Podcasting as Activism and/or Entrepreneurship: Cooperative Networks, Publics and African Literary Production

Madhu Krishnan; Kate Wallis

University of Bristol; University of Exeter, UK

In April 2017, we were present at a workshop titled "Personal Histories, Personal Archives, Alternative Print Cultures," organized as part of the AHRC Research Network "Small Magazines, Literary Networks and Self-Fashioning in Africa and its Diasporas" (see Smit for a report on the session). The workshop was held at the now-defunct Long Street premises of Chimurenga, a self-described "project-based mutable object, publication, pan-African platform for editorial and curatorial work" based in Cape Town and best known for their eponymous magazine, which published sixteen issues between 2002 and 2011 (Chimurenga). As part of a conversation with collaborators Billy Kahora and Bongani Kona, editor Stacy Hardy was asked how Chimurenga sought out and forged readerships and publics. In her response, Hardy argued that the idea of a "target market" was "dangerous" and "arrogant," offering a powerful repudiation to dominant models within the global publishing industry and book trade. Chimurenga, Hardy explained, worked from the premise articulated by founder Ntone Edjabe that "you don't have to find readers, they find you." Chimurenga's ethos, Hardy explained, was one based on recognition, what she terms the "recognition of being part of something," of "encountering Chimurenga and clocking into belonging" (Hardy, Kahora and Kona). Readers, for Hardy, were "Chimurenga people" who would find the publication and, on finding it, find something of themselves within it, be it through engagement with the magazine, attendance at Chimurenga's live events and parties, or participation in the collective's online presence. For Hardy, this is something of a personal story, intricately linked with her own entry into the Chimurenga collective, sparked by a chance encounter with the *Chimurenga* journal at Clarke's bookshop in Cape Town, early in her tenure as a new and unhappy Cape Town transplant (Hardy, Kahora and Kona). This anecdote gestures to something much more complex than what may at first make itself evident. As Hardy's response evokes, to be "Chimurenga people" is to enter into a kind of mutual recognition based on a certain shared ethos, one spread both through the actual transmission of the print magazine but extending far beyond, encompassing music, live events and digital archives as active

sites where publics are forged and found and the literary, as a conceptual entity, enacted through an iterative process of recognition and engagement. Chimurenga's editorial agenda, by extension, is driven by what editors want to read and a firm belief that people "are interested in brilliant, wild thinking." At the same time, in that same conversation, Hardy notes how Chimurenga's shift from its flagship journal to quarterly broadsheet the Chronic in 2013 came from a desire to move beyond the publication's "network of friendship," driven by the "need to reach more people." (Hardy, Kahora and Kona) Perhaps, then, what best encapsulates this multifaceted positioning in relation to cultural production, networks and publics is Chimurenga's tagline, derived from Fela Kuti: "Who No Know Go Know."[1]

We begin this article with this brief anecdote on the grounds that Hardy's comments, alongside Chimurenga's positioning within pan-African literary space, illustrate a number of the key ideas which we navigate here. In this piece, we take the kinds of work—both activist and entrepreneurial—embodied by Chimurenga as a starting point for considering the links between social production, literary activism and recognition as public-formation, evidenced here in two more recently established Africa-based podcasts: Nairobi-based 2 Girls & a Pod (launched in 2015) and Cameroonian BakwaCast (launched in 2018). What the example of Chimurenga brings into view is a series of challenges to normative conceptions of the literary market and its mechanisms, what we might conceive of as a deliberately considered flouting of the precepts of the book trade in its global, capitalist sense and a concerted effort to re-script the operations of the literary field.

An increasingly sales and marketing-led, UK and US defined, "global" literary fiction industry, framed through "key selling points" and BIC subject codes, suggests that any such contravention of market principles might—and should—result in unsustainable models of production. As we read repeatedly in the contemporary Anglo-American press, literature is dying, book markets are shrinking, and readerships are being replaced with a generation of passive internet followers.[2] Yet, Chimurenga, over the seventeen years of its existence, has not only flourished, but expanded well beyond the remit expected of any single literary network, today encompassing the *Chronic*, the Pan African Space Station, "a periodic, pop-up live radio studio; a performance and exhibition space; a research platform and living archive, as well as an ongoing, internet-based radio station;" (Pan African Space Station) the *African Cities Reader*, "a biennial publication that brings together contributors from across Africa and the world to challenge the prevailing depiction of urban life on the continent and redefine cityness, Africa-style;" (African Cities Reader) and the Chimurenga Library, an alternative archive of pan-African independent print culture which functions as "an ongoing invention into knowledge production and the archive that seeks to re-imagine the

library as a laboratory for extended curiosity, new adventures, critical thinking, daydreaming, socio-political involvement, partying and random perusal," and includes a number of extended research projects on the curation of public culture on the continent (Chimurenga Library). Chimurenga has then come to represent a key crucible for African literary production and creativity across genres, modes and forms, which spans linguistic, geographic, and genealogical contexts.[3]

Critically, for our argument in this paper as with the literary podcasts we explore, the structures and means through which Chimurenga has evolved defy easy categorization under the terms of both the capitalist, global literary market and what we might simplistically refer to as resistance to the same.

Literary Podcasting: Models of Activism and Entrepreneurship

From 2014 onwards, when a podcasting app becomes a built-in feature of every Apple iPhone, podcasts as both live events or intimate private listening experiences have become widespread as a new mode of cultural consumption and expression (Spinellii and Dann). In particular, literary podcasts have quickly become part of the structures of the Anglophone global literary marketplace, with podcasts created by leading literary publishers (from Vintage to Penguin) and established newspapers and magazines (from the UK's *Guardian* to the US's *New Yorker*). These literary podcasts also open up potential for new influential voices or "horizontal media space" (Spinelli and Dann 223) as evidenced in FutureBooks' inaugural 2018 Podcast of the Year award which went to Mostly Lit. Highlighting, the work of both 2 Girls & a Pod and BakwaCast, alongside the Johannesburg-based Cheeky Natives (launched in 2016) and Nairobi-based James Murua's African Literary Podcast (launched in 2018). Tellingly, *Africa in Dialogue* Managing Editor Gaamangwe Joy Mogami has reflected on the role that the growing number of Africa-based literary podcasts play in African literary industries. She talks specifically about these podcasts as spaces not only for "reviewing" but for "re-experiencing" and "re-engaging," (Mogami) using terms which explicitly recall the modes of participatory recognition implicit in Hardy's reflections on Chimurenga with which we opened this piece.

