

Gendered globalisation discourses: Implications for the African Renaissance

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Abstract

This article explores the discursive construct of globalisation through the prism of gender and its implications for and effects on the quest for an African Renaissance. It argues that since humans are gendered, so human institutions and discourses such as globalisation are permeated and informed by the discourse of gender and the hierarchies inherent in them. Since discourses on the African Renaissance are conceptualised and framed within the hegemonic discourse of globalisation, they become entangled in globalisation's gendered nature and become either complicit or subversive. The article identifies and discusses the multifaceted implications and effects of a hegemonic, masculine neoliberal globalisation discourse on the various facets of the African Renaissance, and suggests possible solutions. The purpose is then to explore the notion of the multicentricity of discourses on both globalisation and the African Renaissance.

Keywords: Africa; African Renaissance; discourses; feminisation; gendered; globalisation; hegemony; masculinisation; neoliberalism; Othering; patriarchy; representation; the West; ubuntu

Introduction

The interface between globalisation and the African Renaissance has been examined by several scholars such as Cheru (2002) and Cossa (2009). Therefore, the main point of departure for this article is the use of a gender prism to examine practices and discourses of globalisation, and how these impact on discourses and practices relating to the African Renaissance. It views both globalisation and the African Renaissance as largely discursive constructs, and discourses of the African Renaissance as essentially entangled in those of globalisation. Both discourses of globalisation and the African Renaissance are contested, and are understood differently by different people. Instead of one unitary discourse of globalisation there are multiple and often conflicting ones, such that it is possible to conceive of globalisations rather than globalisation. The same applies to the African Renaissance, where it is possible to see divergent strands relating to how the rebirth of Africa can be conceptualised. For example, it is possible to speak of a nativist strand which privileges exclusively indigenous knowledge systems as the route to an African Renaissance. So conceptions of the African Renaissance are also multiple, and Africa itself is characterised by diversity. Instead of a unitary discourse, it is possible to speak of African Renaissances, rather than using the singular. This article is therefore informed by and propagates the notion of the multiplicity of discourses on both globalisation and the African Renaissance.

Globalisation: A gendered discourse

Globalisation is a contested discourse, but for purposes of brevity it suffices to refer to Held and McGrew's (cited in Schirato and Webb 2003, 7) categorisation of the main positions of scholars in globalisation discourse:

‘[T]he globalists’ and the ‘sceptics’: globalists [...] are believers, in the sense that for them ‘globalization is a real and significant development’ The sceptics on the other hand, consider that what we are experiencing at present is simply a continuation of trends that developed in the period of European colonial expansion, peaked during the period 1870–1914, and were interrupted by the two great wars and the ‘cold war’ of the twentieth century.

This article adopts elements it considers valid from both perspectives in its exploration of globalisation and the African Renaissance.

The notion of globalisation as a gendered discourse has been propounded and explored by various scholars, amongst whom are Eisenstein (1998), Freeman (2004) and Cook (2007). For the purposes of this article, another brief exploration of the same is imperative here. A starting point is to note that ‘human society and nations consist of gendered [and sexualised] beings and therefore gender and sexuality permeate and are inscribed in all aspects of human life, [discourses], and institutions’ (Mutekwa 2009, 726). Nations themselves are gendered (masculine) constructs and the way they project themselves to, and interact with, other states (i.e. international relations) is also gendered

(masculinised). This is in line with the notion and dichotomy of a masculinised public sphere, and a feminised private sphere that characterise patriarchal societies. It therefore follows that ideologies of masculinity and femininity permeate and mediate human discourses such as those on globalisation and the African Renaissance.

To trace the history of globalisation as a gendered discourse, a brief recourse to history is essential. Following Connell (2000), the contention here is that the growth of capitalism and (Western) imperialism laid the historical foundation of globalisation. In fact, the narrative of globalisation can largely be traced to the Western Enlightenment project of the colonisation of non-Western peoples. To begin, the rational, scientific and civilised subject of the 'Enlightenment' was essentially male, with masculinity considered normative, so Enlightenment discourses were informed by ideologies of masculinity. This gendering informed imperial discourses, as Connell (*ibid.*, 25) observes:

The colonial empires were gendered institutions which disrupted indigenous gender orders, and installed violent masculinities in the hegemonic position. This process was the beginning of a global gender order, and the colonisers' masculinities were the first globalising masculinities.

