The Rhetorics of West African Historical Feminists: A Pedagogical Resource

Nancy Henaku, University of Ghana

Introduction

There is a popular misconception that "African Feminism" is oxymoronic, a view that assumes that "feminism" is Western and unAfrican. Despite such arguments and our field's little engagement with Africa's feminist rhetorical legacy, the continent presents us with an extensive historiography that should not be presented in broad brushstrokes. Consequently, this teaching resource focuses on the rhetorics of West African historical feminists, highlighting the works of Nana Asma'u, Adelaide Casely Hayford, Anonymous, Efwa Kato, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (with the Egba Women of Abba), Awa Thiam and Annie Ruth Jiagge. Because of their varied identities (as Muslims, Christians, Anglophones, Francophones, Victorians, internationalists, elites, market women, socialists and anonymous), these women's rhetorics resonate transnationally and provide rich materials for classroom discussions. I include Anonymous because of a "history of anonymity" in West Africa[1] and to disrupt the politics of naming "great" rhetors in the field. The submission on the women of Abba (who worked with Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti) highlights the rhetorical power of collective activism and African protest performances while pointing to the archival dimensions of historical studies of women.

I present these West African women as an invitation for more sustained classroom (and ultimately, scholarly) discussions on various strands of feminist rhetoric from the continent's different regions: East, West, North, Central and South. This invitation is essential for several reasons. First, the rhetorics of African women and feminisms have not been significantly analyzed within the field despite efforts to expand and globalize beyond normative Western frontiers. In North America, which is the center of contemporary rhetorical studies, recent publications have spotlighted dimensions of African feminist rhetorics (see Mavis Beckson in Peitho[2]; Maria

1. Newell, Stephanie. *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013.
2. Beckson, Mavis Boatemaa. "Transforming Feminist Narratives and Participation of African Marginalized Women through Ceremonial Beads." *Peitho: Journal of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition* 22, no. 3 (2020). Transforming Feminist Narratives and Participation of African Marginalized Women through Ceremonial Beads – CFSHRC.

Martin in RSQ[3]; Efe Plange in Peitho[4]) and there has been some previous focus on Wangari Maathai[5] and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf[6] perhaps because their status as Nobel Prize winners gives them global visibility. Though crucial, these works are not enough to provide a sense of the broad range of African feminisms and the histories of African women's rhetorics. In African publications, such as the African Journal of Rhetoric (AJR)[7] and the African Yearbook of Rhetoric (AYOR)[8] which have been in circulation for close to two decades, there is limited engagement with women's rhetoric (see Tarez Samra Graban in AJR[9]; Ruvimbo Goredema in AYOR[10]). The recently published *Companion to African Rhetoric*[11], which seeks to provide a "holistic" view of African Rhetoric, has no chapter on women. If there is a strong connection between pedagogy and scholarship (that is, what gets taught ultimately shapes what is researched and vice versa), then this observation points to the fact that African women's rhetorics are not significantly and diversely represented in our curricula. Spotlighting African women's rhetoric in the classroom would therefore be a disruption to this palpable epistemic/pedagogical silencing and invisibilization.

Teaching African feminisms is one of the many crucial steps we need to take to imagine a more global future for the field. Bringing feminist histories of the continent to the classroom can help us to comprehensively situate and theorize African women's rhetorical contributions to women's liberation

