Feature Article

Between Knowing and Imagining: What Space for Feminism in Scholarship on Africa?

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Introduction

What does it mean to talk about the relationship between knowing and imagining? More than any apparently external frontier, it is the capacity to go beyond what is given, to fantasise, to create new possibilities that link what is desired with what is known, that will shape the content of knowledge production and its potential uses. In the quest to transcend existing intellectual frontiers, the sheer expanse of the human imagination and the ability to engage the emotions as well as the intellect in the process of knowledge production, become subjects for reflection and analysis. To do this is no easy matter; it involves addressing, rather than evacuating, ambiguities, innuendos, contradictions, silences and gaps as integral to the issues that warrant sustained study. As Marjorie Mbilinyi points out, creative and innovative work involves "more imagination, inspiration and guesswork" (1992: 53) than treading the well-worn paths of scientific orthodoxy.

Much contemporary knowledge is partitioned by disciplinary divisions. It takes power, and the energy that the upholding of power demands, to maintain these disciplinary divides. Knowing and imagining are conventionally thought of as partitioned from one another in a way similar to the partitioning of the "natural sciences" and the "arts" through a dualism entrenched in Western analytic philosophy. Feminists have pointed to ways in which transcending this dualism requires a recognition of the extent to which knowing is itself dependent on the exercise of the imagination. This recognition requires us to bring together the intellectual and personal parts of our being, of what we think it means to be human, and the practices that expand or inhibit that expression. Feminists have long opposed patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism to grapple with the ways in which societies, polities and economies can be structured to support human beings. The search for new ways of being - at the individual, collective and global levels - and the knowledge to support the political, economic and cultural changes required would not take place without the capacity to imagine such possibilities and an ability to act on them in the first place.

It seems to me that there is an intimate connection between what it is possible to know and what we dare to imagine. There is no way of creating knowledge that is not circumscribed by the oppressions of our times if we cannot imagine a better future, if we cannot dream of a way of life that does away with the domination that is part of our everyday realities, if we cannot envision other ways of being. Without imagination, we cannot search for the kind of knowledge that allows us to fully understand our divided realities in order to transcend them. It is the imagination that allows us to move from where we are to where we would like to be even before we get there. We must learn to liberate the imagination, to unleash the energy that so many of us dissipate, often without realising, in upholding the intellectual barriers that divide us not only from one another, but also from ourselves and from other ways of knowing.

In the search to outline what space exists for feminist imagining and scholarship on Africa, some consideration of intellectual history and institutions in this field is necessary. Here I refer to the knowledge produced by two sites in particular: the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) and the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA). I proceed by questioning not only the knowledge that researchers actually produce (in this case through the published text), but the more elusive question of what it means to "know" in one way as opposed to another, and what it means for the malestream "not to know" what feminist knowledge and imagination in Africa have produced over the last two and a half decades.

As the first regional institution set up to facilitate African women researchers working on questions of gender and development, AAWORD remains an important institutional site. One of its central aims was to set an agenda for feminism in Africa by facilitating research and activism by African women scholars. In its early days, AAWORD held workshops on methodology, women and rural development, reproduction, the mass media and development assistance (see Mama, 1996). The decline of the influence and reach of the organisation over the years is partly a manifestation of the difficult economic and political conditions under which women's organisations on the continent struggle to sustain themselves.

In the wake of the destabilisation of higher education across the continent, African institutions such as CODESRIA have assumed strategic importance as spaces for intellectual engagement dedicated to regional transformation. As CODESRIA demonstrates, however, the persistence of gender-blindness in mainstream research on Africa remains a serious concern: even CODESRIA, formed and led by (male) scholars enlightened enough to recognise that knowledge production can never be neutral, appears to find it difficult to uphold the principle that gender is a fundamental axis of division and power in all social processes and relationships.

There are three parts to this paper. In the first part, I take up the notions of knowing and imagining in relation to feminist knowledge by highlighting its transformative potential. The second part of the paper examines the space for feminist scholarship on Africa by engaging in a critique of African malestream scholarship and analysing two texts published by CODESRIA. Beyond this, I indicate the kinds of transformative analyses that could have been carried out if questions emanating from an awareness of gendered relations and feminist research had been posed. Finally, I address the marginalisation of feminist knowledge in malestream research and go on to outline the challenges this presents for feminists.

Feminist Knowledge and Imagination

Since the formation of AAWORD in 1977, research on gender and women in Africa, drawing on a wide spectrum of theories on gender and other lines of social division, has grown dramatically. Twenty five years on, Desiree Lewis (2002) traces the contours of this expanding field by interpreting linkages and exchanges, silences and possibilities as well as the challenges to be faced. Also in the same year, the hosting of the eighth international interdisciplinary Women's Worlds Congress in Kampala considerably increased the profile of gender and women's studies in Africa and demonstrated the wealth and range of gender and women's studies throughout the continent.

The feminist scholarship that has provided the theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives from which concepts such as "women's subordination", the "gender division of labour", "domestic work" and so on, are marked by a concern with subverting existing gender hierarchies, and not simply describing them, as some of the depoliticised versions of gender and women's studies on the continent have been content to do (see Mama, 1996; Lewis, 2002). It should be stated here that feminism is more than a struggle to do away with male dominance or to fight for women's equality with men. Moreover, feminism is as much about transforming what goes on in the minds and hearts of women and men as it is about realising rights and justice. In addition to subverting existing gender hierarchies, feminist knowledge and imagination are concerned with asking different kinds of questions, "requiring new conceptualizations about wider realities that include women as well as men" (Pereira 2000a: 84).

