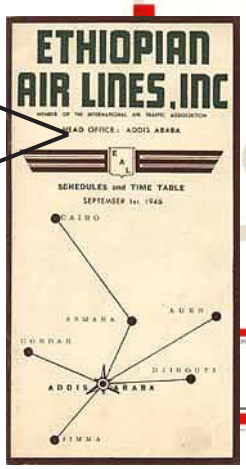
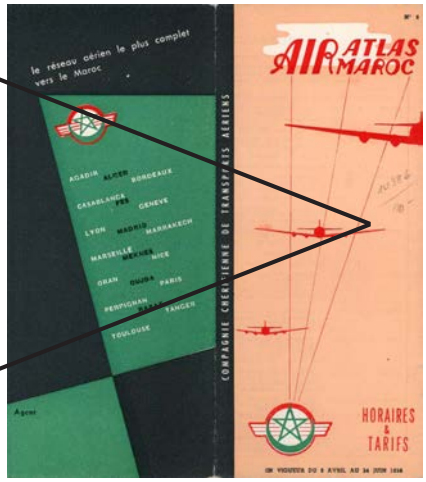
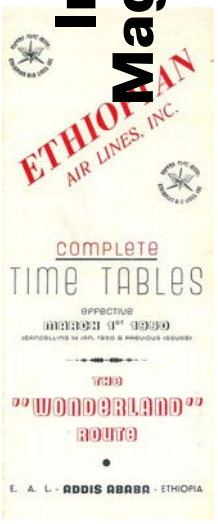
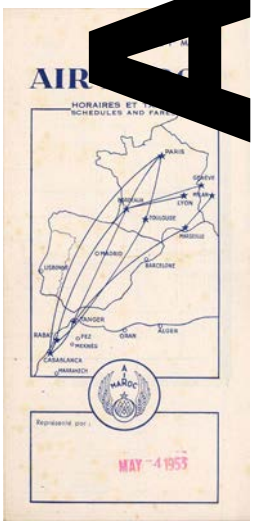
WOMEN AEROPLANES

Inflight Magazine #1





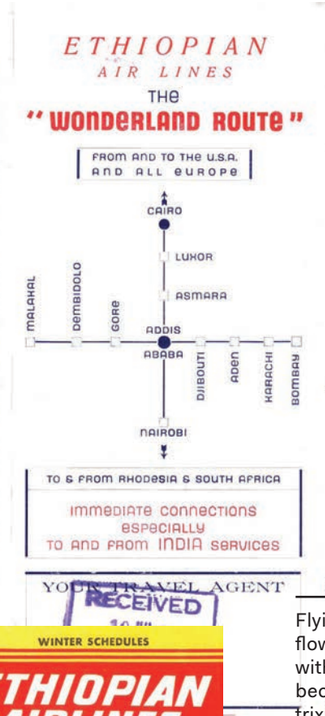




To prepare herself to become a pilot, Muluemebet Emiru had to learn how to drive a car and acquire a driver's license, which also made her Ethiopia's first female licensed driver. She may be the first woman in all of Africa to obtain a driver's license at that age. "It was 1926 in the Ethiopian calendar; that would be 1934 in the world calendar. I would fly several times a week – always over Addis. It was an unusual experience and my friends all envied me." The pilots then had the idea of starting air services in Ethiopia which she believed led to the birth of Ethiopian Airlines. "It didn't get very far at the time of course, because of the invasion by Italy," she said. And neither did her dream. After training for two years and making her first solo flight, the 1936 Italian invasion cut short the journey of a woman who saw the sky as the only limit. She wanted a career as a pilot which was just a year away but was forced to marry and go into hiding for she was on the list of most wanted Ethiopians by the Italians. The Italians wanted to apprehend her because they heard of Africa's only woman pilot training while they were preparing to invade her country. And Muluemebet knew if she fell in the hands of the Italians, she would have been hanged.

From *Remembering Muluemebet Emiru: Africa's First Woman Pilot*
Capital Ethiopia, Staff Reporter, April 30, 2012

http://capitalethiopia.com/2012/04/30/remembering-muluemebet-emiru-africas-first-woman-pilot/



"The aeroplanes they travel with are real. But sometimes they stand still or land themselves."
Kojo Laing

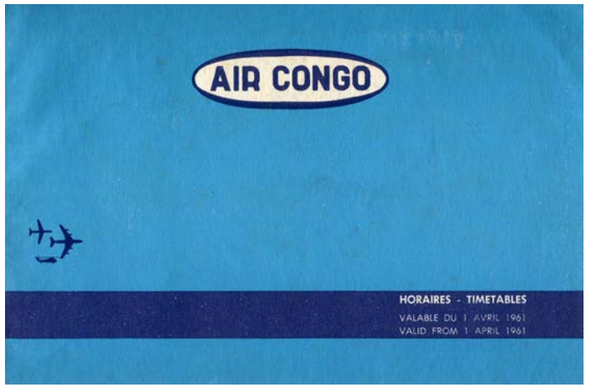
Flying alone, high above the storm, much higher than she'd ever flown before, Touria performed the required maneuvers and landed with a perfect score. Two months shy of her fifteenth birthday, she became the first Moroccan civil pilot in history, and the first aviatrix in the Maghreb. Newspapers across the country hailed her as a hero, and one of her biggest admirers, the Sultan Mohamed Ben Yousef, invited her and Abdelwahed to the palace to meet.

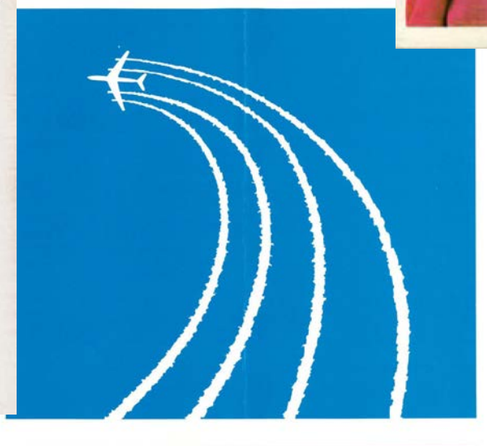
The Sultan was a measured leader who had patiently guided Morocco towards greater independence ever since his favourable 1943 Casablanca meeting with Roosevelt. He was almost universally adored by his people, and together he and the young pilot greeted the press, grinning for the cameras, the Sultan in his brown djellaba, Touria in a dark tie, white shirt, pants, and double-breasted pilot's jacket, wings pinned to her right breast, her arms filled with flowers. Some saw more than a celebration of one girl's accomplishment in the photos that were published the next day. Some saw stagecraft. Some saw a Sultan too adept at symbolism, flying too close to the sun. For the French, independence was as unacceptable as a girl pilot. They would have to burn his wings.

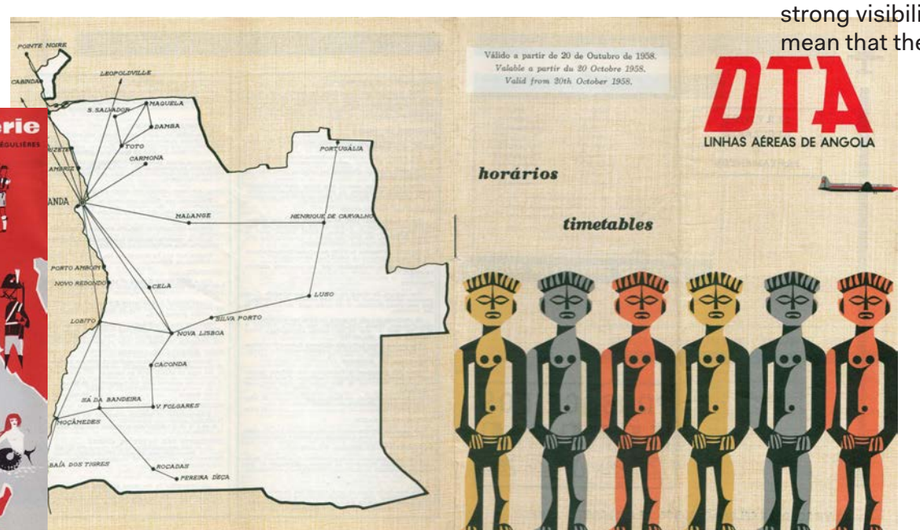
Touria had her enemies. Conspicuously independent – still cutting her hair short, wearing overalls, and now driving a green Morris Minor – she irritated both the French administration and the more Islamic factions jockeying for power. [...] On the afternoon of March 1, 1956 the eve of Independence Day, Touria picked up Salah from school in the green Morris Minor. [...] Salah Chaoui was eleven when he saw his sister shot twice in the head at a spot just below the ear. Now he is seventy, living in Vichy, France, where he owns the Galerie l'Empreinte. [...] "She was a symbol" Salah sighs. "Let's say that the French were behind it. Let's just simply say that was it."

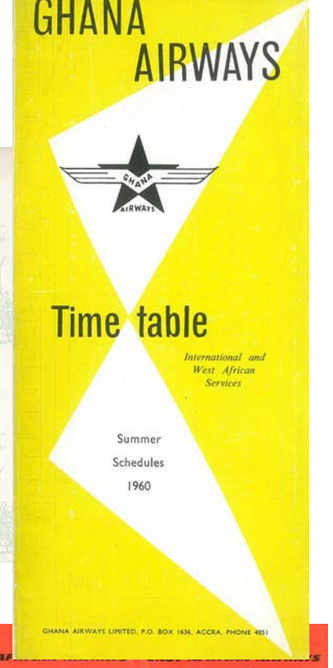
From *The Amazing Aviatrix from Wartime Casablanca,* Josh Shoemake, February 16, 2015

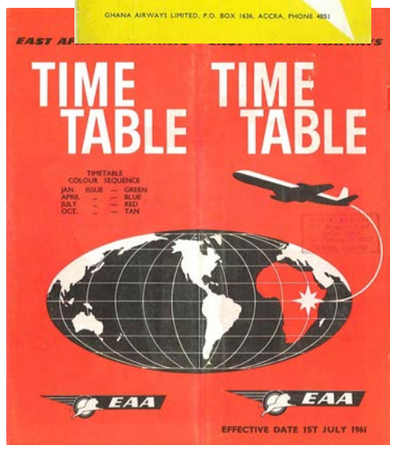
http://narrative.ly/the-amazing-aviatrix-of-wartime-casablanca/











#1 Filter Editing

Every cut forces the editor to make a decision and provokes a crisis. Coming to a decision includes a process of making something visible and something else invisible, what is of course not only an aesthetical but mainly a political choice in terms of storytelling. Even though a person, a gesture, a matter, a landscape is present in the picture, we might not see it, and whatever remains invisible, we can still have an image or an idea in mind of what is missing. What we are able to see is not least a question of knowledge. The ambitious endeavour to change the grammar of a dominant narrative requires an entire reboot of a (mediated) perception we are all too much used to. We need to edit against the grain having a paradox in mind.

The multi-layered research and exhibition project *Women on Aeroplanes* seeks to change the parameters of how we see and listen to the achievements and practices of women in a multitude of moments, being part of a transatlantic and transnational history, with a focus on the struggles for independence and their after effects. The transition from mobilizing all possible forces to win a battle and its hangover, the disenchantment of not being part of any negotiation concerning the future, seems to crystallise a history lesson about power politics. The disappearance of women in politics after their strong visibility during the times of movements doesn't mean that they were not there.

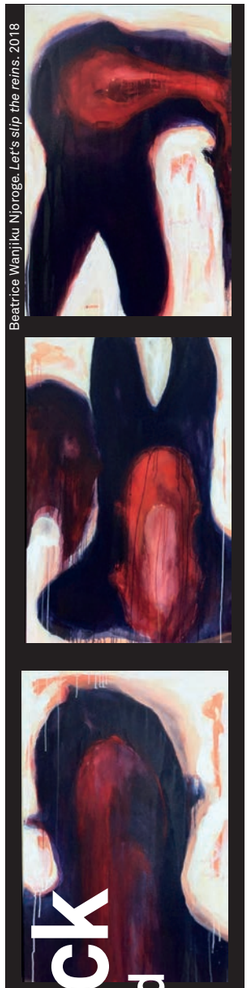
Or, to put it again differently – Kodwo Eshun, in his talk during our first gathering in Berlin, condensed the main elements at stake to a few sentences that almost read like a formula: "One of the frames of the *Women on Aeroplanes* project is *Woman of the Aeroplanes,* the novel. *Women of the Aeroplanes* is Bernard Kojo Laing's second book, written in 1988. It's a science fiction novel that puts extreme pressure on the conventions of science fiction. In Laing's novel, qualities, predicates, attributes, none of these are possessed by a person or a self. They move around and do things. A predicate that moves out of its place: that is one way of understanding the grammar of independence. *For the French, independence was as unacceptable as a Moroccan girl pilot.* The idea of a girl pilot is as upsetting as the idea of a predicate that is not in its place."

Happy take off

Annett Busch, Marie-Hélène Gutberlet, Magda Lipska

Untie to Tie

untietotie.org



Untie to Tie

Feedback — Art, Africa and the 1980s

28.04. — 30.09.2018

WALEW VAIIAUS

ifa-Galerie Berlin

WOMEN ON AEROPLANES SEARCH RESEARCH: Looking for Colette Omogbai May 23–26, 2018

cca lagos

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, LAGOS

Women on Aeroplanes

at The Showroom

Curated with The Otolith Collective

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum
Quadra 04, 2016

Lungiswa Gqunta

Pamela Phatsimo Sunstrum

Emma Wolukau Wanambwa

15.9.18 – 1.12.18

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- interactive guides of selected exhibitions

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MUSEUM ON PAŃSKA STREET - experimental space –
Ul. Pańska 3, Warsaw

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ARTMUSEUM.PL

Star Alliance

Wura-Natasha Ogunji, Star 2014
Thread, ink, graphite on trace paper
31 x 32 cm

Content

Colophon

Inflight Magazine #1

Edited by
Annett Busch and Marie-Hélène Gutberlet

Editorial Office
Drillveita 2, 7012 Trondheim, ab@kein.org
Braubachstraße 9, 60311 Frankfurt am Main, mhgutberlet@gmx.de

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KULTURSTIFTUNG DES BUNDES

In collaboration with the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, ifa-Galerie Berlin, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, The Showroom, London.

