Reimagining Justice: Vernacular Storytelling, Development and Human Rights in Uganda

Ruth Kelly

PhD

University of York

Politics

October 2020

Abstract

Practitioners in the development and human rights sectors are often deeply committed to justice and social change. But the logics of the organisations and networks they are embedded in can limit the kinds of political claims they find plausible and feel confident making. These limitations can be understood within the framework of epistemic injustice, a body of work within political theory which shows how those with most influence over shared epistemic resources curate them – often unconsciously – in ways that exclude concepts apt to describe marginalised experiences.

In this thesis, I argue that such 'hermeneutical injustices' relate not just to descriptions of lived experience, but to marginalised epistemes and interpretative traditions that are excluded from normative regimes such as human rights and development. I demonstrate how vernacular storytelling practices can be used to help social justice activists in Uganda reimagine justice and communicate across difference. I use the European folktale Red Riding Hood and Ugandan ogre stories and origin stories – notably Nambi and Kintu – to explore questions related to gender, agency and the nature of political authority. Participants' contributions are informed by their familiarity with some of the traditions and epistemes neglected in development and human rights work, and by insights from their work and activism about the logics of the bureaucracies and networks that need to change.

My study moves beyond abstract thinking about rival epistemologies, worldviews and perspectives, and general calls for cross-cultural dialogue. In my fieldwork I bridge theory and practice, developing and testing a concrete mechanism for bringing people together in ways that disrupt dominant ways of thinking and help them reimagine justice. I propose vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice: that is, rather than telling each other about different knowledge systems, participants engage with different interpretative practices in order to understand differently together.

Table of contents

List of figures

TRUTH in her dress finds facts too tight.
In fiction she moves with ease.

Stray Birds 140, Rabindrinath Tagore[1]

[1] 1916. Cited as the epigraph to Okot p'Bitek's collection of Achioli folktales, *Hare and Hornbill* (1978).

Preface

> For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?
>
> *Esther 4:14 (New King James Version)*

When I was young, I was a very devout Christian. I must have read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation a dozen times. I was particularly fascinated with the stories of my biblical namesakes: Ruth and Esther. Both were influential women. Ruth, a Moabite, was part of the lineage of Jesus. Esther, a Jew, interceded with the king of Persia to save her people from genocide. I was encouraged to think that I, like Esther, might have been born "for such a time as this" – to fight for justice and to change (and save) the world.

And yet neither story is straightforward. Ruth was married off to an older relative after her husband died, and her baby claimed by her mother-in-law. Esther's cousin Mordechai pushed her to enter the king's harem and compete to become queen, on a gamble that it would increase his political influence. In each case, their influence was bound up with compliance; they changed the world in ways that reinforced the patriarchal and racist structures that they were part of.

During a research fellowship at Yale in 2008, visiting the divinity school library, I picked up commentaries on the stories of Ruth and Esther. A number of theologians, it turned out, find in the book of Ruth a story of Ruth's attraction to her mother-in-law Naomi. Just as the Moabite disrupts Jesus' Jewish lineage, so Ruth's desire for Naomi queers the patriarchal structure that Naomi has her marry into. The story of Esther passing as Persian has troubling echoes of how so many have been forced to deny their cultural identity and sexuality in order to fit in. But the name she adopts hints at other possibilities, referencing the much older myth of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar: goddess of love and chaos; autonomous and transgressive. Over the years the political possibilities of re-reading these

and other familiar stories continued to play on my mind and eventually inspired this PhD project.

The layers and ambiguities of such stories mean that they are not just endlessly fascinating but ideal for use in the context of research and critical reflection on conceptions of justice.[2] Characters celebrated for their orthodoxy can be read as radical and transgressive; heroic, but also dark and compromised. In both Ruth and Esther, I found identities that I could celebrate safely as a devout young person but also reimagine and reclaim as I grew older. Reading and re-reading these stories helped me to position myself personally and politically, considering questions of inequality, patriarchy and racism, and the individualism of social and political activism. As a privileged white woman working in the development and human rights sectors, identifying with these marginalised characters risks directing my attention away from my own complicity in the structures of violence that I seek to challenge. But Mordechai's challenge to Esther, quoted above, leads me to reflect on how my own liberation might be bound up with the liberation of those I work with around the world. The stories are about what women have to do, but also about power and desire; about what makes us who we are, what action we might take, and what we have the potential to become.

[2] For a discussion of the use of the story of Esther as a resource for gender and social consciousness raising for South African Indian Christians, see Nadar 2003, 250-318.

Acknowledgements

I have worked closely with Emilie Flower, Shohrab Jahan, Ribon Khandokar, Duniya Khandoker and Susan Kiguli since the beginning of my PhD project; many of my ideas have been developed in collaboration and in conversation with them. I am grateful to each of them for teaching me so much, and particularly to Duniya for being willing to leave her young baby in Dhaka to come to the workshop in Uganda. Thanks also to Scovia Arinaitwe, who has also been involved since the first workshop in Uganda in 2017, first as a participant and then as a co-facilitator; and to Femrite and the Uganda Society Library for hosting the storytelling workshops in 2020.

Participants brought insightful contributions and a willingness to experiment to the workshops in 2017, 2018 and 2019 that informed the development of my methodology, as well as to the storytelling workshops in 2020 on which this thesis focuses. Specific thanks are due to the following participants who have allowed me to use their contributions in this thesis: Jennipher Achaloi; Bonnetvanture Asiimwe; Alex Atwemereireho; Elijah Bwojji; Buka Chimey; Dilman Dila; Anindita Dutta; Pamela Enyonu; Amanda Joy; George Gumikiriza; Natasha KHadijjah; Duniya Khandoker; Charity Karungi; Juliet Kushaba; Fred Kawooya; Matt Kayem; Rachel (Abwole) Kunihira; Caroline Nalule; Roland Niwagaba; Collins (Howie) Odhiambo; Martha Oringo; Oscar Ranzo; Fortunate Tusasirwe; Hilda Twongyeire; and Joyce Wolayo; as well as to those who have asked to remain anonymous. I am particularly grateful to Duniya Khandoker, Elijah Bwojji, Natasha KHadijjah and Fortunate Tusasirwe for reading and commenting on extracts from the thesis.

I am also grateful to participants in the storytelling workshop in Dhaka in December 2019, where we experimented with different possibilities for the methodology described in this thesis: to my co-facilitators Ribon Khandokar and Duniya Khandoker; and to participants Solika Akter; Anamika Barua; Md. Rifat Billah; Sheila Cabusao; Takdeer Ahmed Chowdhury; Aparupa Hajong; Nazir Uddin Hojjah; Mahfuza Mala; Md. Hanif; Mugddah Mohammad Ahtes Hamul; SM. Mujibul Islam Raqeeb; Sumaiya Sadaf; Saika Shahrin Disha; Pronoy Sarker; Redoun Satter; and

Kazi Mahir Tajwar. Everyone was so patient, and willing to experiment and challenge themselves – sometimes unexpectedly deeply – in helping me work out which approaches worked and which didn't work so well.

My supervisors and advisors – Jon Ensor, Paul Gready, Alfred Moore, Emilie Morin and Maggie O'Neill – have all offered very useful insights at various stages of the process. I am grateful to my principal supervisor Paul Gready for giving me the freedom to explore my ideas in unconventional ways. Emilie Morin in particular has gone above and beyond in the support she has offered. I am also grateful to Danielle Celermajer for her comments and for pointing me to José Medina's work. I am grateful to the ESRC and the AHRC for funding my research.

Emma Woolerton has been a patient and thoughtful companion throughout the whole process, knowing when to listen and when to make suggestions; I couldn't have done it without her.

Author's declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References. The ways in which my work has been informed by collaboration with research participants and by my involvement in a parallel AHRC-funded research collaboration is clearly set out and acknowledged in the text. The first two sections in Chapter 4 – 'Vernaculars' and 'Storytelling' – are under review by *Wasafiri*. I have presented and discussed material in the first half of Chapter 1 and the second half of Chapter 2 at the 2016 DSA Ireland conference and at the University of Leeds and the University of Edinburgh. I have shared and discussed a previous version of the first half of Chapter 2 at the political theory work in progress seminar at the University of York. I have presented and discussed previous versions of Chapter 5 at work in progress seminars at Makerere University in Uganda and at the University of York and the University of Warwick in the UK.

1. Introduction: human rights and development in East Africa

1.1. Introduction

Practitioners in the human rights and development sectors are often deeply committed to justice and social change. But the stories and frames that practitioners rely on often replicate tropes that hinder that change. In this thesis, I explore how vernacular storytelling practices can be used to help social justice activists disrupt dominant ways of thinking and articulate new political claims. My research takes seriously the idea that storytelling helps people make sense of the world and of their lives. Rather than just recreating colonial, patriarchal and individualistic frames, it can lead to new, better ways to think about development and human rights.

Both the development and human rights sectors have long been criticised for offering an overly narrow – and variously elitist, patriarchal, neo-imperial, neo-liberal or depoliticised – template for social justice and social change. Their histories are bound up with colonialism and Christian proselytising and their presents with the dynamics of the market and the promotion (or imposition) of liberal values.[3] Many social justice activists employed by or otherwise involved with these sectors recognise and are troubled by their limitations.[4] Yet such activists often struggle to articulate and to make a compelling case for alternative political claims. For employees of development and human rights NGOs in particular, the logics of the organisations and networks in which they are embedded can limit the kinds of political claims they find plausible and feel confident making.

[3] In the field of development, see: Cooke and Kothari 2001; Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1994; Gifford 2016; Henkel and Stirrat 2001; Kothari 2005; Li 2007; Mitchell 2002, 169-195; Nederveen Pieterse 2010; Sharma 2008. In the field of human rights, see: Baxi 2008; Douzinas 2000; Kapur 2018; Kennedy 2004; Mutua 2002a and 2016; Spivak 2004. For contributions that span both sectors, see: Pahuja 2011; Rajagopal 2003.

[4] For example, Sara de Jong points to a series of studies by development sector insiders – "inspired by their accumulated unease with certain practices and by macrocritiques of development and NGOs" – that consider how their experiences of the sector illuminate "relations between microlevel experiences, meso phenomena such as organizational structures, and macrolevel structures of global inequality" (2017, 5).

In my PhD research, I explore how social justice activists and NGO workers can use familiar, accessible storytelling practices to articulate political claims informed by epistemes, philosophical traditions and repertoires of resistance other than those privileged in human rights and development work. In this thesis, I make original theoretical and methodological contributions to knowledge. In arguing that the cultivation of hermeneutical breadth can help to mitigate hermeneutical injustice and improve decision-making, I make an original theoretical contribution to literature on epistemic injustice. My work bridges theory and practice, making a significant and innovative methodological contribution to knowledge in so far as I develop and test a methodology that can be used with social justice activists to help them to reimagine justice. Activists situated in between local struggles in the global South and global systems of governance and solidarity – such as the social justice activists and NGO workers I work with in Uganda – are valuable interlocutors in this process, offering sophisticated critical, explanatory and conceptual insights into how justice is imagined. Their contributions are informed by their familiarity with some of the traditions and epistemes neglected in development and human rights work, and by insights from their work and activism about the logics of the bureaucracies and networks that need to change.

On the assumption that human rights and development norms remain useful despite their flaws, I explore whether and how the alternative conceptions of justice, dignity and freedom, and related political claims that emerge in storytelling compare with and might be reconciled with those norms, and how such conceptions and claims might help to transform the development and human rights sectors. In analysing human rights and development together, I am less concerned with their differences than with the practical ways in which they overlap; specifically that both sectors provide both funding and employment for social justice activists and sets of broadly accepted norms (rights, goals and indicators) that can be mobilised in support of political claims.