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3. Martin, Maria. "Self-Identified as Nonpolitical: Locating Characteristics of African Rhetoric in Nigerian Women's Words." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2022): 242-256. https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2022.2077625.
4. Plange, Efe Franca. "The Pepper manual: Towards Situated Non-Western Feminist Rhetorical Practices." *Peitho Journal of the Coalition of Feminist Scholars in the History of Rhetoric & Composition* 23, no. 4 (2021). The Pepper Manual: Towards Situated Non-Western Feminist Rhetorical Practices – CFSHRC.
5. Gorsevski, Ellen W. "Wangari Maathai's Emplaced Rhetoric: Greening Global Peacebuilding." *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 6, no. 3 (2012): 290-307. https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2012.689776; Schell, Eileen E. "Transnational Environmental Justice Rhetorics and the Green Belt Movement: Wangari Muta Maathai's Ecological Rhetorics and Literacies." *JAC* 33, no. 3/4 (2013): 585-613. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43854569.
6. Southard, Belinda A. Stillion. "Crafting Cosmopolitan Nationalism: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's Rhetorical Leadership." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103, no. 4 (2017): 395-414. https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2017.1360508.
7. African Journal of Rhetoric (2009-2025), Sabinet African Journals, African Journal of Rhetoric.
8. African Yearbook of Rhetoric (2010-2020), Sabinet African Journals, African Yearbook of Rhetoric.
9. Graban, Tarez Samra. "Decolonising the transnational archive: Re/writing Rhetorical Histories of How African Women (Can) Govern." *African Journal of Rhetoric* 9, no. 1 (2017): 82-118. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-9fcb29fa8.
10. Goredema, Ruvimbo. "African Feminism: The African Woman's Struggle for Identity," *African Yearbook of Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (2010): 33-41. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC169591.
11. Ige, Segun, Gilbert Motsaathebe, and Omedi Ochieng, eds. *A Companion to African Rhetoric*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.

globally. Crucially, primary sources of African women's rhetoric (as presented subsequently) reveal the complex influences of Africa's diverse languages, religions, ethnicities and cultures, histories of (pre/post)colonialism, nationalism, modernity and globalization, presenting essential material that can enhance classroom discussions on the complexities of gendered subjectivities across (con)texts and scales. The diversity of voices and perspectives would support pedagogical efforts at broadening students' knowledge of varied rhetorical performances and provide them with critical tools for reading, thinking and communicating across cultures. Because of Africa's unique geopolitical positioning and the fact that African women's rhetorics are shaped by movements of all kinds, the resources provide interesting connections with feminisms from the African Diasporas, other Global Southern contexts and the West. Engaging African feminist rhetoric would therefore enrich classroom and scholarly theorizations in feminist, global, transnational, decolonial, comparative and cultural rhetorics. It also provides crucial material on the rhetorical histories of social movements as well as women's collective and individual contributions in such spaces.

Course Applicability

Undergraduate Courses

Black Rhetorics
Intercultural Communication
Global Rhetorics
Rhetoric in Everyday Life

Graduate Courses

Women's/Feminist Rhetoric
Transnational Rhetorics
Global Rhetorics
Comparative and Cultural Rhetorics
Rhetorics of Social Movements
African American Rhetorics
African Rhetorics

Key Pedagogical Themes

***Other* Feminisms:** This covers feminist articulations that lie outside of what might be considered as traditionally Western. This broad theme can account for the varied feminisms in this resource including the Islamic protofeminism of Nana Asma'u, the Third World feminism of Annie Jiagge, socialist feminism of F. Ransome-Kuti, PanAfrican feminism of Efwa Kato and Adelaide Casely-Hayford. This theme also implies that there is a sociopolitical reason for the marginalization of non-Western feminist thought and instructors should provide pedagogical opportunities for students to reflect on which

feminist texts/subjects get taught and why. Students must also reflect on the different cultural and historical contexts of the texts without ignoring moments of engagements, appropriation and/or interrogation of Western feminisms and their histories.

Circulation: In the primary resources, circulation manifests in terms of the movement of people and ideas. For instance, Nana Asma'u's rhetoric must be examined in the context of the spread of Islam in West Africa and the fact that her thoughts were circulated by a group of itinerant teachers trained in her school.

(Post)coloniality: African feminisms are shaped by histories of European colonialisms and their aftermath. These histories significantly reconfigured categories of social analysis such as gender, race and class and should inform discussions of intersectional themes in the texts. (Post)colonial themes privilege the analytical usefulness of deep history.

