

DEBATE

Speaking out, talking back? African feminist politics and decolonial poetics of knowing, organising and loving

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SUMMARY

This piece reviews the ‘Talking back: African feminism in dialogue’ interview series I conducted with 15 African feminist activists, policymakers, researchers and artists of diverse ages, genders, sexualities, ability and nationality in which they shared their visions, personal and institutional biographies and aspirations. It explores the intersections of feminist activism, knowledge production, solidarity and power dynamics in Africa and the African diaspora. The essay delves into how African feminists challenge existing power structures, including patriarchy, colonialism, racism, fundamentalisms, capitalism and heteronormativity. It emphasises the importance of feminist scholarship and activism in reshaping political economies and political ecologies and challenging the status quo. The piece discusses the lived experiences of African feminist social movements and their efforts to redefine social contracts.

KEYWORDS

African feminism; feminist methods; feminist activism; social movements; decoloniality; politics; capitalism

The Pan-African Movement and the African feminist movement need to find a nexus between their agendas. Each movement has lessons for the other.

- Sylvia Tamale, *Decolonization and Afrofeminism*, 2020, 382

If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution.

- Emma Goldman, *Living my life*, 1931

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Introduction

In 1978, Senegalese feminist Awa Thiam published her seminal book, *La parole aux Nègresses* (published in English as *Speak out, Black sisters! Feminism and oppression in Black Africa*), in which she interviews a few West African women (and men) from Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, Ghana and Nigeria. In *speaking up* against forced marriage, polygamy, female genital mutilation, and skin whitening when only a few African women were engaging in writing and publishing, Thiam was in fact articulating a pan-Africanist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and feminist manifesto against dominant *négritude* and Fanonian discourses as well as (neo-)colonialist and hetero-sexist analyses on women's condition. Thiam conceived of *speaking out* as a form of protest and resistance, and even called on her sisters to organise for revolution:

Prendre la parole pour faire face. Prendre la parole pour dire son refus, sa révolte. Rendre la parole agissante. Parole-action. Parole subversive. AGIR-AGIR-AGIR, en liant la pratique théorique à la pratique pratique [Speak out to say no and to speak your revolt. To make speaking active. Speaking-action. Subversive speaking. ACT-ACT-ACT, by linking theoretical practice to practical practice¹]. (Thiam 1978, 20)

Obioma Nnaemeka is not saying anything different when she states that African feminist labour is boundary work which brings together lived experience as both theory and practice:

the work of women in Africa is located at the boundary where the academy meets what lies beyond it, a third space where the immediacy of lived experience gives form to theory, allows the simultaneous gesture of theorising practice and practicing theory. (Nnaemeka 2004, 377)

African feminist mobilising and protesting to speak truth to power are anything but new (Thiam 1978; Mama 1995; Sow 1997; Hassim and Gouws 1998; Diaw 1998; Hassim 2006; Tripp et al. 2008; Guèye 2013; Berger 2014; Sen and Durano 2014; Pereira 2017; Bouilly, Rillon, and Cross 2016; Ndengue 2016; Gouws 2016; Sallam 2017; Bouka 2020; Okech 2020a; Tamale 2020; Joseph-Gabriel 2020; Diabate 2020; Nyanzi 2020; Kioko, Kagumire, and Matandela 2020; Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2021; Guèye et al. 2015; Imam, Mama, and Sow 1997; Oyewumi 1997; Mama 1997; Sow 2018; Dosekun 2020; Gqola 2022; Clark and Mohammed 2023; Dieng, Haastrup, and Kang 2023). In recent years, various forms of feminist mobilising and organising have emerged from 'Cape to Cairo' to express their discontent and to protest against hetero-sexism, capitalism and racism. Against this background, I curated a series of conversations with African feminist activists, policymakers, artists and scholars titled 'Talking back: African feminisms in dialogue' between 2019 and 2020. They were published on Roape.net, Africa Is a Country, Progressive International and the blog of the Centre of African Studies of the University of Edinburgh, in the same year as *Féminismes africains: une histoire décoloniale*, by Présence Africaine Editions (Dieng 2021). The series focused on the connections and disruptions in African feminist thought and practice. It did so by asking a simple question: how are (young) African feminist activists on the continent and in the diaspora producing knowledge by using their experiences and lives as a source and resource for theorising their feminism?