My work moves beyond abstract thinking about rival epistemologies, worldviews and perspectives, and general calls for cross-cultural dialogue.

In this thesis I bridge theory and practice, proposing a concrete mechanism for bringing people together in ways that disrupt dominant ways of thinking and help them reimagine justice. During my PhD, I have worked with international NGO ActionAid and with social justice activists and writers in Uganda to develop an innovative, interdisciplinary methodology. This uses vernacular storytelling – that is, storytelling practices that are familiar and accessible to workshop participants – to help social justice activists and NGO workers think differently about human rights and development. I tested this methodology in two workshops in Uganda, using the well-known European folktale Red Riding Hood and Ugandan ogre stories and origin stories, notably the Kiganda origin story of Nambi and Kintu, to explore questions related to gender, agency, and the nature of political authority. In my discussion, I demonstrate how engaging in familiar and accessible traditional and religious storytelling practices helped social justice activists and employees of development NGOs think about justice in ways that are rooted in local cultural traditions; and consider how this might relate to and help to supplement existing human rights and development norms.

The project is informed by my experience of working in the human rights and development sectors for about 10 years. During that time, I was aware of how the cultures of the organisations and networks I was part of affected my conceptions of justice and limited the range of political claims I considered plausible. I particularly noticed this shifting as I changed jobs and organisations. As part of my analysis, I write myself into the thesis, discussing my own experience of using storytelling to help me think differently about justice, both in my preparatory research and as a participant as well as a facilitator in the workshops.[5] Academic conventions can constrain the way we think just as the conventions associated with the

[5] Reflexivity and autoethnography in research are now well-established and embedded in a wide range of disciplines, from critical sociology to feminist scholarship to performance studies (e.g. Bourdieu 2007; Denzin 2014; Nagar 2014, 81-104). A significant minority of scholars argue for their relevance in political science and international relations (cf. Behl 2019; Briggs and Bleiker 2010; Cohn 1987; Dauphinee 2010; Pachirat 2009; Zacka 2017; Zirakzadeh 2009). There is widespread acceptance that interviews, focus groups and workshops are performative and interactive encounters in which the ethnographic researcher necessarily influences the subject of analysis. Practices of self-ethnography are useful in making these entanglements explicit (cf. de Jong 2017, 3-8; Madison 2008).

development and human rights sectors do; by composing stories and verse as part of the research process and by using these in my analysis, I try to supplement the relatively narrow range of interpretative practices admissible in academic research and writing. My PhD thesis focuses on the process of developing the methodology and testing it in Uganda. I have also used it in work in Bangladesh and I am working with ActionAid to develop a toolkit in the hope that it might be used more broadly, especially in the activist meetings in which transnational campaign priorities and framings are articulated.

In trying to contest elements of development and human rights practice they find problematic, social justice activists have placed considerable emphasis on the representation of marginalised experiences and the inclusion of marginalised voices in decision-making. However, this has not been as effective in contesting dominant approaches as might have been hoped. Interventions that aim to facilitate inclusion often require marginalised speakers to reframe their contributions in terms that are acceptable within the process or occupational context at hand (cf. Cooke and Kothari 2001; Fernandes 2017; Schaffer and Smith 2004). This requirement risks distorting or silencing the ways in which contributions from marginalised perspectives might challenge the narrow logics of the sectors, limiting the range of political claims that are admissible.[6]

Such limitations can be understood within the framework of epistemic injustice, a body of work in political theory which shows how those with most influence over the development of shared epistemic resources often ignore and even actively resist knowing about marginalised experiences. This allows the most privileged to persist in misunderstanding and misrepresenting the world in ways that reinforce their own privilege and obscure the violence done by colonialism and neo-liberalism (cf. Pohlhaus 2012; Medina 2012 and 2013). This literature focuses on the exclusion of

[6] Comparably, in the context of democratic deliberation, Iris Marion Young points out that the terms and norms of deliberation and the agenda being considered can exclude "the expression of some needs, interests, and suffering of injustice, because these cannot be voiced with the operative premisses and frameworks" even in the context of formal inclusion (2000, 37-38, 53-56 and 2001, 678-687).

marginalised experiences, paying insufficient attention to the exclusion of marginalised ways of knowing and making sense of the world. Many (post-)colonial subjects are trained to privilege dominant epistemic practices – from European languages to market-oriented logics – even when these are ill-suited to describing their experiences, reflecting their sense of identity, or addressing problems that affect them. As well as accounting for the exclusion of perspectives informed by lived experience, a theory of hermeneutical injustice must take account of the exclusion of marginalised epistemes, interpretative traditions and repertoires of resistance. I argue that this constitutes hermeneutical injustice when hermeneutical resources that are particularly central to the identity of a marginalised group are excluded from contexts or processes where decisions are made that affect the members of that group. The cultivation of hermeneutical breadth, by giving social justice activists and decision-makers access to a broader range of interpretative tools and approaches, is likely to improve understanding of and responses to injustice and changing circumstances.

A number of scholars have made proposals for mechanisms that can be used to mitigate epistemic injustice. These proposals range from reading accounts of marginalised experiences and imaginative texts to engaging in cross-cultural dialogue with diverse others (cf. Medina 2013; Pohlhaus 2012; Mihai 2018; Santos 2014; Stone-Mediatore 2003). However, it is relatively rare for scholarship on epistemic injustice to test whether and how such proposals work in practice. In my PhD research, I bridge theory and practice, developing and testing a methodology that engages social justice activists in vernacular storytelling in the context of a participatory workshop. The collaborative and interactive process of telling, discussing and reimagining familiar and accessible stories helps to disrupt dominant frameworks, draw attention to devalued perspectives and consolidate these insights in ways that expand participants' interpretative horizons. This work proposes vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice. That is, rather than telling each other about different knowledge systems, participants engage with different interpretative practices in order to understand differently together.

I define vernacular storytelling as the stories and storytelling devices members of a group are familiar with and use in communication, whether through direct allusion or in the way those stories frame what they say. Stories and storytelling do important hermeneutical work. Cognitive and sociological research suggests that we make sense of the myriad mental and sensory perceptions we experience by constructing conceptual worlds that cohere and are intersubjectively communicable. One way we do this is to map our experiences onto conventional story structures. We use storytelling devices such as metaphors to communicate complex ideas, and devices such as rhythm and repetition to emphasise certain elements and to make our communications memorable (cf. Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005, 69-71, 185-186, 231-235, 349-350, 520-521; Klapproth 2004, 107-119). The way in which storytellers adapt conventional stories and integrate new material to make them speak to new circumstances mirrors the kind of hermeneutical process that could be used to integrate devalued perspectives into existing human rights and development regimes and to articulate new kinds of political claims.

My project recognises that being caught up in the logics of the development and human rights sectors can limit which political claims social justice activists are able to articulate and consider plausible. I explore the extent to which vernacular storytelling can be used to overcome this dilemma. In developing and testing the methodology, I bring together a critical engagement with political theory with an applied understanding of development and human rights drawn from my experience in campaigning and facilitation, and informed by literature on participatory approaches. I am interested in the theoretical dimensions of the question – whether storytelling reveals alternative perspectives as well as dominant frames – and also in its practical and methodological implications – how the practice of storytelling might be used to help those who think one way to think differently. Specifically, my research asks the following overarching question:

> How can vernacular storytelling practices be used to help development NGO workers and social justice activists in Uganda

imagine and articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development?

In designing my methodology and testing how storytelling practices can be used to do this hermeneutical work, I ask the following sub-questions:

- How can participatory storytelling methodologies be adapted to integrate more vernacular content and approaches and greater flexibility and responsiveness to participants' cultural competencies?
- How can participants use fictional or symbolic stories to articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development? In that regard:
    - what contribution is made by form (narrative structure, devices, symbolic content) and what contribution is made by the practice of storytelling (thinking or seeing differently)?
    - to what extent does the articulation of alternatives emerge in the (re)composition and performance of the stories themselves, and to what extent does it emerge in the margins between exercises or in the interpretation of the stories examined or composed?
- What implications do participants' storytelling and interpretations have for human rights and development?

In the process of investigating these questions, participants were not just informants telling me about their experiences, or guinea-pigs for testing the methodology, but interlocutors involved in the design of the methodology and in the interpretation of the findings. This takes seriously the fact that social justice activists have sophisticated critical, explanatory and conceptual insights to offer which they might express in a range of different ways, from analytical discussion to creative composition. I draw on these insights to show how the methodology I propose can be used to inform and perhaps to transform human rights and development work.

1.2. Motivation for my research

As noted in the preface, the seeds of this research project emerged in my own engagement with the religious stories that I grew up with. However, the primary impulse for the project came in my experience of working in the development sector, and my sense of how the cultures of the organisations I worked for limited the kinds of political claims that I felt able to make. In the ten years before starting my PhD, I worked in a number of international bureaucracies and transnational activist networks: as a trainee at the European Commission, in the Central Africa political relations unit; as a programme support officer in the Albania office of the United Nations Development Programme; and in the UK campaigns and policy teams of international development NGOs Oxfam and ActionAid. Before that, I was an intern at the Irish embassy in Paris and to the OECD; and at the Ugandan office of US-based law and development NGO, the International Law Institute.[7] I found that working in these institutions and networks had an influence on the types of political and social change that I could imagine taking place. Although I was always able to distinguish my personal opinions from the positions of the organisation, I noticed how my assessment of what is reasonable and what is unrealistic shifted as I moved between the different organisations. These logics also limited the range and scope of political claims that these organisations promoted. At a macro-scale, such limitations unnecessarily and sometimes unjustly circumscribe the range of options available to respond to intractable injustices and changing circumstances, even where existing approaches are not working or serve to reinforce the very injustices that they seek to challenge.

My experience echoes activist and practitioner perspectives and research in international relations that points to how the discourses and frameworks for knowledge and practice that are dominant in such institutions and networks limit what those embedded within them consider possible or plausible (cf. Cohn 1987, 703-718; Eyben 2009, 86; Klotz and Lynch 2015,

[7] I have also lived and worked with Christian missionaries in China, Burkina Faso and Argentina and volunteered with migrants' rights organisations.

38-40; Narberhaus and Sheppard 2015, 8, 10, 36). For instance, Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues that dominant societal and epistemological paradigms – like mainstream economics – shape the horizon of possibility, rendering some options possible and others impossible or even unimaginable (2014, 20, 153-154, 156; cf. Gibson-Graham 2006a):

> Having been oversocialized by a form of knowledge that knows by creating order in nature as well as in society, we cannot easily practice or even imagine a form of knowledge that knows by creating solidarity both in nature and in society.

Practitioners make similar observations. For example, individuals from a range of European NGOs, coming together as the Smart CSOs lab, recognise that the current economic system is unsustainable in the light of the rapidly changing climate. Alternative economic models that could work better are simply tolerated at the margins or co-opted into the logic of the current system. Most civil society actors, they argue, have insufficient faith in their ability to nurture such experiments so that they can be used to influence system-wide change. Participants in the Smart CSOs lab suggest that activists are not paying enough attention to the need for changes in culture as well as changes in systems; for example, the need to displace market logics with those of "sufficiency, well-being and solidarity" in response to interconnected environmental and social crises. Referring to the diagram below, they emphasise the interplay, or feedback loops, between three levels: dominant ideas and entrenched narratives (culture) that prop up existing institutions (regimes) must be displaced by new narratives, in order to create space for new or transformed institutions to emerge, inspired by

small-scale innovation (niches) (Narberhaus and Sheppard 2015, 7, 34-36, 56-57).