However, masculinities and femininities go together and help construct each other, so ideologies of femininity were present in Enlightenment formulations. Colonial empires were therefore gendered, meaning that globalisation at its inception was gendered and, in addition, it has always had an economic, political and cultural dimension. This resulted in the 'mapping of globalisation onto the following binary: global: masculine, local: feminine' (Cook 2007). Gendering has continued to inform and mediate discourses of globalisation, with the result that in its contemporary form it can be regarded as a hegemonic masculine enterprise, with all that this entails.

Connell (2000, 57) postulates that '[n]eo-liberalism speaks a gender-neutral language of "markets", "individuals", and "choice", but has an implicit view of masculinity. The "individual" of neo-liberal theory has the attributes and interests of a male entrepreneur.' So it follows that neoliberal discourse is imbued with masculine ideologies, and Connell (*ibid.*) further argues that 'the hegemonic form of masculinity in the new world order [...] is the masculinity of the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executives and military leaderships who constantly deal with them'. This is because of the dominance of men in political leadership positions and in transnational corporations, both of which are central in globalisation.

Globalisation therefore began as a Western gendered discourse, although at present it is largely conceived as multi-nuclei, because of the growing economic power of new centres of global economic power, such as Brazil, China and India. The centrality of the West in globalisation, however, continues to define and mark its manifestations, and the 'Othering' that went with colonial globalisation continues to inform it. Neoliberal discourse, according to Schirato and Webb (2003), continues to be informed by the construction of 'Others'. So it is in the context of a hegemonic masculine globalisation discourse that Africa is envisioning its renaissance. The African Renaissance thus is,

inescapably, mediated and informed by these gendered globalisation discourses, and a full understanding of the implications thereof can provide clarity to certain challenges which bear on attempts to bring to fruition the African Renaissance.

The ‘extreme Othering’ and ‘feminisation’ of Africa

Gendered (masculine) Enlightenment-mediated imperial discourses constructed the (colonised) ‘Other’ as feminine (Connell 2000; Mutekwa 2009). This is the essence of what postcolonial theorist, Edward Said (1978), referred to as Orientalism. The Occident constructed itself as masculine and therefore Orientalism was a feminising discourse, formulated as part of the process of constructing a hierarchical relationship between the Occident (the One) and the Orient (the Other). In the case of Africa, the ‘Othering’ process took on extreme forms (Mbembe 2001). To obtain a better appreciation of this issue, a brief reference to Enlightenment Manichean binarisation is pertinent. Western cosmology was largely mediated by dichotomies which demarcated and constructed the ‘One’ and the ‘Other’. Below is a list of some of the significant ‘Ones’ and significant ‘Others’ that the binarisation created.

The One	The Other
God	Devil
Light	Darkness
Man	Woman
Adult	Child
Man	Animal
Culture	Nature

What the above illustrates is that ‘Othering’ was inherent in Western cosmology and that the West was well experienced in creating ‘Others’ before their (often violent) contact with the Orient (Asia) and Africa. In fact, the ‘Other’ that Orientalist discourses and discourses relating to the ‘Othering’ of Africa created, had some or all of the characteristics of the significant ‘Others’ listed above. Compared to Orientalism, the ‘Othering’ of Africa was extreme in the sense that it was a synthesis of the characteristics of virtually all the ‘Others’ listed above.

Enlightenment discourses represented man as the centre of the universe, replacing God (later signified by philosopher Nietzsche’s ‘death of God’), and this is encapsulated by philosopher Rene Descartes’ well-known dictum: ‘I think, therefore I am.’ This transference of subjectivity from God and nature to man had the effect that the most significant ‘One/Self’ became the man, and the most significant ‘Other’ became the woman, overshadowing all the ‘Others’ listed above. This is why European colonial cultures of contact with colonised people involved gendering which constructed the coloniser as masculine and the colonised as feminine. This also provides the basis for the ‘feminisation’ of Africa and the various manifestations of globalisation as a gendered discourse.

African Renaissances in the context of gendered globalisation discourses

Discourses relating to the African Renaissance can be traced to such Africanist discourses as Garveyism (associated with the pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey), Negritude, Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism that sought to recover the freedom and humanity of Africans during the era of colonialism and racial oppression. Negritude (particularly the prototype associated with Leopold Senghor of Senegal) was complicit with the feminisation of Africa through its celebration of white, Othering stereotypes of blacks, which amounted to a celebration of the 'feminisation' of Africans. Right from the start, incipient discourses of the African Renaissance were therefore unable to challenge and deconstruct the binarisms that marked the gendered nature of the discourses framing the oppression and 'Othering' of Africans. Anti-colonial movements were also unable to do this, and to counter the colonial masculine hegemonic discourse they assumed masculine characteristics, hence the attainment of independence was equated to the attainment of manhood (Fanon 1963).