For more than two decades, African women have pointed to the diverse ways in which scholarship on Africa, including that produced by African men who consider themselves progressive, has been carried out from a perspective that is, at best, gender blind. To paraphrase Benedict Anderson (1991), one may posit that intellectual communities are

distinguished by the style in which they are imagined. And this style is intimately linked to the kinds of issues studied and the modes of intellectual analysis that predominate in these arenas. The critical point here concerns the relative strength of feminist scholarship in a context where masculinist hegemony prevails.

How do we produce knowledge about social realities, past or present, that will further our quest for African societies free of all forms of violence and social injustice, and where gendered relations as well as institutions are transformed? This is a project that is as much political as it is intellectual. The epistemological dimensions of the task are pointed to in Claude Ake's rightful indictment of the development paradigm: "Because the development paradigm tends to have a negative view of the people and their culture, it cannot accept them on their own terms. Its point of departure is not what is but what ought to be" (2001: 15).

Ake's own reference point in the quotation above, "the people and their culture" is complicated by the fact that the aggregate term "people" is often used to refer to the dominant members of that collectivity, who are usually men (and perhaps a few women). Very often, it is particular interpretations of "culture" that are used by senior men, as well as senior women, against other categories of women as a means of social control. Diverse groups of African women have organised against this mis-use of culture, usually at considerable cost to themselves (see, for example, Jacobs and Howard, 1987 and Stewart, 1996). Feminist reconstructions of culture are relatively few in the theoretical domain (see Mama, 1997), and are more visible in initiatives to re-imagine women's human rights (see Pereira, 2001). Consequently, it is by no means a straightforward matter to talk about "the people and their culture".

Yet the aptness of Ake's point should not be lost, albeit with some modification. The significance of his warning is twofold: "what ought to be" cannot be substituted for "what is"; and who defines "what ought to be" and its substantive content is of critical importance. The unanswered question, though, is how best to understand "what is" in order to arrive at where we imagine we would like to be. This is contested terrain, involving power struggles over the substance of intellectual work as well as the necessary resources for its production. The next section illustrates the character of this contest and some of the terrain in greater detail.

Before this, I outline some of the contributions of feminist knowledge to the thematic areas that form the focus of the two texts I go on to analyse. The themes are structural adjustment policies (SAPs), and militarism and politics. The significance of these themes lies in their pervasive and destructive impact on African societies, with far-reaching implications for governance, democratisation and the quality of people's lives, women as well as men.

In 1992, Ake pointed out that, for the vast majority of Africans, "material betterment and even mere survival requires freedom from political oppression" (1992: 4). The impetus for the recent movement for democracy in Africa, he stated, was largely due to "the failure of economic management, a failure which has become life-threatening for many Africans" (1992:4). Political oppression and economic mismanagement were essentially two sides of the same coin. Ake also referred to the structural adjustment programmes that were supposed to provide the "cure … in the long run", but which "worsen, for some of us, the chances of surviving till that long -run comes around" (1992:4).

While Ake judiciously indicts the destructive impact of SAPs, perhaps if he had read AAWORD's monograph (1985) on the crisis in Africa and its impact on women, he would have had more to say on the significance of gender relations to the problems he identifies. Some of the key challenges that feminist analyses pose to conventional approaches to structural adjustment can be highlighted in the following way. The first has to do with the reconceptualising of "the economic" to take account of women's unremunerated work in food production and processing, child-care and housework. Structural adjustment policies overstretch women's time and labour in two main ways. One is by increasing women's

productive activities: women spend more time working or taking on additional jobs due to economic need and as a strategy for household survival. The second is through reproductive burdens, in that women have to compensate for cutbacks in social services by additional care-giving activities.

Feminist analyses pose a second challenge by drawing attention to biases and inequalities within households, such as consumption patterns, health care and education patterns, which result in outcomes that favour men while severely reducing consumption and benefits to women and girls among lower-income groups. Such trends considerably increase the risks and vulnerability faced by women and girls in households. Thirdly, feminist attention to employment sectors and women's locations within these has highlighted women's concentration in low-wage jobs, in the informal sector and in the contingent of "flexible labour" as a result of labour market discrimination and job segregation. The "feminisation of poverty" refers to the fact that poor households are increasingly likely to be households headed by women or dependent on women (see for example Elson, 1990; Tsikata 1995; AWEPON, 1996).

The impact of feminist scholarship in redefining conventional scholarship on militarisation and politics is as significant as its effect in reconceptualising our understanding of SAPs. Since flag independence, African polities and societies have been marred by persistent military rule, another domain in which political repression goes hand in hand with economic mismanagement. In this crucible is forged the escalating war and violence that features in so many African countries. Lewis (2002) provides an overview of the trends in scholarship that are evident in research and advocacy on gender and militarism. The incorporation of women in traditional gender hierarchies, even under conditions of war, is pointed to in the early work on militarism, such as that by Cock (1991), writing on South Africa, and Urdang (1989), on Mozambique.