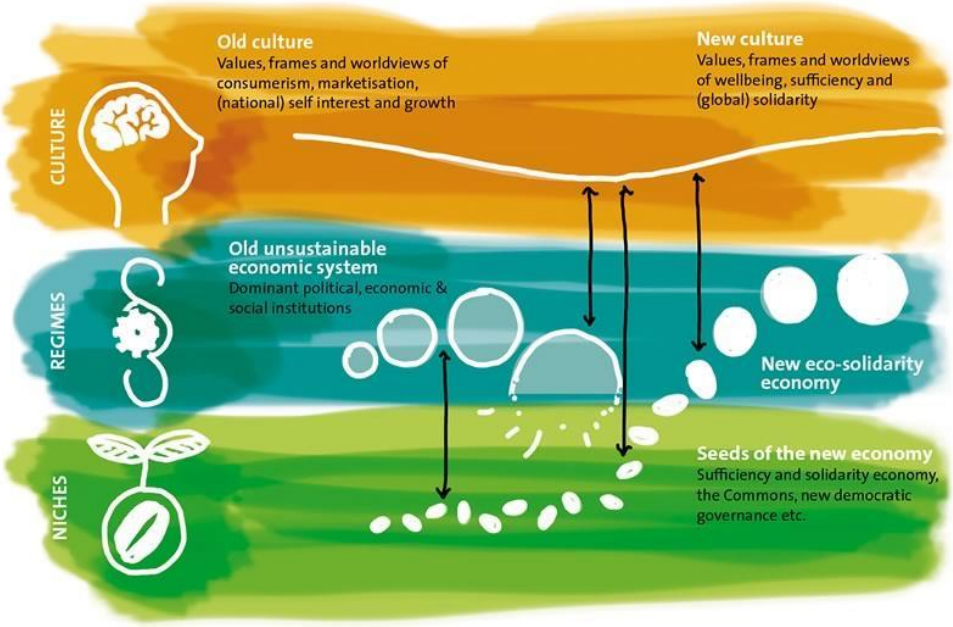

Fig. 1. The Smart CSOs Model for System Change. Source: smart-csos.org

Comparably, post-development theorist Arturo Escobar argues that changing the nature of the development discourse (or displacing it) requires both "the collective practice of social actors and the restructuring of existing political economies of truth," to form new nodes around which new forms of knowledge and power may converge (1995, 216). That is, "modifying political economies involves both material and semiotic resistance and material and semiotic strengthening of local systems" (Escobar 1995, 100).[8] Escobar insists that it is not in intellectual circles but rather in concrete local settings – among communities of modellers and through grassroots resistance – that alternatives will be articulated (1995, 98, 222-3). Efforts to support such local-level experiments must be supplemented with efforts to challenge the barriers that the global economy and dominant ways of thinking pose for the survival of such innovations. For example, he argues

[8] Medina's work on epistemic injustice, which I discuss in the literature review, also recognises that epistemic transformation – to develop new habits and imaginaries and destroy old ones – is possible only if there is also a process of social change (2013, 85-86, 131).

that new forms of storytelling and analysis are needed to displace narratives that treat nature as a commodity to be exploited (Escobar 1995, 198, 211):

> storytelling and analysis must be generated around the commons in order to replace the language of efficiency with that of sufficiency, the cultural visibility of the individual with that of the community … to reawaken the relationship between society and nature, and to reconnect life and thought at the level of myth.

In their collective efforts to develop strategies to catalyse cultural change, members of the Smart CSOs lab point to the power of storytelling to appeal to the emotions and to reshape how we see the world (Narberhaus and Sheppard 2015, 50-52; Smart CSOs 2013; Smart CSOs 2014, 4-5, 9-11, 13-14, 22). While working for international NGO ActionAid and, before that, for Oxfam, I participated in a number of workshops exploring how storytelling could be used to inform the design of NGO campaigns that make the case for alternatives to dominant social and political institutions.[9] Accounts of personal experience have long been used in campaigning in the development and human rights sectors, but this trend is slightly different – it looks to conventional story structures and fictional or symbolic storytelling as a tool to prompt audiences to be more receptive to new ideas. Learning from commercial advertising and Hollywood films, Jonah Sachs proposes using the supposedly universal hero's journey storytelling template to design compelling campaign narratives. He argues that unprecedented changes mean that society is faced with myth gaps (dissonances between what we tell ourselves about and how we experience the world) that create space for powerful new stories to replace the old ones; and that the hero's journey template can be used to design new stories to fill these gaps (Sachs 2012; Narberhaus and Sheppard 2015, 51-52). Sachs worked with

[9] I was involved in a Smart CSOs workshop with Jonah Sachs when working for Oxfam GB and in a Dancing Fox workshop on the Greenpeace story project when working for ActionAid UK. These workshops can be situated in the context of a growing interest in storytelling in activist and practitioner circles: as a communication strategy as part of fundraising and PR functions; to use as a template to design campaigns (advertising or policy/opinion change); as an evaluation strategy; as a method for recording and representing underrepresented voices and perspectives; and to help activists and practitioners understand how short-term tactics relate to longer-term strategic goals.

Greenpeace employees from around the world to adapt this format into a storytelling brand guide (Smart CSOs 2014, 10). The intention was to use the hero's journey as a template for campaigns that overcome dominant narratives and make space for alternatives to emerge, as reflected in the diagram below.

Fig. 2. The Greenpeace Story Arc. Source: Brian Fitzgerald.

While the Greenpeace Story Arc is designed to help campaigners challenge dominant narratives, using this template risks reproducing the limitations of the very narratives it seeks to challenge. For instance, Joseph Slaughter argues that one particularly dominant logic and rhetorical form of human rights finds its fullest expression in the *Bildungsroman*, or coming of age genre, in which the historically marginalised individual makes a claim for incorporation into the nation state and hence into an international cosmopolitan society. As Slaughter describes it, the structure of the *Bildungsroman* is similar to that of the hero's journey story arc: an individual passes a threshold, overcomes an ordeal, and returns whence he came, having changed as a result of his journey. Slaughter argues that this way of understanding the human rights project and its subjects influenced how the Universal Declaration on Human Rights was drafted, and now dominates global human rights culture, influencing how the Declaration is interpreted (2006, 1411, 1413, 1418).

With the hero's journey format intentionally replicated far beyond the novel – in films, advertising and campaigning – it is no wonder that such dominant interpretations of rights are so pervasive, whether or not the

novels Slaughter refers to have a wide readership (cf. Slaughter 2007).[10] While his focus is on human rights culture, Slaughter's argument seems to hold true for the development industry too. Development narratives that focus on individual agency and entrepreneurialism often follow the narrative arc of the supposed triumph of the individual over adversity and their subsequent integration into mainstream society or modernity (cf. Henkel and Stirrat 2001, 182-183; Rajak and Dolan 2016). This story is well-suited to campaigns for the incorporation of the marginalised into the existing system, but less well suited for campaigns that try to change the system itself. Critics also highlight how the hero story format misrepresents the diversity of storytelling traditions and practices around the world – it draws attention to certain common characteristics, but in doing so obscures other elements which might be more central to those traditions (Fernandes 2017, 4-5; Klapproth 2004, 373-378).

Other activist storytelling toolkits accommodate a broader range and diversity of storytelling traditions. For example, AWID (the Association for Women's Rights in Development) worked with Indian-based art collective the Fearless Collective to develop a toolkit using storytelling to help activists collectively imagine feminist futures and to identify narratives that make solutions "irresistible" (Fearless Collective 2017). Inspired by the indigenous Australian oral tradition of song lines – in which songs, stories and dances about ancestral paths across land and sky are used to enable indigenous people to navigate vast distances – the Fearless Collective developed a map representing systems, structures and social constructions that participants navigate every day. Their toolkit proposes using poetry, personal stories and collective dreaming to help participants recognise these

[10] Comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell identified the journey of the archetypal hero, present in myths all around the world, as the ultimate narrative archetype, or monomyth (1949). Despite the weaknesses of Campbell's work from a scholarly perspective (cf. Ellwood 1999, 131-132, 148, 153), it has had tremendous influence, notably in providing a template for Hollywood films (Vogler 1998) and for advertising and other campaigns (Sachs 2012; cf. Fernandes 2017, 69-70, 97-100).

places as spaces for collective imaginings (Fearless Collective 2017, 2-3, 42).

Fig. 3. Map of "imagined space for visioning fantastical feminist futures." Source: Fearless Collective 2017, 2, 10.

In her influential essay *A Cyborg Manifesto*, feminist theorist Donna Haraway argues that the process of retelling and subverting traditional stories and origin myths can give their tellers access to the tools of parody, irony and blasphemy that are so important in resistance. The new worlds they describe might integrate new, technological elements, as well as elements from traditional culture. She describes science fiction writers as "theorists for cyborgs" in so far as they explore "what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds" (Haraway [1984] 2000, 291-292, 310-313). More than thirty years later, Haraway describes being part of a storytelling workshop drawing on science fiction and fantasy to imagine how the world will change over the course of five generations (Haraway 2016, 132-168). Comparably, in the Octavia's Brood project, editors and facilitators have supported US-based activists to use the process of writing science fiction – an accessible genre, familiar to US activists, associated with a strong tradition of fan fiction written by readers – to imagine alternative futures (brown and Imarisha 2015; cf. Kelly 2018). In her afterword to the

anthology of activist science fiction they produced, adrienne maree brown argues that writing science fiction gives activists the space to imagine possibilities, "challenging the narratives that uphold current power dynamics and patterns," as well as facilitating the development of "emergent strategy," allowing writers to play with different outcomes and strategies before having to deal with real-world costs (brown 2015, 279-280; cf. Boal [1974] 1998, 141). The production of the anthology informed the design of science fiction writing workshops where participants identify an issue facing their community, work together to describe characters and settings and then write and share stories that explore the issue and possible solutions (brown 2015, 281).

Drawing on theoretical and critical paradigms such as these, and how they have been translated into practice in the context of participatory workshops, my research explores whether storytelling practices that workshop participants are familiar with and can easily access can be used to help them reconceptualise human rights and development norms and intervention models, and articulate new political claims. The intention is not to make the case for human rights and development or to design more effective interventions – although this process could contribute to these aims too – but rather to expose where human rights and development regimes are problematic or incomplete and to tap into hermeneutical resources other than those commonly used in the sectors to begin to articulate what is missing and how dominant approaches could be challenged and supplemented. This might help social justice activists articulate and make the case for alternative social and political arrangements but also equips them with new hermeneutical resources that they can use to respond to an unpredictable and rapidly changing world, to respond to new challenges and to take advantage of opportunities for change.

1.3. Site selection and research collaboration

My PhD project is informed by my experience of working in the human rights and development sectors between 2005 and 2016, and by my participation in an AHRC-funded research collaboration running parallel to

my PhD between 2016 and 2020 (henceforth, the AHRC project). The AHRC project brought together some of my former colleagues from ActionAid with academics, artists and social justice and cultural activists from Bangladesh, Uganda and the UK.[11] Together we explored whether workshops that brought together activists and local artists to engage with and practice different art forms could help participants break out of traditional roles, explore alternative ways of knowing and enlarge the scope of what development might mean (Flower and Kelly 2019). In this PhD thesis, I draw on data from two storytelling workshops that took place in Uganda in March 2020. These storytelling workshops were funded under the AHRC project and were the last in a series of participatory arts-based workshops that took place in Uganda and Bangladesh from May 2017 to March 2020. While I focus on the March 2020 workshops, I have received ethics approval to include data from the workshops that took place between May 2017 and December 2019 in this PhD thesis. I draw explicitly on data from the two AHRC project workshops that took place in Uganda in 2017 and 2018; and the experience of running those workshops and four similar workshops in Bangladesh informed the development of the methodology for the storytelling workshops in Uganda in March 2020. Participants in the first of the two storytelling workshops in March 2020 included some of those who participated in the AHRC project workshops in Uganda in 2017 and 2018 and one person who had participated in the four AHRC project workshops in Bangladesh. I discuss participant selection in more detail in Chapter 3.