Intersectionality: While the interlocking of oppression is a central theme in African feminist rhetoric, their manifestations and interactions in African contexts may also have histories that diverge from North American explanations of social categories (e.g., gender). Also, as some of the sources below indicate, discussions of the interlocking nature of oppression in African feminisms existed prior to its formal theorization as intersectionality in the U.S academy.

Archival Politics: This theme engages with the possibilities and challenges of the African feminist archive and how these shape rhetorical studies of African women. Instructors should highlight how the primary sources do the work of memorializing African feminisms.

Silence and Rhetorical Marginality: As a theme, silence manifests in various ways in the sources including a) the minimal engagement with African women's rhetoric in rhetorical studies, b) the silencing of African women's theoretical contribution to feminism, c) silences and the politics of reading African women's rhetoric, d) (trans)national archival silences on African women, and e) African women's voicing as disruption of silence. Instructors should encourage students to consider various ways in which silence can be used to theorize African women's rhetorical performances.

Mothering Rhetorics: In African feminism, rhetorics of mothering and maternalism extend beyond biological motherhood to include what Semley describes as "public motherhood" with its social and ideological

implications.[12] African feminisms often articulate their feminist visions through rhetorics of motherhood that cannot be divorced from rhetorics of gendered nationalism.

Essential Terminology

Gender Complementarity: This refers to the view that the sexes perform distinct but complementary (not oppositional) roles in society. For some scholars, this is the basis for characterizing African feminism as collaborative. In a sense, gender complementarity is deeply connected to an emphasis on social harmony and communitarianism (*ubuntu*, for example) and the fact that other social categories (e.g., age and seniority) are salient in African contexts. Based on this notion, scholars argue that women in precolonial Africa—unlike others elsewhere—had access to the public sphere. Instructors must emphasize that these perspectives have been challenged (see for example, Bibi Bakare Yusuf's "Yorubas Do Not Do Gender"[13]).

Bio-logic: In Oyěwùmí's theorization in *The Invention of Woman*[14], bio-logic refers to a specific Western cultural logic (structured by sight, visuality, the gaze) in which the body becomes the central site for social categorization. In short, bio-logic assumes that "biology is destiny" and "destiny is biology." Related terms in Oyěwùmí's theorization of bio-logic are "body-reasoning" and "biological determinism." This Western "worldview," according to Oyěwùmí, differs fundamentally from the "world-sense" of the Yoruba/African social world.

PanAfricanism: PanAfricanism refers to both a transnational movement dating back to the twentieth century and critical analytical orientations that respond to the various intersectional concerns of people of African descent as a racialized group. In her article "Pan-Africanism, transnational black feminism and the limits of culturalist analyses in African gender discourses,"[15] Carol Boyce Davies indicates that PanAfricanism and

12. Semley, Lorelle. "Public motherhood in West Africa as theory and practice." *Gender and History 24, no. 3* (2012): 600-616. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2012.01698.x.
13. Bakare-Yusuf, Bibi. "'Yorubas Don't Do Gender': A Critical Review of Oyeronke Oyewumi's *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses."* In *African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms*, edited by Signe Arnfred S., Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Edward Waswa Kisiang'ani, Desiree Lewis, Oyeronke Oyewumi, Filomina Chioma Steady, 61-81. Dakar: Codesria, 2004.
14. Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
15. Davies, Carole Boyce. "Pan-Africanism, Transnational Black feminism and the Limits of Culturalist Analyses in African Gender Discourses." *Feminist Africa* 19 (2014): 78-93. features - pan-

feminism–as 20th century movements–have intersected historically. Davies argues that PanAfrican feminists (or feminist PanAfricanists) "practised the art of navigating a variety of complex positions around race, gender, class, national origin and culture within the larger goal of the liberation of African peoples internationally."[16] PanAfricanism is a crucial lens for exploring the rhetorics of Black transnational feminisms, Black Internationalisms, and Cosmopolitanisms.