More recent work complements studies of "woman-as-victim" to address women's active engagement in civil war and ethnic violence. This perspective points to the complexities inherent in conceptualising gender and women. Links between the construction of violence and of masculinities are also increasingly the focus of attention, as are the histories and socio-economic conditions shaping the development of men's gendered subjectivities. Finally, the growth of peace studies places the spotlight on women's efforts to manage households and ensure the survival of their families under extremely hostile conditions. Women's vulnerability to torture, rape, injury or death vis-Ã -vis warring elements, coupled with the pressures to care for children and the elderly, often propel women in the direction of peace building. At the same time, their marginalisation from formal peacekeeping initiatives is widespread. All these dimensions shape women's experiences of war and its effects in ways that are markedly different from men (Lewis, 2002). Overall, the different lenses for reading gender in relation to militarisation vastly expand our understanding of the nexus of politics, violence and different individual and collective experiences in Africa.

Ten years after Ake's statement that "mere survival" required freedom from political repression, the persistence of such repression along with economic mismanagement only serves to emphasise (if emphasis were needed) the centrality of the question of how adequate scholarly analyses of such programmes have been. By focusing on SAPs as well as militarisation, I have highlighted ways in which feminist thought offers ways of conceptualising and challenging diverse forms of domination by uncovering what is hidden or silenced, whilst tracing different ways in which gender relations are articulated with other dimensions of social division. From this perspective, we can see that feminist knowledge is not about "adding" to existing progressive knowledge, but, more fundamentally, about invigorating and transforming what we understand by progressive research.

CODESRIA and Malestream Scholarship

It is worth taking stock of the extent to which the intellectual output of CODESRIA demonstrates gender awareness as an integral dimension of social transformation and justice. It should be pointed out here that CODESRIA's activities over the last decade point to some progress in recognising gender and women's studies as a field of inquiry in its own right, although this shift has been painfully slow. Certain landmark features are the 1991 workshop in Dakar on "Gender Analysis and African Social Science", CODESRIA's first major institutional initiative focusing on gender. The workshop culminated in the publication of *Engendering African Social Sciences*, edited by Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama and Fatou Sow in 1997. A comprehensive review of feminist scholarship by Amina Mama, *Women's Studies and Studies of Women During the 1990s*, was published by CODESRIA in 1996. In April 2002, CODESRIA, in conjunction with the Arab Research Centre, held a second major conference on gender. In keeping with the times, the theme was "African Gender Research in the New Millennium: Perspectives, Directions and Challenges".

While the major conferences and ongoing research networks focusing on different aspects of gender relations are important features of CODESRIA's intellectual work, there appears to be a large gap between this arena and the space demarcated for the rest of CODESRIA's intellectual activities. This pattern suggests that gender studies in CODESRIA runs parallel to the malestream of scholarship in which gender blindness is accepted as the norm, a situation which raises the broader question of how successfully feminist thought has permeated non-feminist "progressive" scholarship on Africa.

I explore this situation in detail in what follows by analysing two key texts published by CODESRIA in the prestigious fields of governance and democratisation: *Beyond Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, edited by Mkandawire and Olukoshi (1995), and *The Military and Militarism in Africa*, edited by Hutchful and Bathily (1998). For the purpose of scrutinising limitations in the intellectual production that occurs alongside CODESRIA's general public affirmation of gender-related work, I proceed by presenting a detailed critique of analyses carried out in these texts in relation to the research questions asked. Beyond that, I indicate the kinds of transformative analyses that could have been carried out if questions emanating from an awareness of gendered relations and feminist research had been posed, and here cite the range of path-breaking work undertaken by feminist scholars in Africa. In making my arguments, I refer, as far as possible, to concepts and perspectives from feminist scholarship that would have been available prior to the publication of the two texts.[1]

Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa

CODESRIA's publication on structural adjustment, *Between Liberalisation and Oppression: The Politics of Structural Adjustment in Africa*, could well be expected to provide cutting-edge analysis of the problem. As the editors point out (Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995b), there were serious problems with the political analysis informing structural adjustment and the incredible notion, propounded by the international financial institutions, that their imposition of structural adjustment programmes on often reluctant African states would be good for democratisation. The abysmal and generalised failure of SAPs also required explanation:

If the various models and explanations, most of them emanating from within the World Bank or from its supporters, for the failure of structural adjustment in Africa have not done much to enlighten us, it is partly because of their inability both to grasp the *complexity of the political-sociology of Africa* and keep pace with the *rapidly changing social-economic milieu on the continent* and how these shape and re-shape responses to SAP [my emphasis].
(Mkandawire and Olukoshi 1995b: 7)

Laudable as the above statement is, the editors and contributors to the book fall short of the promise inherent within it by failing to engage with realities that are gender differentiated. It

should be emphasised that, since the early 1980s, several years before the publication of Between Liberalisation and Oppression, African women have argued that the power relations that structure women's and men's access to resources and experiences of development, amongst other things, differ in important ways (see, for example, AAWORD, 1985; AAWORD, 1986; Imam, 1990). While there may be commonalities in the experiences of particular categories of women and men, the inequalities between most categories of women relative to men of the same social standing very often make the differences critical. No matter how progressive a scholar one might be, it is not possible to do justice to the "complexity of the political-sociology of Africa" or the "rapidly changing social-economic milieu on the continent" without analysing gender relations or gender politics. Yet it is astonishing that the entire collection of *Between Liberalisation and Oppression* (seventeen chapters in all) addresses various aspects of the politics of structural adjustment in Africa without once referring to the reliance of SAPs on women's subordination.