While the research process that informed the development of this PhD thesis was highly participatory and collaborative, it was largely oral and discursive, picking up on theory in a magpie fashion where it illuminated discussions, rather than situating the discussions more systematically in terms of relevant academic literature. In bringing together insights from various discursive interactions with critical and theoretical paradigms in the

[11] From Chittagong, Makerere and York universities; ActionAid Bangladesh, Uganda and International, Solidarity Uganda and Rhizing Women; and four artist-run spaces: Jog Art Space in Chittagong, Pica studios in York, and Femrite and 32 Degrees East in Kampala.

form of a coherent and creatively presented written argument, and in making original theoretical and methodological contributions to academic literature, this thesis is entirely my own work.

I made a decision to carry out my doctoral research in collaboration with ActionAid colleagues and partners in Uganda based on expressions of interest from then colleagues across the ActionAid federation and the connections we made, in the AHRC project, with colleagues at Makerere University with expertise in literature and orature.[12] While the decision to work in Uganda was strongly influenced by personal factors and the interest of ActionAid colleagues in Uganda, it is also a particularly good case study. Recently, space has begun to open up within the development and human rights sectors for a more diverse group of practitioners and social justice activists from the global South to have more influence over priority-setting and programme design. The question arises of whether the scope of their contributions is limited by the professional habits they have been trained in, or whether they feel able and confident to draw on other reference points to reimagine justice.

The emergence of the development and human rights sectors after World War II was a process largely driven by actors from the global North. Transnational activist networks have played an active role in the constitution and contestation of both sectors, engaging in political struggles and articulating justice claims using the language of decolonisation, socialism and, especially since the 1990s, human rights. Despite early mobilisation of Third World activists in decolonisation struggles, activists from the global North and elites from the global South have tended to dominate these discussions. While social justice activists critique the one-size-fits-all approach of the development sector, the campaign and programme priorities of many international NGOs often replicate this kind of blueprint approach. Transnational NGO politics and funding models

[12] 'Orature' is a term coined by Ugandan scholars Pio Zirimu and Austin Bukenya to describe the spoken tradition; "the creative imaginative art of composition that relies on verbal art for communication and that culminates in performance" (Mugo 1991, 40; cf. Ngũgĩ 2012, 72-73).

create strong incentives for activists around the world to follow priorities set by those in centres of power, where an individual's or group's influence over priority-setting often depends on who they know (cf. Carpenter 2014).

In the past few decades, a number of prominent international NGOs – notably ActionAid, Oxfam and Amnesty International – have sought to redress this imbalance through a process of decentralisation. ActionAid, for instance, moved its headquarters from the UK to South Africa in 2003, setting in motion a decade-long process to transform the organisation into a global federation of autonomous affiliates governed by national boards (Jayawickrama and Ebrahim 2013). The shift towards decentralisation of international NGOs and increasing recognition of the importance of grassroots human rights defenders within the movement has opened up more space for contributions from the global South. This has prompted Southern NGOs and NGO workers to take on new roles and move in new directions. For example, Ugandans Winnie Byanyima and Irene Ovonji-Odida have been appointed to high-profile roles in international NGOs, serving as executive director of Oxfam International and chair of the board of ActionAid International respectively. Within the ActionAid federation, ActionAid Uganda has played a particularly active role, influencing shared decision-making and priority setting. At national level, the organisation has made a particularly clear shift beyond traditional child sponsorship activities and service delivery to a programme that includes advocacy and work supporting other social justice activists and social movements (while continuing to operate within certain donor constraints).

The shift in ActionAid Uganda's work is particularly striking in the context of the history of civil society organisations in Uganda. Under colonialism, some civil society organisations such as unions and agricultural cooperatives were active in anti-colonial struggles. Strongly linked to the grassroots and operating on shoestring budgets, these organisations were engaged with issues that were socio-economic but also, Oloka-Onyango argues, highly political. Post-independence, these organisations were largely absorbed into the state. Those that survived tended to wither during the civil war, and the economic upheaval and austerity of structural adjustment that

followed. While mutual aid groups such as burial societies continued to have large and active memberships, many Ugandans were wary of making disruptive or contentious interventions in public discourse in the light of past unrest. Joe Oloka-Onyango argues that the re-emergence of civil society after the civil war was tolerated because the state recognised the need for service delivery, but also in part to give an outlet to middle-class frustrations and to appease donors. NGOs in Uganda – including many faith-based organisations – have tended to focus on service delivery and social and economic empowerment work. NGO work is seen as a desirable, elite and usually urban job. There has been little political activism within civil society, and initial shifts towards advocacy have been largely donor-driven (CIVICUS 2006, 19-37; Kiranda, Mugisha and Mbate 2020, 16-27; Oloka-Onyango 2015, 234-239). The development industry is prominent in Ugandan politics and governance structures, but persistent poverty and disconnections between the local and the national highlight its incomplete reach and internal contradictions (cf. Jones 2008, 1-3, 9-10, 157-158; Oloka-Onyango 2009, 78-80).

Calls for greater engagement with politics among Ugandan NGOs have come not just from donors, but from East African scholars. For instance, regretting a civil society that is "intimidated, threatened, silenced and ultimately disenfranchised," Oloka-Onyango has called for more activist interventions – for civil society to be political without being party-political, to challenge the opposition as well as the government and to develop its own independent rather than reactive agenda (2015, 239-241). Others have called for human rights NGOs and feminist activists to root their work more firmly in local material and socio-cultural realities, rather than following blueprints provided by international NGOs (Tamale 2009; Mutua 2009). Adopting a locally rooted political position (as opposed to fulfilling donor requirements for incorporating advocacy into programming) requires a difficult negotiation of highly politicised terrain which is fundamental to those local material and socio-cultural realities, notably with regard to religion and ethnicity. Yet this is rarely discussed in human rights reports or NGO strategy reports.

For instance, Sylvia Tamale describes how Ugandan legal feminists were "left agape" at Muslim women's opposition to the Domestic Relations Bill in 2005, learning a few lessons about the need to take account of culture and belief in feminist activism (2008, 59-60):

> A significant message that was put across to the women's movement was never to take for granted, ignore or erase the complexities and contradictions of women's realities. We must invoke the core values of our societies to engender transformation; find those values that resonate from indigenous cultures that will speak to the rights repertoire, as feminists know it. The women who participated in the protest march were obviously not reading from the same page as the legal feminists and they rejected being subjected to what they perceived as the straightjacket of legalism. It was not a case of "false consciousness" as some people would have us believe, but an "alternative consciousness" borne out of their perceptions and lived experiences. They were not willing to risk further abuse by rejecting deeply entrenched beliefs on such a sensitive facet of their lives.

Disagreements related to the Domestic Relations Bill may have amounted to more than conflict between elite lawyers and the broader population, and between legalistic and cultural campaigning strategies. Abasi Kiyimba notes that the supposedly secular provisions of the bill were perceived by some to have a sectarian bent (2011, 241, 264):

> the Christian groups have tended to be more secularist than the Muslims […] Muslims look at the provisions of the proposed law as an attempt to impose upon them Christian conceptions of morality.

Whether or not they accept Kiyimba's arguments, in efforts to build coalitions with religious women, feminist activists may need to reflect on the degree to which ostensibly secular claims may have been shaped, at least in part, by a specific religious heritage.

While they are less often the focus of NGO strategies and reports, critical discussions of sexuality, religion and the nature of rights are key themes in East African scholarship, and East Africa has long been a region in which development and human rights are contested and reframed. For example, the 1985 Nairobi conference on women's rights is widely regarded

as a breakthrough moment in transnational feminist solidarity. Previously, the global women's rights agenda had been dominated by women from the North mainly concerned about body politics and male-female relations. The participation of many African women in the Nairobi conference led to greater recognition of the economic concerns of women from the global South, such as the erosion of the welfare state, helping to ensure that these concerns were reflected in the subsequent Beijing Platform for Action (de Jong 2017, 16-17). Over 30 years later, most women's rights work continues to be dominated by a singular focus on gender-based violence, but African feminists continue to emphasise the way that women's sexuality and their economic rights are closely intertwined with and affected by global capitalism (cf. Tamale 2009, 53-54 and 2020, 285-298, 316-320, 335-339). In this PhD thesis, I engage particularly closely with critical scholarship on human rights and feminism by East African academics, notably legal scholars Sylvia Tamale, Mutua Makau and Abdullahi An-Naʿim, as well as work by influential writers and theorists, notably poet and scholar Susan Kiguli, Agĩkũyũ writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Achioli writer Okot p'Bitek.

Colleagues in ActionAid Uganda have many connections with a range of differently situated social justice activists across the country; we could draw on those networks in selecting social justice activists to invite to the workshops (cf. ActionAid Uganda 2017, 19). Social justice activists in Uganda are valuable interlocutors in the process of reimagining human rights and development. Their experience of the dynamics of the human rights and development sectors allow them to make an informed critique of their limitations. They also have access to diverse experiences and epistemes that they can draw on in articulating more contextually appropriate or counter-hegemonic claims. Their continued involvement in the sectors – as employees, applicants for funding, participants in transnational solidarity networks, or advocates at regional and global level – motivates them to push for change in the transnational activist organisations and networks they are connected to (cf. Eyben 2013, 21, 27; Eyben and Turquet 2013, 194, 196). They are often well connected to other social

justice activists around the world, and actively engage in debates about power and privilege in the development and human rights sectors, notably emerging debates on decolonisation, feminist approaches and movement building.

I ran the first storytelling workshop in Uganda in collaboration with two co-facilitators: poet and literature scholar Susan Kiguli; and feminist activist Scovia Arinaitwe.[13] In terms of my intellectual development, academic networks and (because of her prominence as a poet) my access to and status among artists and activists in Uganda, Susan has been "holding the door open" for my research (cf. Coetzee 2018, 110). Susan also helped to facilitate the AHRC workshop in 2017 and performed a poem written in response at the workshop in 2018. Scovia participated in the workshops we ran in 2017 and 2018 and has experience running activist training workshops herself – including on storytelling – as a trainer and mobiliser with a number of different organisations and with the Ugandan women's movement more broadly. Working with co-facilitators allowed me to experience the first workshop as a participant as well as a facilitator.

As part of the development of the methodology I tested in the workshops in Uganda, I ran a storytelling workshop with a group of young feminist activists in Dhaka in December 2019. My colleague Duniya Khandoker from ActionAid Bangladesh helped to run that workshop and left her young baby to come to Uganda to participate in the first storytelling workshop there. Reflecting on the process, Duniya challenged me to do this work not just with people from Bangladesh and Uganda, but also with people more like me:[14]

> Storytelling really can touch people differently than other methodologies. Because when we're telling stories, we are bringing lots of emotion; characters and situations, sometimes our past, you know, and the past is always a very emotional place for people. In Bangladesh, in our country,

[13] There was provision to pay for their time under AHRC-funded project running parallel to my PhD, although each have contributed much more time than they have been paid for.
[14] I have tested aspects of the methodology in workshops in the UK but, given significant delays in the ethics process, it would not have been practical to make a supplemental ethics application for permission to use data from these workshops in my PhD thesis.