Images
All the historic African airline images and timetables are from the amazing collection of Björn Larsson and David Zekria. Find much more on their website: http://www.timetableimages.com.
All additional image footage used in the collages has been found here and there during years of research: film stills, details of photographs, to form a pattern of new meanings.

Passenger List

Fatoumata Diabaté landed rather by chance in the field of photography until she realised: *Photography is my life.* Becoming a professional artist-photographer is not an idea that comes easily as an option to a girl growing up in Bamako. Despite living in a city that is known through the work of Seydou Keïta, Malick Sidibé and others. Since 2013 Fatoumata runs her own street studio turning the practice of the masters into a mobile concept.

Ndidi Dike is a multi-disciplinary artist who keeps the past present by addressing critical issues of our times, and moonlight as a chef whenever it catches her fancy.

Jihan El-Tahri, a true woman on many aeroplanes, is an investigating, tireless questioning propelled force. She makes documentaries and writes books. And she is searching until she found the right person to talk to, the document to read, the turning point, the lost image.

Kodwo Eshun is an artist and theorist, a dedicated and committed listener and respondent, who might sharpen an utterance towards a continuative elaboration.

Rahima Gambo is a visual artist, storyteller and documentary photographer who explores themes of postcolonial Nigerian identity, gender, history, memory and socio-political issues through long-term visual projects.

Shahira Issa is an artist and editor, meandering between Cairo, Berlin and other places.

Maryam Kazeem is a writer based in Lagos. Her work consists of experimental writing, multimedia installation, and film. By exploring questions around the archive, memory, and what it means to write the black female body through image, text and other mediums, her work seeks to unearth the possibility of speculation as both an artistic and writing practice.

Brigitta Kuster does films and texts, publishes books, navigates through film-based research and is teaching cultural production with a sensitivity towards gender issues. She is an audiovisual-phile, with an amateur approach to whatever she is doing, but feels immediate unease once things stand still.

Uche Okpa-Iroha is a photographer and founder of the photography platforms *The Nlele Institute* (TNI) and the *Lagos OPEN RANGE.* He is also a big fan of Francis Coppola's *The Godfather,* and he worked hard on the movie until he managed to edit himself into the picture (what became the award winning *Plantation Boy* project).

Iheanyichukwu Onwuegbucha is Associate Curator at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Lagos and founder of e-museum.org, a virtual museum project. His current curatorial and research interests include: collective war memories in museums, inclusive virtual museums for Africa, and modern and contemporary African art with particular interest in female modernists from Africa.

Emily Pethick is of the seldom species who can easily understand and grasp an idea and transform it into production and realisation. She was part of the moment when the conversation started about what became the *Women on Aeroplanes* project. She gave enthusiastic and full support as the director of *The Showroom,* London and is about to take off to become the new director of Rijksakademie van beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam.

Lisl Ponger is an extravagant researcher, investigating the history of colonialism, searching for an artistic, critical form that contains a good sense of humor. She started with experimental film, continued with staged photography and installations to currently playing out her artistic freedom as the (counter-) curator of *The Master Narrative* (Vienna, coming soon to Dresden).

In her curatorial, publishing, teaching and research practice, **Nadine Siegert** engages with discourses on archives and collections within public institutions as well as the collective image archives of resistance and revolution. She moves with care in thought and practice within the fields of aesthetics and politics.

Cara Snyman belongs to the first generation of South Africans to study after the end of apartheid. She is the one who brings people together. Thanks to her thoughtful enthusiasm there is space to try out new ideas to become a vision for a project, a book, an exhibition, an artistic research. The Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg would not be the same, if she would not be there.

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa is an artist and researcher with a distinct sensitivity to what happens between the lines, working with a variety of forms and practices. She is a Research Fellow in Fine Art at the University of Bergen and Convenor of the Africa Cluster of the Another Roadmap School.

Editing Room

Women on Aeroplanes, First Iteration: Editing Room
November 30 – December 3, 2017, ifa-Galerie Berlin
Three intense days of editing – of cutting, assembling, juxtaposing, of rearranging ideas, images, concerns, misunderstandings, fragments of storytelling and histories – lead to dedicated discussions, included lectures, presentations, conversations. For the first iteration we had on board **Fatoumata Diabaté** (Montpellier), **Ndidi Dike** (Lagos), **Jihan El-Tahri** (Paris), **Kodwo Eshun** (London), **Shahira Issa** (Berlin), **Brigitta Kuster** (Berlin), **Uche Okpa-Iroha** (Lagos), **Iheanyichukwu Onwuegbucha** (Lagos), **Emily Pethick** (London), **Lisl Ponger** (Wien), **Nadine Siegert** (Bayreuth), **Cara Snyman** (Johannesburg), **Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa** (London).

What follows on the next pages can only give a glimpse of what has been in the air. But it offers an entry point to a methodology that unfolds in duration, through interlacing shades within an interval, and between the lines. In a not yet defined transition, between one image and another, disappearance and appearance. To speak of her presence and contribution. Her. She. Undefined. The sheer presence requires a translation, not to speak for her, but to claim the value of practices that go without saying. And a contribution to what? Women who joined a struggle, risked their lives, left their families, went on strike, carried bombs, organized a military unit to achieve a liberation, an independence for a people to come. In the moment after, with the shift towards nation building, she already lost her independence.

Every definition is of course also an exclusion and creates hierarchies, which is ok, but we should be very specific what we are talking about. There are different ways of editing, not only film narrative. Are we talking about film? Are we talking about reality? Are we talking about mediated reality? Are we talking about documented reality? Or are we talking about something totally different? **(lp)**

Can I say something? As a documentary filmmaker, the process of editing, be it feature, be it fiction, short, whatever, with a conscious decision of combining, you still exclude. So the exclusion is part of that decision no matter what – if it's because you decided to exclude it or because the connection meant by definition excluding it. So, when you are cutting a piece, to make the connection you want to get to, that one image that you really like, if you keep it in, it could confuse the connection you are making. So you are excluding it by definition. I guess what I'm saying is, what you just said, I understand, but I don't think it's in opposition to what she said yesterday. And also, that's my reaction, by being so strictly defining what exactly we are doing, it puts us on a trail that doesn't allow us to think out of the box. **(jet)**

I have to react to this. What I wanted to do is exactly the opposite. By including more things and not limiting ourselves by defining, but by including more defined things. I come from experimental film and editing has a different function for me. And I think we should include as many possibilities and be aware that we can't include everything, but not create invisible standards by not defining things. **(lp)**

I was mentioning the Motion Picture Editors Guild in the US yesterday and I mentioned it not with this kind of precision I could have made it, and it's of course not the only way to start talking about film editing, but it was a start for me to look for women editors in that business and figuring out that it is an option. And what we do – what we all do, goes in a multitude of directions. It was just a door opener and not defining the method of the project. Not at all. **(mhg)**

The writing of history and the writing of feminist history, part of Jean Allman's point is that feminist history could also develop a methodology for the active forgetting, the work of forgetting, that's what she means by Agnotology, the active production of forgetting. Not forgetting that just happened because the years go by and the archives get lost but because many people put a lot of work into the act of forgetting. **(ke)**

The term I use a lot these days is the interscalar. When you talk about the sieve, the sieve that operates at different levels, the big sieve with the big holes, that's an interscalar vehicle. The very idea of a filter is interscalar. Something that allows us to move between scales. The scale of the big, the scale of the small, the scale of the individual artist, the scale of the detail within the artwork and then the scale of the network of artists. The scale of within Colette Omogbai works, within her painting and then the scale of the manifesto that she writes and then the scale of the Mbari club that she belongs to. Those scales – what we want is an interscalar thinking. What we want is concepts which can act as interscalar vehicles that can allow us to move between scales of thought. Between the scale of the painting, the scale of the artist and the scale of the network she belongs to. **(ke)**

Let me say something: as an artist in Nigeria, I always find, that when the narrative of an artist or a woman artist is being spoken about, it's never about the women and her work, it's always about: *oh, she was married to a big man.* These are the narratives that we need to straighten out, seriously, a woman's success does not always have to be attributed to somebody else, it can be herself. And I noticed that in Nigeria, they do this constantly, you can never be a good, productive female artist – there is always a comma or a full stop to how you got the way you are. So be careful about those assumptions. **(nd)**

At the time I was an artist, in the 1980s, I was the only female in my class, I had decided to be a sculptor, which was considered as not normal. Female artists should have been textile designers or a graphic artist, but you work with what you feel comfortable with. And not only that, in Nigeria, it's a very patriarchal society, so, to a certain extend I was considered as a taboo, because I was dealing with tools and professional elements that were meant to be exclusively the domain of the men. It was a very challenging time, but the interesting thing I felt, I was so determined to be an artist, that I wasn't really bothered about all the background noise – *oh, you shouldn't be a sculptor, I think it's not a good idea to be an artist* – because at that time, also most of my friends were either studying economics, medicine or law, you know, those kind of topics. Looking back to that era and comparing it to now, you can do anything you want and nobody questions your decisions about which medium you want to work with. **(nd)**

Continues on page 12.

cut
cut in
cut out
cutaway
axial cut
jump cut
match cut
slow cut, fast cutting

edit
editing
editing room
editing table
EDITOR

display
assemblage
compositing
constellation
group
line up
pattern

interval, wolf interval
break
void

matter
material, raw material
mootage, found footage
sequence
shot
scene
take

montage

movement
line
rhythm
time line

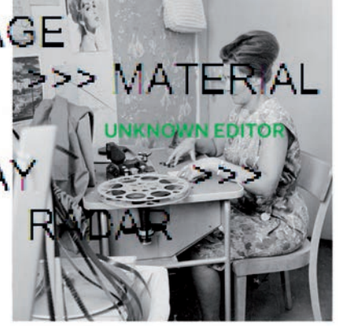
narrative
arrangement
(dis)continuity
direction
(juxta)position

frequency
resonance
score
sound

CUTTERIN

Margaret Booth (1898 – 2002), chief editor at MGM

FOOTAGE >>> MATERIAL



DISPLAY >>> RADAR

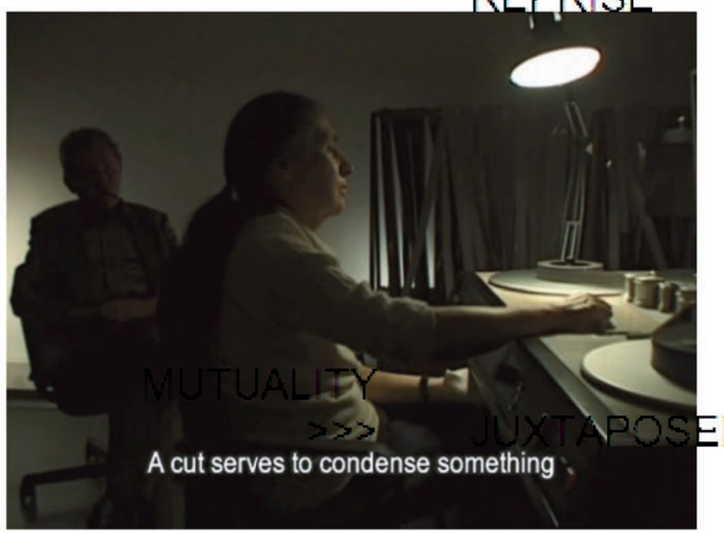
Dziga Vertov—"Kinochestvo is the art of organizing the necessary movements of objects in space as a rythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the properties of the material and the internal rhythm of each object. Intervals (the transition from one movement to another) are the material, the elements of the art of movements, and by no means the movements themselves. It is they (the intervals) which draw the movement to a kinetic resolution."
(*Kinoks: A Revolution*, 1922)

MATTER >>> INTERVAL >>> DOT >>> LINE >>> POINT >>> MOVEMENT

In France the first women editors were laboratory workers, who mounted film negatives. In the early years of film, in the US, editing was considered a technical job; editors were expected to "cut out the bad bits" and string the film together. Women were not allowed to take up "creative" positions (directors, cinematographers, producers were almost always men). The profession of the editor opened a door into the film industry.

MODE / METHOD

REPRISE



Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub editing *Sicilia!*
Still from *Où gît votre sourire enfoui?* (Pedro Costa and Thierry Lounas, 2001)

[In conventional narrative filmmaking] the quality of her work, the montage, is still measured according to the affinity of the material to the director's artistic attitude. The better the editing, the less it is noticed.

ASSOCIATIVE

BIFURCATION

MUTUALITY >>> JUXTAPOSED

UNRELATED

Bettina Böhler—"we edit, we publish, we issue"

Dede Allen
Claire Atherton
Dominique Auvray
Aarti Bajaj
Martine Barraqué
Deepa Bathia
Anne Bauchens
Nadja Ben Rachid
Else Blangsted
Bettina Böhler
Noëlle Boisson
Françoise Bonnot
Margaret Booth
Beth Brickell
Nathalie Alonso Casale
Emmanuelle Castro
Anne V. Coates
Martha Coolidge
Louise Côté
Loredana Cristelli
Gabriella Cristiani
Holly Dale
Julie Dash
Margaret Dickinson
Marie-Hélène Dozo
Marguerite Duparc
Adrienne Fazan
Verna Fields
Dominique Fortin
Lisa Fruchtman
Hélène Girard
Sophie Hesselberg
Danièle Huillet
Eva Houdova
Marguerite Houllé Renoir
Monique Isnardon
Alisa Lepselter
Renée Lichtig
Anna Liebschner
Sofia Lindgren
Juliane Lorenz
Sabine Mamou
Barbara McLean
Joi McMillon
Beena Paul Venugopal
Léa Pool
Nelly Quettier
Susana Rossberg
Patricia Rozema
Gloria Schoemann
Thelma Schoonmaker
Claire Simpson
Dorothe Spencer
Sophie Tatischeff
Annie Tresgot
Denise Vindevogel
Eve Unsell
Svetlana Vaynblat
Juliette Welfling
Anne Wheeler
Geneviève Winding
Leena Yadav
Gisela Zick

EDITING >>>

Dede Allen (1923 – 2010)

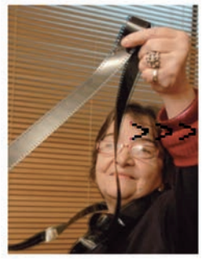
POSITION

ASSEMBLE

GROUP

RELATIONS

INTERDEPENDENCE



Andrée Davanture (1933 – 2014) with Drissa Touré, Mansour Wade and Fanta Nacro, 1980s; photo by Claude Le Gallou - *CinémAction* n° 106, 2003; right 2007.
Founder of Atria in Paris in 1980, Andrée Davanture was chef monteuse of numerous films by Souleymane Cissé, Jean-Pierre Dikongué-Pipa, Safy Faye, Oumarou Ganda, Fanta Nacro, Gaston Kaboré, Férid Boughédir.