In a 2018 keynote speech opening the third edition of the Arts Managers and Literary Activists (AMLA) workshop at Makerere University in Kampala,[4] AMLA founder Bwesigye bwa Mwesigire powerfully articulated his vision of literary activism in twenty-first-century Africa, describing it as not merely the intervention into an allegedly autonomous political sphere by literary producers. Instead, for bwa Mwesigire, the "activism" in literary activism comes through the very processes of space-creation that literary production inheres:

> we use the word activism because as you realize the African literary and cultural scene is not supported by governments. It is not a problematic generalization to say that most African countries took to neoliberal free market policies so there is no government funding for the arts. [...] It's activism to actually have spaces for which artists can create.

Through this keynote, one thing also emphasized by bwa Mwesigire was the idea of literary production as both knowledge creation and epistemic intervention, bringing into view the problematic power structures and discourses through which ideas of a "global" literary field and industries have been defined and, in particular, asking the audience to dwell on the question: "What are we trying to build? When we borrow concepts from Western structures what are we not seeing?" (bwa Mwesigire) Both 2 Girls & a Pod and BakwaCast have participated in AMLA workshops and mentoring programmes, with BakwaCast's founder Dzekashu MacViban from 2018 being invited to join the network's secretariat. In what follows, we are interested in exploring how we might document the work of these two Africa-based literary podcasts as knowledge creation, and more particularly in using literary activism as a frame for this. Thinking of these two podcasts in this way, we argue, offers a productive site for exploring some of the issues around modes of conceptualising literary production and publics which Hardy's comments evoke, as well as demonstrating the range of strategies and tactics leveraged by literary producers in the name of forging spaces for recognition and affiliation.

    In their 2017 follow-up to the *Empire* trilogy, *Assembly*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri produce what is a veritable blueprint for political activism in the twenty-first century. Hinging on the changed conditions of labour, social production, and the nature of power after the turn of the twenty-first century, Hardt and Negri's engagement with political activism, we argue, might help similarly situate some of the organizational and structural patterns which emerge in literary activism. Indeed, a number of parallels appear: the short-lived nature of many activism movements; the tension between the role of a charismatic leader or central figure and larger assemblages, networks, and collaborations which enable their work; and the complex entanglement of vertical and horizontal networks of power and spaces of intimacy and negotiation. Hardt and Negri's observations that the world is characterized by "social struggles" and "the resistances and revolts of the subordinated," but is dominated "by an extreme minority" that "extorts the social value created by those who produce and reproduce society" (Hardt and Negri xviii) could equally be used to describe the dynamics of world literary space. And yet, what grounds *Assembly* is a belief that "it is possible and desirable for the multitude to tip the relations of power in its favor," and perhaps more importantly, "to take power differently." (Hardt and Negri xx)

In "The Uses of Neoliberalism," James Ferguson argues for a transformation of leftist politics away from what he terms an "anti" model which centres itself on a repudiation of certain concepts and policies perceived to be associated with the right (167). In opposition to this "anti-politics," Ferguson proposes that we on the left consider instead a definition of politics not determined by polarities of good or bad, radical or conservative, but rather that we view politics as being about "getting what you want." ("Uses" 168) Fundamental to this re-alignment, for Ferguson, is the pressing need for us to cease our tendency to throw aside concepts or techniques simply because they are associated with what we consider bad—neoliberalism—and instead begin to consider how "some of them can be repurposed, and put to work in the service of political projects very different from those usually associated with that word." ("Uses" 183) While Ferguson writes in the specific context of government policies around universal basic income in South Africa, again his comments might be expanded to cover a more generalised field, which includes cultural production and, for the purposes of this article, literary activism. As Hardt and Negri similarly stress, it is "crucial" that "the opposition to centralized authority not be equated with the rejection of all organizational and institutional forms." (6) Here it is worth recalling their call for activist movements to reclaim the terms which have been turned against them: entrepreneurship, for instance, is no longer simply the purview of a neoliberal world order but "an agent of happiness," (Hardt and Negri xviii) an "autonomous organization of social cooperation" (Hardt and Negri 143) which makes plain "the mechanisms and relations of cooperation that animate social production and reproduction." (Hardt and Negri 144) Building out of this, here we want to suggest that *Assembly* might offer a methodological approach rooted in understanding the cooperative networks that animate social production and reproduction, which resonates with bwa Mwesigire's conception of literary activism as knowledge creation, and which enables the recognition of "existing forms of wealth" as offering the foundations for new democratic forms of strategic power (Hardt and Negri 286).

Turning more specifically to the podcasts which concern us in this article, what begins to emerge is a series of commonalities and divergences which speak more broadly to the variegated landscape of literary activism as a mode of social production in the twenty-first century. 2 Girls & a Pod has produced 24 episodes over the last five years and self-define on SoundCloud (where the podcast is hosted) as "a literary podcast hosted by Beverly Ochieng' and Nyambura Mutanyi talking stories from Africa and all over the world." (2 Girls & a Pod) Founders Ochieng' and Mutanyi are both Nairobi-based writers and in interview have reflected on the intention behind 2 Girls & a Pod as being "to talk about literature in a different way," and in particular to open up rather than close down conversations about books and

African literature, creating a tone that feels "fun" and "exciting." (2 Girls & a Pod)

2 Girls & a Pod launched in 2015 with an episode discussing the shortlist for the Caine Prize for African Writing, a discussion which became an annual staple on the podcast, with Mutanyi asking in "Episode 2 - Caine Prize 2018 Shortlist:" (part of the third season which launched in 2018) "is it even 2 Girls & a Pod if we haven't done the annual Caine Prize episode?" While the first season was "very prize focused" with early episodes discussing not only the Caine Prize shortlist but the Commonwealth Writers Prize shortlist 2015 and the Etisalat Prize 2015 shortlist, 2 Girls & a Pod made a "deliberate push" in their second season "to open up the format." (2 Girls & a Pod) This opening up resulted in the focusing of discussion around particular ideas, "investigating life through the lens of literature," (2 Girls & a Pod) with episodes on writing dysfunctional families (S2:E10), diaspora narratives (S2: E13) and Afrofutures (S2: E16). Alongside this, the podcast started to become more explicitly engaged with and responsive to East Africa-based literary events, from Lola Shoneyin's visit to Nairobi to promote Maimouna Jallow's staging of *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (S2:E7) to dialogue with the Kampala-based Writivism festival (an initiative of the Center for African Cultural Excellence, also the parent organization of AMLA) and prize shortlists. Episodes range from thirty minutes to close to ninety minutes, growing consistently longer over time as the podcast began to host an increasing number of guests.