Various responses to the feminisation of Africa during the post-independence period can be noted. For example, contemporary postcolonial discourses offer an attempt to engage with this feminisation. Postcolonialism is anti-hegemonic, anti-patriarchal and it privileges the perspectives of the subaltern, aiming to recover subaltern voices and subjectivities. In this way it can be seen as an engagement with feminisation. However, postcolonialism is an ambivalent discourse which is, in some ways, complicit with the hegemonic discourses it seeks to subvert. Other responses to feminisation include nativism and Afro-radicalism – strands that are visible in discourses on the African Renaissance. Mbembe (cited in Gatsheni-Ndlovu 2009, 1146) sees nativism as 'one of the culturalist responses Africans have given to the fact of the denial of their humanity', while 'Afro-radicalism is concerned with finding a way of breaking away from imperialism, neo-colonialism, dependence and neo-liberal cultural imperialism' (ibid, 1147). These discourses challenge hegemonic discourses and seek to subvert them, therefore they can be seen as 'masculine' responses to feminisation. In this sense, therefore, the African Renaissance can be seen as an implicitly masculine response to the extreme 'Othering' and feminisation of Africa. This suggests an entrapment of renaissance discourses within the masculinised globalisation discourse, in the same way that discourses of anti-colonial resistance were entrapped in the masculine discourse of colonialism.

Gendered hierarchisation and the African Renaissance

Gendered globalisation discourses position different worlds differently, since gender is premised on hierarchisation. Such concepts as First World, Third World, North, South amount to a power-premised hierarchisation mediated through ideologies of masculinity and femininity. Webb and Schirato (2003) argue that neoliberal discourse is imbued with the culture of naming and 'Othering', which is associated with power and hegemony.

Thus the back-water positioning of Africa in the globalising world is another consequence of such hierarchisation, and it is the express aim of the African Renaissance to lift Africa out of this quagmire. Tilner (2000, 56) argues that relations of power are mediated by discourses of gender, ‘whenever a relation of dominance is established, the construction of gender identity is involved’. These power relations mediate such discourses as race. In this gendered globalisation discourse, race as a gendered construct permeates globalisation and the privilege conferred on whiteness as a racial category (from the colonial days to the present) suggests that globalisation is not an innocent exercise on matters relating to racialism and its power dynamics. The ‘us’ and ‘them’ characteristic of imperial Enlightenment discourse still permeates global discourses, along with phrases such as ‘civilised’ and ‘uncivilised’ nations. Western notions of democracy and neoliberalism serve as models for the globalising world, and Africa is required to submit to these. A gendered hierarchy is therefore implicitly contained in globalisation discourse, and in some way this represents an entrapment in the sense that Africa’s upliftment is equated to submitting to Western models, and following a trajectory of development along Western lines in order to attain the same level.

A ‘masculine’ renaissance?

African Renaissance discourses, it would appear, have not escaped the trappings of a gendered globalisation discourse. To begin with, African nationalisms were imbued with ideologies of masculinity, as they were dealing with Africa’s feminisation. The same situation obtained during the post-independence era. African Renaissance discourses similarly appear unable to escape the trappings of such gendering. As an example, refer to Senegal’s African Renaissance Monument in Dakar. The monument – a symbol of the rebirth of Africa – is a colossal statue which Look (2010) describes thus: ‘A muscled man emerges from a volcano. His left arm holds a baby aloft toward the west; his right arm pulls a scantily clad woman behind him.’ The quote shows that renaissance discourses are imbued with a masculine ethos. Some feminist critics have criticised the monument as a male and patriarchal creation that shows the skewed gender balance obtaining in many African nations. While this may be true, a full appreciation of the whole scenario cannot be achieved without situating discourses of the African Renaissance in the context of gendered globalisation discourses, where a masculine globalisation engenders masculine responses.

‘New scramble’ for Africa, national self-interest and the African Renaissance

The feminisation of Africa (in current globalisation discourses) is readily evident in the so-called ‘new scramble for Africa’ by the West and by other emerging centres of power such as China. The nomenclature suggests that Africa is not in a different position from where it was at the onset of colonialism. Akomofale (2007, 8) revisits the well-known dictum in international relations, namely that self-interest is what guides the relations

of any nation with other nations: 'In international relations, there are neither permanent friends nor enemies; only national interests are permanent.' It follows that in the 'new scramble for Africa', both the West and China (as well as other emerging centres) are in Africa primarily to serve their own interests first and foremost, and then the interests of Africa. In fact, international relations are gendered, imbued with masculine ideologies as the case may be. While 'hard' and 'soft' power, coercion and suasion/attraction may respectively be employed differently by Africa's 'scramblers', it follows that a patriarchal ideology imbues their relationship with the continent. While the West's relationship with Africa since the colonial era has been explicitly and implicitly exploitative (as the above analysis has shown), that of the continent and the emerging economic giant, China, and others such as India, has been ambivalent. The West's exploitation of the continent has a long history beginning with slavery, then colonialism, followed by neo-colonialism, which is inherent in the neoliberal globalisation discourse.