The first section of the book focuses on theories, concepts, perspectives and models in the study of the politics of structural adjustment in Africa. Mkandawire and Olukoshi point out that: "For those interested in the consolidation and sustainability of democratization processes in Africa, one of the central concerns is with the adverse implications of adjustment for that process and the rule of law" (1995: 2). As early as 1988, Ayesha Imam showed how the implementation of structural adjustment programmes in Africa had resulted in a crisis of reproduction (Imam, 1988a). This she did by arguing that it was crucial to re-imagine households as differentiated by gender, as opposed to bounded units which were marked by the pooling and redistribution of resources and within which the division of tasks by gender was "natural" and unremarkable. Consequently, in order to address the question at the heart of *Between Liberalisation and Oppression*, the implications of adjustment for democratisation, it would appear necessary to at least pose the question of the relationship between reproduction and democratisation. Surprisingly, the introductory chapter does not do this, and nowhere in the collection is such a relationship the subject of investigation. A related problem revolves on conceptualising the reference points of democratisation primarily as the male-dominated institutions of the state and the market. The implication is that the democratisation of institutions such as households, and the broader social relations within which all the institutions of the state, the market and households are enmeshed are not placed on the agenda.

In order to address this latter point, it would be necessary to engage with a number of basic assumptions embodied in structural adjustment programmes. Through using gender-neutral language, the design and implementation of SAPs rely on concepts imbued with male bias, such as the gender division of labour, the unpaid domestic work done by women and the workings of the household (see Elson, 1990 and Imam, 1988a). I outline the implications briefly below to point to some of the issues that need to be confronted if substantive democratisation is to take place at the level of social relations.

First, regarding the gender division of labour, structural adjustment programmes typically treat labour as ungendered. The practical implication is that no account is taken of gender differentials in income. Men tend to earn an income from the crops that they grow because these are likely to be cash crops, often grown for export. Women, on the other hand, earn little if anything from the crops that they grow because these tend to be grown for subsistence. Moreover, women generally do not earn an income of their own from work they do on crops controlled by their husbands (see, for example, Elson, 1990 and Imam, 1988a,b).

Secondly, there is no mention of the unpaid domestic work done by women, which necessarily erodes the time available for leisure or rest. Women often bear the hidden costs of adjustment through the unremunerated work that they do as a result of cuts in public expenditure. Cuts in health care services mean that women have to spend more time on family health care. Cuts in food subsidies mean that women have to spend more time

cooking, since cheaper food takes longer to prepare (see, for example, Elson, 1990; Imam 1988a,b; DAWN, 1988).

Finally, it is critical to take account of the workings of the household because divisions within the family prevent women from reallocating resources in the most effective way possible for maintaining the well-being of their families. Although the prices of basic necessities increases under SAPs, women are prevented from reallocating expenditure to food, clothes and fuel, and away from non-essential spending. This is because household income is not pooled. Women are also more likely to spend a larger proportion of their income on family needs than men, even though their earnings are likely to be lower than those of men.

From the above discussion, we can see that there are clear implications of the crisis of reproduction for democratisation. Key features here are women's unequal access to resources, women's disproportionately high labour demands, and the inequitable distribution of resources within households such that men and boys are more likely to be privileged than women and girls. For poor women in particular, their excessive workloads and generalised lack of time are likely to affect their capacity to respond politically to adjustment. Such factors are also part of the reason why women are increasingly found in the informal sector.

As if recognising this, one contributor makes the following statement in the context of a discussion of informalisation:

It takes more than conventional theoretical assumptions to understand the way gains and losses are distributed among different social groups. Detailed empirical studies are required that will take into account the location of groups in the social and power structures of different countries, the pattern of consumption of traded and non-traded goods within households, the variety of livelihood activities different households are engaged in, including the allocation of roles and responsibilities between individuals of the same household, and the capacities of different groups to respond to the challenges thrown up by the shifts in policy (Bangura, 1995: 86).

There is no mention of gender in the discussion, even though it is difficult to see how the "detailed empirical studies" that are urged can be produced without thoroughly engaging in analyses of gender divisions of labour, paid and unpaid work on the basis of gender, gender analyses of the workings of households; and the numerous dimensions of division, such as class and age, that intersect with gender.

Also in the section on theories, concepts and perspectives, Hutchful argues that one of the properties of regime dynamics that may help to shape their responses to and management of adjustment is "the nature of the ruling coalition and its 'hegemonising' practices, in other words the process by which it generates vertical and horizontal solidarities" (Hutchful, 1995: 57). What is not mentioned here are the national women's organisations, state-supported and state-supportive, that are officially represented as "the voice of women". These include Maendeleo ya Wanawake in Kenya, the National Council of Women's Societies in Nigeria, the National Council of Ghanaian women and so on. Even where these organisations started out with radical demands and with linkages to rural women, their leadership changed over time to comprise women allied to the state, either through family ties or patronage (see Wipper, 1995; Nzomo, 1989; Mba, 1982). Using the national women's organisations to mobilise women for state-determined purposes allowed political regimes the possibility of expanding their constituencies while engaging in efforts to increase their legitimacy (Pereira, 2000b).