JUMPCUT

FRAGMENT

DIRECTION

>>> CONSTELLATION >>>

Instituto Nacional de Cinema (INC), Mozambique, **Margaret Dickinson**, with her students Mário Felix, Miguel Chambule, Eusébio Mfumo, Josué Chabela, Enoque Mate, José Cabral, Ismael Vuvo; photo 1977/78, courtesy Margaret Dickinson.

PARTIAL

MOBILE

Thelma Schoonmaker and Martin Scorsese, 1970

EVIDENCE

RELATED

ENTANGLED

SEA VIEW / TIMELINE

CHEF MONTEUSE

The editor is the first spectator.
She selects the takes.
She decides whether someone is speaking on or speaking from the off.
She proposes to skip or to shift takes or sequences.
She accepts being lost.
She is learning by doing.
She knows where she is going.
She doesn't know where she will arrive.

>>> RESONANCE

Loredana Cristelli, editor of *Hyenas* by Djibril Diop Mambety, 1992

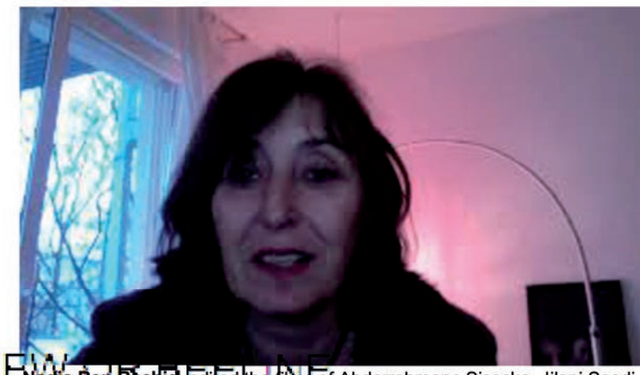
COLLAGE

PATTERN

Trinh T. Minh-ha—"Interval and partition, sleep and wake, wild and tamed, after all, are not a threat to each other when *spacing* is what every movement requires: what enters, exits; what dwells far in, travels far out." (*Beware of Wolf Intervals*, 1999)

Fred Moten—"the massive discourse of the cut"

WOMAN EDITOR



Nadja Ben Rachid, edited the films of Abderrahmane Sissako, Jilani Saadi, Yamina Benguigui among other 30 fiction and documentary films.

Thelma Schoonmaker—"Very early on, a certain kind of trust developed between us, which really is the basis of our relationship."

My interest in the *Women on Aeroplanes* project is actually: how do we edit in the absence and erasure of women in the Nigerian narrative when it comes to contemporary Nigerian art. We have a lot of pioneering women that came well before I started. People like Clara Etso, she actually taught the famous Uche Okeke what was then known for the Uli School, but when they are talking about history, they never mention the fact, that she actually taught Uche. **(nd**)

Again, it's this idea of the necessity of the role of constantly trying to show what is invisible and not what is already present. [...] In a way the insistence is on the position that you are not trying to show what's known, but trying to show what is missing – we are not here to simply gather all these histories that are missing and to narrate them, but to show the process of invisibility. [...] Perhaps it's this dilemma of trying to think of – when you bring things into light, are you just expanding the center and incorporating such histories into it? Is it that things are getting appropriated by the center, everything falling under its light, or are you actually perforating it? **(si)**

So in a way I haven't thought them all through yet, but I would say, just the fact that we're displacing art history or art histories and the fact we're displacing partly histories and the fact that we're trying to think through the relation of nation, nationality and nationalism and then of course what Homi Bhabha called the narration of all of those, so the fact that we're trying to think through the narration of nation, the narration of nationality and the narration of nationalism outside of the precinct of national history, nationality history and nationalisms histories, the very fact that we're doing that, means that in a way we can narrate otherwise. And I take it that that is part of what brings us all here. To try to gather a vocabulary of narration which extracts from nation, nationalism and nationality but does not belong to any of those but is precisely a mobile vocabulary. **(ke)**

Eight Hours in the Museum

Lisl Ponger in her solo exhibition *The Master Narrative* plays out eight hours – a full length working day in central Europe – or as old Werner F. (Gott hab ihn seelig) used to say, "eight hours don't make a day". That's how Ponger transforms a part of the Vienna Weltmuseum (the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna, reopened 2017 as Worldmuseum) into her fictive Museum for Foreign and Familiar Cultures (Museum für Fremde und Vertraute Kulturen, MUKUL), which she will present at Kunsthaus Dresden later in 2018.

Her reworking of the Western Master Narrative turns out to be a stream of stories of colonial misunderstandings, violent twists and (counter-)strategies within colonial entanglements. In contrast to what happens in the fantasy-comedy *Night at the Museum* by Shawn Levy (2006), where things happen during the time you are supposed to relax, recover, stay home, maybe in bed, Ponger inverts the day of the museum visitor, willingly prepared to become enlightened, into a long night of a crossover black box experience from the imaginary underground of imperial visual histories. While doing this, the artist transforms herself into a curator of history lessons. Length seems to be a matter of a new sustainability, a narrative that runs breathlessly against the master's speech in his very own house.

One of my favourite sequences in Ponger's cinerama is her reading of André Kaminski's fantastic short story about Moaki, the assistant editor at the Television Studio in Algiers after the political victory of the FLN over the French:

"On that day gravity was off. Moaki reflected upon how to fulfil the order: the French had switched it off, he presumed, so it could be also switched on. But which button? There were thousands of buttons. If I find the right one, the power is on again, light is back, and the broadcast station will work. [...] At five o'clock in the afternoon, he entered the central control room flooded in complete obscurity and started to switch on all keys. Frenetically, one by one, till a lightning flashed through the darkness. Green lights went on, ventilators started to hum, neon bulbs flickered. It was unbelievable. Moaki had repaired the broadcasting. Just like this. As one would repair some stockings. The broadcast station was ready, only the programme was missing. Peanuts. He had the idea of his life. He sent seven footboys to the city of Algiers and asked them to call the people into the studio. As they were. With drums and flags and exploding hearts. He opened all gates and around six o'clock in the evening the most powerful reportage of all times began. Thousands of people run up the mountain. [...] It was science fiction of an extend as never seen before. A ghost studio with no staff, no cameramen, no floor manager, no cable bearer. [...] Moaki sat at the control desk, with 12 monitors sending images to 12 channels, witnessing an overwhelming procession, a demonstration of happy riotousness and overexcited illusions. This was anarchy. Freedom of one night. The microphones were on. The broadcasting aired."

From André Kaminski, *Der Sieg über die Schwerkraft*, 1983

Brigitta Kuster

The idea of sitting around a negotiating table

My name is **Jihan El-Tahri.** I'm a filmmaker, producer, writer and a woman on an aeroplane. All the time! The title of the project can't be more appropriate. And I'm not really sure where to begin. My very first job was as a photographer. I was a photojournalist in the war zones of the early 1980s like the civil war in Lebanon. From there I started writing for Reuters, then for newspapers and later for different formats, magazines and radio ... I think I've done every single format under the sun.

The turning point came in late 1980s and especially with the 1991 Gulf War when it was clear to me that what I was looking for professionally was no longer doable. It was very clear by the moment of the Gulf War that journalism and everything connected to journalism was not the right avenue for me. Journalism is where the first draft of history is written – and I was trying to find a narrative of history that I would be part of and involved in its articulation. But, in terms of space and in terms of how it's done, no longer gave that space for an individual voice, especially not a voice from the South.

So I turned to different kinds of filmmaking, starting with journalistic, then going into observational and then I guess dabbling in formats all with an aim to find my place. When I talk about the films I made I only talk about the last eight – I exclude everything I did before. My earlier work feels like part of the search for my own voice. However, my last eight films, deal with political history and these made me realize that I had found what was looking for.

Returning to the theme of this project – it is quite funny that after every single screening of my films usually the first question is: *As a female filmmaker, how come there are no women in your films?* And it is indeed ironic that women are excluded in my films but that is intentional because they are flagrantly excluded from the histories I'm talking about. So, it's not just that I could not find any women, it's also because if I put a women and give her a major role it would be a form of falsifying the narrative that was transmitted and that we live with. And the angle or the vantage point from which I have decided to make most of my films is that of the perspective of those who hold the reigns of power because the narrative of power is the one that history retains. It is the narrative to which we, regular people, submit to because we have no way of knowing better. The mythologies of independence are based on what is documented from the point of view of those who emerged as winners from the decolonizing process. Yes, there are many films on small social issues seen through the lense of the people on the ground, but the grand narrative of history that is transmitted in history books is the one that is delivered by the decision makers.

If that is the history that will be handed down to us, then at some point I decided that I need to start understanding the decision makers: Who are they? What are they thinking? What are their relationships? What happens to these people once they attain power? How did they lose the dream they had when they were freedom fighters? What is their story? What is their personal eyewitness account and why is it that they want to underline a specific narrative?

Although my films are all quite different and happening in different spaces, somehow they all deal with the same issue: What happened to the inspiring vision of independence? It was in many ways a collective vision, they all wanted to get rid of colonialism and build a brave new world to come out of a moment of crisis into a bright new future! And now look at the state of the world we live in, how did we get from there to here? That is my central research path, if you want. How did the vision collapse? How did the desire for that vision get corrupted, how was it thwarted?

And to get back to women in this context: I've done a lot of work on liberation movements and it is striking when you start looking closely at the issue of the absence of women, obviously in Africa, but elsewhere too. I made this film called *Cuba, an African Odyssee*[1], which was about Cuban support for African revolutions – this meant that I had to look at the Cuban revolution itself and to my surprise there were all these women that you never heard about or seen. You always have this wonderful picture of Camilo, Che and Fidel, but Celia Sánchez is nowhere to be found. She was there too at the front, but hardly ever in the pictures that became part of the official history. So, the exclusion of women from the narrative, which I participate in, I participate in their exclusion because I use their absence to make a point about their erasure from these narratives.

When we proceed to tell a story in film, the form and the format you will be working with, is the first decision that guides the film maker. So, the mental editing before you go to the physical editing, is often what defines the trajectory. It is here that the first step towards exclusion happens: What is going to fit in the limited space available to tell a story and is going to be left out? Women are at a disadvantage since they are already excluded from the archive material itself that you're using to construct a narrative. That material is the major source for piecing together a reality that we have not been taught. The mythologies constructed around our histories are multiple and we really don't know what really happened yet. From the moment of independence until now – at least the countries in which I have been working with including my country, Egypt – you suddenly realize the amount of fallacies we accept when you're trying to reconstruct these histories. There has been a consistent, intentional and coherent fabrication of a mythology of what independence was, how it came about and who the heroes of that independence were. This fabricated exclusive narrative becomes a reality, when actually it was never a reality in the first place. We know that others who were key in liberation struggles were simply wiped out of our collective consciousness, yet we accept these mythologies that become our history and that we accept on face value. This has happened in almost every country. Let's take the example of Algeria.

We know of Ben Bella, Ben M'hidi, Boumediane and other key FLN figures. We even know Ali la Pointe's story through *The Battle of Algiers*[2], but we don't know much about the women who were amongst the front liners in the FLN struggle. Djamila Bouhired, we just know her as the woman who bombed the café. But Djamila Bouhired, to get to that point of bombing the Cafe, had a whole history with the FLN. And we don't know anything about that history. So the woman becomes the figure which is the exception: *Oh wow, was there a woman hijacker? Was there a woman terrorist?* And that's why when we were talking with Marie-Hélène, I asked her to get that book *Shoot the Women First*[3].

I would like to backtrack to the moment when I decided to move from journalism to filmmaking. It was at that moment of the Gulf War and I was completely disillusioned and questioning everything: Who am I? What am I supposed to be doing? I was covering the

Gulf war for an American publication while American troops were destroying one of the oldest civilizations in the region I belong to. So where do I fit in that paradox? Am I telling their narrative? It was a very complicated moment where identity was a big issue, where the spaces in which you deliver a narrative was an issue. Once the Gulf War was over, I literally pulled out of everything and questioned my space as a woman, as an Arab or as an African. I was constantly faced with the dilemma of responding to what seemed a valid question: *Are you an Arab or are you an African?* I always felt I was obliged to choose and was constantly in conflict with, which one of the two am I really. At some point I dared to break the structure of thought imposed on me and I finally managed to ask: Why can't I be both? I actually am both. So, it's how you integrate being a woman, and an Arab and an African that is the question. That was something I was finally willing to fight for: the AND rather than OR. I don't see why only the Arab ethnic group on the African continent needs to justify its Africanness. The Peul exist in a number of African countries, they share a common language and specific tradtions and they migrated from the space now referred to as 'The Arab World' yet I don't think the Peul have to say: *I'm a Peul, but I'm African.* But as an Arab somehow you needed to do that.

To get to *Shoot the Women First,* Eileen McDonald – the angle from which she comes is the IRA. And I was very interested in the IRA at the time. Reading this book about female terrorists, by someone in a position to give insight about them, was fascinating. The provocative title *Shoot the Women First* is a debate in itself, there are five/six different versions as to who actually said that famous phrase. The predominantly accepted origin is that the German anti-terrorist squad GSG 9 basically said that when there's a female terrorist, she is so committed that she has nothing to lose so she will cause the most trouble. Therefore if you come to a hijacking space you shoot the woman first and then there will be less problems.