Black Atlantic: Theorized in Paul Gilroy's book on the subject[17], Black Atlantic is a lens for reading the transnational/transcultural basis of black subjectivity highlighting the triangulated links between America, Africa and Europe. A Black Atlantic reading transcends the nation-state as a category of analysis and engages with rhetorically relevant concepts such as creolization, hybridity, diaspora, chronotope, and Double Consciousness in its complex exploration of the legacies of slavery and colonial modernity. Instructors must emphasize that this view considers Black subjectivity as rhizomatic–not fixed–and that it complicates analysis of nationality, history, memory and location.

Nationalism: This is a term with multiple meanings. Besides the sense of nationalism as linked to the project of the nation-state, the term also refers to efforts by people of African descent to challenge colonial domination. These various meanings are implied in PanAfrican nationalist advocacy (which ironically was transnational and not national), the anti-colonial nationalisms and the nation-building projects of post-independence Africa. Instructors should emphasize the gendered dimension of nationalism as well as the fraught relation between feminism and the nation in their discussions of the sources.

Primary Sources

Ngom, Fallou, Jennifer Yanco, Mustapha Hashim Kurfi, Garba Zakari, Babacar Dieng, Daivi Rodima-Taylor, and Rebecca Shereikis. "Nana Asmāʾu: Admonition." Digitized 2022, at https://sites.bu.edu/nehajami/the-four-languages/hausa/hausa-manuscripts/hunwick-95-3-nana-asmaau-waazi/.

africanism transnational black feminism and the limits of culturalist analyses in african gender discourses.pdf

16. Davies, "PanAfricanism, Transnational Black Feminism," 78.
17. Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.

Addressed to her female followers and written in Nana Asmā'u's typically simple yet evocative style, the poem admonishes women to seek knowledge, live in Islamic purity and adhere to marital rules. She argues that it is not against the Islamic faith for women to go out and seek knowledge for Islam requires it and that men who deprive women of knowledge are contravening the laws, an observation that highlights how Nana Asmā'u's writing[18] intricately recast religious discourse to center women's concerns in the Sokoto Caliphate[19] and beyond. Structurally, the poem begins with the Basmala, followed by an identification of the author, praises to Allah, the admonition itself and ending with a charge for readers to figure out the date of her writing using the Ramzi or migration date of Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W). The link to the source contains the original manuscripts in Hausa Ajami as well as translations in English and French, providing opportunities for comparative discussions in the classroom.

Anonymous. "Two letters to the editor." In *Women Writing Africa. West Africa and the Sahel*, edited by Esi Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw, 147-148. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005.

These two 1886 letters are responses to a publication in the "Ladies Column" of *Western Echo* (a Gold Coast newspaper) written by a person with a male pseudonym purporting to speak on behalf of women and targeting a female readership. The letters, written by individual women but rendered in a collective voice ("we"), are vociferous in challenging the pseudonymous "male" author's misogynistic representation of Gold Coast women as politically apathetic. The letters are anonymously published (one is signed as "One of Them") but the gender of the authors is unquestionable. These letters are examples of how 19th century newspaper culture provided a space for West African women's rhetorical articulation.

Hayford, Adelaide Casely. "A Girls' School in West Africa." In *Documenting First Wave Feminisms Volume I: Transnational Collaborations and Crosscurrents*, edited by Maureen Moynagh (with Nancy Forestell), 85-90. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

18. Boyd, Jean and Beverly B. Mack. *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, Daughter of Usman 'dan-Fodio (1793-1864).* East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997.
19. Last, Murray. "The Sokoto Caliphate." In *The Oxford World History of Empire Volume Two*, edited by Peter Fibiger Bang, C.A. Bayly, Walter Scheidel, 1082–1110. New York: Oxford University Press (2021). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197532768.003.0040.

