



'Doing feminism' online: acknowledging the materiality of the processes and relationships involved

Yvette Hutchison

Theatre & Performance Studies, University of Warwick

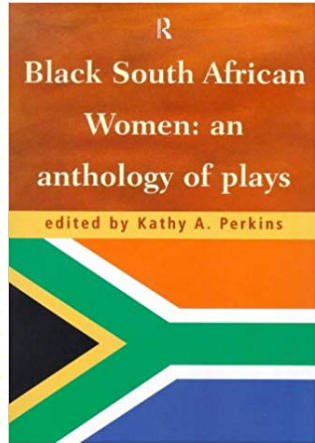
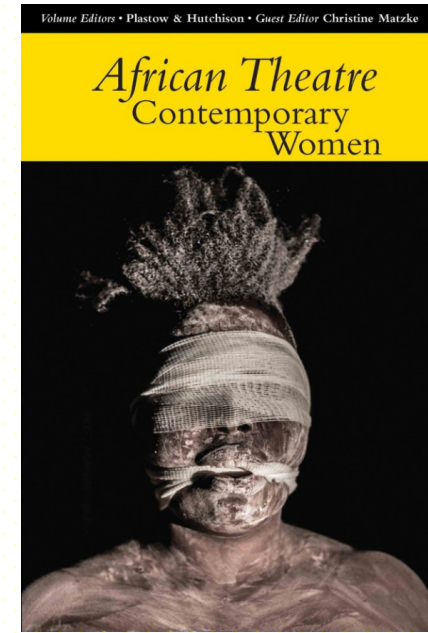
With thanks to Steve Ranford, IT University of Warwick for online data collation

Background to the project

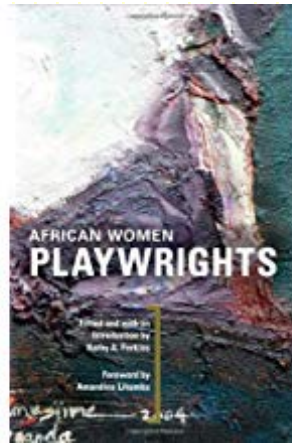
Issues arising from researching *African Theatre: Contemporary Women* (2015)

- * Accessing artists (vastness and diversity of continent, resources needed: time, travel, spaces)
- * The paucity of work by women that has been published
- * Similar patterns in theatre & festival programming

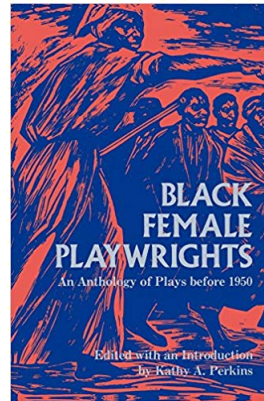
In contrast to the richness and number of new plays being written, created, directed & performed by women in Africa



(About women, 1998)



Only anthology of plays by African women, 2008, until 2019)



(From diasporas, 1990)



(18 new and recent works by African American, Asian American, Latina American and Native American playwrights, 2007)

All edited by Kathy Perkins

The importance of **decolonising methodologies** – given the ways in which colonialism continues to haunt the present, & is being challenged by youths vis a viz curricula, etc ... cf. #Rhodesmustfall

Mobile technology in Africa: background research

In 2015, GSM reported that, 'The mobile industry in Sub-Saharan Africa continues to scale rapidly, reaching 367 million subscribers in mid-2015' (2018), and by 2017 there were 455m subscribers in the region representing a 43% penetration (GSM 2018a).

Need for mindfulness regarding digital inequalities vis a viz gender, race, and socioeconomic status (Cooper & Weaver, 2003; diMaggio et al., 2004; Junco, 2013).

Feature phones – format of information for these phones is stripped-down and largely text-based, tailored to be low bandwidth for a low latency browsing experience, and to save on data transfer costs.

E.g. Opera, a feature phone browser had over 50% market share of mobile web traffic in Africa for 2016 (GlobalStats, 2016).