Based on the themes emerging from the Talking Back interview series, I argue in this review article for the need to build bridges between feminist communities of scholar-activism, and for policy beyond civil societies and beyond the 'ivory tower' of academia.

This means bringing down the invisible walls between activism and knowledge production and learning from those who are leading in doing and embodying feminist ‘housework’ (Ahmed 2017) as *theory* and *praxis*. As feminists, we pose in this double movement the question of the decolonisation and decompartmentalisation of different types of knowledge often conceived in silos, and the re-politicisation of knowledge-building and community-making.

Lived experience and active solidarity as methods: centring feminist forms of organising, knowing and loving

Talking back and co-producing knowledge

The Talking Back series brings together dialogues I had with 15 African feminist activists, policymakers, researchers and artists of diverse ages, genders, sexualities, ability and nationality in which they shared their visions, biographies and aspirations. The respondents were selected purposively and through snowball sampling for their important feminist scholar-activism. The oral narratives that emerge from these organised encounters tell the personal, professional and collective working life stories of the selected feminist activists and academics and the meanings they give to their feminist politics and poetics of knowing, organising and loving. These conversations also often shed informative light on the institutional biographies of some pan-Africanist feminist organisations, collectives and movements, including the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) based in Ghana and its Charter of feminist principles for African feminists (African Feminist Charter 2016), the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) based in Kenya, the Yellow Movement based at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia and Africanfeminisms.com, as well as the Tunisian collective Falgatna and LBQ Gathering, also in Ghana. I believe holding these conversations and letting the respondents re-create their herstories in their own words was helpful to escape normative narratives and reclaim agency. Finally, centring respondents’ voices through storytelling while building horizontal relations of collaboration helped to de-centre knowledge on African feminist activists and movements. Conversations were useful as a tool to i) elicit and reflect on feminist activists and their movements’ and organisations’ visions and struggles; ii) promote dialogue and co-produce knowledge through these oral narratives; iii) document trajectories and new orientations for feminist thought activism and policy; iv) offer an opportunity to discuss scenarios of possible feminist futures.

Decolonial feminism: and care-full ethics

Before starting the ‘Talking back: African feminisms in dialogue’ interviews, I reflected on the questions of *where* knowledge production on feminist thought and practice take place, but also *to whom* and *with whom* we speak about this knowledge. How much do vernacular and ‘home audiences’ matter in producing this knowledge? The ‘home audiences’ I shared with the respondents – the feminist communities in Africa and the diaspora – were the audiences of these conversations, as they shared, amplified and reflected back by actively engaging with and commenting on them. For instance, ROAPE’s Janet Bujra asked excellent questions after reading my conversation with the Yellow Movement about their membership recruitment, decision-making and leadership structure, as well as how they face the anti-feminist backlash on social media. I escalated the questions to Hilina Berhanu and

Aklike Solomon and asked that their responses to Janet be shared in public as comments below the interview text (Berhanu and Solomon 2019). These comments were so informative that I later incorporated them into the French version of the interview, illustrating how feminist knowledge co-production is iterative and, in this, the dialogues left room for further engagement. Therefore, this was really an open-ended *interactive conversation*. In addition, the fact that this is a travelling series published on several online platforms – Roape.net, Africa Is a Country, Progressive International, and the Centre of African Studies Edinburgh blog – permitted some flexibility and allowed the conversations to reach different publics, depending on their themes. This African feminist ethics inspired me to reflect on epistemological power and privileges. As a result, the Talking Back dialogues sought to: i) honour what is important in feminism as a *labour* of love; ii) pay attention to gender, class and power dynamics within these dialogues; and iii) draw lessons from previous feminist literature, valuing oral narratives and the knowledge produced by other feminists before us. In doing so, the series sought to value what was deemed important by the interviewees/respondents from diverse genders, generations, class, ability and nationality, and with a geographic representativeness. Shirley Walters and Shauna Butterwick suggest, in their analysis of feminist organising, three simultaneous and mutually reinforcing moves for feminist decolonising solidarity: i) stepping forward; ii) standing with; and ii) staying connected (Walters and Butterwick 2017). Therefore, our feminist premise of power differentials guided our methodological approach to focus on oral narratives and to co-produce knowledge as an active form of solidarity, rather than privileging a ‘giving voice’ approach. Our sole preoccupation throughout was guided by feminist principles in seeking to amplify already existing knowledge through feminists’ lived experiences: one that seeks to build bridges between epistemic communities of policy, practice and thought (Okech 2020b).