Originally published in the *Southern Workman* and echoing ideas in other Casely Hayford texts such as "'The Home, its Educational Value" speech, this source reflects Casely Hayford's feminist and PanAfrican motivations for starting a girls' school in Sierra Leone. Influenced by Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy, Casely Hayford interrogates the emphasis on academic education in mission schools to the relegation of practical education that would prepare girls for motherhood and homemaking responsibilities. From a contemporary feminist lens, there is an obvious ambiguity in her discourse–that is, the quest to uplift colonial Sierra Leonean women through an African-centered education on the one hand, and her emphasis on preparing these women for the domestic sphere on the other hand.

Kato, Efwa. "What We Women Can Do." In Documenting First Wave Feminisms Volume I: Transnational Collaborations and Crosscurrents, edited by Maureen Moynagh (with Nancy Forestell, 254-258. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

Efwa Kato's 1934 article, first published in WASU (a journal of the West African Students Union of Great Britain and Ireland), highlights the intersection between feminism, Black internationalism and PanAfrican nationalism in the often-silenced discourses of West African women in Europe at the time. The essay suggests ideas on what women can contribute as mothers, wives and professionals. Besides a feminist rereading of the Eve narrative, the article also projects Mary Kingsley and Emmeline Pankhurst as examples to African women in ways that introduces tensions in the essay's discourse on racial upliftment.

Aderemi, Lanaire, dir. and executive producer. *Record Found Here* [video]. 2024.

The 18-minutes film (see trailer here)[20] documents the history of the 1940 Egba Women's Revolt against an exploitative British colonial tax system by exploring varied sources including oral testimonies of witnesses (with some performances of protest songs from the revolt), archival sources (e.g., newspapers, official documents) and historical sites. The film provides crucial material for thinking about the archival and memorial dimensions of African feminist protests. The film is not currently in the public domain, but private screening sessions could be arranged by contacting Lanaire Aderemi, its executive producer, here.[21] Instructors may pair this film with the Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti

20. Aderemi, Lanaire, dir. and executive producer. Record Found Here [video], 2024. record found here // trailer
21. Dr. lanaire A., [Home Page] LinkedIn, Accessed on August 9, 2025. dr. lanaire A. | LinkedIn.

biopic on Prime Video,[22] discussing both films as rhetorical acts of memorializing the Abeokuta Women's protests and F. Ransome-Kuti's leadership role.

Thiam, Awa. *Speak Out, Black Sisters: Feminism and Oppression in Black Africa*. Translated by Dorothy S. Blair. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

This is a collection of translated feminist writings (originally written in French) exploring several issues affecting Black African women (e.g., clitoridectomy, polygamy and skin whitening), arguing that African women are triply subjugated by colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. Besides Thiam's incisive theorization of the African female condition, the text also includes several ethnographic materials in which readers hear ordinary Africans in their own voices. PanAfrican in its orientation, Thiam's work critiques the limits of Western feminist thoughts while also providing a language for complex gender analysis that predates, but is similar, to Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality.

Macdougall, Elspeth, dir. *Fear Woman* [video]. United Nations Television, May 1, 1984. UN Audiovisual Library. https://media.un.org/avlibrary/en/asset/d203/d2039182.

This 1984 United Nations film spotlights the perspectives of Annie Ruth Jiagge and two other people, who epitomize the idea of a successful Ghanaian woman for that era. Besides serving as an entry into some of the key influences (e.g., gender complementarity, discourses of women and development, U. N rights discourses) in Jiagge's feminist rhetoric, the film also provides crucial contextual information about the sociohistories of gender in Ghana as well as Jiagge's own biography. A session on Jiagge could begin with the screening and discussion of this film followed by a more detailed analysis of Jiagge's speeches, writings or interviews.

Secondary Sources

Azuonye, Chukwuma. "Feminist or Simply Feminine? Reflections on the Works of Nana Asmā'u, a Nineteenth-Century West African Woman Poet, Intellectual, and Social Activist." *Meridians* 6, no. 2 (2006): 54-77. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338702.