On the other hand, China has no history of an imperial and exploitative relationship with Africa, and has assisted materially in a number of anti-colonial liberation struggles on the continent. China also sided with African countries in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War days, and currently espouses a policy of non-interference in its dealings with other countries. In addition, China relies on the image of its legendary 15th-century sea-faring admiral, Zheng He, who is reported to have made several trading expeditions to Africa, to portray itself as a non-imperial power in its relationship with the continent. The Sino-African relationship has therefore been portrayed as being based on mutual equality, which implies that it is mutually beneficial. Arguably, there are numerous continuities and discontinuities between the China Admiral Zheng He came from, that of the anticolonial war days, and the current People's Republic. Modern-day China offers an alternative model to development and globalisation to that of the West, and so is attractive to those African countries seeking alternatives to Western models, and also to conceptualisations of the African Renaissance. This is reinforced by China exercising 'soft' power in its relations with the continent. Nye (cited in Suzuki 2009, 781) defines soft power as 'the ability of a state to get "other countries to want what it wants"', primarily through attraction. The source of this attraction ranges from cultural attraction, ideology, to international institutions.' So attractive has this been, that in 2006 China hosted a successful Sino-African summit in Beijing, where virtually every African head of state was present (Romann 2006, 8–9). However, since all relationships involving power (in this case an economically powerful country and an economically weak continent) are permeated by gender ideologies, it follows that China's relationship with Africa can also be seen as gendered. Godenzi (2000, 39) observes that

dominant groups are drawn especially to the ideological mould of paternalism, where the coercion of subordinates is grounded in love, rather than hate.... Love, affection and praise are offered to subordinates on strict condition that the subordinates comply with the unequal relationship.

The Chinese Dragon, its 'soft' power notwithstanding, is masculine, just like Uncle Sam (the United States [US]) and his preference for 'hard' power. These are facts proponents

of the African Renaissance must take into account. In fact, in business, the Chinese, just like Westerners, are reportedly aggressive and shrewd, and there have been some complaints, notably in Zambia, of their exploitation of African workers.

Gendered relations are hardly ever mediated by equality, and hegemonic masculinities inevitably reap a 'patriarchal dividend'. Even 'soft' power is evidence of hegemony, and this is reinforced by Connell's observation that 'the dominance of hegemonic masculinity over other forms may be quiet and implicit' (2000, 50). While Africa's relations with China might therefore be mutually more beneficial than those with the West (in most spheres), the pattern of Chinese investment in Africa to date has focused largely on primary commodities to feed its growing industries, leaving Africa more or less in the same position as before. It therefore follows that the African Renaissance, in terms of industrialisation, will have to be internally generated, and the continent would also need to be more assertive and to encourage greater investment in manufacturing industries. It would have to move away from exporting unprocessed primary commodities, which largely translates to exporting jobs and surplus value. The weakness of most individual African countries means that greater bargaining power can be attained through regional groupings such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The 'patriarchal dividend' and global inequalities

In gender politics, masculinities (*vis-à-vis* femininities) benefit from what is referred to as the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell 1995) that can be used to explain current global inequalities. The powerful (the masculinised) in globalisation discourse would also be said to benefit from the 'patriarchal dividend' by neglecting the less powerful and powerless (feminised) – in this, it can be argued, lie current global inequalities. The uneven nature of globalisation means there are centres (nodes) of growth such as the West, Southeast Asia (including China) and nodes of relatively little growth, as is the case with much of Africa. This, since the days of colonial imperialism, has created power hierarchies premised on domination and exploitation. Technology mediated this domination and exploitation, and formed the basis of the power differentiation that manifests through race and exploitation. Technology enabled the metropolis to extract a 'patriarchal dividend' from the periphery. In current globalisation discourses it continues to play the same role, as witnessed by how countries that produce primary commodities (e.g. in Africa) are heavily disadvantaged compared to industrialised countries that produce manufactured products. Low raw materials commodity prices and very high prices for manufactures illustrate how technology mediates imbalances between rich and poor. This has led to resource-rich countries (mainly in Africa) becoming pauperised, while many resource-poor countries (mainly in the West) have become very rich. A lack of technological capacity is the main reason why African resources, like minerals, end up under the control of multinational companies – Africa has yet to develop the technological capacity to exploit them. This minimises the benefits that a country reaps from its resources, when compared to the repatriation of profits to industrialised

countries which import the raw materials. The patriarchal dividend is also obtained and defended through institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, alongside prevailing unfair terms of trade between developed and developing countries.