This point is related to another theme that Hutchful addresses, "the nature of the discursive formation that defines a regime" (1995:58). He points out that it is necessary to ask: "What resources, determinants and constraints are imposed on the regime by the broader environment" (Hutchful 1995: 58)? These questions cannot be fully addressed without recognising that the period during which SAPs were first implemented in many African countries coincided with the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985). This was a time when

political regimes were increasingly short of funds, but when donors were willing to provide considerable funding for WID (Women in Development) structures and projects. Accordingly, many regimes found it expedient either to create new structures (Mama, 1995), co-opt existing structures (Pereira, 2000b) or combine the two in authoritarian efforts to increase their legitimacy and access to resources. Efforts to increase legitimacy went hand in hand with the recasting of two of the major themes that Hutchful identifies as present in the political discourse of African states: welfare and statism. In this context, it is noteworthy that Olukoshi (1995), in his chapter on the politics of structural adjustment in Nigeria, makes no mention of state structures for women. These include the project instituted by Maryam Babangida in 1987, the Better Life Programme, a female power structure that drew its authority from the political regime to which it ran parallel (Mama, 1995).

In the final section of the collection, the focus is on social responses to SAPs and how these translate into political responses. Labour and student unions are addressed, both of which are male-dominated institutions. It is likely that a different kind of picture of the range of political responses to structural adjustment would have been painted if, for example, market women's associations, or rural women's co-operatives had been included. The omission is all the more remarkable in view of the recognition that some of the salient factors shaping the responses of social actors to particular trajectories of crisis and adjustment include "the way in which particular states have been constituted historically" and "the nature and context of the post-colonial 'social' contract on the basis of which state legitimacy is built" (Mkandawire and Olukoshi, 1995b: 9).

In most African countries, post-colonial states have been constituted in such a way as to marginalise women seriously from the institutions of the state and processes of governance - without jeopardising the legitimacy of those institutions and processes for many observers and citizens. Yet the presence of women in early social protest movements and in national liberation struggles under colonialism is testimony to women's engagement in political struggles against local as well as imperial domination.[2] Numerous studies of gender and nationalist struggles have been produced (see Lewis, 2002), often based on the testimonies of women with actual experiences of political struggle. Nina Mba's (1982) detailed exposition of women's organising in southern Nigeria, including the famous Women's War of 1929; Urdang's (1979, 1989) accounts of women's anti-colonialist struggles in Guinea Bissau and the aftermath of the liberation struggle in Mozambique; and Wilson's (1991) study of women's involvement in the Eritrean revolution are some of the noteworthy texts in this vast field. It is ironic that knowledge production by male "progressives" on political responses to structural adjustment excludes women in a way that mirrors the marginalisation of women from formal state structures and governance. This is a glaring manifestation of the continuing need for critical review of the gender politics of intellectual work at the same time that there is similar critique of advocacy around gender and politics.

The Military and Militarism in Africa

It was not the military that caused military rule in Africa by intervening in politics; rather, it was the character of politics that engendered military rule by degenerating into warfare, inevitably propelling the specialists of warfare to the lead role. (Ake, 2001: 6)

Although Ake never addressed the gender implications of this simple but profound point, it is worth pointing them out here. If politics in Africa has become the practice of war by other means, this underscores a fundamental way in which the latter is gendered. For is warfare not a masculine sphere, one in which women are cast as vulnerable and needing protection? Even in those countries where African women have fought in armed combat, such as Kenya, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and others, such gender ideologies persist.

In post-colonial societies, African women who aspire to political office are faced not only with the burden of trying to enter a domain constructed as a war zone - and to do so while keeping body and soul together - but if they are feminists, to do so with the additional aim of re-imagining and reconstructing politics itself. To succeed in this endeavour would be no

mean feat. The value of post-colonial African feminist traditions of analysis has been highlighted in the South African case, where scholars were able to draw on existing work to shape radical analysis and action regarding women's gendered political participation in the years prior to the first democratic election (Lewis, 2002).

The second major CODESRIA publication that I consider is the collection entitled The Military and Militarism in Africa. The unevenness of the treatment of gender here is worth noting; most chapters make no mention of it at all. Unlike the 1995 publication on structural adjustment, gender is not entirely absent from discussions. Yet the inclusion of gender amounts to a few of the authors gesturing towards gender or women in passing; one developing a framework that is suggestive of gender analysis; and only one chapter appearing to integrate a discussion of women's presence and concerns in relation to militarism.

In the only paragraph addressing gender in the editors' introductory chapter, three key features are demonstrated. First, the term "gender" is used, but in a formulaic way that makes it unclear exactly what is being conceptualised: "Militarisation and warfare have had severe gender and generational consequences. Luckham points … to the gender-chauvinist nature of military and national security ideology …" (Hutchful and Bathily 1998: X). The second feature is that "gender" is implicitly equated with "women". Women, moreover, are conceived of as entirely passive beings: "Women have borne the brunt both of war and of the struggle for peace" (Hutchful and Bathily 1998: X). Thirdly, there is an association of "women as passive" with "women as victims". The metaphor of victim is applied to women as well as to children, this leading to the conflation of women with children: "the prime victims of militarisation and war, providing the most eloquent testimony of the diffusion of the instruments of violence, are children" (Hutchful and Bathily 1998: X).

Conceptualising women as passive misses the point that while women may bear the brunt of war, they are often heroic in their efforts to keep families together under the devastating conditions of conflict, destabilisation or war. Women, of course, have also played roles as combatants, whether in liberation struggles or in ethnic conflicts. It is also significant that women do not mechanically bear the brunt of the struggle for peace; they are active peace builders. McClintock points out how, in South Africa under apartheid, black women "organize increasingly as the militant protectors of their communities and activist children" (1991: 116). The very randomness of attacks on black people's homes and children by the South African Defence Force deeply politicised women, even those who might otherwise not have been so engaged. Although there are undoubtedly times when women are victims, this is not a "natural" consequence of being a woman; it is a result of being subjected to violence that is systemic and often perpetrated by men whose masculinities have been militarised and for whom violating women is a way of violating the men of their communities.