Samia Lakhdari, Zohra Drif, Djamila Bouhired and Hassiba Ben Bouali, the bomb planters in the Battle of Algiers.
Salut les Cubains (Agnes Varda, 1963)

And so what interested me in that book wasn't the terrorists, since the words terrorist and terrorism had a different resonance at the time, in the 1970s and 1980s it was clear that today's terrorists would be recognized as tomorrows' freedom fighters. What interested me was why she chose just the women because it was so unusual, even for her, that a woman can be a terrorist. So that "function" was somehow reserved for men. This book basically inspired me to look deeper into the females of liberation movements: How did they get into and commit to a liberation movement? How they decided to go into the bush, which entailed leaving their family, sometimes their children and breaking with traditions? But mostly, why none of these women ended up as part of the power structures that emerged once independence was obtained?

One of the really interesting concepts I ran into was the idea that women once engaged in struggle became firmly in the mode of no compromise. Practically every single independence on the continent came out of a negotiated settlement. I don't think any 'African revolution' as such, actually technically, won the battle for independence. However, the struggle itself obliged the adversary to retreat in whatever form that ended up bringing independence.

The empire was collapsing in three main phases: the first phase, which is the 1960s starting with, let's say 1952/53, but concretized by 1956, where it was clear that France and especially Britain could no longer sustain its colonies financially, they were obliged rather than willing to hand independence to all these new nations. Thirty countries got independence between 1960/62. The second phase of the 1970s, where it was real armed struggle: countries like Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, Cap Verde; and in the 1980s Zimbabwe and South Africa. But Mozambique, for example, was one of the revolts that had the greatest number of women. Women were very present, but where are they now?

All these liberation movements had to sit around the negotiating table to define the nature of relations of the future. Why were there never any women sitting around the negotiating table? That was something that I wanted to look into – given the concept of no compromise – under the title of *Shoot the Women First.*

Often what actually happens in that moment of transition to independence, is that the deals struck become the founding infrastructure of the post-colonial state. So, for example the dependency on the metropole, in the case of francophone Africa, was guaranteed through the deal struck regarding the currency, the CFA – all of these are the negotiated settlements that then become to undermining elements of real independence which I think we never really got. In every Liberation movement there were women high up enough within the ranks. So, maybe all these independence movements would have been better off having their less compromising female comrades around the table. The case of the ANC in South Africa is probably the most obvious. Many women were high ranking in the organization and yet, only one or two sat around the table, mostly in a secretarial rather than a decision making role.

1 *Cuba, an African Odyssey* (2007, 118 min, France); written and directed by Jihan El-Tahri; cinematography by Frank Meter Lehmann; music by Les Frères Guissé; edited by Gilles Bovon; produced by Temps Noir.

2 *The Battle of Algiers* (1966, 120 min, Italy/Algeria); directed by Gillo Pontecorvo; written by Franco Solinas and Gillo Pontecorvo; Music by Ennio Morricone and Gillo Pontecorvo; cinematography by Marcello Gatti; edited by Mario Morra and Mario Serandrei; produced by Antonio Musu and Saadi Yacef.

3 Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First* (New York: Random House, 1992).

Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966)
Terror's Advocate (Barbet Schroeder, 2007)

PFLP: Declaration of World War (Masao Adachi, 1971)
Cuba, an African Odyssey (Jihan El-Tahri, 2007)

Two or three questions
Jihan El-Tahri

I have decided to contain my answers mainly to my region and mostly my country Egypt. Otherwise, this questionnaire would end up unfinished!

Who has been an important source and influence for the way you think, work and live?

"A Nation cannot be liberated internally or externally while its women are enchained" – Doria Shafik. I stumbled on Shafik by accident when a friend at university showed me a tattered copy of *Bint el Nil,* from February 1952. The magazine was unfindable and only recently were covers of the publication put online. The visual of an Egyptian woman looking elegant, defiant and eccentric got me curious and mostly I wanted to know why Doria Shafik's name remained unknown. I later found out how she had organized the women to storm the Parliament in 1951 and how she was actually the godmother of female suffrage as early as 1952.

I have never considered myself a feminist however, I firmly believe that being a woman is no different from being a man. The problem is extracting women who are, weighed down by centuries of submission, out of their own certitude that they are merely followers. So, the work, the resilience and the fighting spirit of Funmilayo Kuti (Frances Abigail Olufunmilayo) was for me among the most inspirational encounters. The fact that she was Fela Kuti's mother on top of all her personal achievements makes her monumental.

There are two women who have profoundly affected and structured the way I work and live. The self imposed discipline and methodologically outlining the route to what you want to achieve is a reality that I lived through with two of my teachers/mentors very early on.

Gail Gerhart was my professor at the American university in Cairo. She came to Cairo after having been a tenured professor at Colombia University. Students usually fled her classes saying she was too demanding and a very hard grader. We usually ended up being no more than three students per class. I was privileged to be among her students for every class she taught. She specialized in South African politics since she had just recently finished her PhD and published the first book about Black politics inside Apartheid South Africa. *Black Power in South Africa* was the fruit of more than a decade of interviews with activists from all the different struggle movements fighting Apartheid. Her six-hour interview with Steve Biko remains the only complete document of his thoughts articulated first hand (with a sound recording). I guess she taught me the worth of creating chronologies for everything.

Norma Percy was the series producer of the monumental documentary called *The Death of Yugoslavia.* When I watched the six-part series I knew that I had found the way I would like to make documentaries – across between academic, anecdotal, archival and visual bonanza. I took the train to London where she worked, knocked on the door and asked if I could work with them, even as a coffee boy. It took two years for her to call me back (even when I harassed her almost every month reminding her that I was available for any job paid or unpaid). I worked with her on *The 50 Years War: Israel and the Arabs.* It was a painful experience of non-stop hard labour but it was one of the most enriching in terms of learning how to work like an ant, with precision for the longterm.

Which work of art/literature/music/photography keeps resonating with you?

My People Shall Live by Leila Khaled. I read that book when I was 15 and I was awed by that women who dared do the undoable in the name of a cause she believed right and also have the words to make me understand and identify with her own plight and that of a nation at large.

Nations Nègres et Cultures by Cheikh Anta Diop. He opened my eyes to why as an Egyptian I should reevaluate who I am against the dominant narrative that we are sold by the powers that be. It was maybe the timing of reading this book, but until today the essential understanding of how my own mind has been colonized and how I can little by little try to break some of the shackles.

The Prophet by Gibran Khalil Gibran. His ability to capture the decaying state of our countries during the colonial period as well as post colonial period in a lyrical and non-factual manner was for me as powerful as Homer's *Odyssey.*

Fela Ransome Kuti. He dared, he said, he sang and created a rhythm from the gut. A universal language if ever there was one.

Which books did you always want to read, but never found a copy, the time, the entry point?

Full seven volumes of *Kitāb al-'Ibar* or *Book of Lessons of Ibn Khaldun* (1332–1406). The full title of the book is: *Book of Lessons, Record of Beginnings and Events in the History of the Arabs and the Berbers and Their Powerful Contemporaries.* Only the first volume is known in the west as *The Introduction or Prolegomena.* Ibn Khaldun is a fascinating character, an Arab from Grenada, his life was a constant adventure that took him to many countries, landed him in Prison and enabled him to hold high office within the Empire and finally led him to exile in Egypt

where he died. His book which started as an attempt to document the history of the Berbers, ended up being a sort of universal history. From his works he can be acknowledged as the father of several disciplines like sociology and economics.

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a good equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

I would love to see Sun Ra's *Space is the Place* in good quality on a big screen rather than the hundreds of viewings I have done on my laptop.
I would have loved to be on set of *Soul Train* anytime but even better when James Brown was starting his career.
To have attended one of Oum Kalthoum's legendary concerts, I think would have given me keys to understand many of the underlying themes in Egyptian culture. My father would leave his post in London to attend Oum Kalthoum's concert in Egypt even if it cost him more than he earned.

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

Gertrude Bell in Iraq. I would have loved to discuss and understand how she navigated the spaces with and between the different desert tribes. What it was she knew that her superiors in the foreign office did not pay any heed to. How she feels responsible – or not – for the mess that has become the Arab World based on the lines that were drawn in the sand. How did she come up with these lines, would she have done things differently? I am fascinated by how she was in total oblivion and now is being romanticized as *The Desert Queen* when ultimately she was against independence and was a faithful servant trying to maintain the domination of the British Empire.
Hoda Shaarawi in Egypt. How she plucked the courage – given her social and marital status – to shed the veil as a symbol of change. What she had to confront? How she managed to get her husband's support to go ahead and kick the Ant Hill. Could she have done it alone? How did she find Safia Zaghloul as the perfect accomplice. And a million more questions.

Which artist / figure should be rediscovered and should get a retrospective or a solo show or a proper catalogue?

Tahia Halim a wonderful Egyptian painter from the southern region of Nuba. Her work and depictions are mostly forgotten among surrealists but are superb and claim Egypt's black heritage.
Ateyyat El Abnoudy a fantastic documentary maker whose 1971 graduation documentary *Sad Song of Touha* is both stunningly beautiful and eternally relevant. She continued to do her work, documenting and filming without ever being funded or recognized.

Did you ever have a favourite heroine in fiction ..., in reality ..., in history? And who would that be?

Shajar al-Durr played a crucial role after the death of her first husband during the 7th Crusades against Egypt (1249–1250). She became the ruler of Egypt in 1250 ending the Ayyubid reign and starting the era of Mamluk rule. One of Egypt's most culturally and architecturally prosperous periods since the Pharaohs. Shajar Al Durr is still referred to in Egyptian households when a girl is strong, willed and rebellious. Indeed, although she only reigned directly for a few months, her days as a monarch witnessed two important events in history:
1. Expelling of Louis IX invading troops from Egypt, which marked the end of the Crusaders' ambition to conquer the Southern Mediterranean.
2. Ending the Ayyubid dynasty and creating the Mamluk state which dominated the Southern Mediterranean for decades.
There are wild stories of her chasing high state officials with clogs when they refused to abide by decrees – only because the ruler was a woman!

You will come to like this job

DR Congo is a complicated space. Many things that we perceive not to know just as we begin to know a few of them: history, political settings, mining industries, music, cinema, arts – produced by the many people who do extraordinary work in this huge country. One of them is Kiripi Katembo who we painfully lost at the point in time of his international emergence. His series of photographs entitled *Transit – RDC*[1] generated a rather generous view towards the Congolese cosmos, which too often seems depicted as a place of deprivation. Deprivation is present in Katembo's images, but it is not its leading tone. His frame of reality rather has depth and levitation.

Kiripi Katembo was the producer of *Maman Colonelle*[2], a documentary by his friend Dieudo Hamadi. Both were born during Mobutu's dictatorship and experienced the 'African World War'. Desolation is not Hamadi's or Katembo's thing, although the cinematic space of *Maman Colonelle* could not be more nightmarish. They found an accomplice in Colonel Honorine Munyole – one of these exceptional people who would not dare to despair. She is the main character, the star in this documentary film named after her.

In real life, people call each other Maman, Papa, Child, my Elder, even if they are not family. As a gesture of humanity, respect, and acknowledgement of age and position, intensifying the bond between people and the impact of violence. Maman is a widow, and a police officer. She has many children, some of her own and some adopted. She is the head of a police unit established to protect women and children from war crimes, abuse and rape in Bukavu – the province of South-Kivu, close to the Rwandan border – and is later transferred to Kisangani, province of Tshopo, DRC. Kisangani was an inferno in the war between Rwanda and DRC – drowned in atrocities, then isolation, silence, and invisibility. Violence continues. It is somehow a miracle that the *Unité de la Police Spéciale chargée de la Protection de la Femme et de l'Enfant* (PSPFE) has been brought into existence with a personality like Honorine Munyole (another *Sister in Law*[3]) in charge of it, that the film has been accomplished, and been brought to cinema.

The camera is around while she raises awareness and funds, prepares female victims to testify before court, finds them a place to stay, and a job to make a living; she brings them traumatized children to care for, and she trains police officers (mostly men) to be trim and vigilant. As much as Maman cares for practical solutions – leaving the site when it comes to overwhelming emotions –, the film is concerned with not turning the camera's lens into a voyeuristic eye, but not turning it away either. Not only does it become necessary to produce a film as a testimonial, but also to understand its impact as a statement.

Siegfried Kracauer in *The Head of the Medusa*[4] slightly re-conceptualizes the myth of Perseus' victory over Medusa. In his version, the film would enable its spectators to look at horrific things and not be petrified (as Perseus was looking at Medusa's reflection in the mirror of his shield, and not at her) in order to acknowledge and become aware of how to "decapitate horror" (das Grauen köpfen).

In cinema, the image of horror (Kracauer had the Nazi Concentration Camps in mind) does harm, but not directly and physically. Cinema configures a space where one could engage with a reality that one would never be able to cope with directly. *Maman Colonelle,* while keeping the balance between "rememberment and redress"[5] (Fred Moten), finds its way back and forth into and out of the Kracauerian utopian dimension of cinema and its promise of acknowledgement, starting with the presence of a camera that produces images that contain a possible link to an exterior world.

(mhg)

1 Kiripi Katembo, *Transit – RDC* (Brussels: Africalia and Oostkamp: Stichting Kunstboek, 2015).

2 *Maman Colonelle* (2017, 72 min, DR Congo/France); written, directed and photographed by Dieudo Hamadi. Sound by Dieudo Hamadi and François Tariq Sardi; edited by Anne Renardet; produced by Kiripi Katembo (Mutotu Productions, Kinshasa) and Christian Lelong (Cinédoc Film, Annecy). Lingala, Swahili, French and other languages.

3 *Sisters in Law: Stories from a Cameroon Court* (2005, 104 min, Cameroon); directed by Florence Ayisi and Kim Longinotto; starring Vera Ngassa and Beatrice Ntuba, two Cameroonian lawyers seeking justice for women and children.