Introducing the ‘Talking back: African feminisms in dialogue’ interview series

The goal of these dialogues was to re-centre African feminisms and feminists’ voices in knowledge on them, away from the often exclusive and exclusionary territories and vocabularies (and policing) of academia. In doing so, we colour outside the lines and re-claim feminist agency in the interstices of our daily realities and solidarities, feminisms that are daughters of our times, of our current joys, struggles, dreams and aspirations. Thus, the series focuses on the very connections and disruptions of African feminisms today, in particular on the various contemporary issues that are at the heart of young/emerging feminist scholars and activists organising. The questions explored in this series are:

- How are we, as African feminists, using our own lives as a source and a resource for feminist theorising?
- What are the contemporary issues raised by young and emerging African scholars and activists?
- How do African feminists in the continent and from the diaspora re-connect (or dis-connect) with yesteryear feminist issues and their legacies?
- What networking and organisational strategies are we putting in place online and offline to articulate our revendications?

- What are the roles of digital platforms in these new geographies of power?
- How are we, feminists in Africa and its diaspora, articulating our visions for the future?
- What are our rituals of self-care and how are we centring them in our feminist thought and practice?

The dialogues can be organised around four major themes. The first of these can be themed *Talking back and liberating ourselves*. This centres intergenerational and transnational conversations at the intersections of women's pan-African liberation movements, contemporary feminist activism and debates on Afro-feminism (mostly in the diaspora). It aims to undo the erasure and 'invisibilisation' of the crucial role of women during decolonisation and their efforts to make a world beyond diasporic, cultural, linguistic, ideological and political borders. The result is a synchronic and diachronic dialogue between different generations of feminists, for instance, scholars who digitised *Awa: la Revue de la femme Noire* (Bush 2020); and contemporary francophone Afro-feminist citizens or the *Mariannes Noires* who are fighting for the recognition of yesteryear activists who transformed citizenship in the French empire, such as Paulette Nardal, Suzanne Césaire, Aoua Keita and Andrée Blouin (Bush 2016; Joseph-Gabriel and Niang 2020; Dieng and Sall 2023; Joseph-Gabriel 2020; Niang 2020). Also featured are the founders of contemporary feminist initiatives like Eyala and Africanfeminism.com. While evaluating the legacies of feminist trailblazers, the interviewees take a critical look at the disconnections that remain despite efforts to organise, *make movements* beyond historical moments, thanks to transnational sorority and solidarity. The crucial role of social and digital technologies as a strategic organising tool is also discussed.

This first part includes the conversations with:

1. Dr Annette Joseph Gabriel (Ghana, France) and Dr Mame-Fatou Niang (France, Senegal), academics.
2. Dr Ruth Bush (UK), academic.
3. Françoise Moudouthe (Cameroon/France), founder of Eyala Blog.
4. Rosebell Kagumire (Uganda), digital platform Africanfeminism.com.

The second part of the dialogues, titled *Revolutionary love, de-romanticising feminist housework*, is a self-reflexive account from feminists involved with movements and collectives in Africa on their own biographies and that of their feminist organisations/initiatives. It covers discussions ranging from the AWDF's African feminist Charter (2016) to FEMNET to the struggles of the Tunisia-based Falgatna collective, which embodies the Tunisian #MeToo (#EnaZeda) movement. These interviews offer testimonies and institutional and personal histories to document and memorialise the (un)civil societies and feminist social movements in Africa. In doing so, the respondents reflect on the feminist *housework* they do to overcome sexist, hetero-patriarchal and ableist oppression and exploitation, as well as creating synergies to advocate for feminist joy and defend gender and sexual rights, including LGBTQI+ citizens and their rights. This second part includes the interviews with:

1. Mwanahamisi (Mishy) Singano (Tanzania), Programme Director of the Pan-African Feminist Network (FEMNET) based in Kenya.
2. Yara Sallam (Egypt), feminist activist and human rights defender based in Egypt.

3. Amal Bint Nadia and Saif Thairi of the Falgatna Collective (Tunisia).
4. Jessica Horn (Uganda-UK), former Director of Programmes, African Women's Development Fund, Ghana.