Women's resistance and struggles have focused fundamentally on retaining their dignity and integrity, and that of their families and communities. If we bear this in mind, we find that the very concept of "woman" in malestream research has to be challenged and re-imagined. The conventional notion of "woman-as-victim" presupposes that women are victims because they are "not-men". In other words, "woman" generally signifies one who is characterised by a lack or "absence" - "not-men" and therefore passive. Re-imagining women requires recognition of women as human beings who exercise agency, and in militarised contexts, that means exercising agency under circumstances of need and crisis that few men ever have to contend with.

As for children, my point is not so much that children have not been victims of violence. Rather, it is to argue that the erroneous but widespread linkage between conceptions of "women" and perceptions of "children" not only misconstrues women and women's experiences, but indicates an extraordinarily restricted understanding of gender. It also levels the category of "children" and ignores the gendered nature of children's experiences. We see this in Hutchful and Bathily's statement that "Children have been doubly victimized,

both as victims of violence and at the same time as dealers in violence" (Hutchful and Bathily 1998: X), which leads to a discussion about "child soldiers". The phenomenon of children, primarily boys, being turned into killing machines is something that warrants serious attention. The experiences of girls as the sexual slaves of senior soldiers are surprisingly not mentioned. Yet the pattern of girls being turned into sexual slaves and boy soldiers witnessing, even if not experiencing, such distorted and abusive gender relations speaks volumes about the distinct evolution of gendered subjectivities and social relationships under particular circumstances.

These subjectivities and relationships are rendered more complex when we consider the interlocking of gender and class. The boys who become soldiers and the girls who become sexual slaves are not the children of elites, but of peasants and farmers. Accordingly, re-integration will not only be a question of "child soldiers" reconstructing their relations to "constituted authority", although it will necessarily include this. Re-integration is likely to be a more uncertain, painful and uneven process of reconstructing boy soldiers' relations to their past atrocities, their relations to female as well as male sources of authority at school, to women and men in families and the community, to other boys and especially, to girls.

Robin Luckham's chapter on theory points out that "States arise from and are reproduced by practices and discourses of power: notably those of coercion, discipline and surveillance" (1997:8). Although Luckham's reference to Foucault's point that "relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend far beyond states" (1997:8) is suggestive, this insight is not followed through in terms of content. Quoting Foucault, he refers to the simultaneous emergence of new mechanisms of power, allowing "time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities, to be extracted" (2997:8). It should be noted, however, that mechanisms of power that permit extraction of time and labour are new as well as old. The extraction of women's time and labour by men of similar social standing (rarely the converse) through ideologies of gender, is not a recent phenomenon.

It is not that Luckham omits gender from the discussion. Rather, gender is referred to explicitly as an "aspect of identity planted at the heart of national security ideology" (Luckham, 1998:14). Nowhere does he mention the ways in which the gendered practice of national security has particular implications for women. As Cynthia Enloe points out, "Ironically, the more a government is preoccupied with what it calls national security, the less likely its women are to have the physical safety necessary for sharing their theorizing about the nation and their security within it" (1993: 38). Mama examines the ramification of power through ideas about security, showing that these are simultaneously "national and familial, micro-political (psychosexual and interpersonal) and macro-political" (1998: 3). She goes on to state that "Because security means different things to men and women, it is attained through different routes and different identities" (1998:3). Ochoche's (1997) insightful discussion of security - both in terms of the dynamic nature of the concept and the link between Africa's insecurity and its underdevelopment - would no doubt have been considerably strengthened if gender had been integral to the analysis.

What is not captured in most of the chapters in The Military and Militarism are the ways in which militarism rests on gendered ideas about a host of interrelated processes and identities: violence, enemies, masculinity, femininity, work, danger, women's and men's roles, ideas about pleasure, male sexuality, morality and what is "right" and "natural", sex-work, reproductive health policies, police rape, domestic violence and the role of the state in all this (see Enloe, 1993). As Enloe puts it, "Analysing militarisation casts a theoretical spotlight on a convergence of social processes - cultural, economic and political" (Enloe, 1993: 66), rather than on any one of these processes in isolation. Mama (1998) provides an example of this convergence in her discussion of the banal notions of domesticity and familial stability propagated by the wives of military rulers, Maryam Babangida and Maryam Abacha, in their programmes for women. These notions became metaphors for national

security and military rule in Nigeria, and functioned to reassure the general public that their security was safe in the hands of the military.

If the gender implications of militarism are not fully taken on board, then the danger is that the "new nation" will incorporate the ingrained and invidious divisions of the old: "the nation-state will remain a repository of male hopes, male aspirations and male privilege" (McClintock 1991:122). This is crucial in view of the fact that militarised and colonial states affected women similarly in terms of structures and styles of government. The bureaucratic centralism characteristic of each permitted only marginal, if any, representation of women (Mba, 1989).