Spinelli and Dann, in their recent book mapping podcasting as a creative medium, have reflected that the route to the most successful podcasting is very often producers building podcasts around their own enquiries, pleasures and curiosities without a clear demographic in mind" (14)—strikingly resonating with Chimurenga's repudiation of the idea of "target market." This is very much reflected through 2 Girls & a Pod, where what makes the podcast so compelling is the variety of registers it navigates. Discussions move from critical analysis of literary craft and style to humorous quips about a host's relationship status or the availability of airtime or food. Spinelli and Dann, who are also concerned with exploring the "affective intimacy" located in and through podcasting, highlight "intimacy" more broadly as a ubiquitous concern within radio and listening histories (74). This affective intimacy, as we will explore, is very much in evidence in both BakwaCast and 2 Girls & a Pod, and particularly reflected in the ways in which, for 2 Girls & a Pod, there are no clear lines between the space of family and friendship and the space of literary production.

BakwaCast is a self-described "periodic, living archive, which is conversational, intimate and introspective." Its origins can be attributed to its place in the larger evolution of its parent organization, *Bakwa* magazine. The magazine was founded in 2011 to—in the words

of its founder, Dzekashu Macviban—"fill a lacuna," and responded to the absence of spaces in Cameroon where people could at the same time publish critical and literary works. Critically, Bakwa's origins can be traced to the closure of *Palapala* Magazine, which ran from 2008 to 2011 and was Cameroon's main venue for literary criticism. Macviban, in Episode 0 of BakwaCast, dedicated to the podcast's origins, describes feeling something akin to a void with the loss of *Palapala*, what he describes as a sense that there was "no place [he] could really belong to—[…] no place [he] could really feel at home." Following a series of discussions with Kangsen Feka Wakai, the editor of *Palapala*, Macviban decided to launch Bakwa in November/December 2011 with the aim of filling this gap. Today, Macviban describes Bakwa's mission as "to give Cameroonians a place where they could share their stories, where they could discover new writers, where they could meet their peers, where they could actually comment and interpret the society in a way that was thoughtful and in a way that was balanced." (BakwaCast, "Episode 0")

Social production—and the production of new subjectivities—is an explicit goal, one captured in Macviban's comment that the current literary and publishing landscape in Cameroon "doesn't help writers or society in any way." (BakwaCast, "Episode 0") Instead, Bakwa envisions itself as transformative, enabling "writers to re-experience what it means to be published" through a process of "doing everything differently." (BakwaCast, "Episode 0") Macviban's choice of words here is of no little consequence to the ways in which BakwaCast operates and its position within an institution with a longer history based on an affective call to a certain type of public (or counterpublic) in Cameroon (see Warner).

Emerging from this work and founded in June 2018, BakwaCast is a self-described seasonal podcast, focusing on music, literature, art and tech. Hosted by Leslie Meya and co-host/producer Tchassa Kamga, each 90-minute episode features an extended interview/ conversation with a leading Cameroonian cultural producer (in addition to Episode 0, which featured Macviban, Season 1 featured curator and art historian Christine Eyene, women in tech entrepreneur Janet Fofang, and writer Florian Ngimbis). While the majority of episodes have been broadcast in English (in line with Bakwa's largely – but not exclusively – Anglophone focus, which we discuss below) at the time of this writing, one of the five episodes currently produced was broadcast exclusively in French. Not without consequence, given the politics of language in the country and, particularly, the dominance of the French-speaking majority, the French-language episode, featuring acclaimed writer Florian Ngimbis, is by far BakwaCast's most widely streamed episode. While not solely focused on literature, BakwaCast has included readings from Bakwa's literary projects, with Episode 4 taking the form of a self-contained reading and conversation

with Dami Ajayi, which formed part of the Limbe-Lagos exchange of young Cameroonian and Nigerian writers conducted in 2017 in partnership with *Saraba* magazine. More broadly, as Macviban has explained, BakwaCast hopes to leverage more of a general interest form to develop new readerships who might initially approach the podcast for other reasons, and this has become a central focus on planning for Season 2 (personal correspondence).

Our interest in what follows is in drawing out the different strategies and structures through which 2 Girls & a Pod and BakwaCast are able to curate new publics, commons, and citational-critical matrices, looking at selected episodes from these two Africa-based literary podcasts in more detail with this in mind. In particular, we wish to draw attention to these podcasts opening up potential spaces of horizontal solidarity/subjectivity based on cooperation and collaboration, while nonetheless not necessarily outside of the reach of the larger mechanisms of domination at play. If literary activism is about, as bwa Mwesigire suggests, the opening of spaces through which literary production can be created, then rather than take a view which categorizes its organizational structures or operational techniques through blunt characterizations, we argue that what is necessary is a critical perspective which evaluates the extent to which the assemblage of techniques, structures, networks, and institutional frameworks developed by literary activists achieve this task and to what ends.

2 Girls & a Pod: Cooperative Networks and Pan-African Literary Production

Central to Hardt and Negri's analysis of contemporary forms of activism is their insight that, today, production is ever more "social" in a "double sense:"

> on one hand, people produce ever more socially, in networks of cooperation and interaction; and, on the other, the result of production is not just commodities but social relations and ultimately society itself. (Hardt and Negri xv)

This new mode of production is very much linked to the increasing dominance of digital and communicative technologies (Hardt and Negri 145). As we will explore here, hosted on the online audio distribution platform *SoundCloud* and with conversations supported and continued via *Twitter* and *Facebook*, 2 Girls & a Pod demonstrate a bifurcated or doubled sense of social production in precisely this manner. George Ogola's work has been important in exploring the ways in which digital media technologies in Kenya have "incubated new expressive communication infrastructures and cultures."("#Whatwouldmagufulido? Kenya's Digital 'Practices' and

'Individuation' as a (Non)Political Act" 125) In particular, his work foregrounds the participatory nature of online platforms even as they construct new hierarchies, ultimately reading these as multi-voiced text and space, and exploring humour as an established narrative strategy within these spaces of social and political engagement (Ogola, "Social Media as a Heteroglossic Discursive Space and Kenya's Emergent Alternative/Citizen Experiment" 79, 70, 74). Again, we argue that there are possibilities here for research into political activism, and more specifically political activism in Kenya and its relationship to digital media technologies, helping us to situate the organizational and structural patterns which emerge in literary activism. So the work of 2 Girls & a Pod can be productively positioned within a broader landscape of social media and social production in East Africa, perhaps also being notable within this context that Kenya has one of the highest mobile phone penetration rates in the developing world.[5]

Nanjala Nyabola's 2018 study *Digital Democracy, Analogue Politics* documents the ways in which digital platforms and new media in Kenya, even while often functioning as echo-chambers, have ultimately given people "more control over their personal and national narratives," reclaiming space abandoned by traditional media and forcing shifts in structures of power (38, 61-2). There are clear parallels here with 2 Girls & a Pod reclaiming a space for serious debate around new books and the structures of literary production in Kenya, while literary coverage and review sections in Kenya's print newspapers have shrunk over the last decade. Perhaps still more significantly, both Nyabola and the work of Dina Ligaga on digital media and African popular culture (Ligaga 112) show the impact of digital platforms in amplifying women's voice and feminist agendas resulting in a visible opening up of the public space and of the identities women in Kenya occupy (Nyabola 127, 138).