4 In Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960).

5 Fred Moten, *In the Break – The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

Ousmane Sembène Emitaï (1971)

My first thought was to evoke the stance of a Senegalese female hero, named An Sitoe (Aline Sitoe for the French), who during the Second World War had led a battle against the army which had confiscated the rice in the villages in the name of a successful war. But while doing biographical research I realized that the legend had veiled the historical truth and that it was difficult to separate one from the other. And then the mysticism of An Sitoe made me sick, me who am an Atheist and Marxist. So I have decided to remove An Sitoe from her role as main character. But I kept the idea to illustrate on screen the anticolonial resistance of the Diola during this period.[2]

As *Emitaï* shows, when the French wanted our rice, the women refused but the men accepted the orders. Women have played a very important part in our history. They have been guardians of our traditions and culture even when certain of the men were alienated during the colonial period. The little that we do know of our history we owe to our women, our grandmothers. The African women are more liberated than elsewhere. In certain African countries, it is the women who control the market economy. There are

villages where all authority rests with the women. And whether African men like it or not, they can't do anything without the women's consent, whether it be marriage, divorce, or baptism.[3]

First of all, I have to say that the story of *Emitaï* is based on an actual event. The person who led the struggle, all by herself, was a woman – and a woman who was sick. The colonialists killed her, but they didn't kill her husband. I can give you an example of the strike in Thies, I can give you an example of the birth of the RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain). I can even talk of recent times under Senghor. In 1963 the women left the indigenous quarter called the Médina to overthrow Senghor. On their march the men also came and in front of the palace they killed more than one hundred and fifty people. I think it's a white man's vision that says that our women have never participated in our struggle.[4]

In *Emitaï,* when the women are forced by the soldiers to sit out in the sun, the only sound you can hear is the sound of the rooster and the weeping of the children; however, there was also wind. I did not look for music to engage the audience. I just wanted to show, by gestures, that the women are tired, their legs are tired, their arms are burdened – one woman has the sun shining in her eyes, another two are sleeping. All this is shown in silence, but it is a silence that speaks. I could have had a voice coming from the outside, but I would have been cheating. Instead, for example, there were the two children who were walking along to bring water to the women. When they crossed the woods, you couldn't see their legs, but you could hear, very clearly, the dead leaves underfoot. For me, this represents the search for a cinema of silence.[5]

Let's be clear about this: If we do not accord women their rightful place, there will be no liberation. Women work a whole lot more than men do, and if work was in and of itself liberating, women who farm fields daily would have long been liberated. Women's emancipation doesn't only depend on labor. If we do not wake up and appreciate justly the role of women and share responsibilities, we will lose. But I think there's a gender revolution going on in Africa anyway, and we will have to conform.[6]

1 *Emitaï* (1971, 103 min, Senegal/France), written and directed by Ousmane Sembène; cinematography by Georges Caristan; music by Manu Dibango; edited by Gilbert Kikoine; produced by Paulin Soumanou Vieyra and Myriam Smadja.

2 *We Are Governed in Black Africa by Colonialism's Disabled Children*, Guy Hennebelle (1971), in: Annett Busch/Max Annas (Eds), *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008).

3 *Ousmane Sembène: Interview*, Gerald Peary and Patrick McGilligan (1972), in: Busch/Annas, *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews.*

4 *Filmmakers Have a Great Responsibility to Our People*, Harold D. Weaver (1972), in: Busch/Annas, *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews.*

5 *Filmmakers Have a Great Responsibility to Our People*, Harold D. Weaver (1972), in: Busch/Annas, *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews.*

6 *Still the Fire in the Belly: The Confessions of Ousmane Sembène* (2000), in: Busch/Annas, *Ousmane Sembène: Interviews.*

from top left to bottom right

1 Hardcover, William Heinemann Ltd (1988)

2 Picador Books, UK Paperback (1989)

3 Hardcover, William Morrow and Company, Inc., New York (1990)

4 Pearson Education, Harlow (2011)

Specific Grammars of Intricate Displacement

My name is **Kodwo Eshun** and I live in London. My parents are from Ghana, on the West Coast and growing up in London, living in London, I've lived in other places. Since about 2003 I've been working with a close colleague Anjalika Sagar under the name the Otolith Group. We make videos, installations, photographs and we also curate.

There is a reason why we are not seated in a university seminar conducting this discussion. Why this meeting is not framed by a department of history. Or political science. Or art history. Or visual cultures. Many of us have affiliations to universities or art schools. We could be located there but we have chosen not to. This has to do with what happens when knowledge travels outside of the university or the museum or the seminar.

I take it that this movement of knowledge outside its disciplinary frames and its relocation to the constraints

implied by a space of curation is part of what brings us together in this space. The idea is that this time and this space offers this group of people a way to think through the implications of what happens to knowledge as it moves away from our expertise towards a state that is more elusive or inchoate, more difficult to grasp or locate or interrogate or question. Less amenable to those rituals of knowledge.

What draws me is the prospect of a group intelligence that mobilises a knowledge that moves away from the forms that we presume knowledge should take. Such a project is not only or not entirely a question of working with archives. There is a great deal of important artistic, critical, theoretical and curatorial thinking around archives. These days, however, I often find myself working as much with collections as with archives. By which I mean the practice of assembling collections from objects or images acquired on eBay. Which entails understanding eBay as an online platform that collects different kinds of collections, a meta-collection joined to an online auction around which communities of collectors aggregate to form an electronic market.

The Otolith Group, the group within which I work, directed a video called *In the Year of the Quiet Sun*[1] in 2013 that was edited from images acquired on eBay, footage downloaded from YouTube, newsreels bought from Pathé News. A project that entailed assembling scenes from international conferences in Bandung, Accra, Casablanca and Addis Ababa and others into a political calendar of Pan-Africanism. That was a project whose existence would have been impossible in the absence of an electronic market.

Part of what draws many of us to this meeting then is not only a matter of history or a question of historiography or archives or collections, important as those questions are. What draws us here is an orientation towards the future. A revisiting of future's histories. A rethinking of history's futures that takes the form of what Edouard Glissant once called a prophetic vision of the past.

What preoccupies some of us, at this preliminary juncture, is a reckoning with the conditions required for the construction of futures that have escaped from history's futures. That is one of the reasons suggested by the title of the project: *Women on Aeroplanes*, a title that alludes to a novel named *Woman of the Aeroplanes*[2]*. Women of the Aeroplanes* is not a historical text. Nor is it an art historical text. Nor is it a text of political science. It is a novel. A science fiction novel, written by one of the greatest writers of the 20th Century and the 21st Century. A novelist that died in 2017: Kojo Laing.

Laing wrote four novels: *Search Sweet Country, Women of the Aeroplanes, Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars,* his final novel *Big Bishop Roko and the Alter-Gangsters,* a volume of poetry entitled *Godhorse* and an utterly amazing short story entitled *Vacancy for the Post of Jesus Christ. Women of the Aeroplanes,* his second novel, was published in 1988. Critics tend to describe Laing as a magical realist. I would argue that Laing wrote science fiction that desedimented the expectations of what science fiction was and what it is supposed to be. One of the things I most admire is that Laing's books increased in difficulty. Each of his books demanded more and more from its readers, in the style and the form of its experimentation with language.

I am going to read the opening sentences from the opening chapter of *Women of the Aeroplanes.* It is written in chapters that are called Classes:

Kwame Atta was the bad twin and his chin was strong enough to box with, even with the sun on his tongue. He kept his science in his chin. Now, he was so agitated that when he inadvertently picked up a piece of rubbish on the clean streets of Tukwan, he threw himself in the bin instead, with the rubbish motionless in his left footprint.

I want to follow that quotation with a second quotation from a critical essay on the writing of Kojo Laing. These two quotes will delimit the stakes of what it is I think we are working on or with or around. These quotes will pinpoint the alteration of context that emerges from collective thinking that takes place in a public space of curation and exhibition. The citations provide a way of specifying the shift in frame that is taking place now. A reframing that we are embarking upon. They indicate the relative degrees of autonomy of constraint under which knowledge moves. They point towards the shifting grounds and altered perspectives of thinking through the implications of living with and living in and living through the dependencies of independence.

The second quotation comes from the literary critic Derek Wright. Wright identifies a key feature of Laing's writing carried out by and in Laing's prose. A critical aspect of what I call the inventivism of Laing. Inventivism is a term invented by the critic Brian Massumi. According to Wright, the Laingian text carries out operations of

... metaphorical displacement and reallocation of qualities and functions to which they do not properly belong. The effect of this is to suspend normal sense-relations and perceptual processes and to produce a kind of behavioural synaesthesia in which beards 'disagree', people 'eat' thoughts and 'wear' each other's features, and smiles detach themselves from their owners and move according to their own momentum.[3]

What Wright clarifies is the way in which Laing's formal approach to prose reallocates qualities by displacing characteristics from their proper site of belonging to locations to *which they do not properly belong. The effect of this,* according to Wright, is that the Laingian text produces *a kind of behavioural synesthesia in which beards disagree, people eat thoughts, wear each other's features and smiles detach themselves from their owners and move according to their own momentum.* In Women of the Aeroplanes, Kwame Atta's chin *is strong enough to box with, even or despite the revelation that the sun is on his tongue.* Atta picks up a *piece of rubbish* but inadvertently *throws himself in the bin instead of the rubbish which* then stands its ground *motionless in his footprint.*

My suggestion is that the Laingian operations identified by Wright as the reallocation of expressions are not just, or not only, metaphorical. These operations of reallocation and displacement constitute a grammar of expressions, qualities, attributes, characteristics or actions. We could nominate these expressions, qualities, attributes, characteristics or actions under the general name of *predicates.*
What Laing narrates is a grammar of predicates on the move. What we read is the ongoing movement of predicates that *detach themselves from their owners and move according to their own momentum.* Laing writes about predicates that are no longer properties. Predicates that are no longer the exclusive property of, nor are securely possessed by, nor automatically belong to a person. Predicates that are usually attributed to a person, fictional or historical, predicates which we might think of as the attributes of that person, which we usually think of as defining who that person is by characterising them: these predicates extricate themselves from bodies and move on. And we read them in the process of their movement. They do not stop attaching and reattaching themselves to persons. But they do not stop there either. They undergo a process of *entification.* They become entities that do their own thing. They are things that do their own thing.

Women of the Aeroplanes is a compendium of grammars of displacement. An anthology of predicates on the move. The Laingian grammar of predicative disallocation and reallocation reminded me of that specific moment yesterday, that striking moment, when Annett read a specific sentence on Touria Chaoui. A quotation from a newspaper that stated: *For the French, Independence was as unacceptable as a girl pilot.*

It is not so much that Independence is unacceptable to the French imperial nation state as the fact that the intolerability of Independence is embodied in and by the figure of the *girl pilot.* The French state finds the idea of a *girl pilot* is unacceptable because the idea of a *girl* as *pilot,* a girl that pilots a plane indicates that the border between an acceptable Independence and an *unacceptable* Independence has already been breached. A *girl pilot* is not only an embodiment of an independent Independence. She is a figure that puts the independence of Independence into practice. She is, and has already been, practicing independence as a technology that can be, and that has already been, taught, learnt, practiced and spread.

The mobility of the predicate that is the *girl pilot,* the *girl* that *pilots* the aeroplane that flies by its own speed, in its movement, the plane whose movement and direction and altitude and speed is controlled by her, the *girl pilot* named Touria Chaoui, airborne in a sky open to her flight, a sky through which she flies, sets predicates in motion. A girl pilot practices displacement. Touria Chaoui is displacement in practice. A practice whose independence of motion no longer knows its acceptable place. She is a predicate that has left its proper place. Whatever qualities the French state believes that a *girl* should possesses, whatever predicates should belong to a girl no longer belong to her. Nor she to them.

What Touria Chaoui sets in motion, ahead of whatever it is the French state believes that she should be doing, entails a practice of displacement. A practice of displacement that entails and inspires a grammar of reallocation. We can think the inventivist procedure of the Laingian text together with the practice of piloting independence that is mobilized by Touria Chaoui. We can think these two distinct moments, one fictional, one historical, in their articulation, precisely because they do not have any necessary belonging to or with each other.

A figure such as Touria Chaoui would, in her singularity and her exemplarity, usually be assigned to the archives of Morocco's histories, Morocco's feminist histories, Maghrebian feminisms or moments from Morocco's Independence. *Women of the Aeroplanes,* would be assigned to a course on African literature or West African literature or a module in magical realism.

Part of the impetus for this gathering is to practice a collective thinking with moments such as these in order to displace or disarticulate the frameworks that allocate a figure such as Touria Chaoui to her place in the history of Moroccan Independence and assigns a novel such as *Women of the Aeroplanes* to its place in postwar African literature.

Meeting here focuses us upon the preconditions required to undertake this work of predicative mobilisation. It requires a slightly shifted context in order to think through or think with figures or texts, not only in their historical indexicality or their fictional imagery but as predicates or as entities undergoing an ongoing mobilization What these texts indicate are methods for practising a mode of thought in which archival events or historical figures move away from and ahead of wherever or whatever we think we can locate the proper place and time of Independence. Even more, thinking with predicates suggests ways for moving ahead of whatever predicates we think constitute a *girl* or an *aeroplane* or a *pilot* or a *sun* or a *tongue* or a *chin* or a *footprint.*

A third text to draw on in this regard is Jean Allman's essay *The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism, and the Tyrannies of History.* Allman's influential research focuses upon the nexus between West African feminisms and nationalisms by rereading the archives of Ghana's decolonization. *The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe* reconstitutes the life and the work of the forgotten figure of Hannah Kudjoe[4], a woman that played a critical role in the Gold Coast Revolution as a founding member of Nkrumah's Convention Peoples Party (CPP) and was gradually erased by Party politicians, journalists and historians after Ghana's independence in 1957.

What, Allman asks, can feminism, and feminist research on African women's role in African Independence, learn from Kudjoe's incremental erasure? Kudjoe's disappearance can be understood in terms of agnotology, which Allman defines as the production of ignorance. Allman pays close attention to the practices by which Kudjoe is erased. Instead of presupposing disappearance as the starting point for feminism's recovery of the forgotten revolutionary, Allman opens another path for feminist research.