This source examines Nana Asmā'u's legacy as a poet, intellectual and social activist asking whether, from a contemporary lens, Nana Asmā'u

22. Austen-Peters, Bolanle, dir. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti [video], 2024, Prime Video: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti

should be read as just feminine or feminist. For Azuonye, feminist readings of Nana Asmā'u are Eurocentric, anachronistic and flawed because the Islamic and non-Islamic West African social ethos that shaped Asmā'uʿs works are fundamentally different from those of the Western gender paradigm which, as he argues, subordinate femininity. With reference to the concept of gender complementarity and accompanying sociological and literary illustrations, Azuonye situates Asmā'u in what he calls "traditional ʻfemininism'", implying that Asmā'u's work was not oppositional but rather conformist to the social world she emerged from with its emphasis on harmonious gender relations.

Newell, Stephanie*. The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa.* Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013.

This source examines the cultural history of anonymity in West African newspapers between the 1880s and the 1940s–a period marked by intense literary creativity and experimentation–to argue that unlike in Europe, anonymity has a history in West Africa. Besides providing a platform for public debates, newspapers from this era published several pseudonymous writings, a testament to the new forms of subjectivity engendered by newspaper culture. The source provides historical, cultural and rhetorical contexts for examining the two anonymous primary sources provided.

Mianda, Gertrude. "Reading Awa Thiam's La parole aux Négresses through the Lens of Feminisms and English Language Hegemony." *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice/Études Critiques sur le Genre, la Culture, et la Justice* 36, no. 2 (2014): 8-19. Reading Awa Thiam's La parole aux Négresses through the lens of Feminisms and Hegemony of English language | Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice.

This source argues that though Awa Thiam has garnered some attention in Western feminist circles for her critique of practices such as excision, infibulation and polygamy, her theoretical contributions to the interlocking of multiple oppressions has been largely overlooked. She explains that this is largely because of two reasons: one, Thiam was recognized for her critique of certain cultural practices only because it aligned with a Western feminist biopolitics that sought to argue for the universality of female oppression and two, feminist knowledge production is shaped by a politics that not only marginalizes voices outside of English Language hegemony but also refuses to take African women seriously as a producers of feminist knowledge.

Desai, Gaurav. "Gendered Self-Fashioning: Adelaide Casely Hayford's Black Atlantic." *Research in African Literatures* 35, no. 3 (2004): 141-160. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3821299.

This source examines Adelaide Casely Hayford's autobiography as a means through which she fashioned herself as a gendered and racialized subject, highlighting among other things the significance of her many travels in shaping her sense of self. Desai suggests that Hayford's life provides crucial insights into the ways in which "Black Atlantic" (Paul Gilroy's concept) modernity engendered a black counterculture. This work also contains more original literary writings by Hayford and could be read together with *An African Victorian Feminist The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1848-1960*[23] to provide further contexts for Hayford's essay.

Matera, Marc. "*Black internationalism and African and Caribbean intellectuals in London, 1919–1950.*" PhD diss., Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2008. https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T38S4Q7V.

Marc Matera discusses the writing of Efwa Kato (and other women) in his work on black internationalism through the lives of West Indians and Africans in London. Matera observes (in pages 33-35) that Kato's essay contains a "distinctly class inflected discourse" which is interestingly "disassociated…from any religious content." Furthermore, Matera's analysis of Kato's essay suggests that Kato's feminism and Black internationalism were layered with allegiance to empire, creating ambiguities and tensions. This work and Matera's book Black London[24] provide crucial material for contextualizing Kato's writing.

Byfield, Judith A. "In Her Own Words: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti and the Auto/Biography of an Archive." *Palimpsest: A Journal on Women, Gender, and the Black International* 5, no. 2 (2016): 107-127. 10.1353/pal.2016.0016.