As evidenced in an initial focus on literary prizes, 2 Girls & a Pod are self-consciously intervening in structures of power in relation to the literary space. Doseline Kiguru's work has been influential in opening up conceptions of how literary prizes operate and construct cultural value within the contemporary African literary landscape, and in particular drawing attention to the complex ways in which both writers' organisations and prizes for writing in African languages decentre and challenge the power of international prize bodies. The ways in which conversations around literary prizes are staged by 2 Girls & a Pod in different ways form part of this work of decentring and challenging. Episode 6 discusses the 2017 Caine Prize shortlist (a UK-based prize for African literature), but uses this as an opportunity to start a conversation about the "place of local publishers," accompanying this with a long bibliography shared on SoundCloud made up of links to a range of Africa-based literary magazines and publishers. Across both Season 2 and Season 3, as engagement with

Writivism's Uganda-based short story and non-fiction prize becomes an annual event (with episodes discussing the shortlists as well as separate episodes recorded in Kampala at the Writivism festival interviewing shortlisted writers), the heightened energy and excitement around these conversations compared to the tone of conversations around the Caine Prize is palpable, with Ochieng' reflecting on being "a little underwhelmed" (S3: E2) by the Caine Prize 2018 shortlist and Mutanyi commenting that the Writivism 2018 short story prize shortlist very much "redeemed the other shortlist we read this year." (S3: E4) However, arguably more significant to the ways in which 2 Girls & a Pod has been able to intervene in structures of power in relation to the literary space is the decision to make the podcast less prize-centred and instead focus on East Africa-based literary events and networks.

As we have highlighted, Hardt and Negri advocate for a claiming or occupying of the concept of entrepreneurship, arguing for entrepreneurship as "the hinge between forms of the multitudes' cooperation in social production and its assembly in political terms." (xviii) It is worth noting here that the AMLA Network, which originally was founded as the Arts Management and Literary Entrepreneurship Workshop in 2016,[6] made a concerted decision in 2017 to re-frame its work around activism and not entrepreneurship. This, we argue, indicates the extent to which the concept has remained co-opted by a certain neoliberal mind-set, on the one hand, and the shifting patterns of organization, structure and governance whose own morphings inflect upon the ideological and epistemic contours of literary production on the African continent, on the other. Hardt and Negri build on Joseph Schumpeter's classic theory of entrepreneurship, framing it as creating "*new combinations* among already existing workers, ideas, technologies, resources, and machines" with the essence of "combination" being "cooperation." (140) It is in these "networks of cooperation" (147) through which social production operates that Hardt and Negri celebrate entrepreneurship, the coming together of a "wide plurality of groups and subjectivities" (68) and locate possibilities for assembly and taking power differently. Drawing on these ideas, we want to argue here that the most significant intervention made by 2 Girls & a Pod in the structures of power that govern literary production is in making visible "networks of cooperation" in a Nairobi-centred and, interlinked with this, pan-African literary space.

The "networks of cooperation" and "collaborative networks" in Nairobi's literary space that 2 Girls & a Pod is constructed through, and that the podcast in turn constructs (literary production in a double sense), are initially framed in understated ways and consistently through a register of affective intimacy. In their very first episode 2 Girls & a Pod mention that "Wanjeri and Kilolo" are with them in the

café where they are recording and thank them for their sound effects. However, at no point do they draw attention to the fact that this is Wanjeri Gakuru and Moses Kilolo, who at the time were running the pan-African writers' collective Jalada. Similarly, Ochieng' is married to Otieno Owino who worked as Assistant Editor at Kwani Trust, perhaps Kenya's most visible literary journal and publisher. However, this connection to Kwani Trust is in evidence only obliquely through the Kwani? Manuscript Project artwork that accompanies the SoundCloud pages across Season 2 (see Episodes 10, 14 and 16) or Kwani? titles forming reference points for several discussions. Instead, despite Owino appearing as a guest across Episodes 14 and 15 (in the latter sharing insights into his work with Ellah Wakatama Allfrey as one of the editors of non-fiction anthology *Safe House*), for the most part his interactions with the podcast are visible only through the humorous and informal references by Mutanyi to "your husband" as not having made her food or bringing a power cable into the room. These interactions operate in very much the same register as Ochieng' hosting her brother as a guest on the show (S2:E16) or both Mutanyi and Ochieng' discussing that they would like to do an episode hosting their mothers talking about the books they read (S2:E10).

This understatement has remained characteristic across the podcast's four year lifespan. Alexander Ikawah, longlisted for the 2015 Commonwealth Short Story Prize, appears as the never fully named 'sound guy' Alex in the first two episodes. Much more recently, right at the end of the podcast's first poetry episode, Alexis Teyie and Bethuel Muthee explicitly reflect that they have managed "not to talk about Enkare Review" despite being poetry editors for this influential Nairobi-based literary magazine (S3: E3). We want to suggest that this signals towards 2 Girls & a Pod not only as a space of intimacy and friendship, but linked to this as concerned with ideas of literary value which operate outside of discourses around literature associated with publicity, marketing and sales.

While this feels very far from the Euro-American literary culture where modes of publication are embedded within systems of publicity and advertising aimed at target markets, and where literary features and events become merged with sales pitches, 2 Girls & a Pod is very overtly concerned with championing books and making visible the work of literary producers. Early episodes feature repeated 'shout outs' to the important work of the Magunga Bookstore (now Rugano Books) in making new books by contemporary African writers accessible in Nairobi (S1: E4, S2: E5, S2:E6, S2:E8), and to the work of Zukiswa Wanner and James Murua in staging literary events with visiting African writers (S2: E8). Perhaps the most powerful example of 2 Girls & a Pod's work reinforcing Africa-based literary producers and, in dialogue with Nyabola's observations about digital platforms moving forward feminist agendas in Kenya, particularly female Africa-

based literary producers, is a 2019 episode hosting Wanjeri Gakuru shortly after her appointment as Jalada's new Managing Editor (S3: E8). Gakuru and Jalada have again been regular reference points for 2 Girls & a Pod, from mention of Gakuru's innovative work on Jalada's mobile literary festival (S2: E7) to Mutanyi referencing their co-creation of the humorous hashtag #ReplaceBookTitleWithKegels (S1:E3). In welcoming Gakuru to the show, Mutanyi and Ochieng' comment that they have been "threatening" her with a "jaunt on our podcast" ever since her technical appearance as "cheerleader" for the first episode. They then begin by very explicitly documenting and celebrating her new leadership role in Jalada, with Ochieng' commenting "I am so psyched!' Cause one I'm a big fan of all the work. And I'm a fan of YOUR work, and I'm a fan of your input and your ideas, and I'm so excited for what you are going to do for it." Following on from this ensues a 90 minute-long episode which is humorous, lively and wide-ranging, with lots of singing, laughter and conversations moving across topics including Supa Modo, cover design and problematic characters in books.