Discourses of the African Renaissances, apart from privileging indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), recognise the importance of technology in ending Africa's marginalisation, as witnessed by the existence of the African Renaissance Institute of Science and Technology. Without something of a technological revolution, the African Renaissance will just remain a pipe dream. It therefore goes without saying that African countries need to invest in technology and research if they are to break out of the poverty trap, where a 'masculine' technology is the basis of their exploitation. However, on their own IKS and nativism may not provide all the answers, hence the need to borrow and learn from others who have done what Africa aims to achieve through its renaissance. Considering that all cultures are virtually hybrid – for example, Western culture has strong elements from the Orient, like Christianity – it follows that Africa stands to benefit immensely by learning from others and understanding other cultures. It is noticeable that in much of the West there are institutes, schools and centres for African and Oriental studies that show the value the West attributes to understanding and learning from other cultures. In Africa, similar institutes for European, American or Oriental studies, which are designed to achieve the same, are scarce. This means that Africa retains a knowledge gap that puts it at a disadvantage when dealing with the main nodes in the current globalising world. Furthermore, Africa needs to develop its intellectual resources in order to help close the knowledge and technological gap between itself and other regions of the world – especially the West and Asia. For Africa, the problem of the brain drain (the loss of its top intellectuals and skilled manpower) stands in the way of achieving this goal, and African nations and renaissance strategists need to come up with ways to arrest this trend.

Of African politics and gendered globalisation discourses

Gendered globalisation discourses have impacted on Africa in more ways than one. As noted, African Renaissance discourses seem unable to escape the trappings of gendering. Few other discourses in Africa, like those on politics and leadership, have escaped this fate. African nationalism was masculinised, and post-independent African politics is largely masculinised (culturally) due to the dominance of men in leadership positions. Globalisation discourse fetishises and valourises the market over the state, and in the final analysis it masculinises the market and feminises the African state (Rage 2003). Facing a masculinised globalisation discourse, those participating in African political discourses, along with leaders, have either been subordinate, complicit, resistant or (in some cases) oppositional. Subordinate and complicit relationships mean an acceptance of the skewed power relationships imbued in global discourses, as represented by global institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, and the neo-liberal discourse largely permeated by Americanisms and their implicit racialism.

This is seen in the imposition of economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in African countries which led to the loss of power to determine their own destiny. In fact, finance, as represented by the above institutions, is masculinised in gendered globalisation discourses. In this way subordinate and complicit African masculinities at worst become feminised. However, more 'masculine' responses are characterised by resistance and opposition to various manifestations of contemporary globalisation, in terms of its tendency to dictate, enforce terms and administer bitter medicine (like SAPs) down the throats of African nations.

These challenges to the hegemonic masculinities of globalisation and neocolonialism have largely had mixed results, being characterised more by failure rather than success due to the control of the global economy by a few (hegemonic masculinities) who can make life hard for any oppositional and resistant masculinities. The pattern in Africa has largely been that radical leaders, beginning with the late pan-Africanist and first Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, have met with more failure than success in their attempts to move their nations forward. Writing in the magazine, *New African*, Ankomah (2010, 17), claims Nkrumah was unable to obtain a loan for his industrialisation policy from the West, which thwarted his plans for Ghana's development. More recently, the case of Zimbabwe is another example. After embarking on a land reform programme described by Mamdani (cited in Gatsheni-Ndlovu 2009, 1143) as 'the greatest transfer of property in Southern Africa since colonisation', but vilified by the West as disregarding the rule of law, the country soon faced a backlash mainly from the West, and went into economic meltdown that caused its citizens immense suffering. While this is not the place to discuss the multifaceted ramifications of the Zimbabwean case, suffice to say that it, to an extent, represents an oppositional 'masculine' response to global hegemonic discourses in their Western form. Hegemonic globalisation discourses have therefore impacted on the leadership patterns of several African nations. The (mainly economic) failure associated with radical leaders means they usually lose popularity amongst the populace and may then go on to lose elections, before being replaced by more neoliberal, compliant leaders whose very compliance often gleans the rewards of a measure of economic stability as a result of aid, grants and investment by metropolitan companies. This, however, does not lead to the kind of development that would free countries from the trap of underdevelopment and marginalisation, or enhance their ability to compete on equal terms with developed countries. They are increasingly forced to open up their markets to cheaper Western and other products, thus disadvantaging local industries which may be forced to close down. Over time, the populace may realise that they have not benefited much from the policies of their neoliberal-inclined leader. This may set the stage for the coming-to-power of more radical leaders, thereby creating a vicious cycle that spawns the discourse of a 'leadership crisis' in African countries. This 'crisis' is best understood in the context of gendered global discourses and their impact on African nations and leaderships, although the personal shortcomings of individual African leaders are, inevitably, part of the equation.