This source reflects on the Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti Papers, currently located at the Kenneth Dike Library at the University of Ibadan, indicating the ideological influences (e.g., Yoruba gender ideology, Christianity and democratic theory) that shaped the politics of F. Ransome-Kuti, her preacher-husband and the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU). Byfield argues that though the archive offers a "glimpse"

23. Cromwell, Adelaide M. *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1848-1960*. London: Routledge, 2014.
24. Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015).

into Ransome-Kuti's "internal monologue," it is limited by the absence in these papers of "interior dialogues" within organizations such as AWU and cannot therefore be a replacement for the collective voices of the people who sustained the revolt. Byfield suggests that to gain insight into the "interior dialogue," analysts would need to engage public responses to the revolt and Ransome-Kuti's writings in the newspapers.

Machado-Guichon, Mélanie Lindbjerg. "Reimagining African Womanhood in an Unjust World Order: Exploring the Writings of Ghanaian Women's Rights Advocates, 1970s–1980s." *Africa* 93, no. 2 (2023): 273-292. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972023000244.

This source examines the writings of Ghanaian activists Annie Ruth Jiagge and Florence Dolphyne for their discourses on women's issues in the context of the Ghanaian/African postcolony. Using Homi Bhabha's "third space," Machado-Guichon argues that these two women recast global discourses to articulate African women's intersectional lives in a context of an unequal economic world order. Crucially, the publication challenges received ideas that the period these women worked in was characterized by "quiet activism" and was therefore, apolitical

Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

This book challenges the epistemological basis of Western gendered discourses arguing that "the woman question" does not exist in Yoruba cosmology. For Oyěwùmí, underlying Western gendered discourses is a "bio-logic" that assumes biology is destiny and that gendered analysis of African contexts cannot ignore the dominant influence of Western gendered epistemologies. This source provides crucial historical and analytical language for exploring the cultural basis of African feminist rhetorics.

Salami, Minna. *Can Feminism Be African?: A Most Paradoxical Question*. London: HarperCollins, 2025.

Using perspectives from several disciplines (e.g., postcolonial theory), Salami explores the links (or presumed lack thereof) between feminism and Africanicity. Besides providing a history of African feminisms, the book also presents some critical language for thinking through the possibilities and limits of African feminist praxis, relationality and discourses and is a good foundational text for teachers and students interested in exploring the intersections between Africanness, rhetoric and feminism.

Sheldon, Kathleen. *African Women: Early History to the 21st Century*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017.

This book provides a comprehensive history of African women, covering periods from the precolonial to the contemporary moment. Besides bringing together material on African women that is often scattered in several publications, the collection suggests that studying African women complicates historical analysis of the continent. Touching on areas such as women's leadership, colonialism, slavery, postcolonialism, religion, and urbanization, it provides crucial material for contextualizing the primary sources provided above.

Discussions Questions

1. What constitutes (West) African Feminism? What constitutes African Rhetoric?
2. What epistemic conundrums are presented when we put Africa, Feminism and Rhetoric together? How are these useful for complicating feminist methods in rhetoric?
3. What are the theoretical possibilities and limitations of gender complementarity as a lens for examining patriarchal power and oppression? What alternative view of rhetorical feminism does this concept provide?
4. Do you observe connections between these African feminist texts and other feminist texts? How do we explain these connections?
5. Language politics shapes receptions of African feminisms. Can you think of specific language issues emanating from your reading of the sources?
6. There are tensions in many of the primary sources. Can you identify some of these tensions? How would you respond to these tensions?
7. What do you think about Oyěwùmí's argument on the biological determinism of Western gendered discourses? How does Oyěwùmí's African-centered theorization complicate your readings of African feminist rhetoric?
   What crucial insights do the sources provide for theorizing the silences of African women's rhetorics, archives and knowledge-making?
8. What rhetorical insights does the Black Atlantic provide for readings of African women's rhetorics?
9. In your view, which of the primary sources pushes the boundaries of feminism and rhetoric?