Gakuru equally explicitly celebrates the work of 2 Girls & a Pod through this episode, commenting at the outset: "I'm so proud of you guys." It could be argued that the "networks of collaboration" being made visible here are not in fact reflective of a "wide plurality of groups and subjectivities" (Hardt and Negri 68) and that the culture of understatement and intimacy described here is instead indicative of 2 Girls & A Pod speaking to and for a small Nairobi literary elite. The reach of the podcast on SoundCloud perhaps supports this reading, as of May 2019 2 Girls & a Pod only has 209 followers with plays of individual episodes ranging from 57 for Season 3's poetry episode (S3:E3) to 238 for Season 2's episode engaging with Lola Shoneyin's visit to Nairobi (S2:E7), and the majority of episodes having somewhere between 75 and 200 plays. However, we want to argue that, while 2 Girls & a Pod is undoubtedly embedded within the power structures of Nairobi's literary space which is necessarily an elite one, that the podcast's reach and significance lies not in its audience figures but in the forms of lateral solidarity which it builds and makes evident between independent cultural producers, from Enkare Review to James Murua's blog, from Writivism to the Aké Festival.

In ways that speak to bwa Mwesigire's conception of literary activism as a form of knowledge production, an example of this is a recent Episode which 2 Girls & a Pod hosted with co-founder of *Saraba* magazine Dami Ajayi (notably also the focal point of BakwaCast's fourth episode) where they asked him to speak about the conditions that have enabled *Saraba*'s longevity and "how to keep a collaboration going as creative people." (E3:E7) As part of this conversation Ochieng' emphasised the importance of nurturing literary initiatives and arts spaces on the continent as spaces to "find new

talent, to encourage one another to keep producing." Whether talking to literary producers, writers, friends, family and regularly blurring these categories, 2 Girls & a Pod remain engaged in staging accessible and humorous yet ultimately serious discussions about the work of Africa-based literary initiatives and more broadly the need for restructuring literary space, advocating for Kenyan publishers to pay more attention to cover design (E3:E8) or for starting a queer press in Nairobi (S6:E6). 2 Girls & a Pod consistently makes visible the work of cultural producers whom Ochieng' and Mutanyi are in dialogue with or seek dialogue with without framing these relationships as promotional or transactional; through this process queer and female voices are often foregrounded as well attention given to pan-African literary networks.

Alongside this, 2 Girls & a Pod draws attention to the material structures of distribution and circulation in the global publishing industry and the ways in which the books available in Nairobi inevitably define the podcast's focus. While the content of many UK and US-based literary podcasts is embedded in a cycle of promotion and another tool for publishers to attract book buyers towards their latest titles, 2 Girls & a Pod repeatedly draws attention to the difficulties of accessing books due to issues of both pricing and availability. When talking about the Etisalat shortlist and book tour, Ochieng' and Mutanyi reflect on the frustrations of frequently attending book events where the book is being made available in Nairobi through that event for the first time and on the manner in which this limits the ways in which audiences can engage with writing (E1:E4). Frequent reference is made in the podcast to what Mehul Gohil would call "book hunting" on Tom Mboya Street, and particularly the role this has played in building Ochieng's large library which takes up the majority of space in her second bedroom where the podcast's third season is recorded.

2 Girls & a Pod draws attention to the politics of the secondhand book market in Nairobi where books sourced from the UK and the US are the cheapest and most easily available on the street and it is therefore difficult to find books by African writers (E3: E8). When a book by Zakes Mda or Brian Chikwava is bought from a book hawker, it is worthy of comment and celebration. Ochieng' talks about knowing that "with some literary fiction you are not likely to find that book again" and that she cannot take the risk of lending those books to her friends because she may not be able to find another copy (E3:E8). 2 Girls & a Pod is very much a labour of love, produced by Ochieng' and Mutanyi bringing their time, creativity and resources to the project.

In ways that resonate with the work of Ogola on the dynamics of humour and political engagement in Kenya's social media space, the precarious situation this puts the podcast in, particularly when

resources are unavailable and paid labour needs to be prioritised, is often addressed through humour. Frequently Mutanyi in particular will jokingly suggest that local bookshops or festivals should sponsor them, highlight they are not being paid or sponsored by the mobile networks they might mention, or give out a PO Box for people to send books to (S1:E3, S2:E12). While this brings into view structural inequalities in global literary space, it also offers possibilities for recognising models of literary activism that might shift these, operating against distinctly different valences of power. What does it mean for literary initiatives to work precariously yet sustainably outside of the pervasive cycles dictated by those with marketing and publicity budgets in the UK and the US of monthly releases? What terminology helps us to understand the work of these initiatives and to recognise them as "existing forms of wealth" offering the foundations for new democratic forms of literary or social power (Hardt and Negri 286)? And what role do or can African literary podcasts play in relation to a larger literary ecology with this in mind?

BakwaCast: Intimacy, Belonging and Publics

In contrast to 2 Girls & a Pod, BakwaCast operates with a deliberately broad remit, encompassing a cultural field which expands well beyond the realm of the literary to engage listeners in topics including contemporary art, technology, and music. Speaking as part of a week-long roundtable discussion on "Small Magazines and Literary Networks" at the 2017 Writivism festival held in Kampala, Macviban explained the decision to broaden BakwaCast's remit as a strategic effort to engage new readers: "we see the podcast as an opportunity to widen our audience and get people who do not naturally identify with literature and wouldn't engage with Bakwa in the hopes that they maybe will be led to Bakwa though this." Critical here is the sense, alluded to by Macviban, that through engagement with the podcast, listeners might be interpellated into a wider Bakwa community, transforming through this act of recognition and engagement into what we might think of as "Bakwa people," or members of the Bakwa community. In contrast to Chimurenga, however, for Bakwa, this becomes a deliberately intentional act, starting with an audience "in mind" and with guests chosen "based on how much their work, and stories, would be relevant to our listeners." (Macviban, personal correspondence)