Horace Campbell's chapter on the dismantling of the apartheid military machine is the only one in the collection that integrates women's presence and concerns into the text:

> *After 300 years of coercion, violence and repression, apartheid had cemented violence as an integral aspect of an anti-democratic system. … African women had suffered disproportionately from the warfare and violence all over Southern Africa. Warfare and violence in the public sphere encouraged domestic violence and other forms of oppression which humiliated African women. (Campbell, 1998: 544)*

National security under the apartheid regime covered the whole spectrum of social reproduction, including religious-cultural action; "manpower" services; national supplies; resources and production services; transport and distribution services; community services; telecommunications services. Campbell therefore points out that demilitarisation and conversion span a wide spectrum of issues. These include the place of nuclear energy, the method of mining minerals, the nature of land ownership and redistribution, the surpluses from agriculture, and the forms of co-operation with the countries of the region. All this means that "the question of demilitarization is not only a technical/military one but a profoundly political one". (Campbell, 1998: 553). In this context, Campbell distinguishes between "scholarship for reforms" and "the intellectual transformation necessary for social justice" (1998: 553), a distinction that operates at several levels and continues to be of relevance to us all, not least in the focus of this paper.

The question of the level at which the issue of economic conversion is placed on the political agenda in South Africa is crucial. Ultimately, this concerns the broader question of how the apartheid military machine can be effectively taken apart and what this will mean for the substance of democratisation. Campbell highlights the significance of this issue for African women:

> *African women in South Africa, in particular, have a fundamental interest in the issue of conversion and the land question, for the system of apartheid and migrant labour had a debilitating effect on the African family. It was the women left in the reserves who subsidized capital and who bore the brunt of the pain in the absence of healthcare, education, water supplies and affordable electricity. African women suffered from the violence of the system and from the attempts to manipulate the symbols of tradition to maintain patriarchy. The struggles of African women to transform gender relations at all levels of the society will enrich the struggles for peace and conversion. These struggles are linked to the struggles of African women all over the region, especially those from societies such as Angola and Mozambique, who were made refugees by the activities of the South African military. (Campbell, 1998: 576-7)*

One obvious omission in all the chapters concerns the failure to question, let alone discuss, the relationship between militarism and masculinities. Enloe's astute discussion of why militaries are overwhelmingly male institutions throws light on what is so often taken for granted:

> *Militaries are composed of men as a result of quite conscious political policies. State officials - themselves primarily male - create an explicit link between the presumed cultural and*

physical properties of maleness and the institutional needs of the military as an organization. The boys and men who are typically recruited or pressed into service as foot soldiers or ships' crews are drawn from the relatively powerless strata of state societies: peasants, poor urban dwellers, and members of those racial, ethnic, or religious communities held in contempt by the state elite. Yet, for a military to serve the state's interests, these boys and men must be bound to their officers - men who are usually from quite different social strata. The glue is camaraderie; the base of that glue is masculinity. In fact, nervous commanders often try to use the alleged common bonds of masculinity to reduce the all-too-obvious class and ethnic tensions among their troops. (Enloe, 1993: 51-2)

Marginalising Feminist Knowledge in Malestream Scholarship

I have demonstrated some of the specific ways in which masculinist thought continues to dominate intellectual work and how this has restricted the character of knowledge produced. The discussion has highlighted two major ways in which gender continues to be absent from the analysis. The first is by simply not placing women's presence and concerns on the agenda of intellectual work, or by doing so in ways that are limiting and distorted. The second mode involves ignoring how masculinities may be inscribed in structures, processes and practices of domination. Most of the scholars writing in the texts analysed show astoundingly little or no awareness of concepts and perspectives arising out of feminist scholarship. Contributions also reflect highly uneven levels of gender awareness, with one or two writers demonstrating far more sensitivity to theory and concepts that focus on gender than the vast majority. What this suggests is that feminist thought and imagination are permeating the work of some scholars but that this influence, among the present generation of scholars, remains relatively rare.

I have raised two broad concerns about the value of feminist thought and imagination in scholarship on Africa. The first relates to the potential for feminist scholarship to transform the ways in which African realities are understood, with attendant implications for progressive social change. The second concern is that this possibility has patently not materialised, despite the rapid expansion of feminist intellectual work inside and outside the academy since the early 1980s. We may well ask why malestream researchers who regard themselves as progressive only refer to gender, if at all, in descriptive terms, and cannot imagine systematically using gender as an analytical tool. Why are male researchers so unable to apply feminist analysis to issues - structural adjustment programmes, war, militarism - that are very obviously gendered and that have such an intense impact on women's lives?

One reason why malestream researchers are often reluctant to take up feminist research in their own work has to do with the fact that conflicts of intellectual traditions are not matters of "detailed interpretation or nuance" but are manifested at a very basic level (Hudson, 1976: 97). In his early critique of neo-positivism in psychology, Hudson points out that intellectual traditions function through their control over the simplest levels of mental functioning: what we attend to and what we dismiss out of hand. Intellectual traditions that are in conflict with one another are also embedded in relations of power. The deeply ingrained hegemonic definition of feminist theory and research in gender and women's studies as "soft", "peripheral", "not serious" and "unmanly" renders this domain "not worth attending to" for masculinist researchers.

From feminist research on nationalism, it is possible to discern some parallels in the processes involved in defining some social categories as "not worth attending to". It would appear that many malestream scholars tend to view work on gender in a manner analogous to male-defined relations with women: "Our nationalism is like our relationship to women: too implicated in our moral nature to be changed honourably, and too accidental to be worth changing" (George Santayana, cited in McClintock, 1991: 105). The suggestion that men are by "nature" immoral (or amoral?) in their relations with women, and the casting of such relations as "too accidental to be worth changing", is breathtaking in its sheer arrogance.