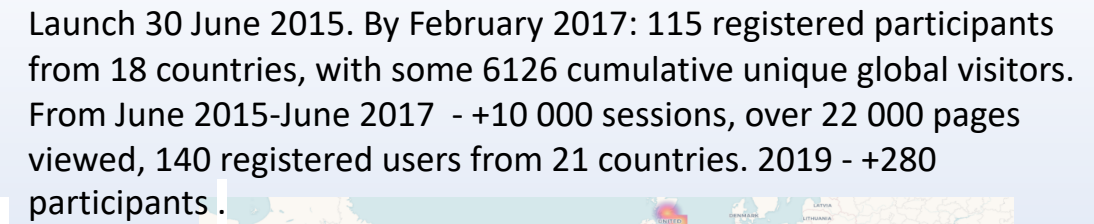
UK-SA company,
<http://www.every1mobile.net/>

E1M was desirable because of their

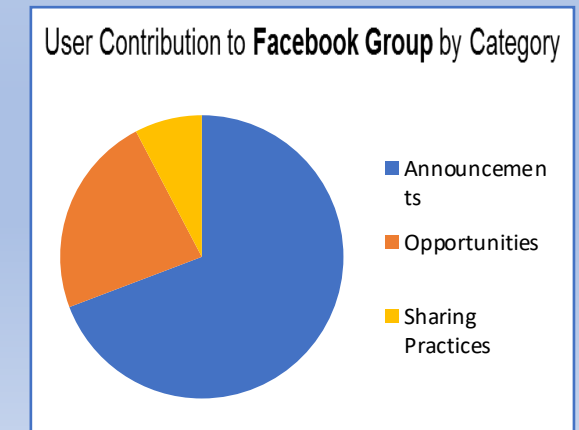
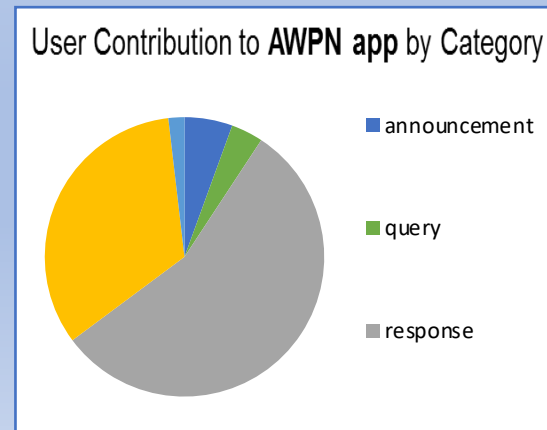
- multi-device platform expertise for users in Africa
- experience running projects in multiple countries, involving development topics such as sexual health, digital and financial literacy, business skills, family planning, gender and nutrition; reaching millions of people
- processes for collecting data generated from their online platforms and use of web analytics to measure and report to us
- willingness to work with us to create a dialogic platform

The app

- to facilitate **women creative practitioners from Africa or diasporas** increasing their visibility and connectivity beyond their specific regions, to access work and artists nationally and internationally,
- to **highlight events** in which our creative practitioners are involved or may be interested
- to facilitate **critical engagement**, via **forums** on topics based around both researchers' and community's issues.



Social media specialist Mark Schaefer's noted a 'shift taking place from social media to private media' in 2016. GetSocial has suggested that in 2017 'private sharing is twice as large as public sharing (qtd in Rayson, 2018:10).



Funders



Symposium 2017:

Breaking Boundaries: African Women Writing on the Edges of Race, Gender and Identity

Meet face to face

Collectively see and discuss **shows**:

Mothertongue's Langeberg Youth Group's *Mama Ruby*

Sara Shawaari's *Niqabi Ninja*

Workshops

- Writing
- Artists' challenges?
- What makes a safe spaces for women to 'speak'?
- Who can speak, about what? (gender, race, rel ..)
- Access to festivals & effect