By casting a deliberately wide net, but one which is nonetheless oriented to a specific and specifically chosen set of broader social, cultural and vocational interests, BakwaCast aims to invoke a specific modality of subjectification predicated upon participation in an intellectual-critical matrix which opens up from the literary towards a

broader complex of social production. In *Publics and Counterpublics*, Michael Warner argues for a pluralistic model of (counter)publics, defined by a set of iterative and self-reflexive characteristics which betray a series of internal tensions. As he highlights, "a public enables a reflexivity in the circulations of texts among strangers who become, by virtue of their reflexively circulating discourse, a social entity." (Warner 11-12) In contrast both to the notion of "the" public, or "the" public sphere of rational discourse amongst self-actualized men (Habermas), and encompassing questions of affect and embodiment, publics are both plural and self-organized around an iterative and reflexive process of attention and world-creation amongst strangers. Crucially, publics in this formulation bring us back to Hardy's reflections on Chimurenga, with which we opened this article, evoking the idea of a disparate group of individuals who, through an act of recognition, both of self and of one's others-in-the-same, become something more than the sum of their parts, enacting a kind of sociality or social formation. At the same time, this move cannot be reduced to the pre-rational, disinterested sublime of an Enlightenment-derived mode of aesthetic judgement; rather, it draws equally on the recognition of a shared idiom in which the social and the cultural become a kind of politics through practice. Imbued with temporality and historicity, publics are both personal and impersonal and span the interrelated zones of the public and private in complex, contingent and ever-shifting ways. Implicit in this formulation is a tension between a kind of passivity—publics are instantiated by the act of paying attention to a text, but that attention need not be active or explicit—and the core work of world-building which constituting a public entails. By positioning itself as a particular kind of public product, with a specific social remit, BakwaCast participates in precisely this kind of public formation, fabricated through a sense of kinship, community and belonging instantiated from a disparate range of inflected identifications.

In this respect, it is no coincidence that BakwaCast is also structured through a formal-affective frame which leverages informality as a kind of intimate address based on affect, collaboration, and cooperation. There is a certain amateurish quality to each episode (a term used not in the pejorative sense, but rather to differentiate BakwaCast's production from any kind of corporatized or sponsored brand management) which operates within the larger discursive and material frameworks of the hustle. Hustle is that mode of being defined alternately as the imperative to "'make it' or die trying," (Quayson) on the one hand, and as "evok[ing] a kaleidoscopic range of activities" whose own temporality matches the speed of everyday urban life and which innovates operations outside of the mainstream (Murphy and wa Ngũgĩ), on the other.

In their influential 1999 text *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz suggest that we must recognise a wider and more expansive concept of the political in Africa: "the boundaries of politics [in Africa] are also porous: politics is seen to include many other, less obviously political, activities." (52) This observation is echoed, from a vastly different ideological perspective, in Hardt and Negri's directive to abandon the treatment of the political "as an autonomous realm detached from social needs and social production," "leav[ing] the noisy sphere of politics, where everything takes place on the surface, and descend[ing] into the hidden abode of social production and reproduction." (xv) In contrast to Hardt and Negri, for whom the expansion of the political functions as a potentially emancipatory act, for Chabal and Daloz the expansion of the political is a fundamental consequence of what they diagnose as the weak nature of the state in Africa, its informalization and reliance on "the patrimonial practices of patrons and their networks." (16) Whereas, for Chabal and Daloz, this patrimonial model entails an emphasis on vertical ties and divisions which close off the possibility of robust "horizontal functional bonds or ties of solidarity" across populations (20), the concertedly affective models projected by BakwaCast (and literary activism more broadly), we suggest, indicate a form of commoning which resists the thrall of the vertical in favour of the sprawling networks of the horizontal, based upon a shared ethics, collaboration, and a certain mode of intimacy. At the same time, this is not to suggest a sense of polarity between vertical leadership and horizontal movements or to fetishize horizontality (Hardt and Negri xiv), but instead to offer critical models that make visible the structures of literary and cultural production through ideas of relationality centred on the specifically social condition of interpersonal alliance-formation. It is notable, moreover, that the very weaknesses diagnosed by Chabal and Daloz —including the collapse of distinctions between public/private, state/civil society, individual/ community, and prevalence of informality of mode of operation— might be seen as opening the very spaces of possibility which enable new forms of social production, subjectivity, and assembly to occur. Literary activists, including those podcasts we discuss here, are exploiting precisely this condition in order to produce organizational structures and ecologies of production which enable different kinds of networks of practice publics and commons to emerge, both engaging, in a fashion, in a longer history of alternative, lateral, submerged, less-visible, or informal production on the African continent, while remaining savvy and active participants in larger and sometimes more stratified networks and structures of production.[7]

Chabal and Daloz emphasize the ways in which, in Africa, social production operates "along informal vertical channels or relations," (21) with reciprocal networks firmly entrenched along

identitarian lines (54). What BakwaCast and other literary initiatives like it demonstrate, however, is the extent to which informality might function differently, enabling new models of leadership and social organization to emerge, emphasising affect and community as nodes around which connections are forged and embodying the notion that entrepreneurship operates as "an agent of happiness." (Hardt and Negri xviii) Though recorded in a studio, BakwaCast still gives the sense of being in an intimate space, chatting with friends and evoking the spatio-affective realm of the veranda rather than the formality of the air-conditioned room (cf. Terray). It is this atmosphere which Episode 0, "BakwaCast's Origins," sets up, filled with in-jokes, references to mutual acquaintances and shared histories which remain unglossed for the listener not already in the know in a manner reminiscent of the affective-collective identifications present in 2 Girls & a Pod. To listen to BakwaCast is to be immersed within a conversation in media res, conducted not through transactional relationships but through a genuine sense of friendship and familiarity.

It is our argument in this paper that the deliberate modes of self-positioning described by BakwaCast, 2 Girls & a Pod, and other podcast ventures are no coincidence; rather, by explicitly invoking ideals of intimacy, belonging, co-creation and collaboration, both BakwaCast and 2 Girls & a Pod, position themselves as literary producers whose manifestations are determined by their relational positioning in a larger field, invoke the core precepts of the idea of the commons, "the wealth of the earth and the social wealth that we share and whose use we manage together," whose very appearance

> rel[ies] […] on shared knowledges, languages, relationships, and circuits of cooperation along with shared access to resources in order to produce, and what we produce tends (at least potentially) to be common, that is, shared and managed socially. (Hardt and Negri xvi)

When asked in an interview what led them to expand Bakwa into podcasting, Macviban and Kamga explain:

> We've always been drawn to experiments with format, as well as the desire to own our narrative, such that it reflects the depth and intricacies of reality as we know it. Podcasts have a way of circumventing the limitations of online texts, while offering a unique intimate experience to the listener. (Macviban, personal correspondence)

If Bakwa and its many instantiations, including BakwaCast, exist to forge the opening of spaces in which ordinary citizens might "comment and interpret," "meet," and interact in "a way that [is] thoughtful," (BakwaCast, "Episode 0") a basis made more urgent by the total lack of such outlets elsewhere and the accompanying dearth of official channels for co-creation, then its very founding principle might be read as one form of commoning through the ethos which permeates across the podcast's individual episodes. At the same time,

however, this opens up a new set of questions around access and accessibility, questions which hinge on the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity and which the affective-critical matrices invoked by BakwaCast provoke. Recalling with Harvey that "cultural and intellectual commons are often not subject to the logic of scarcity and exclusionary uses of the sort that apply to most natural resources […]. We can all listen to the same radio broadcast or television program at the same time," (103) even as these shared cultural resources risk becoming "degraded and banalized through excessive abuse," (104) these are tensions which cannot be easily resolved. While choosing to join a Bakwa public indicates a certain agency on the part of the listener, it equally speaks to the uneasy relationship between creation and reception in which the autonomous production of subjectivity functions.