Failed leaders often find a scapegoat in real or imagined Western conspiracies to win popularity amongst their people and sympathy from other African leaders. In this libidinous

world, where gender mediates an understanding of the world, anti-imperial 'masculine' postures against an emasculating globalisation discourse and against the West can gain popular appeal amongst African populations who are impoverished and powerless. In this case the leader portrays himself as the warrior-hero, out to recover the nation's virility and/or avenge the emasculation and humiliation of the nation inflicted by greedy, iniquitous, parasitic, imperial and foreign ogres. He transfers all the problems the country may be facing (including those due to his own failings) onto the imperialists. The schizophrenia spawned largely by globalisation discourse in African leadership discourses is one area that African Renaissance discourses need to address. New leadership paradigms need to be developed, by borrowing aspects from positive traditional models and infusing them with positive modern examples to make them more relevant and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. This, because the paradigms produced largely by Western-oriented educational institutions do not appear to have successfully risen to the challenge, particularly in the area of restoring Africa's capacity for internally generated development that can champion an African Renaissance. Leaders need to be able to negotiate the treacherous nooks and crannies of a hegemonic, masculine, globalisation discourse and must put the continent on the path to prosperity, and in a position of strength. From here it will have a voice in the globalised world, and will be equal to other centres of growth. Gendered globalisation discourses, the powerlessness and emasculation of African leaders, and the consequent weakening of the state and the impoverishment of the masses, impact on the cohesion of African nations. Nations are gendered constructs, and as Mayer (2000, 6) puts it: 'the nation has largely been constructed as a hetero-male project, and imagined as a brotherhood ... which has typically sprung ... "from masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope"'. In the case of African nations, national disempowerment in the context of a masculine globalisation translates into masculinised humiliation and the shattering of masculine hope as far as national prosperity is concerned. For African nations, being no more than colonial constructs and being multi-ethnic, this loss of faith and hope in the national project strikes at the heart of national cohesion, forcing men to try to reassert themselves along the lines of ethnicity, thereby exacerbating national conflicts. As a result, civil wars have become a regular feature of most African countries, such as Rwanda, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. This resonates with Kimmel's (2003, 604) assertion that 'gender becomes one of the chief organizing principles of local, regional and national resistance to globalization, whether expressed in religious or secular, ethnic or national terms'.

Gendered global discourses have not only impoverished African countries, they have also resulted in weak African states. These states often try to assert themselves through dictatorial (masculine) tendencies which, in turn, lead to discontent or strife and the further weakening of the state. The competition for scarce resources leads to violence, which is often institutionalised in the form of national exclusion of certain groups on the grounds of ethnicity, race, religion or creed. The state, as Wallerstein (2004, 54) notes, becomes the main means

... of capital accumulation, which in turn weakens the ability of the state to perform other tasks. When the state machinery becomes the main mode of capital accumulation, all sense of regular transfer of office to successors becomes remote, which leads to wildly falsified elections (if any are held at all) and rambunctious transfers of power, which in turn necessarily expands the political role of the military.

This has been the tragedy of many African nations, and it has impacted on issues of governance and the development of a democratic culture. The stability and governance of African nations is one of the issues which discourses of the African Renaissance have to address. Regional integration and a movement towards supra-nationalism, as epitomised by the African Union and regional economic groupings, as well as working towards greater economic prosperity are some means that can help mitigate against the potential breakdown of African nation states.

Of gender regimes and the African Renaissance

Gendered globalisation discourses and the marginality they have conferred on Africa have impacted on gender regimes in Africa, impoverishing and disempowering both African women and men. For example, SAPs apparently hit women hardest. Cook (2007, 5) notes that ‘women absorb the cost of a shrinking welfare state through increased workloads, stress and, and work-related health hazards. They are the “shock absorbers” of International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies in terms of both their paid and unpaid labour.’