> music, story, the imagination, dream, all of these things are really emotional for us. You just presented it as a methodology, but we take it into our past and it's real work to see your real personality like a mirror.
>
> I think you people don't want to be emotional in front of other people because you think: if I get emotional it will be, you know, a weak point for me because maybe she can use my emotion [against me …] But that word solidarity – that really confused me. You are taking the lead to design development. From you people we get all of these concepts: solidarity, collectiveness, emotional intelligence, you know, teamwork, caring, sharing. But what does it all mean? Things you really don't feel comfortable to apply for yourselves and you are testing that in another country. So what are you people doing? It means you people don't know, you don't have the experience of using that methodology in your own lives, and what the repercussions can be. You are just testing your methodology on others, to see how those people react. Maybe for your research you can write a big book. Your people, maybe your supervisor, will be very happy to read it. And I'm sure she or he is really not going to apply that methodology to her or his own life. Then why does she encourage you to do it?[15] […]
>
> It will be a really great test if you can do it in your country. They don't like to discuss storytelling; their beliefs are quite different. If in that place, if we try to introduce that methodology of storytelling, then what can be the reaction?

The more time I spend working with colleagues in Uganda (and in Bangladesh) the more I am aware of the ways in which our work is informed by the overlaps, parallels and divergences between their worlds and my own. This has led to the transformation of the project from one focused on the potential for storytelling to help Ugandans articulate alternatives (with myself as facilitator and observer) to one in which I am as much a participant as my Ugandan colleagues. In my preparatory work, the

[15] This may seem a rather rigorous demand, but it is echoed in academic literature; for example, Medina argues that to overcome the epistemic disadvantages associated with privilege, those of us who are privileged need to engage in self-transformation and retraining – "a deep restructuring of the self that requires the development of new habits and the destruction of old ones" – as well as social change (2013, 29, 39).

process of thinking about and composing stories and verse gave rise to theoretical insights that I am unlikely to have had otherwise (cf. Ngũgĩ 2012, 15-17, 19). In the workshops I shared stories from my own cultural context, as well as participating in the discussions about stories from Uganda. This new framing of the inquiry mimics the dynamics of activist networks in which colleagues bring in perspectives and priorities from their different locations and positions when working together on joint campaigns and projects; that is, activist networks that facilitate trans-local conversations and situated solidarities, rather than abstracted transnational interactions (Nagar 2014, 11, 83-88).

1.4. Reimagining justice: homegrown theory and cross-cultural dialogue

David Kennedy has prominently argued that human rights activists have a "tendency to act as if human rights express what justice means, always and for everyone." And yet, he argues, "justice is not like that. It must be built by people each time, struggled for, imagined in new ways" (Kennedy 2012, 25). There is widespread critique – from scholars and practitioners – of the ways in which the NGO-isation of social movements has hindered this emergent process, as professional norms and Eurocentric, liberal philosophies displace locally-specific ways of struggling for justice.[16] Among the most prominent of these professional norms are dominant framings of the development and human rights projects; ways of telling stories about injustice that make it more likely that interventions will be funded, or that the stories will circulate in transnational activist circuits (cf. Schaffer and Smith 2004). And yet such framings may be ill-suited to local struggles for justice; they might misdiagnose the problem, limit the range of possible solutions or undermine alternative, locally consonant conceptions of justice, freedom or human dignity. In this section, I discuss scholarship

[16] For example, Ugandan legal scholar Joe Oloka-Onyango points to the professionalisation and consequent depoliticisation of civil society in Uganda and calls for more activist interventions (2015, 233-242).

calling for East African social justice activists to draw on cross-cultural dialogue and internal discourse in order to imagine justice in new ways.

In the introduction to a volume reflecting on the state of human rights NGOs in East Africa, Kenyan legal scholar Makau Mutua calls for human rights NGOs in East Africa to do more to develop their own thinking about what human rights mean. In an echo of Kennedy's critique, he argues that such NGOs tend to uncritically copy the agendas of international NGOs rather than allowing priorities to emerge from the material conditions in their own societies; that they promote a liberal conception of individual human rights even though human rights abuses in the region have a more complex and highly politicised character. Notably, he argues, they privilege civil and political rights even though some of the most blatant abuses on the continent relate to socio-economic rights. He suggests that this is partly because East African NGOs lack a conceptual understanding of human rights in all their complexity. He challenges NGO workers to do more to reflect on and challenge their assumptions, cultivating links with universities and others to carry out "serious research into questions of human rights and universality through the prism of the rich African cultural heritage and values in the region," to challenge the belief that they have "nothing valuable or original to contribute to human rights" (Mutua 2009, 22-25; cf. Mutua 2016, 92-93). In the same volume, prominent Ugandan legal scholar Sylvia Tamale argues that more work needs to be done to ensure that feminist theory informs women's rights work in Uganda. She challenges activists to engage vigorously in the production of "homegrown feminist theory" and a reconceptualization of the links between theory and practice (Tamale 2009, 66, 71; cf. Tamale 2020, 40-44).

As an organisation, ActionAid Uganda is aligned with both the human rights and development sectors. In their most recent strategy, they commit to "deepening our use of feminist and human rights principles and approaches [and] strengthening the capacity and agency of people living in poverty and exclusion to assert their rights" (ActionAid Uganda 2017, 19). There is debate about the degree to which human rights and development overlap or should be distinguished (Gready and Ensor 2016). I consider the sectors

together in my analysis for three main reasons. First, many of those most critical of the human rights project point to its neglect of poverty and inequality, issues that are a major focus for the development sector. For instance, Mutua says that he has worked with advocates who have had very little help from the human rights regime when confronting economic injustice – this, he argues, is where human rights theorists need to depart from the status quo (2016, ix-x, 2, 10). Given the influence of the development sector in these debates, it is important to consider whether development norms help or hinder in these struggles.[17] Secondly, both sectors provide activists with sets of norms (rights, goals, indicators) that can be used pragmatically and strategically to engage with the state and other systems of governance and that can be mobilised in support of political claims. In both sectors, these norms are monitored and backed up by (albeit imperfect) enforcement mechanisms: in the case of human rights, courts and other types of tribunal, and in the case of development, funding and diplomatic pressure. Thirdly, both sectors are closely intertwined with social justice activism, both in terms of providing employment and funding and, despite their limitations, in terms of their objectives and aspirations. In places where the development aid budget makes up a significant proportion of spending on public goods and services, the languages and logics of the development sector in particular, but also of human rights, tend to be prominent in governance and politics. In Uganda, for instance, the NGO sector provides a significant proportion of the job opportunities available to university graduates. Despite its limitations, as Pamela Enyonu said during the first storytelling workshop, "the whole area of development and development practice is embodied under hope – that we can do better […] recognise injustice and do something about it." The same can be said about human rights.

[17] Mutua discusses controversies related to the negotiation of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (2016, 35-37, 53-55, 69, 125-126) and points to the need to elaborate further standards to reinforce the protection of economic, social and cultural rights especially in response to the negative impacts of globalisation (2016, 143-147), but does not consider the role of development norms in this area, even though debates related to the elaboration of the SDGs – which include reference to inequality and to industrial policy – would have been ongoing while he was writing.

Mutua suggests that the agenda of East African human rights NGOs should be informed by local material conditions as well as African cultural heritage and values. ActionAid has long been committed to hearing from marginalised groups about their material conditions and to supporting their priorities. However, Kate Newman argues that the organisation has underestimated the tension between the commitment to participatory approaches and the focus on global human rights standards, leaving insufficient room for local articulations and prioritisations of rights (2011, 159, 261-263).[18] In ActionAid Uganda's current strategy, the organisation commits to work with "people living in poverty and exclusion" and also to support "people's movements and citizen formations that are sometimes considered 'uncivil' society because of their radical approach to contemporary challenges in the country" (ActionAid Uganda 2017, 19).[19] These two objectives are not easily reconcilable; a number of Ugandan activists have told me that their families and communities, including people living in poverty, are aware of multiple injustices but actively try to dissuade activists from speaking out because they are worried that this will lead to instability and a return to the civil war they remember from the 1980s. As the shift in ActionAid Uganda's strategy is bedded in, it will be interesting to see whether priorities articulated by people living in poverty are related to and used to inform ActionAid Uganda's work with movements – or whether these two streams of work remain separate – and

[18] ActionAid is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) structured as a federation with members in more than 40 countries. The organisation was originally established in 1972 as a UK-based child sponsorship charity with programmes overseas. In 2003, ActionAid moved its headquarters from the UK to South Africa, setting in motion a decade-long process to transform the organisation into a global federation of autonomous affiliates governed by national boards (Jayawickrama and Ebrahim 2013). New staff recruited to national and regional offices tended to have policy or activist backgrounds rather than expertise in programme implementation (Newman 2011, 219, 224, 242). These changes sought to increase the influence of those who had been marginalised in the past, both within the organisational structure and in society more broadly; but Newman suggests that local voices were often marginalised as a result (2011, 159, 261-263).

[19] In response, the organisation has faced a backlash. The Ugandan government has put ActionAid Uganda on a watch list and raided the offices and froze the organisation's bank accounts for a three-month period in 2017, in response to ActionAid's campaigns against constitutional changes that would remove the presidential retirement age (Article 102b) and allow for the compulsory acquisition of land without prior consultation of those affected (Article 26) (cf. Larok 2018).

whether ActionAid Uganda's support for activism by social movements creates political space for people living in poverty to make more radical claims. But perhaps the greater risk is that ActionAid employees reframe and distort the claims made by people living in poverty and social movements alike, to make them fit within the logics of the development and human rights sectors.

The hegemony of a relatively narrow range of conceptions of rights and development in social justice activism can be overstated. Santos, for example, points to "movements or grammars of resistance that have been emerging against oppression, marginalization, and exclusion, whose ideological bases often have very little to do with the dominant Western cultural and political references prevalent throughout the twentieth century." These movements use human rights in ways that "fully contradict the dominant understandings of human rights" (Santos 2014, 21, 34-35, 40-41, 327). Yet such counter-hegemonic trends have had limited influence on conceptions of justice within the aspects of human rights and development work that are most generously funded. Certain entitlements tend to be privileged in interventions and actions of international solidarity, leading to the neglect of other entitlements – which may or may not be specified in the international human rights regime or in normative frameworks used in development (like the Human Development Index or the Sustainable Development Goals). Entitlements that receive relatively little attention include rights that resist the logic of progress, such as the right to leisure in Article 24 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, or, more radically, rights that might accrue to the non-human (animals, nature) and the non-material (gods, spiritual aspects of the environment). These gaps – or types of gaps – are to some degree oversights or areas that have been neglected, but they can also represent a fundamental challenge to existing regimes, representing logics – of presence, of parallel temporalities – that are at odds with the logics that underpin human rights and development norms. Dipesh Chakrabarty, for example, describes the Bengali habit of *adda* – or gossip, meeting for aimless conversation – as a form of sociality that resists the instrumentality associated with other articulations of civil

society ([2000] 2008, 180-213; cf. Motta and Bermúdez 2019, 426-428, 435). Such alternative perspectives may be difficult to reconcile with the logics of the human rights and development projects. For example, in arguing that rights must be supplemented by a more robust imperative to responsibility, Gayatri Spivak highlights that "being defined by the call of the other […] is not conducive to the extraction and the appropriation of surplus [… and] living in the rhythm of the eco-biome does not lead to exploration and conquest of nature" (2004, 533).