Each episode of BakwaCast centres on a key figure based in Cameroon or its diasporas, taking the form of an extended and seemingly informal conversation. Episode 1, for instance, which focuses on the work of art curator and historian Christine Eyene, traces her own genealogy as a young member of the diaspora in Paris and subsequent training as an art historian and curator. Eyene describes her formative experiences as a series of encounters with the wider art world, both through her personal life (Eyene's brother-in-law is the South African photographer George Hallet) and her educational journey, drawing linkages between areas as diverse as Weimar art and South African contemporary painting. Throughout, she foregrounds her development in a language reminiscent of Macviban's own description of his trajectory to founding Bakwa, highlighting a desire to create, through curation, new publics, commons, and citational-critical matrices to make visible the voices, spaces and networks previously consigned to the margins. In one telling anecdote, for instance, Eyene describes the dissonance between her lived experience of African art and the citational publics she encountered as a student studying art history in Paris, explaining that "when [she] was looking at the bookshelves at the University there was nothing on African artists. And to [her] it was weird because [she knew] there are African artists" (Bakwacast, "Episode 1"). For Eyene, as for Macviban, this lacuna transformed into a spark for creation, for the opening of publics and spaces previously rendered invisible under normative social structures. Merging different historical moments and temporalities, Eyene's comments repeatedly return to a point which resonates with Bakwa's own origin story, a need to produce new spaces and modes of knowledge to encompass the diverse experiences of African artists not as ethnographic curiosities, but as cultural producers. Notably, Eyene describes her own curatorial process as one based on affect, describing her relationships with the artists with whom she works as foregrounding "this sort of human connection before being the artist

that is going to be in the exhibition" and emphasising the space of the exhibition as a space of dialogue in which she "tr[ies] to create conversations with artists who don't know about each other or don't know about each other's practice." (BakwaCast, "Episode 1")

Put in this context, these conversations function not as bland spaces of unanimity, but as spaces in which "they can say different things," even those which directly conflict, invoking an image of the exhibition space as "a dynamic composition of heterogeneous elements that eschew identity but nonetheless function together, subjectively, socially, in cooperation." (Hardt and Negri 121) By so doing, Eyene's comments gesture towards a similar tension as that seen in Bakwa's origin story between the inclusivity of the commons as a space "composed of heterogeneous singularities" (Hardt and Negri 122) and the public as a social entity which engages in a self-reflexive—but nonetheless unified—act of world-creation. What remains subject to interpretation is the extent to which these spaces and social forms might enable the entanglement of the horizontal and vertical, in such a manner as to produce new possibilities for the ecologies of production within which they operate and towards which they contribute. By conceiving of and foregrounding the doubled nature of social production, it becomes possible to identify in outfits such as BakwaCast and 2 Girls & a Pod the emergence of a multi-focal, multiple and overlapping series of social forms which together fabricate a larger ecology of literary production and social creation.

In the Cameroonian context in which Bakwa is located, this becomes a particularly urgent issue, enabling the creation of new solidarities forged on an affective relationality and participation in a context still riven by the divisions wrought under colonialism, particularly linguistic:

> A lot is changing. Bakwa is very much at the forefront of these changes because what we do is actually to challenge the way Cameroonians perceive what writing is because we need to be able to produce content that can really stand the test of time. Bakwa exists as a place where writers can actually discover each other read each other's work and as well critique the society and this generates a conversation which is really important for everything from societal change to growth – basically every aspect of life you need a conversation like this to progress. (BakwaCast, "Episode 0")

It is important to highlight, in this context, BakwaCast's choice to operate primarily in English, a choice which, in the context of Cameroon's "Anglophone problem," cannot be anything but political, in its most expansive sense; at the same time, the inclusion of bilingual and French-language episodes, as well as new translation-focused projects such as the forthcoming anthology *Of Passion and Ink*, indicates something beyond a mere tribalism rooted in deep-seated linguistic conflict and divisions in the country,[8] a radical opening up of

public space to a mode of commoning in which heterogeneity retains its preserve.

These tensions emerge across the larger demographics and reach of BakwaCast. As Macviban articulates in Episode 0, BakwaCast, like Bakwa, is "very much a Cameroonian thing," oriented firmly towards that country and its populations in its aims, objectives and choice of formatting. At the same time, it is difficult not to question how effective this can really be in a context in which internet penetration is just over 35% percent and largely concentrated in major metropolitan districts (APA News). Whatever BakwaCast's larger aims, questions of literary economies persist, evidenced in statistics which show that the majority of Bakwa's listeners and readers come from Cameroon, the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, France, Germany, Canada, and Nigeria (Macviban, personal correspondence). Yet, the material realities of access and inclusion do not invalidate the larger claims which Bakwa makes towards its role in the forging of a more egalitarian and open ecology of literary—and social—production:

> If you look between the birth and death of *Palapala* and the birth of Bakwa magazine, the academia pretty much ran the literary space but now it's no longer the case. Of course, the internet has a very major role, does play a major role. What has changed with regards to the way people see literature because I can say around 2011 Cameroonian writers didn't know each other the way they know each other now. There was—there is—a generational gap between writers. (BakwaCast, "Episode 0")

For all of its ambitions, BakwaCast's reach remains relatively limited, with only 96 followers on their official SoundCloud platform as of May 2019. Plays of individual episodes, too, remain modest: 248 for Episode 0, 184 for Episode 1, 149 for Episode 2, 477 for Episode 3 (the only French-language episode to date) and 245 for Episode 4. Funding, too, remains an issue, with a lack of large-scale or sustainable funding beyond Macviban's own personal resources (though it is worth noting that Bakwa, more broadly, has been in receipt of project-based funding through international avenues, such as the Goethe-Institut). In this context, it would be easy to dismiss the work that BakwaCast does as essentially flawed, less oriented toward opening new commons, publics, and social forms and more towards perpetuating a self-selecting and already-established in-group, and predicated on the very ethos of individualist entrepreneurship so often decried by critics of the neoliberal turn. Yet, this would be a highly uncharitable reading, one which falls into the trap of "anti-politics" described by James Ferguson ("Uses of Neoliberalism", *Give a Man a Fish*).

