

INTRODUCTION

AFRICA AND THE WORLD: INTERACTION, CONNECTION AND CHANGE

Africa's entanglements with the world have always been structured by circulation: of bodies and goods, of ideas and images, of laws, religions and aesthetic forms. The contributions gathered in this thematic issue, *Africa and the World: Interaction, Connection and Change*, respond directly to the call to think of Africa not as a peripheral recipient of global forces, but as a decisive actor in shaping transnational worlds. Across very different disciplines and case studies, the articles in this special issue focus on several shared problematics: the centrality of mobility and displacement in the formation of African identities; the enduring afterlives of colonialism in legal frameworks, development agendas, humanitarian practices and narrative traditions; and the usefulness of relationality and circulation (as articulated by Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* and Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation) for understanding how ideas, cultural forms and memory travel across the globe. Equally significant is the emphasis on African agency, expressed through literature, philosophy, law, sport, diplomacy and translation, as well as the ongoing work of rewriting, reclaiming and transmitting history.

Joachim Adams and Cynthia Akwadah's comparative reading of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* and Abdourahman Waberi's *In the United States of Africa* explores exile as a defining condition of post-colonial African subjectivity. Through Afropessimist and Afrofuturist lenses, respectively, these novels reveal how spiritual, psychological and geopolitical displacement reshapes belonging, ethics and global responsibility. Read alongside theorists such as Glissant, Achille Mbembe, Edward Said and Felwine Sarr (as the authors propose), this article exemplifies the issue's overarching interest in relationality: exile here is not merely

displacement from a fixed origin, but a reconfiguration of relational networks – spiritual, epistemic and geopolitical – through which Africa’s “global modernities” are negotiated.

Elżbieta Binczycka-Gacek and Dariusz Brzostek turn to speculative fiction to examine how “imaginary histories” and futuristic world-making re-situate Africa within post-human, cosmic and technologically transformed environments. The article examines how narratives of migration, colonisation and decolonisation, set not only on Earth, but in cosmic and post-human environments, become metaphors for contemporary processes of dwelling, inhabitation and environmental transformation. Drawing on Malcolm Ferdinand’s *Decolonial Ecology* and re-reading philosophical notions of “terrestrial nature” (Heidegger, Arendt) from an African perspective, the article analyses works such as Cristina de Middel’s *The Afronauts*, the exhibition *O Futuro na Lista de Espera*, Anthony Joseph’s *African Origins of UFOs* and Jacek Dukaj’s speculative fiction.

Gustavo Santana Miranda Brito and Marcus Paulo F. Dos S. Domingues investigate the translation of Manu Herbstein’s *Ama* into Brazilian Portuguese as a decolonising act that reconnects Ghanaian histories of enslavement with Brazilian memory cultures, revealing the long-standing circulations of the Atlantic world. The interview with the author himself complements these inquiries by reflecting on narrative strategies, archival silences and the ethical responsibilities of representing slavery for African and diasporic readers.

Among the articles focused on law, governance and the politics of social life, Doreen Basemera examines the potential and limitations of Ubuntu-based approaches to conflict resolution in Ugandan refugee settings, demonstrating how communal ethics offer powerful frameworks for reconciliation while also generating tensions when applied within contemporary humanitarian regimes. Jakub Kościółek and Adam Bulandra analyse the management of infertility in Africa, tracing how customary law, international norms, public health deficits and gendered expectations shape social responses to infertility and contribute to persistent discrimination. The authors show how legal pluralism, cultural resistance and limited access to assisted reproductive technologies produce a situation in which infertility is simultaneously medicalised, stigmatised and addressed through alternative practices such as witchcraft and herbalism. By calling for comprehensive reforms and greater prominence of infertility on national and international agendas, the article highlights Africa’s agency in redefining

reproductive rights and health as matters of social justice, not private misfortune.

Francis Salawu's analysis of Nigeria's persistent brain drain highlights the structural conditions that drive skilled migration despite governmental interventions. Through a case study approach, he shows how political and economic constraints undermine professional retention and embed Nigeria within broader African and global dynamics of unequal development, labour markets and knowledge economies, while implicitly raising questions about the rights, aspirations and obligations of highly skilled migrants within transnational spaces.

Klaudia Wilk-Mhagama's study of karate programmes involving people with albinism in Tanzania illustrates how sport serves as a vehicle for social inclusion, empowerment and international visibility. Based on extensive autoethnographic research, her work demonstrates how NGOs and sports associations engage with global networks to challenge stigma, reshape narratives of human dignity and position Tanzania as an active participant in international soft power relations.

The Varia section includes a single article by Bofry Wahyu Samosir and Emanuel P. D. Martasudjita on "inculturating" the *Pasahat Ulos Saput* ritual into Catholic funeral practice among the Batak Toba in Indonesia. Although geographically outside the African context, this study of ritual negotiation and cultural translation offers a comparative point of reflection on how communities integrate local traditions into universal religious frameworks.

We hope that this issue will be read as a set of intersecting routes rather than isolated case studies. The articles presented here trace a dense and changing network of relations. These relations are not merely descriptive; they are normative and imaginative, demanding that we rethink what it means to speak of "Africa and the world" at a time when global crises, from climate change to forced migration, continue to expose both the inequalities and the possibilities of our shared planet.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue map the many routes through which Africa interacts with the world, through the lived experiences of exile and migration, the structures of law and public policy, the reconstruction of memory through translation and narrative and the reimagining of futures in speculative and cultural practices. As guest editors, we invite readers to follow these routes, to attend to the specificities of each context and to consider how the connections outlined here may inform future research, teaching and political engagement. The contributions

assembled in this volume suggest that Africa's interactions with the world are not only sites of historical trauma and structural constraint, but also laboratories for new forms of relation, responsibility and change.

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