Understandings of gender in contemporary Africa have largely been received from the West, and development interventions have usually been done by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are largely informed by mostly Western (often radical) variants of feminism which do not accurately comprehend and address gender realities on the continent. The result has often been a polarisation of the genders in ways that have brought problems along with the intended solutions. Silberschmidt (2005) notes this trend in her studies in Kenya and Tanzania. She discovered that impoverished and emasculated male roles have brought problems that have, for example, helped spread HIV/Aids, as sexual conquest remains the only site and avenue for impoverished males to show their masculinity. Safilios-Rothschild (2000) notes that the impoverishment of African males (caused partly by development interventions blind to the fact that African women and men are equally impoverished and marginalised) has partly contributed to instability in some African countries, as disempowered males are easily swayed into joining armies or militias by leaders out to serve their own interests: ‘In view of this profound identity crisis and feelings of being socially and economically downgraded, the majority of African men turn more and more to revolutions and bloody ethnic and religious conflicts, swelling the ranks of the military’ (ibid, 89). Safilios-Rothschild uses Rwanda as an example, but countries which could be added to the equation include Zimbabwe, where impoverished youths have swelled the ranks of militias of some political parties. While the dynamics of gender are more complex than this might imply, what is pertinent is that gender issues in Africa and development interventions need

to be informed more by internally generated perspectives, such as those of African womanisms, which are cooperation and collaboration oriented in their approach to dealing with questions of gender justice, thus becoming more relevant and responsive to social and national needs. A polarisation of the genders does not appear to help realise an African Renaissance. Gender equality, and the full participation and co-operation of women and men in Africa's development, are prerequisites for realising the African Renaissance.

The hegemony of Western understandings of gender has meant that they function like other globalisation discourses in suppressing, silencing and foreclosing other perspectives such as African conceptions of gender. And it is no insult to oxymoronicly describe these hegemonic feminine discourses as 'masculine' in the manner they suppress and silence other perspectives. In fact, hegemonic femininities of globalisation are centred on Western models and feminist modalities of achieving gender equality. These, however (unlike hegemonic masculinities of globalisation) have received little attention from scholars of globalisation. African conceptualisations of gender, which are largely non-hierarchical, can also help to subvert a gendered globalisation discourse and its reinforcement of gender hierarchies through a valourisation of the masculine over the feminine.

Representation as gendering: A bane for the African Renaissance

Another key area for the African Renaissance is the area of representation – a key site on which the feminisation of Africa, since the 'Dark Continent' days, has been projected. 'Representation' here means representing the cultural aspect of globalisation. Indeed, representation is central to the construction, institutionalisation, 'normalisation' and perpetuation of gendered identities and hierarchies. Africa's representation has always been done mainly by others – in particular, the West. As dominant groups are drawn to patriarchal ideologies, the way they represent those they dominate is imbued with a culture of Othering which translates into a negative portrayal; this is the tragedy of Africa's portrayal by the West. Enduring metaphors of Africa as the Other have been formulated since the continent's contact with the West. Currently, the dominant images of Africa, as projected by dominant global media houses, portray Africa negatively and include images of war and genocide, disease such as Aids, poverty, hunger and starvation, corruption and bad governance, failed states, and so on. These negative images come at the expense of positive ones portraying the progress African countries have made. This is part of the culture of the extreme Othering of Africa, which has contributed to its rather extreme marginalisation. Images of Africa as a failed and hopeless continent – particularly when imbibed and internalised by Africans themselves – are inimical to progress, as Africans tend to look outside for models of success and progress, thus contributing to a valourisation of the foreign at the expense of the local.

In advancing the African Renaissance, Africans need to take charge of their representation in order to portray positive and progressive images of the continent. The

eschewed power relating to how the continent is represented contributes to Africa's marginalisation. Africans need to appropriate the power to represent themselves, to control how they view themselves and how the world views them. In fact, representation is one of those sites where the feminisation of Africa and the perpetuation of unequal power relations have been enacted and made to appear normative.

Neo-liberal development discourses and hegemony: Silencing other models

Yet another key area of Africa's Renaissance challenge is that of development discourses. According to Jarowsz (1992, 108): 'the discourse of modernity and development is predicated upon highly unequal relations of power between the developed and developing world'. These unequal relations of power translate into a gendering in which masculinity is appropriated by the 'developed', and femininity is conferred on the 'underdeveloped'. Thus, development discourse is indeed gendered and gendering. The hegemony of Western models of development has tended to silence other models such as African ones. Western linear (stage by stage) models are the ones African countries are made to emulate, for example, through economic SAPs. Linearity and Western models of development are premised on Enlightenment notions of progress, where development follows a Darwinian paradigm in which there is a progression from lower forms to higher forms. This becomes the basis of the Othering of those considered to still be in the 'lower' stages of development, creating a hierarchy which inevitably becomes permeated by ideologies of gender, where femininity is used to mark those still in the lower stages (in this case, underdeveloped areas of the world such as those in Africa, hence the Third World, the South). This is where Africa can rely on its indigenous cosmologies and world views to come up with paradigms that are best suited to it, rather than to remain trapped in Western paradigms where Africa is always trying to catch up with the West. Mbiti (1989), referring to African notions of time, posits that in Africa time does not mean linearity, but is premised on events. These perspectives and cosmologies can be harnessed in enabling Africa to come up with development models of its own. China has demonstrated the possibility of alternative models to 'development'. Young (2008, 8) notes that