Efficacy of platforms

Online engagements: 'digital residents' versus 'digital visitors'

understanding what motivates behaviours

... placing the emphasis on motivation allows for a wide variety of practices which span all age groups and does not require individuals to be boxed, inexorably, in one category or the other. Both 'place' and 'tool' have the capacity to incorporate motivation. Questions such as: 'What am I going there for?', 'What am I hoping to achieve?', 'Which place best serves my purpose?', 'How long do I intend to stay?', 'Have I got the skills that I need?' and 'Am I happy to be on my own, or would I prefer to be in company?' all fit within the Visitors and Residents paradigm and transcend issues such as age, technological 'geekishness', and the development of the brain, while still recognising that individuals may have a greater or less well developed natural aptitude for using technology and that some may never move (we avoid the term 'progress') beyond a low-level engagement of selecting a small range of tools for a limited number of purposes. (White & Le Cornu, 2011:10)



Key references

- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue- Ellen Case, Johns Hopkins UP, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. 2006. [*Gender trouble : feminism and the subversion of identity*](#). London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 2011. *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"*. Routledge, e-book.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. Routledge, 1993.
- Chutel, Lynsey. 2018. Connecting to the internet costs more in Johannesburg and Cape Town than it does in New York and Zurich. *Quartz Africa*, June 14, 2018, <https://qz.com/1304520/data-costs-south-africans-in-cape-town-and-johannesburg-pay-more-for-internet-usage-than-new-yorkers/>, last accessed 22/06/18
- Cooper, J., & Weaver, K. D. 2003. Gender and computers: Understanding the digital divide. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Celeste, C., & Shafer, S. 2004. Digital inequality: From unequal access to differentiated use, in K. Neckerman (Ed.), *Social inequality*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 355–400.
- E1M - <http://www.every1mobile.net/international-development/>, last accessed 09/07/2018.
- Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. 2007. The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12:4, 1143–1168.
- Fotopoulou, Aristeia. 2016. *Feminist activism and digital networks: between empowerment and vulnerability*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. E-pub, <https://0-link-springer-com.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/download/epub/10.1057%2F978-1-137-50471-5.epub>, accessed 04/04/2018.
- GlobalStats. 2016. Mobile Browser Market Share Africa, <http://gs.statcounter.com/browser-market-share/mobile/africa/2016>, accessed 12/07/2018
- GSM Association. 2018. The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa 2015, <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/subsaharanafrica/>, accessed 03/07/2018.
- GSM Association. 2018a. The Mobile Economy 2018. <https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/The-Mobile-Economy-2018.pdf>, accessed 03/07/2018.
- Hargittai, E. 2008. Whose space? Differences among users and non-users of social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13:1, 276–297.
- Hargittai, E. 2010. Digital Na(t)ives? Variation in internet skills and uses among members of the 'Net Generation'. *Sociological Inquiry*, 80:1, 92–113.
- Lanclos, D. and Phipps L. 2018. 'Leadership and Social Media: Challenges and Opportunities.' To be published in Rowell, C (2018) 'Social Media in Higher Education', [preprint].
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai 2012 (2nd expanded ed., first 1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books; Dunedin, N.Z.: University of Otago Press.
- Stephansen, H. C. 2016. Understanding citizen media as practice: Agents, processes, publics. In M. Baker & B. Blaagaard (Eds.), *Citizen media and public spaces: Diverse expressions of citizenship and dissent*. London: Routledge.
- Van House. 2011. 'Feminist HCI meets Facebook: Performativity and social networking sites', *Interacting with Computers*, 23:5, 422-429.
- White, David S., & Le Cornu, Alison. 2011. Visitors and Residents: A new typology for online engagement. *First Monday*, 16:9, np., <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3171/3049>, accessed 12/07/2018.
- White, David. 2013. Just the Mapping, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSK1lw1XtwQ>, accessed 15/07/2018.
- Zobl, Elke & Ricarda Drüeke (eds.) 2012. *Feminist Media: Participatory Spaces, Networks and Cultural Citizenship*. Berlin: Knowledge Unlatched. E-Book, <http://open.org/search?identifier=627781>, accessed 04/04/2018.