Many social activists are ambivalent about the content of current human rights and development norms, but think that it is useful for there to be some set of shared norms, whether as a moral framework, as mechanisms for engaging with systems of governance, as a shared if imperfect vocabulary that can be used in coalition building or for some other purpose.[20] On the assumption that some set of shared norms is useful, a key challenge is that it takes huge amounts of time, resources and the right political conditions to agree on new norms (cf. Mutua 2016, 23-72, 137). As such, it seems wise to hang on to the norms that we have and try to make them work for us if we can. Mutua himself has an uncomfortable but pragmatic relationship with human rights. In the face of challenges like tyranny, globalisation, domestic violence, environmental degradation and climate change, he says that he "often deploy[s] human rights language, some of it very liberal, when the

[20] Other scholars and activists suggest that human rights and development norms should be abandoned. For example, in her critique of human rights, Ratna Kapur argues that the language of rights flattens political claims into very narrow formulations which privilege certain solutions: law and order, criminal justice and security. She recognises that it may be necessary to engage with human rights because they are an arena of power, but argues that they are not apt for pursuing freedom or correcting injustices (Kapur 2018, 15, 35-36, 163-164). In the context of development studies, post-development theorists resist overarching political programmes, emphasising instead the need for communities to have the autonomy to articulate their own projects (Ziai 2017, 2728). However, the projects that those communities articulate may well include claims that are consistent with the development project. Writing from South Africa, Sally Matthews argues that the trend in post-development theory to dismiss people's desire for development as colonisation of the mind is patronising. In South Africa, for example, political claims articulated in terms of demands for "service delivery" – a core part of the development agenda – are not just about the need for greater efficiency, but about the protesters' desires to be treated with respect and dignity and for recognition and redress related to the racial lines of inequality (Matthews 2017, 2652-2659).

situation demands it" (Mutua 2016, ix). There is more scope within existing human rights and development norms than is reflected in much human rights talk and the most commonly referenced norms. For example, Mark Goodale argues that the ratification of declarations and treaties on indigenous rights integrates "contingency, incompleteness, and multiplicity of cross-cultural normative practice" into the human rights regime (2009, 120). In the development sector, advocates for the inclusion of new goals related to the environment and inequality in the Sustainable Development Goals were successful in spite of resistance from a number of key donor countries, although these were formulated in less radical terms than many advocacy groups wanted (cf. Fukuda-Parr and Muchhala 2020; Howard and Wheeler 2015; Narayanan et al. 2015). Extensive critique of the human rights and development regimes means that activists know about many of their flaws and have begun to work out ways of negotiating them and of making the systems work for their purposes.

If existing human rights – and development – norms are not to be abandoned, there needs to be another way of addressing the gaps referenced above. One approach is to return to the political origins of the (abstracted) human rights framework and see existing norms as an articulation of claims emerging from diverse cultural contexts and political struggles, as part of a conversation that continues today. For example, Mutua's account of the history of the human rights regime highlights how it emerged in response to the rise of the nation state in Europe, with limited relevance for the very different political context in Africa. He argues for a human rights regime in Africa that is more responsive to the history of political institutions on the continent, recognising the stronger loyalties populations have to lineage and community than to the arbitrarily-drawn borders of the nation state (Mutua 1995, 359-364, 378-379 and 2002b, 68-70, 84-86). Mutua sees the articulation of rights and duties in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as more responsive to this history, and argues that it should be used to supplement liberal approaches to human rights. He does not reject the universality of human rights norms, but insists on their incompleteness and on the need for other traditions to fill the gourd. He

calls for negotiation between different cultures and traditions as part of an ongoing process of articulation and reformulation of rights (Mutua 2002b, 70-72):

> In reality, the construction and definition of human rights norms are dynamic and continuous processes. Human rights are not the monopoly or the sole prerogative of any one culture or people. […] Rather than assert the primacy of one over the other, or argue that only one cultural expression and historical experience constitutes human rights, this author views each experience as a contributor to the whole. […] the cultures and traditions of the world must, in effect, compare notes, negotiate positions and come to an agreement over what constitutes human rights. Even after agreement, the doors must remain open for further inquiry, reformulation and revision.

Mutua's work on rights and duties in the African Charter is part of a project seeking to reconcile religion, culture and rights initiated by Sudanese legal scholar Abdullahi An-Naʿim. In that project, the focus on rights rather than other languages of resistance was justified for the following reasons: experience shows that populations need to articulate their demands for justice in rights language for their demands to be recognised and satisfied by those in power; human rights are well suited for dealing with the way local realities are linked to global systems; and the rights paradigm is designed to limit and regulate the powers of the state, which have particularly profound effects on people's lives (An-Naʿim 2002, 6-7; cf. Mutua 2016, 52-53). However, An-Naʿim also highlights the difficulty of implementing human rights in the absence of a culturally-grounded motivation to do so: the law is not enough, especially in the absence of effective enforcement measures (An-Naʿim 2002, 4-5). As such, rights must be reconciled with local cultural traditions in order to be effective.

In order to facilitate this process of reconciliation, An-Naʿim suggests that a process of internal cultural transformation – "the struggle to establish enlightened perceptions and interpretations of cultural values and norms" – should happen at the same time as cross-cultural dialogue. In a co-authored chapter, An-Naʿim and Jeffrey Hammond note the complex ways in which people "selectively call upon diverse cultural resources from which they can

construct strategies of action," arguing that culture is always evolving and structurally receptive to innovative interpretations and outside ideas (2002, 20-21, 25). Any given cultural tradition is liable to be hijacked by the powerful and interpreted or manipulated to their advantage. An-Naʿim argues that disadvantaged groups and individuals within a given tradition should challenge this monopolisation and manipulation. Through internal cultural discourse, they should "offer alternative interpretations in support of their own interests," which might be expressed in intellectual, artistic or scholarly work or various forms of political action (An-Naʿim 1992, 27-28). Such internal discourse might also be informed by cross-cultural dialogue, just as jurisprudence in one tradition might borrow from that of another tradition (An-Naʿim 1992, 36-37). While An-Naʿim focuses on internal discourse within Islam, such a process of internal discourse could also be carried out in the international human rights community, to explore the ways in which the meaning of rights has been hijacked by the powerful and how they might be reclaimed.

There are parallels between An-Naʿim's work and proposals for the 'vernacularisation' of human rights; that is, the translation of human rights into forms that make sense in local contexts. However, literature on vernacularisation tends to focus on giving human rights legitimacy and appeal in local cultures and systems of meaning, but not on learning from conceptions of justice, dignity and freedom articulated in local cultures that might be missing from the human rights regime. That is, it relates to translation from the top-down, but not from the bottom-up (Reilly 2011, 69-71).[21] The project referenced above is distinctive in including in its concept of rights the normative standards that "Africans themselves" wish to establish and implement through their local struggles, taking the existing

[21] For instance, in her influential work on vernacularisation, anthropologist Sally Engle Merry suggests that this has happened and should happen only at a relatively superficial level. She argues that if human rights are adapted too much, so that they are compatible with existing ways of thinking – "fully indigenized" – they will lose their ability to challenge existing power relations and to offer radical possibilities. Merry refers in particular to the importance of retaining, "[i]nside the culturally resonant packaging[,] a core that radically challenges patriarchy" in efforts to tackle gender based violence ([2006] 2009, 266-267, 297). For a contrasting view, see Tamale 2020, 205-220, 230.

human rights regime as "a very important and useful, though not necessarily definitive or exhaustive, framework for the internal and cross-cultural social construction of rights at the local, African and global levels" (An-Naʿim 2002, 5).[22] Internal disagreements, An-Naʿim argues, "cannot and should not be settled by outsiders" (1992, 38). The key to efforts to promote the legitimacy of human rights within a given cultural context is the internal legitimacy of their advocates (An-Naʿim 2011, 195):

> These advocates must be able to draw on the symbols of their own culture and history, speak the "language" of their own peoples, know and respect their concerns and priorities. In so doing, advocates of universal human rights should appreciate and utilize the "ambivalence and contestability" of their cultures, seek out and explore new options and rationales for advancing the cultural legitimacy of universal human rights.

Local culture is used not just as a means of communicating norms determined elsewhere, but as a source of alternative normative standards and conceptions of rights and justice. Such a process of reconciliation facilitates the development of national constitutions that represent a fusion between human rights and local values. Such constitutions are apt for limiting the power of the state – which human rights are designed to do – while also being a key resource in the process of imagining what it means to be a nation state after colonialism, ensuring that governance structures reflect local cultural values and motivations for promoting rights and dignity (An-Naʿim 2006, 23, 27-28, 30-33):

> [Constitutionalism] can embody a productive commingling and encounter between traditional notions of selfhood, human dignity, and political values of consensus and community building along with notions of human rights, sovereignty, and the nation state (as distinguished earlier from the postcolonial "territorial" state in Africa). It can reflect a rich and valuable engagement between religious and secular discourses, and hopefully, ultimately reflect a productive outcome of a fusion of European and African thoughts, experiences and traditions.

[22] For discussion of the reasons post-colonial and decolonial theorists might legitimately use the term 'Africans' rather than distinguishing between specific African communities, nations and states, see Tamale 2020, 10-12.

While An-Naʿim focuses on the development of the nation state, he also argues that "challenging Euro-centric perspectives is only one step in the right direction that must be followed by constructing universal concepts that are inclusive of non-European experiences and histories" (2006, 23). Others discuss in more detail how bottom-up translation might transform the global human rights regime itself. For example, Santos points to how cross-cultural dialogue can be used to reveal the ways in which all cultures have something to contribute to conceptions of justice, but are also all incomplete. Following An-Naʿim, he argues that concepts like umma (in Islam) and dharma (in Hinduism) can be used to reveal the failure in human rights to account for the relationship of the individual to the collective or to the cosmos. In the other direction, he argues that the human rights framework highlights the inequalities and individual suffering that such philosophies do not attend to (Santos 2002, 44-56; cf. Santos 2014, 91-92, 219-220). Santos argues for a "a mestiza conception of human rights, a conception that instead of resorting to false universalisms, organizes itself as a constellation of local and mutually intelligible local meanings, and networks of empowering normative references" (2002, 47). In her account of activist engagement with the UN system, Sylvanna Falcón points to how such a "counterpublic constellation" of rights can inform legal advocacy that challenges, reinterprets and reimagines dominant understandings of rights (2015, 816, 820-824).

In the past few years, debates about multicultural conceptions of rights have been supplemented by calls to decolonise research, teaching and activism.[23] The work of Agĩkũyũ writer and theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o has been particularly prominent in these debates since he published *Decolonising the Mind* in 1986, calling for the publication of literature in African languages. For Ngũgĩ, language is both a mode of communication and a carrier of culture; he argues that using European languages such as

[23] See, for example: Mignolo 2000; Ngũgĩ 1986; Smith 1999; Mohanty 2003; and, more recently: Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlu 2018; Chilisa 2012; de Jong, Icaza and Rutazibwa 2019; Horn 2020; Jansen 2019; Kapoor and Shizha 2010; Mertens, Cram and Chilisa 2013; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018; Shetty 2018; Walsh 2013 and 2017.

English rather than local languages such as Gĩkũyũ disconnects Africans from their cultural memory (1986 and 2009, 16-20, 40-65, 90-98). More recently, Ngũgĩ has highlighted other ways of knowing that were and continue to be imposed on (post-)colonial subjects, notably the way that colonial education systems imported ideas of Africa as 'other' and Europe as the centre. We add new knowledge to what we already have, starting from the ground on which we stand. If we have been taught that Shakespeare is central, we identify with that as the base; the colonial process dislocates the subject in the colonies, who ends up looking at themself "with the lenses of a stranger" (Ngũgĩ 2012, 36-39).