A research that proceeds by tracking the practices of ignorance through retracing the moments within archives, the events within narratives, the names of the people that carried out the work of agnosia in all its increments of violence. What Allman reveals is the work of violence that is specific to the work of erasure. The silence of agnosia is the index of its violence, its rage and its revenge.

What I would add to Allman's point, is the understanding that the work of the allocation of predicates, the displacement of predicates practised by the entities in the novels of Kojo Laing and enacted in the piloting by Touria Chaoui engenders a rage and a fury out of all proportion to its practice.

A fury whose name is agnosia. A rage whose silenced silences and pacified peace is reconstructed by the feminist agnotology practised by Jean Allman. A rage for revenge and vengeful rage that takes differing forms that depend upon its practice by the French state or by Ghana's new state.

The more the new state centralises itself, the more it works to erase Kudjoe's presence. By the time Ghana consolidates itself as a Republic in 1960, Kudjoe is all but written out of history. Allman locates a critical moment in the 1962 memoir of Tawia Adamafio, a leading CPP politician.
Nkrumah instructs Adamafio to unify two different, warring women's organisations as a distinct identity and keep them under the wings of the CPP. Adamafio complains to Nkrumah: *I cannot adequately convey to you an expression of the actual difficulty involved in organizing women, but if you could imagine their gossip, bitter quarrels and bickerings and the acrimony of the lashing tongues, you would be getting nearer the truth than I could describe. I did not cherish this new task at all.*
Nkrumah's instructions trigger a panic in Adamafio that takes the form of a vision. Adamafio foresees a future world, a Ghana of the future in which *the National Council of Ghanaian Women would grow so monolithic and powerful that the party could lose control of it. When you have its leadership bristling with dynamic women intellectuals and revolutionaries and the organisation had become conscious of its strength, it could break off in rebellion, form a party by itself and sweep everything before it at the polls. The ratio of women voters to men then was about three or more to one and the position could well arise where Ghana would be ruled by a woman president, an all women cabinet and the principal secretaries and regional commissioners are all women and men would be relegated to the back room. It would be disastrous for Ghana for I could see men being ridden like horses, a male tyrant could be twisted around a woman's little finger. An Amazonian tyrant could only probably be subdued by a battery of artillery.*
Adamafio's fear at the prospect of what the organisations led by Hannah Kudjoe and Evelyn Amarteifio might achieve, leads him to imagine a world that he deems necessary to make public. In his future, Ghana's men will shoot Ghana's women in the name of Ghana's national leadership. The imagination of the sociality of female leadership that is no longer attributed to male ownership or predicated on male leadership, triggers the rage-filled fantasy in which armed soldiers aim their guns at an *Amazonian tyrant* in order to kill her.
The figure of the *Amazonian tyrant* surely stands in for Hannah Kudjoe or Evelyn Amarteifio. Or both. In Adamafio's fable of death by gunfire, both Kudjoe and Amarteifio, each leading a rival woman's organisation, have merged into a single sovereign. A female sovereign. An *Amazonian tyrant* that presides over a female future in which *I could see men being ridden like horses.*

Tawia Adamafio's vengeful vision of state sanctioned shooting undergoes a subtle displacement in Kojo *Laing's Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars.*[5] What Laing envisions is a future whose predicative inversion are able to disarm the hostile takeover imagined by Adamafio.
Set in Achimota City during the Second Wars of Existence in the year 2020, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* features a scene in which a male character called Pogo Forr is not ridden *like* a horse but is ridden *by* his horse:
And lo! There was Pogo staggering in with the horse's front legs up on his shoulders and a saddle on his back. And what was the horse wearing? The horse was wearing its master's darkglasses.
In Laing's world, women do not ride men like horses. Instead, a single horse rides *its* owner. Its owner wears the former's saddle. The horse wears the latter's sunglasses. The reallocation is ludicrous. Disarmingly so. Its absurdity works to contain and to disarm the murderous fantasy of preemptive attack unleashed by Adamafio at the prospect of women reassigning their gender from its role as a predicate of men. Laing's grammar of predicative displacement cares for the panic it unleashes in men. It curates the effects and the implications of predicative reallocation.
What strikes Adamafio is the prospect of male ownership owned by women. An imagination of a future world in which male possession is reversed and inverted by women. An imagination of a world in which women exert a revenge upon men for their predicative ownership by men. It is this prospect that frightens Adamafio to the extent that he cannot bring himself to write who exactly will ride men: horses or women or both or neither.
There is much more to be said about these quotations.

What I want to end on is a reconstitution of the movement of thought upon which we have embarked.

A movement that moves by the unguaranteed articulation of the dissimilar rather than the necessary solidarity of belonging.

A movement that begins with the Laingian figure of Kwame Atta with the sun on his tongue. A figure that throws himself in the bin.

A movement that thinks with the figure of Touria Chaoui the girl pilot whose piloting power moves her into the vanguard of Morocco's Independence. A figure whose capacity for flight escapes the French state's fury at the unacceptable extent of Morocco's Independence.

A movement extended by Jean Allman's archival reconstruction of the historical work of erasure of Hannah Kudjoe and of Evelyn Amarteifio. An erasure whose violence entails a confrontation with its silences which entails a confrontation with the extent of its belief in retaliation.

A reckoning with a rage that is triggered by Tawia Adamafio's fear at the prospect of leadership by the National Council of Ghanaian Women. A movement from the encounter with Adamafio's vision of an *Amazonian tyrant* to taking seriously the righteous vision of a war waged by Ghana's soldiers upon women that have not been forcibly integrated into the CPP. An intramural massacre for the right to rule Ghana in the future.

From Adamafio's vision of a future in which men are ridden like horses to Laing's vision of a horse that rides its wealthy owner.
Moments from a movement in and of thought. A movement that aims to move away from the forms that we presume knowledge should take.

A movement that points towards the altered grounds and shifting perspectives.

A movement of thinking through the unguaranteed implications of living with and living in and living through the afterlives of the dependencies of Independence.

A movement in which to undertake the unpredictable work of predicative mobilisation.

A movement in which we think with figures or texts, not only in their historical indexicality or their fictional imagery but as predicates or entities undergoing an ongoing mobilization.

A movement in which archival events or historical figures move away from and ahead of the proper places and times and genders and nations and romances and tragedies of Independence.

A movement that reckons with the implication and the consequences entailed by its work.

1 *In the Year of the Quiet Sun* (2013, 33 min, UK); made by The Otolith Group; commissioned by HKW/Berlin for the exhibition After Year Zero – Geographies of Collaborations; curated by Annett Busch and Anselm Franke.

2 Kojo Laing, *Woman of the Aeroplanes* (London, William Heinemann, 1988).

3 See Derek Wright, Postmodernism as Realism: Magic History in Recent West African Fiction in *Contemporary African Fiction*, ed. Derek Wright, Bayreuth, African Studies, 1997, 181-207.

4 Jean Allmann, *The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism, and the Tyrannies of History,* in: *Journal of Women's History,* Volume 21, Number 3, Fall 2009.

5 Kojo Laing, *Major Gentl and the Achimota Wars* (London, William Heinemann, 1992).

Take Our Picture

I can't tell you what to see, but when I see the image of the twenty or so elderly Nigerian women, partially naked, a few women spilling outside of the frame, my foremost concern is finding the women in the photograph. I'm on an endeavor as an archivist to record their stories, to document more than what the image holds, to uncover the story behind the photo – the materiality of the image at this point is an afterthought and depending on who you are, where you are, and what you know – how you see the photograph will likely differ.

Once a photograph has been taken and subsequently disseminated it becomes a living, breathing thing. A testimony of whatever the photo captures, the place and time, and subjects impossible to deny, and un-see. Twenty Nigerian women protesting naked in a photo is perhaps somewhat of a conundrum within the conditions Eurocentricism has created for our sight of the bodies of naked black women, globally; a paradigm in which the audience and subject both have to recover from a long history of a hypersexualized and objectified black female body. A history in which black women, were documented and photographed without their consent and where the naked body was used as evidence of inferiority and justification for colonialism and the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Legacies still inscribed on the body today. But what about outside of those conditions? What conditions create the possibility to see something else?

The history of the photo I speak of is both long and short. Nigerian women have utilized mass naked demonstrations as a tool of protest since the early 1920s in opposition to colonial reforms and issues such as taxation, and more nuanced cultural transformations which despite our present collective amnesia, they were both aware of and actively working to negotiate against and within. In present day Nigeria, women have protested naked in different parts of the country against foreign multinationals (Chevron-Texaco 2002), and within their own and neighboring communities for issues such as land rights (Sonde Apon, Ogun State 2012).

The context of the naked protest is both simple and nuanced. Within Nigeria and many African nations, there is a cultural belief that if an elderly woman or mother threatens to disrobe in conflict, those in sight will go mad. This threat exists in the moment. Those who view the photograph of the naked protest are not susceptible to the curse and its madness – perhaps neither are those present. The question of whether those threatened believe they will actually go mad is beside the point. While the curse and its meanings have many layers through different eras of Nigerian history, in present day (and past) Nigeria, an elderly women threatening to strip is enough. Madness, aside – it conveys that something is deeply wrong.

The photo I speak of is not a beautiful photo. Most of the photos we have of women protesting naked in Nigeria are not beautiful. They are few in number, and their purpose is not to please the eye, but to document the action. These images are often poorly stylized. Words often absent, for *the body is the text.* There are often no synchronized movements, which the aperture is able to capture the subtlety of, or props. Simply the women themselves, ready to bare all. These photos are in stark contrast to those of women protesting naked in the West, which I should note are much easier to find as the method has become somewhat popular for feminist related movements in different parts of Europe and America.

Now, look again.

Without context, perhaps you do not know how to make sense of what is in front of you. The reason the women are naked, why they seem distraught, maybe even why the photo is taken in the first place. Without picket signs, without posters, without words painted on to the body – how can these images be read?

I can't tell you what to see. Because when I find these women and ask them who took the photo and why the photo is taken, they are disinterested in context, in legacy, or who is seeing, and why they may be unable to see what matters to them most – the documentation. The decision they took to organize the protest. The occurrence. Their choice. They simply tell me:

"We asked them to. We said – take our picture."

Do you hear them?

Maryam Kazeem

Two or three questions Maryam Kazeem

Who has been an important source and influence for the way you think, work and live?

María Lugones – particularly her piece *Playfulness, "World"–Travelling, and Loving Perception*

Which work of art/literature/music/photography keeps resonating with you?

Swallow the Fish, Gabrielle Civil (literature)

Which books did you always want to read, but never found a copy, the time, the entry point?

Zong by M. NourbeSe Philip (never found the time)
White Teeth by Zadie Smith (could never get into it)

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a good equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

Nina Simone, *Nina at the Village Gate* (1962)

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

Saidiya Hartman, writer/archivist – *Social Death and Afro-Pessimism*

Which artist/figure should be rediscovered and should get a retrospective or a solo show or a proper catalogue?

Safi Faye

Did you ever have a favourite heroine in fiction ..., in reality ..., in history? And who would that be?

Efuru in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*

Reading is another story

All the women are asked whether they feel that there should be women on the Commission. No man is asked whether he feels there should be women in the Commission. Nobody is asked whether they feel there should be men on the Commission.

It is only lately that I dared reading it: *Country of My Skull* by Antjie Krog. At night, the darkness a blanket. I had bought a copy of the Random House Struik 2014 reprint at the O.R. Tambo Airport bookshop, an attractive space for its amazing music section. The larger paperback version, its size and soft paper fits well in the hand. I had seen it here and there, and for some reason, it meant something to own it, the object, a container of some sort, with its own weight, touch and physicality.

My head is full of scepticisms prevailing the idea and the practice, the possibilities and the failures of a concept called *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. Afraid to be confronted with crimes and atrocities. Antjie Krog writes about it all. About the wording, the making of sentences, of stories, and how difficult if not impossible it is to get it right. She breaks up, starts again from a different angle, avoids the obvious, puts question marks everywhere. She figures out fictional inserts, descriptions of media coverage. Some landmarks. She looks at gendered issues, at women's power (and lack of authority). Her writing has many sounds, voices, a multi-layeredness, the muttering juxtaposed to stammering to torrents of words to silence. Names, and more names. Places, and situations. Repetitions. Memories. Abuses. Angst. Revenges. Betrayals. Trauma. Lies. Languages. Translations. Drama. People of all ages and birth and death, political convictions, parties, circumstances in fragments of situations which refuse to fit into any generalisation.

Country of My Skull is a sort of a film essay script without images in transition between different documentary styles. Its pages are loaded with images, brought together not to explain, but to ask: 'And what do we do with this?' There is no simple version, but observing, nearing and distancing, questioning, looking at the voids, sensing the interruptions gets part of the reading work that is mental editing. This piece of radical literature becomes a form, an attempt to take possession of her history, only to be a temporary property.

And the women! They have never managed to subvert the developing stereotype of the Commission: women as victims, men as fighters and leaders. They never take the lead in a considered, direct way. At hearings they easily become sentimental or moralistic. They're either fighting among themselves or revelling in the role of the supportive little woman. While the manne are busy with the Big Politics, the voices of the victims have been packed away safely on computer files somewhere. The perpetrators have been dispensed with. Reparation and reconciliation are 'women's issues'.

The last victim hearings finished more than five months ago, and the focus has been lost. No more the voices, like a leaking tap in the back of your mind, to remind you what the Commission is all about. And I miss the microphones and translation earphones. You seldom see them these days. On television, you see the Commissioners filing up the street to lay charges, or holding press conferences, or meeting dignitaries – but you don't see them listening to ordinary people any more. For me, the Truth Commission microphone with its little red light was the ultimate symbol of the whole process: here the marginalized voice speaks to the public ear, the unspeakable is spoken – and translated – the personal story brought from the innermost depth of the individual binds us anew to the collective. What has happened to that? Has it all become politics?
(Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull*, (1998) 2014, pp. 17 and 236–37.)