The third part, *Pleasure and sexualities*, aims to centre dialogue on sex-positive, pleasure-centred feminisms. The aim is to move well beyond the trope of the 'native informant' that Keguro Macharia refuses to conform to, reclaiming rather the posture of the indifferent narrative (Macharia 2016). By centring care-full pleasures and ways of being that aim to just be away from the formatting and tone-policing of (Africanist) academia, these African feminists seek to create content that responds to their needs to celebrate sexual rights and sexual practices based on mutual consent – often to educate, most of the time to centre pleasure (activism). The interviewees talk creatively and freely about pleasure and pleasure activism. This section includes conversations with the founders of *AdventuresFrom*, an award-winning blog that focuses on African women, sex and sexuality; HOLAA, a Pan-Africanist hub that promotes conversations about sex, sexuality and the experiences of African Lesbians; and LBQ (Lesbian, Bi, Queer) Gathering, a queer feminist organisation actively involved in advocacy for the recognition of LBQ rights in Ghana:

1. Interview with Tiffany Mugo (South Africa), digital platform HOLAA.
2. Interview with Nana Darkoa (Ghana, UK), digital platform *AdventuresFrom* and author of *The sex lives of African women* (2023).
3. Rita Nketiah, Sheila Adufutse, Golda Gatsey and Fatima Derby (Ghana): the founding members of the queer feminist collective LBQ Gathering.

The fourth and final part, *Healing the polis*, is a collection of reflections from academic feminists who propose/produce critical political thought on the city and the university. Indeed, academics are often criticised for locking themselves in their ivory tower (the university) and talking only to their peers. The *parti pris* of the speakers in this part of the collection is one which conceptualises teaching spaces as a fertile ground for planting the seeds of subversion, and political commitment not only through learning, but also through questioning and unlearning. These seeds, with their inquisitive and cathartic power, may heal societies at large through the production of critical and fertile thinking for durable solutions to social, economic, political and ecological issues which are all tinged with dimensions of gender, class, ability, nationality and race. In doing so, most of these academics from Senegal, Ethiopia and Kenya, relatively young by age though not by experience, aim to no longer be spectators of their world, but to reconnect the critical thinking to political *praxis*.

The conversations in this section are with:

1. Lyn Ossome (Kenya), Director, Makerere Institute for Social Research, Uganda.²
2. Hilina Berhanu and Akilile Solomon (Ethiopia), founding members of the Yellow Movement, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.
3. Ndeye Debo Seck (Senegal), Educator and Civil Servant, Collège d'Education Moyen Waly Thiobane, Kaffrine, Senegal on *Teaching as grassroot feminist militantism*.
4. Maimouna Eliane Thior, Senegalese student in France; and Adama Pouye (Senegal) on *Feminism, religion and culture in Senegal*.

Old germinations and new blossoming of decolonial knowledge production: a reflection

Moving away from the temptation of siloed area studies and objectivity

Current African feminist thought continues to be nourished and nurtured by the legacies from feminist and women's movements' foremothers in literary production, in academic research and in political action. In fact, some of these contemporary activists do call out the often elitist nature of academic knowledge production, which some find exclusionary. For instance, the LBQ Gathering reports having received the following derogatory comment: 'your feminism is incomplete because you haven't read enough feminist theory' (LBQ Gathering 2020). Therefore, it is not only timely, but also relevant to bring feminist theory back to the many as an everyday act of resistance to de-centre knowledge production by theorising (from) our practice and vice versa. African feminists are, in this double movement, interested in resisting the temptation of 'area studies' to compartmentalise and hierarchise between different types of knowledge. They are interested in finding echoes and common threads between theory and practice. In addition, academics need to leave their ivory towers to engage with and learn from activists. Against academic elitism, our dialogues reiterate the urgency of interrogating the notion of 'value' (and transactional understandings of it) which again lead to hierarchies in knowledge production. It is thus crucial in its promise to critically encourage new ecologies of cross-fertilisation of knowledge, recentring feminist subjectivity and lived experience as a source and a resource. Lyn Ossome's friend, referred to in her interview, illustrates aptly that social transformation cannot happen in silos but requires collective societal efforts: 'it is in the locations where one spends most of one's time that education takes place. The academy is a minuscule part of those locations' (Ossome 2019). Therefore, these alternative pedagogies of change also require alternative epistemologies which comprise attentive and active listening, learning and unlearning, holding spaces for knowledge that emerge from 'being and doing with', at the intersections of theory and praxis.