Tamale has long argued for greater appreciation of the emancipatory potential of cultural traditions – and internal cultural transformation – for women's rights (cf. Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995; Tamale 2005 and 2008). In her most recent book, she takes this a step further, arguing for the decolonisation of feminism and human rights. As a social justice project, human rights are fundamentally flawed in so far as their historical basis lies in the dominant colonial ideology that they challenge. In contrast, a decolonising and Afro-feminist perspective involves more disruptive social transformation: "the conscious resistance to internalised colonial structures of thought," in the search for "ethics that reject domination and exploitation" (Tamale 2020, 244-245). Instead of Eurocentric human rights, she argues for contextually responsive normative frameworks, informed by "African socio-philosophical understandings of living, of knowing and of being" as represented by the tradition of Ubuntu, which understands the individual "as an inherently-communal being, embedded in social relationships." She engages with this concept not as an essentialised pre-colonial notion or static notion of culture and identity, but as a lived reality of reciprocity and interconnectedness – a familiar idea that "can act as a springboard for launching counter-narratives regarding gender hierarchies [… and] can be used to appeal to their [many Africans'] sense of justice and empathy. It is a unifying motif to address inequities and violations in our societies" (Tamale 2020, 220-233).

In her discussion of the colonisation of the mind, Tamale highlights how non-Eurocentric realities, philosophical tools and ways of knowing have been delegitimated and rendered invisible through the education system (2020, 245-249, 262-270). Decolonising the education system, she argues, requires the integration of indigenous and other familiar knowledge systems, languages and ways of being – such as indigenous ecological knowledge – into curriculums. She challenges universities to be open to a wider range of multivocal literature, including oral texts "such as orations, stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, riddles, games, artworks and ceremonies" (Tamale 2020, 265-266, 272-277; cf. Abdi 2010; Shizha 2010). She suggests that the process of conscientisation – following Freire – "facilitates the transformation of tendencies and practices which foster injustice and inequality" (Tamale 2020, 233-234; cf. Freire [1968] 1970):

> Thus, conscientization is an effective vehicle for developing new perceptions and worldviews. It allows learners to interface Indigenous knowledge systems (e.g., story-telling, song, lamentation and dance) with modern systems; connect with traditional concepts of justice and conflict resolution and management under the *Ubuntu* paradigm.

The "loss of one's history," she argues, "is equivalent to a loss of one's soul" – Africans must "return to the annals of history to find ourselves, to become fluent in our cultural knowledge systems, to cultivate critical consciousness and to reclaim our humanity" (Tamale 2020, 2, 264).

1.5. Conclusion

Informed by calls for cross-cultural dialogue, cultural transformation and decolonisation of human rights, my research draws on storytelling traditions familiar and accessible to workshop participants to support them to engage in a conversation in which political struggles and diverse cultural contexts can inform new conceptions of rights. In the literature review to follow, I situate my research within the framework of literature on epistemic injustice, drawing parallels between the applied literature discussed above and more abstract arguments developed by political theorists. I argue that the focus in both these literatures on taking marginalised perspectives

seriously should be supplemented by efforts to increase the range of hermeneutical resources used in understanding the world, making decisions and articulating political claims.

The insights provided by bringing these two streams of literature together inform the development of my methodology and design of the storytelling workshops which are the focus of the substantive chapters in my thesis. This methodological framework uses vernacular storytelling – that is, stories and storytelling practices that are familiar and accessible to workshop participants – to help social justice activists think differently about human rights and development. My work moves beyond abstract thinking about rival epistemologies, worldviews and perspectives, and general calls for cross-cultural dialogue. I propose a concrete mechanism for bringing people together in ways that disrupt dominant ways of thinking and help them imagine new things. For example, an exercise in which I asked workshop participants to tell the story of their names led them to share stories that articulated complex ideas about patriarchy, colonialism and cultural heritage, expressed in a way that was firmly rooted in local cultural symbolism and practices of naming. I use ogre stories and origin myths from European and Ugandan traditions – Red Riding Hood, Mudo and Nsangi, Nambi and Kintu, and Adam and Eve – to explore questions related to gender, agency and the nature of political authority. My analysis supplements data from the conversations in the storytelling workshops and responses that participants sent me afterwards with perspectives from East African scholarship on these and other themes in the stories we discussed. The social context of telling, retelling and interpreting traditional stories creates promising conditions for performers and audiences to challenge assumptions, communicate across difference and negotiate and renegotiate different cultural traditions and conceptions of justice. In my conclusion, I assess how these new conceptualisations might relate to and be reconciled with existing norms and priorities in the human rights and development sectors.

2. Literature review: cultivating hermeneutical breadth

2.1. Introduction

As discussed above, limitations in the range of political claims that are admissible in development and human rights work can be understood within the framework of literature on epistemic injustice. My engagement with this literature builds on Miranda Fricker's important distinction between testimonial and hermeneutical injustices (2007). In this chapter, I argue that hermeneutical injustices relate not just to descriptions of lived experience or linguistic concepts articulated by marginally-situated groups, but also to marginalised epistemes and interpretative traditions that are excluded from normative regimes such as human rights and development and from processes of deliberation and decision-making. I consider a range of mechanisms that can be used to mitigate hermeneutical injustice and cultivate greater hermeneutical breadth, which approximate and supplement the processes of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue discussed in the introduction.

In the field of development and human rights, scholars and practitioners have placed considerable emphasis on the importance of including marginalised voices; ensuring that the stories of those who are victims of human rights abuses and those who are marginalised in decision-making processes are promoted, giving them a platform to speak and in some cases giving them a role in decision-making. However, including marginalised voices in such processes does not guarantee that new kinds of political claims can be made. Take, for example, the drafting process for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Responses to critiques of the Eurocentric bias in the rights framework often point to the presence of drafters from Lebanon (Malik) and China (Chang) and to the influence of Latin American officials over the process. But the inclusion and influence of these others was not sufficient to disrupt the Eurocentric bias. Despite their different origins, these others operated within the same liberal framework as

European and North American drafters (Mutua 2016, 18-19, 167-168). Goodale draws attention to how the Universal Declaration was formally abstracted from political struggles and social practice, and borrowed from the only available transnational secular moral-legal framework – derived from European intellectual traditions – and therefore was unrelated to the diversity of normative practices around the world (2009, 116-119; cf. Tamale 2020, 190-191, 194-204, 211-213). A more genuinely inclusive process might have included participants from less elite backgrounds, but this would not have been sufficient. The elaboration of a more representative set of norms would have required mechanisms to ensure that diverse perspectives and approaches were accommodated in the drafting process and in the resulting set of norms. Standard setting in human rights has since become more participatory and inclusive. "It would be a mistake, however," Mutua argues, "to conflate inclusivity with a radical normative shift in the basic character of the human rights corpus because subsequent texts built on the normative script of the founders" (2016, 168).

Literature on epistemic injustice provides valuable insights into why inclusion might not be enough. It points to how the privileged discount marginalised perspectives due to their prejudices against marginalised speakers and their lack of interest in or even active efforts not to know about other perspectives. A number of scholars working in this area suggest that those in privileged positions should try harder to become more open to marginalised perspectives and to notice and correct for communicative habits that function to silence the marginally-situated. However, it is not just the case that those with powerful social, economic or political interests to protect limit the terms of the debate, or that marginalised speakers are ignored or dismissed as lacking in credibility. As discussed above, social justice activists highlight how the logics of the organisations and networks they are part of influence the kinds of political claims that can be articulated. The limited range of hermeneutical resources used in human rights and development work restricts how practitioners understand what they encounter and what they can imagine: such limitations might relate to prejudice and privilege, but also to the political objectives pursued in a

given process or occupational context. Such limitations make it more likely that they will mis-categorise grievances and pursue solutions that beneficiaries may not value or that are ineffective in addressing the problem at hand. In the first part of this chapter, I argue that the useful focus in epistemic injustice literature on the role of prejudice and privilege in hampering the communication of knowledge needs to be supplemented by greater attention to limitations in the range of hermeneutical resources – frames or scripts, concepts and practices – used to communicate knowledge but also to interpret and speculate about the world. The narrowness of admissible hermeneutical resources constitutes hermeneutical injustice when hermeneutical resources that are particularly central to the identity of a marginalised group are excluded from contexts or processes where decisions are made that affect the members of that group. The cultivation of hermeneutical breadth, by giving social justice activists and decision-makers access to a broader range of interpretative tools and approaches, is likely to improve understanding of and responses to injustice and changing circumstances.

In the second part of the chapter, I assess different mechanisms that have been proposed to cultivate greater epistemic justice. These proposals tend to call for greater openness to encountering marginalised experiences and perspectives, either by talking to people who have different experiences and learning from them, or by engaging with the representation of those experiences in texts. However, if hermeneutics goes beyond communication of knowledge to include interpretation, the cultivation of hermeneutical breadth must go beyond learning about other experiences and perspectives, to encompass a process of learning how to interpret and speculate about the world in new ways. I make a case for using vernacular storytelling to cultivate hermeneutical breadth and facilitate the articulation of new political claims. The social process of telling, discussing and reimagining stories can help participants engage with the world differently, and can also be used to consolidate these insights, facilitating a process by which they are integrated with – and, in being integrated, expand – participants' existing interpretative horizons. I illustrate and supplement my discussion of

literature on epistemic injustice with examples from development and human rights practice and theory and from anthropological studies of cultural change and political resistance.

2.2. Hermeneutical injustice beyond the communication of knowledge

In recent decades, practitioners have made considerable efforts to promote the testimony of marginalised speakers within development and human rights work and decision-making (cf. Schaffer and Smith 2004; Narayan et al. 2000; Narayanan et al. 2015). One particularly well-known testimony, *I, Rigoberta Menchú,* tells the story of the oppression, resistance and resilience of the Quiché people and other poor people in Guatemala through the lens of the life of one woman and her community. The *testimonio* was based on interviews with Rigoberta Menchú Tum conducted by anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, who edited the text substantially and rearranged the material thematically when Menchú did not follow a planned chronology. After it was published in 1983, the text circulated widely among activist networks; it helped to forge alliances among indigenous and other activists in Guatemala, and was set as assigned reading in many US colleges and universities. Menchú got involved in a growing transnational movement of indigenous people and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. In the late 1990s, the *testimonio* was the focus of serious controversy when David Stoll challenged the factual accuracy of some of the claims in the text, charging Menchú with fabricating details. Menchú's supporters point to how the contentious debates about the authenticity and factual accuracy of the text failed to engage with what the text is trying to do on its own terms. The genre of *testimonio* is not autobiography, but a collective mode that represents many different experiences through the lens of one life. Menchú's *testimonio* was not simply reportage, but a creative reframing of marginalised experience in terms of a narrative form familiar to those outside the Quiché community (Holden 2012, 122-124; Schaffer and Smith 2004, 29-31). The controversy around Menchú's *testimonio* relates to whose knowledge counts – a central

concern in both the development and human rights sectors – but also to the ways that this knowledge might be reframed, distorted and criticised where it doesn't fit with what privileged audiences expect to hear from marginally-situated speakers.