(mhg)

A rigged process, a careful choreography

It begins in a circle with the students chanting in unison. Amina jumps in and the others jump out. I press my shutter. Amina points outside the frame, a student's leg is caught inside. The chanting continues. It's a carefully choreographed game and I'm the game keeper.

Later in the evening, alone and cloaked in semi-darkness, with a reel of moving images stretched out like a film strip before me, I choose six. I'm playing with time, wielding the power of my preferences to bend their temporal experience of seconds really, into an eternally looping sequence.

Yet, not everything is under my control. Like a leg cut at the knee, white socks and black sandals appearing in the left side of the frame. In a video, I see Zainab steal an uncomfortable glance at me while she and Amina are playing a clapping game. It is this sort of subtle defiance to the sovereignty of my authorship that creates spaces of resistance and a constant questioning of my narrative construction that continues to be my saving grace as a storyteller. And how would I define grace here, but as a continual subversive conversation that my subjects have with the world beyond the edges my frame. It is a world that I am not privy to.

When I look through my camera at the girls, nothing I see is a hundred percent natural. The air between us is charged with a hyperawareness that sucks out neutrality like a bucket of rock salt in

a humid room. Does this electric awareness separate us or join us as we create this yet unnamed thing together?

If it separates us, when did the crack first appear? Was it when I was with the girls in the classroom with the camera between us? Or later when I was editing alone, always a few sprinters yards away from closing the gap to joining, but never quite making it. Or is the separation caused by the perforated edges of the frame itself, making fragile papery cut-outs from their reality so that I can finally string them all out in sterile squares, on a white wall for decoration?

What I know about this process is that it is rigged. A game where the playing field itself is the bleeding edge of separation. Editing, cutting and producing narrative is a brutal and often painful process where the author knows there is a vast mound of material they must reluctantly leave behind on the workshop floor. This process can be entered naively but never innocently.

An assemblage of right angles creates a supposed container of meaning of things I can control, of things I choose to leave in, my safe space.

Five years ago, the safety of another square space, a classroom at Shehu Sanda Kyarimi secondary school was intruded on when a Boko Haram gunman stormed in shooting and injuring students and teachers. The images I made show them playing and laughing, without sound though, their expressions of excitement slip into fear like that day five years ago when students were running for their lives from those same classrooms. A day when the borders of their experience was pierced by the chaotic randomness of a wider environment stained by the horrors of an eight-yearlong insurgency.

As a visual author, I'm forever negotiating what to keep in and what to leave out. It's a careful choreography where I seem to be in control, only at the last moment like a bad comedy, I see dainty white socks and black sandals looming at the edge, threatening my painstaking construction to fall apart where it joins.

Rahima Gambo

Tatsuniya (2017) – Stills and video installation
The act of remembering traumatic experiences creates an alternate reality, timeless, open-ended and ambiguous in its positioning between fact and fiction, the past and the present. They spill into each other as students in Northeastern Nigeria recollect their experiences of going to school during the Boko Haram insurgency. Beyond this contemporary conflict, the school sites themselves are embedded in Nigerian history as a symbol of the colonial encounter and a symbol that deeply connects citizens through a fragile yet intimate collective memory of innocence, youth and endless possibility. *Tatsuniya* means a fable, a short story in the Hausa language, and the title of a series of stills and an experimental 8-minute video installation. It is a continuation of the *Education is Forbidden* multimedia documentary project began in 2015 about student experiences living at the forefront of the Boko Haram conflict

Mnemonic Technologies

My name is **Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa,** I was born in the UK. My parents were born in the Ugandan Protectorate. I first studied literature and went on to work in the theatre for a long time. Then I had a "crisis of faith", at the end of which I found myself working in the context of fine art. I make artworks but I am also involved in some very long term more or less open-ended research processes. (This might be another one, I find them hard to turn down.)

By way of an introduction I should state that I sometimes do things with video but I have never worked with film and I do not consider myself to know very much about the medium. And my work at the moment is much more focused on the late colonial period in Africa than it is on independence movements or post-independence periods.

I have been interested for a very long time in how we know what we know, where our beliefs and values come from and how those beliefs and values are disseminated and how they become authoritative. A big part of that has been to do with narrative and storytelling – which is where my practices conceptual connections with processes of editing might start to emerge.

One of my colleagues, Kitto Derrick Wintergreen once said to me *You know, Emma, Ugandans never let the truth get in the way of a good story.* This is a phrase that I think has had a lot of resonance for me in relation to such questions.

It occurred to me, that this talk might be a useful place to revisit my MA Dissertation from 2008. I wrote about revisionist Second World War memorials [in London]. To give you some background: during the New Labour government, British national identity appeared to try to redefine itself. This period also coincided with the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The Second World War, often popularly referred to as 'the People's War' functions culturally, I would argue, as a proxy 'war of independence' for Britain, and in the early 2000s, there was a concerted government-led effort to expand the number and kinds of people who figured in its public commemoration.

I worked on the *Women at War Memorial,* which went up in 2005, and the *Commonwealth Memorial Gates* which were erected in 2002 to commemorate the five million soldiers from British colonies who fought in the First and Second World Wars.

The *Women at War Memorial* was sculpted by John Mills. It is placed in the middle of Whitehall, which is a ceremonial processional space in central London between Trafalgar Square and the Houses of Parliament. When this memorial was originally designed it was meant to go in front of the Ministry of Defence which is a large building on one side of Whitehall. In front of the Ministry of Defence are statues of the major Second World War generals dressed in military fatigues. The plan had been to place the *Women at War Memorial* on one side of that building and at that time the design included, at the top of this pylon, a figurative sculpture of a female air raid warden protecting children during the Blitz. This was going to be its primary image of women's active participation in the Second World War.

Now, when they started to excavate this site they found a massive gas main – a huge gas pipe – underground and it was going to cost them something like 300,000 pounds to move it. The organisers of the memorial did not have enough money to do this, so they approached the government and sought permission to build this statue in the middle of Whitehall instead.

The *Cenotaph,* which is Britain's national Second World War Memorial, is situated in the center of Whitehall. It was designed by Edward Lutyens and erected in 1921. The organisers of the *Women at War Memorial* asked the government if they could build their memorial in the middle of Whitehall like the *Cenotaph.* And the government said yes, provided that they got rid of the figurative sculpture at the top. So, the statue of the air raid warden and the children was abandoned and what we are left with is the pylon, that it was supposed to stand on.

According to Dame Betty Boothroyd, the senior Labour politician who chaired the campaign for the *Women at War Memorial,* the pylon was a symbolic representation of a cloakroom and hanging on the hooks were the uniforms that represent the jobs that the women did in the service of the nation in the Second World War. So there's an air raid [warden], there's the army, there's the air force, the fire service, and so forth. Many different kind of jobs.

As my friend Andrew Walsh pointed out to me at the time, *a commemorative statue always commemorates a particular historical moment.* That is why, for example, even though the celebrated [Second World War] generals standing in from of the Ministry of Defence are all depicted in their military fatigues, even though they probably all died very old men in their pyjamas. That is why the former Prime Minister Winston Churchill is portrayed in his First World War grey coat in Parliament Square. And what is interesting then is that, as a result of bureaucratic and economic decisions, Britain's national memorial for women's service in the Second World War commemorates not their active service but the moment AFTER they gave up their public roles and returned to the domestic sphere. If you follow Andrew's logic, that's what the memorial commemorates: the fact that they went home.

Now the second memorial, one that I'm going to mention, is the *Commonwealth Memorial Gates,* which are at the back of Buckingham Palace Garden, which is the largest private garden in the city of London on the approach to Hyde Park Corner roundabout, which is full of military commemorative statuary. This memorial was chiefly organised by Baroness Shreela Flather, a senior Conservative political. And every single diplomatic mission of Britain's former colonies formally endorsed it.

The memorial comprises these 4 pylons and little pagoda off to one side. Underneath the pagoda here you can just about see names of some of the particularly valiant colonial subjects who died in battle. Then on the front of each pylon is a list reading *India, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Bangladesh.* On the back of each, the list reads *Nepal, Africa, Caribbean.*

First of all, Nepal was never a British Colony. It had never had that legal status. The British had been going there to recruit mercenaries and soldiers for centuries, but it never was a colony. And then of course Africa? Caribbean? When did Pakistan come into existence? 1947. And Bangladesh? 1975.

When I interviewed Baroness Flather, I put it to her: *Well, Nepal was never a colony so why is it on the Commonwealth Memorial*

Gates? And she said: *Well you know, at that time* [she was referring to 2004/2005] *all those Gurkha veterans had taken the Ministry of Defence to court* [because they were not getting the same pension benefits and the same rights of abode in the UK as British veterans even though they had done the same job. They had been fighting the government to get same rights with British military veterans.] *And the Ministry of Defence came to me and they said, you know it would be really helpful to our cause if you could mention Nepal on your memorial. Would you mind?* And Baroness Flather said *fine*!

And I said, *okay... well, you know obviously in 1945 India, Pakistan, Bangladesh weren't separate nations* and she said something like *Well I know but things have got so difficult, so tense since then, we thought it would be better if we separated them out.*

And so, I asked, *what about Africa and the Caribbean? Because that's quite a lot of different countries.* I have this on tape somewhere. She said: *Oh, there were so many of them we were bound to forget someone.*

I want to repeat that. She said: *Oh, there were so many of them we were bound to forget someone.*

I just wanted to throw in these two examples of the ways in which particular narratives can be shaped.

... never let the truth get in the way of a good story ...

Researching these memorials was a very insightful experience of looking into how public histories end up being constructed. It's this weird mixture of the arbitrary and the political. And there's also often an awful lot of people who are involved in these processes who maybe don't have the tools or the interests to ask some of the more complicated questions. That only seems to happen, in the context of public histories in the West, when the history itself to be commemorated is itself a controversial or contested one, for example the Vietnam War in the US or the Holocaust in Germany.

Public memorials are massively underresearched in the UK – academically, art historically. Nobody writes about these. You will find one or two news reports about the unveiling, but unless it is made by a particularly famous artist, you won't find much literature. Even though there are very often extremely eminent curators and art historians involved in awarding the commission.

And what these processes also do, almost immediately, is to erase their own archive. Because actually the archive for them is the statue. The processes that brought that statue into being are of no interest to memorial organisers. The decision making, who has agency, who decides, all of this stuff is not considered to be of any interest for posterity or for discussion. So, for example by the time I submitted my MA Dissertation in 2008 but by the time I did that the only records I had of [the memorial organisers] websites were the printouts that I had made. They deleted everything and thrown all the paperwork away, leaving no paper trail. But they don't have to because within their logic, it's the statue that is the archive.

I am interested in unearthing these decision-making processes. (I'm using the term *decision making,* wondering if it can serve, in this context, as a synonym for editing.) What are these decisions, these moments of choice where we go, *we don't want this we do want this?* The Italians suppressing reports of their defeat in Abyssinia, the Allies deliberately sending all of the soldiers of colour away when they were filming the liberation of Paris, so it looked like Paris was only liberated by white men.

There was a choice. There was a moment and a decision was made and those choices can be illuminating. Sometimes, as in the case of the *Commonwealth Memorial Gates,* those choices are really politically cynical, or sometimes extremely arbitrary. So those coat hooks become the memorial because the other, allegorical, idealistic mothering woman saving children thing couldn't happen. And so something else happens.

II

What's interesting in the Ugandan context is that one of the reasons that the current President Yoweri Museveni was able to win the civil war was that he made a deal with women. He sent his representatives to the women of Uganda and said: *We know we can't win this war without you. We need you to feed us, to dress our wounds and to fight with us. And if you do this, in exchange we will give you political representation.* After the National Resistance Movement won in 1987, Museveni kept his promise and this has meant there has been a huge number of women in politics and in relatively high positions of power in politics in Uganda for a comparatively long time. (This is why his first vice-president was Dr Specioza Kazibwe.) But this has been an extremely fraught process because Ugandan society is very misogynistic – it's not a good or safe place to be a woman in so many instances. But at the same time this is a quite interesting tension because the nation has to officially acknowledge the place of women in the narrative of post-civil war Uganda, but in the context of a society where most men appear to be uncomfortable with women enjoying that a degree of power or wealth or autonomy.

III

For a very long time, in my work, I have been looking at how societies remember – how public memory is produced and maintained. This is a social process in which the arts, I think, have historically frequently been complicit or active participants. Just think about history painting. When I was working in Uganda (2010–2014), I was looking at technologies of public memory that had been under colonialism. One was the museum, one figurative art, but one of the ones I was most interested in was public cemeteries. There are still very few of them in Uganda, because most Ugandans are buried on family land.

So in Uganda public cemeteries serve migrant or foreign populations. They are highly exogenous spaces, even today. And there are very few of them; they all have strange stories. One of the things I have observed is that memory is something that is practised. It is an active practice. What's interesting about these public cemeteries they are generally not practised in the way in which small family cemeteries or historical burial sites in Uganda are currently practise. For example, where my father comes from in the east near the Kenyan border, they have elaborate rituals to do with male puberty and circumcision and as part of this, young men have to visit all the places where their ancestors were buried.

These public cemeteries obviously have a very different relationship to contemporary Ugandans. And they're often sited on what is now on very valuable land. The government would like to sell them off, but there are many British people buried there – mainly soldiers – and so the British Government and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission puts a lot of pressure on the government to preserve them. And in recent years the government seems to have realised they might potential be tourist attractions.

And so in 2011/2012, I read about a cemetery here, a little Polish World War II-era cemetery. Kampala is the capital city, the national airport is here. To drive from here to there takes about three and a half hours. It's a very long drive, you pass your last electricity pole somewhere around here and then you just keep going. Even today, even though it is relatively close to the capital, Koja is a very remote place.

This cemetery that was all that remained of a refugee camp for Polish refugees, mainly Polish and Ukrainian refugees, which had been operational from 1941 to 1953. These people were part of a group of 30,000 Polish and Ukrainian refugees who had been sent from the Gulags in Siberia overland to what is now Iran, and then onto India, and then from India to East and South East Africa. As I understand it, these were people who had been deported from Poland after Russia invaded Poland in 1941. And then when Russia changed sides and joined the allies, it was not possible for them to return to Poland because the Germans had invaded. However the British said, we have all this space so you can come and we can put you up until the end of the war – to be reductive and humorous. It was an extraordinary journey. There is archive newsreel footage of these refugees. They walked. They mainly walked from Siberia to Iran. An extraordinary journey.