The personal is political, once again

Feminist discourses present in this dialogue series all bear demands for greater social justice. Some activists like Jessica Horn, Falgatna and Ndeye Debo Seck have used art to fuel revolutionary praxis; others such as Lyn Ossome and Maimouna Thior are using their scholarship; whereas many others, such as Françoise Moudouthe, Mwanahamisi Singano and the members of LBQ Gathering, are using their formal and informal institutional work to do this. For many, these aspects are not separate. For Jessica Horn, who is a feminist 'artist', it is important to centre art and love in this feminist *labour*, as working towards transformation often leads one to forget the necessity of centring care:

we can often lose sight of the aesthetic and the emotional resources that humans have always drawn on to inspire and create change. This is true in African liberation struggles where music, literature, theatre and other art forms have always been integral to resistance. (Horn 2020)

Re-politicising the personal and the subjective means embracing a feminist *poetics* besides our feminist politics of radical transformation. It means centring personal and collective care as a priority. Feminist work is a long-term project: it aims to radically transform centuries of unequal relations. As Yara Sallam points out, 'revolutions are not a season',

and even the finest of feminist rights defenders can only survive and thrive by taking care of their well-being and mental health (Sallam 2017). Issues such as equal access to productive resources (including land), reproductive justice, the right to political and cultural freedoms, representation, human dignity and freedoms, and positive sexuality can only be tackled with a strong advocacy strategy, but also with support and solidarity networks, as well as appropriate mental support. It is in this context that the expression of the African American activist Audre Lorde takes on all its meaning. Indeed, Lorde (1988) encourages women of colour and LGBTQI+ activists to care for ourselves conscientiously and patiently in the epilogue to her essay collection *A burst of light*.

Speaking truth to power and renegotiating social contracts

For Kenyan feminist Lyn Ossome, the shrinking of civic spaces is an issue of utmost importance that has brought about the formulation of demands which go far beyond those spaces and which actually call for a redefinition of citizenship. For her, ‘growing unrest, protest in all forms, and demands for recognition and representation are among the more immediate signs of the distress that African women are experiencing’ (Ossome 2019). These demands urge us to actively re-imagine new and more viable social contracts (Sen and Durano 2014) which advocate that politics must be everyone’s personal affair, while proposing a new dialectic and pedagogy of power. These aim to replace old inequalities not with new ones, but with more inclusive, horizontal and feminist modes of leadership governance that centre the duty of care (Bakare-Yusuf 2002), as illustrated by the structures of feminist organisations such as the Yellow movement, HOLAA! and African Feminist Forum. This will allow us to face collectively the increasing tightening of civic spaces, the reduction in funding for feminist organisations and collectives and therefore their inability to put their priorities on the political agenda in Africa. This agenda necessitates that we embody our feminist politics in our interpersonal, family, community and professional relationships, cultivating our solidarity and care-centred political economies. As the Covid-19 pandemic has made us realise, recognising our common interconnectedness and putting humans and nature before profit is the only way forward. Pan-Africanist consciousness and transnational solidarity and sorority are the key words in the radical feminist social transformation project. They constitute the foundations of movements and initiatives such as the Pan-African Women Organization (PAWO) and the African Feminist Forum.

Challenging mainstream media coverage on African women

The media can contribute to the homogenisation of African women, and it is our role as African feminists to make the media a site of and a means for transformation and celebration (McFadden 1998, 654). In our conversation, Ugandan feminist journalist Rosebell Kagumire, who created the platform Africanfeminism.com to challenge the problematic coverage of African women in media outlets, shared that their priority was to document our collective struggles and celebrate African feminists’ achievements on the continent and in the diaspora. Kagumire, who worked on stories of justice following the Lord’s Resistance Army in northern Uganda, emphasises the interconnectedness of struggles facing feminists locally, nationally and globally (Kagumire 2020). Hence, it is vital for African feminists to develop a critique that aptly emphasises the intersectional nature of

struggles against racism, heteronormativity, religious fundamentalisms, ableism and the politicisation of violence, but also capitalist oppression and (sur)exploitation.