Our own research on literary activism and independent literary initiatives on the African continent has noted the ways in which the very precepts so often associated with neoliberalism and its ethos of the individual as entrepreneur of the self reappear time and again, not

as a mode of capitulation to the dynamics of an all-consuming market, but as a call towards the fabrication of new modes of social production and terrain: passion, intimacy, initiative, and need as driving forces for the creation of different ways of doing. To simply dismiss these outright as another symptom of the financialization of everyday life or the neoliberalization of subjectivity strikes us as both inadequate and impoverished, a symptom of the kind of thinking which relies on a priori theoretical frameworks at the expense of the empirical.

Returning to the question of social production, then, what emerges in BakwaCast is a highly complex ecological terrain in which the tensions which inhere in the simultaneous emergence of disparate social forms, themselves founded on a set of material structures which operate along vertical lines of differential power and stratification. This is a terrain in which easy observations about the relative value of production must be discarded in favour of a more highly situated working through of the actually existing discourses, networks, and forms of world-creation which make their appearance known. These in turn, as Doseline Kiguru's work has demonstrated, are central to the formation of new forms of canonization and instrumental to what Moradewun Adejunmobi has described as reading publics and critical-citational matrices which may nonetheless function beyond the visibility of the global north or a totalising concept of "the" literary field.

Conclusions

Our intention throughout this article has been to use the examples of literary activism and Africa-centred podcasts to move away from a sense of polarity between vertical leadership and horizontal movements, instead trying to offer critical models that make visible the structures of literary and cultural production—and activism—through ideas of relationality. We have been interested, in particular, in thinking through the ways in which specific calls to a bounded public of intimates and friends, evoked through the audible structures of both 2 Girls & a Pod and BakwaCast, opens up new space for considering questions of social production, entrepreneurship, and activism as means and modes through which to forge new spaces for cultural production and, by extension, the social and the political. These examples, we argue, enable new structures through which to think through the ultimate force of cooperative networks of practice, publics, and lateral solidarities which together can produce new forms of thinking about how independent cultural producers and their work might help us conceptualize the new topographies and entanglements that define literary production in an Africa-centred context. Key here, we suggest, are shifting and manifold ideas around terminology and

measurement and their potential both to enhance and to hinder how we think about value and the structures which undergird work across multiple literary spaces. With this view, our primary interest is in the ways in which both 2 Girls & A Pod and BakwaCast operate as exemplars of Africa-centred literary initiatives which cannot be easily categorized along a single axis or model of interpretation, with the potential to shift power structures even while remaining entangled within these.

At the core of our larger project here is documenting and drawing attention to work that can, in bwa Mwesigire's words (drawing on Carli Coetzee's research into Africa-centred research and cultural production), function as gate opening, particularly through literary organizations connected to the AMLA network. With this in mind, we have argued for the particular potential of literary podcasts to build new pan-African networks of readers, writers and literary producers, leveraging the flexibility of their medium to generate dynamic structures of value and networks of practice. Our argument has been that the novelty of the podcast as form is that it enables us to model a mode of literary production that is on the one hand part of existing power structures and literary networks, but also explicitly engaged in opening up new models and forms of African literary production and activism, on the other. Through this, we have worked to draw attention to the kinds of the conversations 2 Girls & a Pod and BakwaCast are having, alongside the practicalities that make this engagement possible.

For reasons of space, we have not dwelled as much as we might have on questions around the economics of these podcasts. For example, both these initiatives are self-funded, calling up questions around sustainability and reach which are critical to conceptualising the remit of each initiative's aims. Yet, as 2 Girls & a Pod have articulated, this equally raises challenges around the viability of operating within a structure that without compromising their production "takes into consideration how much intellectual and material labour" this work requires. If financial and economic concerns have not been at the centre of this article, they nonetheless remain crucial issues for African literary production—particularly that which attempts to position itself beyond the structures and limitations of the "global" literary market—more broadly. Equally urgent is the tension which inheres between the collaborative models produced by these podcasts and the constant recourse to varying visions of charismatic leadership, centred on the presence and participation of one or two individuals, which has driven the narrative of African literary production. What, that is, happens when money runs, or when founders leave? How can initiatives balance the need for structures and governance that enables sustainability against the tendency to fall into corporatized modes of valuation which erode the very bonds of

intimacy on which they are founded? These are not questions with easy answers, even through documenting or commentary on forms of literary activism as knowledge creation. Rather, they attest to the continually evolving nature of Africa-centred literary production in all of its messy complexity and entanglements.

Notes

1. In an interview with Dzekashu Macviban, Chimurenga founder Ntone Edjabe explains that this tag line, borrowed from a Fela Kuti lyric, "signal[s] that knowledge is something that one makes (or takes) rather than merely receive – an active rather than passive process. This guides how we approach the editorial aspect of the publication." (Macviban, "Q & A")

2. A 2017 report commissioned by Arts Council England, for instance, cites collapsing sales, dropping prices and the erosion of advances as contributing to the constriction of the literary marketplace (Arts Council England).

3. It is worth noting that Chimurenga might now be viewed as a consecrated entity in the African literary field, evidenced in its award, in 2011, of the Prince Claus Fund Prize as well as Hardy's own shortlisting, in 2018, for the Caine Prize for African Writing for her short story, "Involution."

4. Established in 2016, AMLA is an initiative of the Kampala-based Center for African Cultural Excellence (CACE), whose other projects include the annual Writivism Festival, Writivism Short Story Prize and Kofi Addo Nonfiction Prize. Founded with the purpose of supporting literary producers, both established and aspiring, the AMLA Network's activities encompass an annual workshop and mentorship programme.

5. In 2017 the Communications Authority of Kenya reported a mobile phone penetration rate of 2018 with wider research indicating over a ⅓ of these devices were capable of accessing the internet and over ¼ of users were participating in social media (Nyabola 36).

6. In the interest of full disclosure, it is worth noting that we were both present and acted as co-facilitators at this inaugural workshop.

7. There are certainly resonances in the building of agency through networks of collaboration with Stephanie Newell's work on the influence of 'paracolonial' literary networks that stretched along the west coast of Africa, established through African-owned newspapers

and alongside British colonialism and pre-colonial exchanges of trade and culture (Newell 2002, 3, 30, 213).

8. Originally a German colony, following World War I Cameroon was administered under the auspices of a UN Trusteeship split between France and the United Kingdom, with the majority of territory for the former. At the time of independence, a plebiscite determined that part of the British-held, Anglophone Cameroons would join neighbouring Nigeria, while the remainder would unite with French Cameroon. This division, predicated both on differences in language and in colonial policy in line with the French and British empires, respectively, has resulted in deeply entrenched inequalities which have particularly impacted the poorer and less resourced Anglophone regions of the country, where separatists continue to agitate for the creation of the independent state of Ambazonia.

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