7,000 of them were sent to Uganda at a time when the entire white population of the colony was just 2,000. (Uganda was a 'protectorate' which was, if you like, the 'diet' version of colonialism where the British delegated the administration as far as possible to the indigenous populations and had a small white population, as opposed to, say, Kenya next door which was a large settler colony.) The British didn't want these refugees to stay [in Uganda] and so, they managed them by keeping them in these two camps, one here at Koja and the other is further in the North near the border with Congo which is called Nyabyeya. But Nyabyeya was much smaller. There was 5,000 people living in Koja, which is really a town. 5,000 people is a town, a respectable town.

I wanted to see this place and with a bit of help from the Polish Consulate in Nairobi, I was put in touch with a man called Waikiku Edward, who runs the Poland-Uganda Friendship Foundation, and through him with a historian called Sam Lwanga Lunyiigo. They took me to Koja for the first time in 2012. This is a very brief introduction to the artwork that emerged. It is called *Paradise,* and it is an installation of four light boxes (3 images, 1 text), which I created to be exhibited in a shipping container at the Kampala Contemporary Art Festival in 2012. This is the text:

The fact that when I get to Koja there is almost nothing to see is by design. For when the camp was finally closed in 1952, it was systematically dismantled. Every brick, every bench, every lamp every tool was either sold for profit or given away to locals.

The inmates themselves were forcibly resettled abroad. Sixty years later old people weep openly in Warsaw as they describe the trauma of being forced to leave their home.

But it's sex that the old men seem most keen to talk about today. Specifically, the sex that was had in secret by Polish women and local men. (Of intimacies between Polish men and local women, I note, they make no comment.)

The camp commandant maintained, they say, that there were never any illegitimate children. But it was common knowledge, they tell me, that whenever a Polish woman fell pregnant by a local man, their baby was killed at birth, its body discarded as medical waste.

Those women, they were prostitutes. *Kasule smiles, his sightless eyes twinkling, his grandchildren crowding round, staring and eavesdropping with all their might. "Prostitutes." Also how these women were described by the regional director of refugees and the camp commandant – he who remanded two women from Koja on this very charge to the penitentiary at Makindu.*

I think about this story as I take Kasule's picture. A picture he will most likely never see. I think about it again later as I stand looking at the ant hills and the lake.

This is farmed land, but I was just mainly struck by the vast numbers of huge anthills that were on this landscape. The text is an account of what happened the day that I took these photographs. I went and I met a man called Kasule who had worked at the camp as a young man because, as is often the story in the colonial context, even though the British wanted to keep the indigenous population separate, they relied upon their labour nonetheless. Any contact or interaction between the two groups was to an extent inevitable but heavily policed. The story he told me appears to be true. When I looked into it at the Ugandan national archive, there were six refugees who stayed in Africa after the forced resettlement in

1952: three boys who were sent to reform school in Dar es Salaam and three women who went to a mental asylum with a diagnosis of nymphomania. (According to Sam Lwanga Lunyiigo, this was the medical diagnosis for a white woman who had sex with an indigenous African man.) But the only people who've told me this story are the two old men who once worked at the camp at Koja. I could find no similar story from Nyabyeya further North.

Two years later, Waikuku Edward confided that the cemetery you see here is actually empty. The original graves were all bulldozed in 1952. That hill in front of the cemetery is where all the bones actually are. So, this is a cemetery that contains nothing. And then there's a hill which is totally anonymous and that's actually where the bodies are.

Kathrin Peters-Klaphake, who was the director of the Makerere University Art Gallery when I was doing a residency there in 2012, brought to my attention the fact that the UK National Archives had a Flickr album for Uganda. Back in 2011/2010, they, as part, I think of an open archives movement, set up a huge Flickr account now. All the press releases have gone now – so the paper trail is itself disappearing – they announced one collection they called *The World Through a Lens.* It had subsections, called things like *Africa Through a Lens, Asia Through a Lens, America Through a Lens* and so on. Now the story behind this is that budget cuts had forced the UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is called the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (formerly the Foreign and Colonial Office), to get rid of its archive. They didn't have the money to maintain it anymore. So they donated it to the UK National Archive, where it was re-catalogued. The FCO had a huge photographic collection, so after this collection had been re-catalogued the National Archives started to promote it. I think if I remember what the press releases said at the time, they admitted that while they generally had good records of the white people in the photographs, but they didn't know so much about anyone who wasn't white. Therefore part of their aim in putting the archive into the public domain was to enlist people in helping to flesh out the available information about the images. There are 134 photographs in the Flickr album called *Uganda Through a Lens.* The head archivist of the photographic collection later told me that the pictures on Flickr had been chosen by the marketing department.

When looking through these pictures what struck me was that almost all of these photographs were taken in prisons. Luzira is Uganda's largest prison. It's on the edge of the Kampala. (Interestingly, it's also the place where, when they were building the prison, they found the only precolonial example of figurative art – sculpture – from the area, which was promptly donated to the British Museum where it's been ever since.) These photographs seemed so staged to me, and I wondered why anyone would need so many pictures of a prison and why something like 70% of the pictures in this Flickr album were all of prisons. Why not photographs of anything else? So, I went to the UK National Archives and discovered that indeed 70% of the image collection that they have is photographs of prisons mainly from the 1950s. I became very interested in what it means to photograph a colonial prison – from a position of institutional authority. I mean, I think it's easier to make oppositional images of prisons, to say "this is what's *really* happening". But I think for a government to make photographs of a prison is an extremely complex undertaking.

These photographs are all taken with a large format camera by the way. Many of them have titles written on the back in English, French and Portuguese. They have pinholes in the corners and they're mounted on card which means they were made for exhibition. And I to this day am still fascinated as to where one would go to look

at photographs of prisons. This photograph is a particular favourite. You can see pictures of [Prince] Phillip and [young Queen] Elizabeth on the wall. There is a radio, there is a bunch of flowers. The door is open and every single prisoner is reading a book. So anyway, without getting into it too much, you can see why someone like me would become interested in this collection of photographs, it's pretty obvious.

In 2014 I was invited by Elena Aguido and Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung to present my research into colonial prison photography as part of an exhibition, called *Giving Contours to Shadows* at SAVVY in Berlin, which was about the historical record. The post-coloniality and the historical record.

I really wrestled with what to do with this material and in the end, I decided not to show it at all, which is, I think, also something I do quite a lot. And I instead produced an installation which is called *Nice Time* that consists of two things: one is a file of photographs from the UK National Archive – the largest most substantial file from the UK National Archive's Uganda image collection that isn't of prison. It is a set of documentation photographs that I think were taken in a storage room in the Central Office of Information, which is the UK [government's] public relations department. The British spent a lot of money producing a valedictory exhibition called *the Speke Centenary Exhibition* in 1962 as part of the celebration of [the] Ugandan declaration of independence. And it was first shown at the Speke Centenary Festival in Jinja, which is close to the [River] Nile, and then it was shown in Kampala, then it was toured round Uganda. And it's a classic 1960s touring exhibition comprising portable panels covered with images and text. Its starting point is Captain John Hannington Speke's "discovery" of the main source of the River Nile in 1862. And then it narrates the "development" of Uganda by Britain during the past 100 years ending with Uganda today.

The text on the first panel is fascinating. It says something like: *this exhibition is about John Hannington Speke's discovery of the source of the River Nile and the story of the close friendship between Britain and Uganda.* Which I really like because it shows you the power of language: Uganda was not a preexisting entity but it is somehow instead produced through tricks of language and legislation. It turns into a fact. In their narration because the British completely fail to explain or articulate their own role in the "development" of Uganda as a colony. There is no discussion or reflection on what Britain was gaining from its interventions there. A bit like the films, the propaganda films they were making in the 1950s as well. Uganda is figured as a self-evident entity that is also a problem that has to be resolved. The exhibition carefully places Britain's role in an extremely positive light.

In 2013, which was the year I was looking into the colonial prison photographs, I learned of a court case that had been brought by old men and women in 2009/2010 who had been tortured as young people by the British in Kenya in the 1950s in the context of the Mau Mau uprising. Their lawyers had subpoenaed documents from the UK Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they claimed demonstrated Britain's involvement in directing these acts of torture. And the British government originally said I don't know what you're talking about, there isn't any paperwork. But there was a small but committed band of colonial historians, I mean *real* colonial historians, and people working inside the Foreign Office who believed this wasn't true.

After some extensive digging, they uncovered a bunker in Buckinghamshire, about sixty or seventy kilometers out of London, where they found a secret collection of 9,000 files. They were all that remained of what turned out to have been systematic culls of the colonial archives that Britain organised in every single colony as part of their preparations for independence. That is to say that one of the things they would do to prepare for a colony's independence was to destroy their records. So, for example, when I was researching the colonial prison photographs, I went to Ugandan National Archive. Between 1900 and 1936, every year, the Ugandan prison service would produce an annual report that detailed things as granular as how many prisoners had corporal punishment – how many got beaten. And then after 1936 there is just nothing.

When this file was finally declassified in November 2013, I went to the UK National Archives and I photographed it. They may have destroyed the files, but British kept a record of their record of the destruction, which is quite an interesting thing to do. In Uganda, with what appears to be no irony, this was called "Operation Legacy". And the purpose of Operation Legacy was to ensure that no materials is passed to the future government which may prejudice the defense of the commonwealth in the event of war, embarrass Her Majesty's Government or any other government or lay them open to legal challenge or to charges of racism.

Half of the file is internal memos between various government officers talking about who is destroying what and when, and what can be kept and what it might be safe to leave for the Africans to use for the purposes of writing their history later, what constitutes a "responsible historian". There is also an amazing subplot to do with a woman from Goa who was working in the colonial administration and whether or not she should be allowed to destroy documents. Because her children were studying in the UK and she was going to the UK some officials think she can be trusted. In the end they decide that only „authorised" officers can destroy the archive – „authorised" being a code word for white. So authority, legitimacy and race: it is quite interesting how it works in this document.

In *Nice Time* you can see two processes of narrative or narrative formation that were more or less unfolding simultaneously. Because at the same time as the Speke exhibition was touring, – that was the public face, the public explanation – behind the scenes, the paperwork was being thrown in the lake or set on fire.

What has been interesting about working on Ugandan protectorate history is that it's not particularly interesting to most people. Nobody really cares about this archive. It's not sexy, it has no particular political currency. And so in many respects it's very easy for me to get hold of information because nobody is worried about the consequences. The stakes are so low.

Two or three questions

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa

Who has been an important source and influence for the way you think, work and live?

Friends and family. (You are the company you keep.)

Which work of art/literature/music/photography keeps resonating with you?

Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land,* 1992 // Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Post-Apartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts,* 2009 // James Allen & Hilton Als (Eds), *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America,* 2000.

Which books did you always want to read, but never found a copy, the time, the entry point?

Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*

Is there a work you would have wanted, but never managed to see properly? In a good equipped cinema, as an original in a museum? Attend the concert instead of listening to the record?

I never heard Nina Simone play live.

Who would you love to meet and have a conversation with? Where and what about?

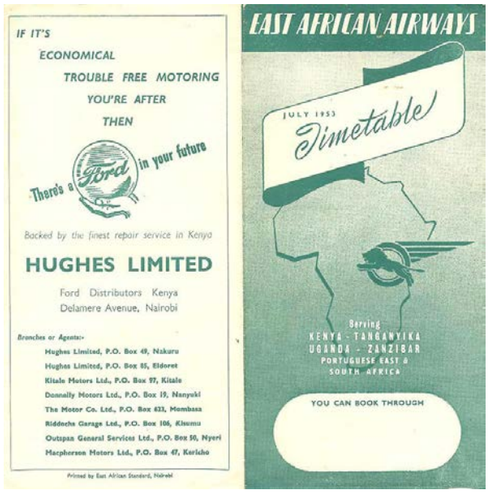
Harriet Tubman

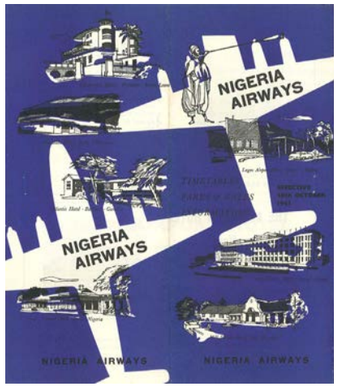
Which artist/figure should be rediscovered and should get a retrospective or a solo show or a proper catalogue?

Adrian Piper

Did you ever have a favourite heroine in fiction ..., in reality ..., in history? And who would that be?

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. Also Esme Weatherwax.



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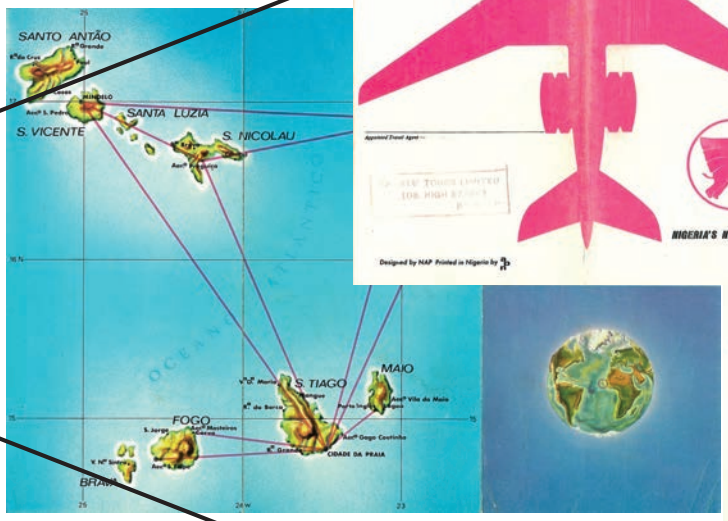
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