New geographies of digital counterrevolutions

There is a fictitious division between online and offline activism which is not fortuitous, but the fruit of the romanticisation of *field work*. It is time to put an end to this myth, as these modes of organising often go hand in hand. Beyond *clicktivism*, the digital sphere is a field of power and a battlefield of counter-narratives. In other words, in these new geographies of power and counter-power we witness new dynamics of struggles, solidarity and loving. As our interviews in this collection make clear, digital and new media make many things possible, including finding partners and co-workers, reaching out to a wider base, running sensitisation campaigns, carrying out large-scale political actions at low cost, thanks to the increased accessibility of these media. This is especially welcome for small organisations without many resources in the current context of reduced funding and shrinking civic spaces for women and girls. Needless to say, such networks are not immune to online abuse and cybercrime. As for modes of organising on the ground, they are also more or less engaging in new avenues for social transformation and activism, and they innovate by renewing their discourse, methods of enrolling new members and their strategies, as well as their access to financing. However, the ‘veteran’ feminists interviewed paint a welcome and deromanticised picture of *field work*.

Love revolutions and reclaiming pleasure-centred feminisms

A beautiful image that probably comes to mind first is that of Bibi Bakare-Yusuf’s expression of the need to make a transition from the ‘politics of the belly’ – or visions equating Africa as a site of corruption and lack – to a ‘poetics of the belly’, which imagines it as a site of creation and creativity (Bakare-Yusuf 2002). South African feminist Tiffany Mugo, one of the founders of the website HOLAA!, a space for women and gender-non-conforming people, sex-positive feminism, non-fiction and storytelling on digital platforms, finds the internet a powerful tool to overcome mass censorship and create an online community as well as meet new collaborators, and commented, ‘[f]rom where we are standing, the internet is key to building the pan-African queer feminist agenda, because it allows for connections that might otherwise not happen’ (Mugo 2020). The HOLAA! collective was able to publish a safe sex and pleasure manual and workbook, a podcast, and travelled to eight countries as part of a tour to promote their #PleaseHer sexual health and pleasure project. Promoting sex-positive feminism is extremely crucial for African feminists online and digital media has also been a space for them to learn from each other. Tiffany Mugo, for instance, has been inspired by Ghanaian feminist Nana Darkoa, co-founder with Malaka Grant of the website Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women: the website made her realise the need for spaces that ‘spoke about sex in a positive way as well as through an African lens’ (Mugo 2020). Darkoa’s website is a blog which provides a safe space where African women can openly discuss a variety of sex and sexuality issues with the intention of learning from each other, having pleasurable and safer sex, and encouraging continuous sex education for adults. Darkoa, who is also the author of the book *The sex lives of African women*, organised an online festival on sex and sexualities, Adventures Live!, with a community of friends, activists and supporters.

She thinks of her work and HOLAA!'s as complimentary, as they all promote content which show African women as having and exerting ownership over their bodies and having pleasurable sex lives (Darkoa 2020).

Conclusion: stepping forward, standing with, staying connected

The Talking Back African feminist series has been a vibrant love letter from African feminists to all feminists globally, but most importantly to other feminists from the majority world to the global South, those that are the centre, and certainly not the margins. Some 40 years after Awa Thiam, we too held each other in sisterhood and solidarity, in speaking out and talking back. This review article is a *care-full* article. It takes the time to pause and to celebrate our own ways of knowing, being with, writing with. It celebrates the validity of our politics of knowing, organising and loving.

Before us, one writer named Calixthe Beyala also followed in Awa Thiam's steps. Poetically, she stood up to challenge *Négritude* by proposing a theory of *féminitude* (a contraction of 'feminism' and 'negritude'). In her novel *Femme nue, femme Noire*, published in 2003, she offered her own original response to Senghor's famous poem, to him who was an ardent father of *Négritude*, by making her character Irene say:

'Naked woman, Black woman, dressed in your color which is life, in your form which is beauty ...' These lines are not part of my linguistic arsenal. You will see: my words jump and rattle like chains. Words that clash, disintegrate, unscrew, topple, dissect, torture! Words that spank, slap, break and crush! Let anyone who feels uncomfortable move on ... Because here, there will be no lace bras, fishnet stockings, overpriced silk panties, perfume of roses or gardenias, and even less these ritual approaches to the *femme fatale*, borrowed from films or television. (Calixthe Beyala, *Femme nue, femme Noire*, 2003, 11)³

Notes

- 1 Translation by author.
- 2 In dialogue with Françoise Moudouthe, Eyala Blog and Rama Dieng.
- 3 Translation by author.

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Notes on contributor

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