This move normalises hegemonic gender relations at the same time as it absolves men of any responsibility for changing them.

Rigorous feminist work requires considerable reflexivity about the assumptions used to make sense of "what is": social realities and the ways in which these realities are re/presented in knowledge production. The immense challenges posed by imagining "what ought to be" and observing this in practice are personal as well as political, and necessarily entail a considerable destabilising of subjectivity. Many male researchers who regard themselves as progressive do not imagine that their politics should extend to the realm of the familiar, to that which is everyday and intimately known. Nor do they view practice in this domain - whether their own, that of other males or that of female members of the household - as relevant to social research.

Some male colleagues are supportive in that they consciously accept certain feminist principles politically and intellectually, and are also willing to assist in providing platforms for women. Scholars such as the late Claude Ake, Thandika Mkandawire, Tiyambe Zeleza and Adebayo Olukoshi number among those who have been most supportive of feminist ideas and principles. Very few, however, are able to go beyond this in terms of using feminist knowledge to transform the content of their scholarship. It should be stressed, though, that practices such as writing and publishing in and of themselves, are not sufficient to change mindsets and ways of attending to social realities.

Even where platforms that are supportive of feminist scholarship are available, a number of factors limit the extent to which these spaces can be utilised. The very real shortage of appropriately skilled women in general, and feminist capacity in particular, makes it difficult to take up many existing possibilities. The shortage of research in gender and women's studies, and the lack of written work in these areas compound the problem. This situation is not specific to institutions such as CODESRIA or even the academy, but is a manifestation of larger social configurations of exclusion, discrimination and oppression.

A factor that complicates necessary critique of malestream scholarship in Africa is that progressive male researchers and feminists jointly contest a global mainstream of African studies, especially through shared platforms such as CODESRIA. For feminists, this presents the double challenge of critiquing the scholarship produced by African men for its gender blindness, while sharing the concerns of African male colleagues with the imperialist, colonialist and racist connotations of mainstream constructions of Africa. Considerable dilemmas for feminists arise when "African culture and traditions" are viewed as the subject of contestation, as is often asserted by masculinist scholars once feminists challenge hegemonic gender relations. Feminists who challenge malestream research agendas are often accused of being overly "Western", if they are attended to at all. The difficulties with their contestation are compounded when they experience a conflict between criticising those features of "culture" and "tradition" that oppress women and affirming aspects of the same "culture" that uplift women or that have social value but have been distorted by global agendas. Depending on the context, feminists may feel compelled to withhold their criticism in order not to be misunderstood as mistakenly upholding uninformed Western agendas.

Concluding Remarks

One key implication of the state of affairs reviewed in this article is that feminist gains in intellectual work cannot be taken for granted. The challenge presented here is one of developing and consolidating autonomous spaces that are sufficiently supportive of critical interventions for sustaining feminists in their work. There is a clear need to find ways of broadening and deepening spaces for feminist scholarship on Africa. Mobilising, capacity- and theory-building among feminists are strategic priorities here. At the same time, feminists should expect continued resistance to the uptake of their work by male scholars, even those regarding themselves as progressive, and should prepare for this resistance. This means

continuing to develop strategies such as the sharpening of conceptual and analytical arguments, as well as nurturing theory building. There is also a need to promote forums for exchanging ideas and engaging in collective intellectual work. This inaugural collection of Feminist Africa is an important and timely step in this direction, and expands the achievements of sites such as AAWORD and gender and women's studies programmes.

While the consolidation of autonomous feminist sites is politically and intellectually tactical, it is vital that malestream scholars overcome their resistance to the uptake of gender analysis and feminist research in their work. It is also necessary that the far-reaching implications of feminist thought and research are acknowledged by progressive male scholars as well as those currently engaged in gender research. For a forward-looking CODESRIA in the twenty-first century, it is simply not good enough to develop parallel streams of scholarship on Africa, one in which gender analysis, even feminist scholarship, is permissible, and another in which it is malestream "business as usual". Masculinist domination of scholarship on Africa will simply not deliver the goods in terms of producing knowledge that is up to the task of transforming our institutions and our societies in the direction of gender equality and social justice.

More importantly, gender analysis used for feminist ends transforms existing agendas to place new and radically different concerns and perspectives at the forefront of scholarship and advocacy. Feminist thought and imagination are most likely to flourish in sites dedicated to that aim, such as the autonomous spaces referred to earlier. "Mainstreaming", in the sense of integrating gender research into broad, general programmes is unlikely to be sufficient, since the overall ethos of particular disciplines, fields or institutions will usually remain untouched by feminist principles. It is often questionable that there are workable mechanisms in place to guarantee continued attention to women's concerns and experiences in such contexts. More fundamentally, feminists have questioned the nature of the "stream" that they are being persuaded to join, and whether such a stream is capable of transformation as opposed to reform.

Between knowing and imagining - knowing that what we know today is limited and imagining more expansive, creative possibilities - this is the space that we must continue to inhabit. We must not only inhabit this space, but expand it so that feminists of whatever inclination, and our allies, can transcend the gender-blind visions of worlds and lives that have so far been offered by male dominated scholarship on Africa. Looking forward and outward, African feminists must continue to produce scholarship that engages with the possibilities and practices of re-imagined futures.

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