

the intimate relationship between performance and politics in diverse contexts.

While it is easy to stop at the claim that performance has always connected with politics in Africa, the contributors go further in this collection to explore the implications of this relationship. That is where the collection gets exciting, and it solidifies the significance of the book. Nompumelelo Zondi's "The Intrinsic Power of Songs Sung During Protests at South African Institutions of Higher Learning" moves through time and identifies a trajectory between songs and protest in South Africa across historical and ideological lines. Tracing the role of songs from the Apartheid era to incidents that culminated in the #FeesMustFall movement allows for an understanding of how context influences one single mode of communication in volatile spaces. The chapter "Discussing the Play *Angalia Ni Mimi!* and a Performance by the Playwright Marthe Djilo Kamga" by Frieda Ekotto operates in a transnational and diasporic context to highlight women-centred African epistemologies that are created in a one-woman play. In "Surviving Gender Violence Activating Community Stories for Social Change", Anita Gonzalez analyses the use of solo performances to, in this case, speak to the difficult topic of rape in South Africa. Another difficult topic—the brutal colonial history of the Belgian Congo—is the focus of Yolanda Covington-Ward's "Seditious Songs: Spirituality as Performance and Political Action in Colonial-Era Belgian Congo." Here, she examines the performative encounters that occurred as Congolese subjects sang hymns to reclaim agency in the face of Belgian oppression.

Judith Irvine (36) speaks for the rest of the contributors when she notes, in "Performing Political Identities: Senegalese Speakers and Their Audiences", that performance is layered and thus encompasses a wide range of possibilities. Not only does it appear in the more obvious forms of dance (as in a chapter on how dance and space relate in South Africa) and plays (including one-person plays in Cameroon and South Africa), performance also manifests in personal and mediated social exchanges, such as in-person "institutionalized" teasing in Senegal and gratitude over the radio in Nigeria, respectively. Politics, on the other hand, manifests in hyper-masculine themes in Tanzanian underground rapping; it is also present in Black Nationalism in Haiti and South Africa; and can be found in hymns in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The diverse definitions of these two broad umbrella topics provide room for the various authors to take their chapters in unique directions, as is also seen in their methodologies.

African Performance Arts and Political Acts.

Naomi André, Yolanda Covington-Ward & Jendele Hungbo (eds.).

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The intricate interconnections between performance and politics in Africa are informed by a productive and chequered history, one of the famous events of which was the call in 1964 by the celebrated Nigerian author Chinua Achebe for African literary artists to infuse their creative work with political consciousness. In *African Performance Arts and Political Acts*, Naomi André, Yolanda Covington-Ward and Jendele Hungbo take a similar charge by another luminary, Léopold Sédar Senghor, as basis to explore this connection. The Senegalese poet-politician made his call two years after Achebe, and focussing on him appears to be a highly intentional choice; his background embodies the purpose of the 12 constituent chapters that combine to highlight

Differences in method can remind emerging scholars and advanced graduate students of the importance of tailoring scholarship to fit specific areas of study. For example, Nikolas Sweet's field research into institutionalized teasing is done through a focus on and subsequent comparative analysis of three examples and Irvine uses her field data to explain the linguistic role that different Senegalese case studies played in both conventional and unconventional notions of performance in the 20th and 21st centuries. Using interviews and analysis, David Kerr employs a theoretical framework by Michel de Certeau to move an understanding of rap beyond the restrictive resistance/consumption binary. The various types of data—including plays, speeches, and music—suggest overlapping qualitative modes of engagement that can still be specific to these unique data sets.

The editors clearly delineate their area of focus in their introduction and present a strong case for how African countries south of the Sahara connect performance and politics. As in most collections, selection creates exclusion in terms of representation. Accordingly, North Africa and Lusophone Africa are absent. While all the representative regions bar West Africa are each represented by one country, South Africa dominates the collection with almost half of the chapters. This is understandable considering the process through which the collection came to fruition—from a workshop organized in South Africa—although the promise of the book makes one wonder what could have been if more countries had been sampled.

Another lacuna is the lack of attention paid to social media, despite the presence and influence of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and lately Tik Tok on both politics and performance. Even Zondi's chapter, which refers to an incident that also played out online, is more interested in songs sung offline. Social media has become an intrinsic part of cultural practices across the continent, and research consistently underscores its performative nature. But again, the editors and authors are highly aware of their focus. Accordingly, identifying this gap serves to reveal the potential of this work to influence subsequent research in order to better understand the connection between performance and politics in relation to events such as #EndSARS or #BringBackOurGirls in Nigeria, #AmharaGenocide in Ethiopia, #ZimbabweanLivesMatter in Zimbabwe and lesser-known events.

While Achebe and Senghor both made their calls in a specific time of political upheaval, each chapter proves that their claims are still relevant in the 21st century. To a large extent, the authors collectively

manage to adequately “explore how identity, interpersonal relationships, and larger societies are shaped through performance dialogues across Africa” (3). These investigations crucially speak to each other and are enhanced by four thematic subtopics that help to structure the work. The collection thus presents a strong case for new directions in performance and politics on the continent and is highly recommended for scholars in humanities and social science fields.

Kwabena Opoku-Agyemang

kwabena.aa@gmail.com

University of Ghana

Legon, Ghana

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5149-6128>

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