there is a sense in which everything is happening at once in China, so to some degree, there is a collapsing of the familiar framework of historical stages of industrial development into one where multiple forms of economic transition are taking place in parallel.

However, Africa's circumstances are different from those of Asia or China; while Asian examples provide an alternative to Western models, there are fundamental differences that make the aping of the Southeast Asian examples largely untenable. Former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammed, notes that the development of Southeast Asian 'tiger' economies – and by using the 'tiger' rather than 'tigress' metaphor the Asian nations were implicitly masculinising themselves – was helped

by Western direct investment in manufacturing, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the easy accessing of Western markets. He declares that '[w]hen we Asian nations, including China, were struggling for a place in the economic sun, private sector investors from developed nations came and helped establish industries and businesses that brought benefit to all. This is what Africa has lost out on' (2010, 14). This contrasts with Africa, where most investment has focused on the extraction of and trade in primary products such as minerals. Therefore, while the Asian 'tiger' model or the Chinese version is attractive, it was achieved through a route that currently differs from Africa's development trajectory. In African Renaissance discourses on development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development's (NEPAD) vision appears to be modelled on the Asian tiger developmental model, in that it envisions the development of Africa assisted by international partners which include Western nations. If this NEPAD vision succeeds, perhaps it will be possible to hear of African 'panther', 'cheetah' or 'lion' economies, if the feline metaphor were found to be equally attractive.

An alternative world view? Subverting a 'masculine' globalisation discourse

Another key area for the African Renaissance is that of language and culture. The hegemony of Western languages (like English) contributes to Africa's marginalisation. English, for example, has an implicit negative perception of blackness, which has contributed to the extreme Othering of Africa. It is also an implicitly masculine language, for example if one considers that Enlightenment narratives referred to humanity by using the word 'mankind', and so it helps to buttress the masculine, hegemonic globalisation discourse. African languages can help to subvert this as they carry African world views containing cultural values such as *ubuntu*¹ that differ from Western Enlightenment and neoliberal views. *Ubuntu* privileges the human being as opposed to the market logic of neoliberalism. Unlike in notions of Enlightenment subjectivity, where humanity is master of the universe and nature, *ubuntu* places humans as a part of (rather than masters of) the universe and nature, and so can form the basis of entirely new development paradigms that privilege resource conservation and human dignity over the market-logic of neoliberal discourse which promotes the ruthless exploitation of human by human, resource depletion, environmental pollution and the concomitant global warming.

Africa's entanglement in globalisation discourses which give little room to other perspectives means that alternatives to neoliberalism (such as *ubuntu*) have little chance unless African countries can take charge of their destinies and map their own trajectories, and in the process subvert the hegemony of neoliberal discourse that does not appear to serve their best interests.

Conclusion

The analysis presented here demonstrates that the discourses of the African Renaissances are entangled in the gendered and gendering nature of globalisation discourse, since they are framed within it. Responses of the African Renaissance, however, can be complicit or subversive. By trying to bring Africa on par with other global actors, some discourses on the renaissance (such as the projection in NEPAD) can be conceived as complicit in globalisation, as there is no attempt to challenge or subvert the latter, but rather to make Africa a key player. Other discourses – particularly nativist and Afro-radical-permeated ones – can, however, be subversive in their attempts to conceive of an African Renaissance whose trajectory differs from any others, and whose development models are original and conceived out of African realities and cosmologies. In this way a new alternative to neoliberalism might become a reality. In the same way, the masculinity that mediates globalisation discourse can be subverted. The overall goal, however, is to enable Africa to escape its ‘feminisation’ in globalisation discourses, and to bring it on par with other regions of the world, but on its own terms.

Note

1. *Ubuntu* is a Zulu/Xhosa word, translated here to mean ‘humanness’. For more on the philosophy of *ubuntu*, see M.J. Bhengu (2006). *The Global philosophy of mankind*. The text explores how this philosophy can make positive contributions to the developing world and also to the discourse of globalisation.

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