In the field of political theory, literature on epistemic injustice attends to who is valued as a knower (testimonial injustice) and what ways of knowing and sense-making are valued (hermeneutical injustice). In distinguishing the concepts of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, Fricker's book *Epistemic Injustice* has provided a reference point for this growing body of work (Fricker 2007 cf. Dotson 2014; Giladi and McMillan 2018; Kidd, Medina and Pohlhaus 2017; Mihai 2018).[24] Fricker approaches the question of epistemic injustice in terms of reception of testimony. She is concerned with the conditions under which a listener might make a correct assessment about the reliability of testimony; that is, the degree to which what someone communicates tells the listener something accurate about the material, social or interior world (which may or may not be factual). The credibility of testimony might be unjustly undermined for three reasons: due to the listener's prejudice against the speaker as a member of a marginalised group (testimonial injustice); due to a hermeneutical gap in the absence of a concept to describe an experience (hermeneutical injustice); or a hermeneutical gap related to the listener's inability to relate to the style of address the speaker uses (hermeneutical injustice) (Fricker 2007, 1-7, 109-128, 158-162). Much work in human rights and development focuses on giving a platform to marginalised speakers and ensuring that their perspectives are taking seriously in decision-making, going some way to mitigate testimonial injustice. Yet such efforts risk reinforcing hermeneutical injustice, where testimony is edited and curated to increase the chances of it being picked up in activist networks, or perspectives collected in ways that make them relevant to the terms of a decision-making

[24] This literature builds on many decades of research exploring indigenous and feminist epistemologies and critical race theory (e.g. Collins 1991; Harding 1991; Mills 1997; Mohanty 2003; Smith 1999; Spivak 1988).

process. These changes and framings risk distorting or silencing political claims that the speaker is trying to advance.

2.2.1. Hermeneutical gaps, interpretative communities and narrative conventions

Fricker's main focus is testimonial injustice; her elaboration of the concept of hermeneutical injustice is more limited. She is interested in how the category of hermeneutical injustice can explain epistemic obstacles to the communication of testimony that are not covered by her category of testimonial injustice, rather than in elaborating hermeneutical injustice as a category of epistemic injustice in itself (cf. Fricker 2007, 1, 6-7). As such, although hermeneutics has a broader meaning – "a method or theory of interpretation of texts, utterances or actions" (*OED*) – Fricker focuses on obstacles to the communication of reliable knowledge about the world, not on obstacles to participation in interpretative activities more broadly understood. As noted above, she distinguishes between hermeneutical injustices arising from hermeneutical gaps and those related to the style of communication. In this section, I discuss efforts to articulate a more pluralistic account of hermeneutical gaps, and show how examples from human rights practice can illuminate this further. In the next section, I discuss her second category of hermeneutical injustice, related to style.

According to Fricker, hermeneutical gaps occur where no concept exists that would allow an individual to describe their experience faithfully. This leads to injustice where it causes distress or material harm to a member of a systematically marginalised group. For example, she describes the difficulties a woman might have in expressing her discomfort with what is called 'harmless flirting' in the absence of the term 'sexual harassment' (Fricker 2007, 147-152; cf. Young 2000, 72-73). In response to Fricker's semantic account of hermeneutical gaps, José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus highlight the possibility of cases where the marginally-situated can express and describe their experiences perfectly well, but the dominantly-situated resist hearing them (cf. Medina 2012 and 2013; Pohlhaus 2012). In some cases these articulations might be embryonic and inchoate, as subjects

struggle to make sense of experiences that "do not yet have standard formulations," but even in the absence of a widely-accepted term, such nascent formulations can be used to express and make sense of marginalised experiences (Medina 2012, 208-209 and 2013, 97-101). Medina argues that a theory of epistemic injustice needs to take better account of the fact that communication takes place between different groups or interpretative communities, as well as between different individuals. In any social context, a number of (internally heterogenous) interpretative communities coexist, each with different expressive practices and interpretative resources. This suggests that hermeneutical gaps might arise not just where a concept has not yet been articulated, but also when the perspectives of members of one interpretative community are ignored or resisted by members of another more powerful interpretative community (Medina 2012, 202, 207-211 and 2013, 96-97, 101-104). That is, hermeneutical injustice might relate to a gap in the dominant set of shared hermeneutical resources – the one that is shared by the marginally-situated and dominantly-situated alike – not just to the absence of a particular concept in language.

In her discussion of hermeneutical injustice, Gaile Pohlhaus highlights the tension between situatedness and epistemic interdependence. A knower's social position draws their attention to certain parts of the world that others might not notice. But the epistemic resources they draw on to make sense of and evaluate their experiences – tools like language, concepts and criteria – are by definition collective, existing to coordinate communication between agents. Those for whom the shared set of epistemic resources are most likely to be unsuitable are almost by definition those with less influence over the development of shared epistemic resources. The situatedness of those who have most influence over the development of such resources means that their attention is not drawn to marginalised experiences, and so they fail to notice that there is a need for new epistemic resources to describe such experiences. Concepts that the marginally-situated develop to describe their experiences, like white privilege or date rape, seem "to make something out of nothing." Pohlhaus calls this kind of pre-emptive dismissal – there is nothing to know here, and

so these concepts are redundant – wilful hermeneutical ignorance (2012, 722, 728-729; cf. Dotson 2014, 127-129; Medina 2013, 30-33).

In some cases, the shared set of epistemic resources is actively (if unconsciously) curated in order to misrepresent and misinterpret the world. Where it is in the interest of the dominantly-situated not to know about something, they are trained in and contribute to maintaining epistemic insensitivity or numbness. As an example of this, Medina draws on Charles Mill's work on white ignorance to show how some white people unconsciously but actively resist knowing about racialised oppression so that they can "keep enjoying their privileges without having to face uncomfortable questions" (Medina 2013, 34-40, 104-109, 141-143, 145-147, 150-154). What he calls active ignorance is not easy to undo and correct, but requires retraining.[25] Medina argues that the dominantly-situated have a responsibility to cultivate a "kaleidoscope sensibility;" that is, active curiosity about and openness to diverse perspectives that "can serve as correctives of each other [… and] enable people to see the limitations of each viewpoint" (2013, 78-79, 200-202).

Analogously, in the field of human rights and development, shared norms allow us to communicate justice claims in ways that others are likely to respond to. If existing norms are ill-suited to respond to injustice, they may need to be challenged, reinterpreted or supplemented. However, those who are most likely to know about the injustices neglected by existing norms are rarely those with influence in what are often highly politicised processes of development and interpretation of norms. As in the case of the negotiation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, those with most influence in such processes are likely to be from elite backgrounds and to draw on a relatively narrow range of epistemic resources that are ill-suited to describe or understand marginalised experiences. Those in positions of privilege might actively resist learning about and endorsing other epistemic resources in order to protect their own privilege, whether as epistemic agents with mastery of existing norms – as professionals or experts – or as

[25] Henceforth I use Pohlhaus' term 'wilful hermeneutical ignorance' because it makes the epistemic character of such ignorance clearer than the term 'active ignorance' does.

people who benefit from the systems these norms reinforce. Those in positions of relative privilege might also resist alternative formulations for more benevolent reasons: perhaps in order to defend normative systems they have invested in and believe are valuable; or because they believe that alternative formulations are less likely to be taken seriously by those they are trying to influence; or because such formulations do not help achieve the political objectives they want to pursue.

Epistemic conditions and conventions – and our position in the social hierarchy at hand – shift as we move between different contexts in which communication takes place. As Medina acknowledges, some hermeneutical climates are less favourable than others (2012, 210 and 2013, 112). In any given occupational context or process, the set of epistemic resources that is widely shared is likely to be narrowed even further by the procedures and objectives of the activity at hand. For example, NGO workers and human rights factfinders might be open to accounts of injustice that are framed in terms of traditional, religious, communal or other philosophies from a personal perspective. But in documenting such stories as part of their work, they are likely to "enfold the narrative within the individualistic, humanist and secular frameworks of Western rights," imposing frames "designed to capture the interest, empathy and political responsiveness of readers elsewhere" or that "conform to the protocols for codification of a human rights abuse" (Schaffer and Smith 2004, 17, 27, 37, 40-41). Even if testimony is articulated in terms of widely shared epistemic resources, if the way the testimony is framed fails to fit the procedures and objectives of a given process or context it is likely to be rejected or simply ignored. This can be understood more fully by looking at an extended example from human rights practice, namely testimony given to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

In April 1996, the mothers of the Gugulethu seven – ANC members killed by apartheid-era security forces – were invited to testify at one of the first hearings of the TRC. Poet and journalist Antjie Krog, who was reporting on the proceedings, describes the testimony of one of the mothers – Notrose Nobomvu Konile – as "one of the most incoherent ... she had had

to report on" (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 39).[26] Part of this incoherence is due to inadequate interpretation, as the overworked simultaneous translator struggled to convey what Mrs Konile was saying in Xhosa in interpreting it into English. However, the challenges with interpretation are compounded by Mrs Konile's failure to comply with the expectations and narrative conventions of the hearings. Like most women testifying at the hearings, the mothers of the Gugulethu seven were expected to talk about what had happened to their sons, not to speak about their own experiences of apartheid (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 85-87; cf. Ross 2003, 17-18). Mrs Konile does talk about her son Zabonke, but not in terms of the incident in which he was killed; rather, she talks about the impact of his death on her own life. She recounts an incident in which she was injured by a rock while collecting coal after he died – "where I really got hurt" – set in the context of her precarious status as a widow without a son to rely on: "I didn't have anyone else. Their father died earlier. […] Life is very difficult in the township when you don't have anyone." Zabonke's death meant that she was unable to register for land in her own name or access her rightful inheritance (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 79-82, 182-183; cf. Ross 2003, 33-34). Kopano Ratele highlights the persistent use of "I" in her testimony, arguing that Zabonke's death cut her off and introduced her to loneliness, forcing her to become an individual (cited in Krog 2010, 132). In an interview ten years later, Mrs Konile foregrounds her individual efforts and resilience in overcoming the challenges of widowhood, poverty and injury, both during and after apartheid (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 160-161, 164-166).

In their collaborative analysis of Mrs Konile's TRC testimony, Krog, Ratele and Nosisi Mpolweni argue that Mrs Konile's age, poverty and rural identity made the testimony difficult to hear (2009, 177). However, her narrative is not so counter to bureaucratic logics as to be incomprehensible. Her account of her poverty and vulnerability and subsequent discourse of

[26] Krog was not just an ordinary listener: the huge international success of her book about the hearings, *Country of My Skull*, made her a key figure in the interpretation and subsequent dissemination of the testimonies given to the TRC (Krog 1998; cf. Schaffer and Smith 2004, 76-79).

self-reliance are familiar from the development sector[27] and may have been effective in securing Mrs Konile the welfare grant she received after her injury. The issue is that her concerns did not fit with the frames and conventions of the TRC, which sought out narratives of forgiveness and reconciliation in the light of a limited number of apartheid-era crimes, namely gross violations of bodily integrity (almost exclusively against men) and, in a less prominent parallel process, sexual assault against women (Ross 2003, 11-12, 23-24). The kinds of structural inequalities highlighted by Mrs Konile – her struggle to make ends meet, get medical treatment, build her house and marry off her daughters – were not legible in the context of the hearings. By foregrounding her own suffering, rather than how Zabonke died, Krog argues that Mrs Konile undermined the "frameworks imposed on her by the format and expectations of the Commission hearings" (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 87-91). But when the testimony was first broadcast, Krog found it to be incoherent. What Mrs Konile said simply did not fit the categories of evidence that the hearing sought to elicit or the narrative conventions according to which other testimonies were expressed.

Testimony is generally elicited in order to achieve something: perhaps to prove someone guilty, or to facilitate reconciliation or, in Fricker's formulation, to produce reliable knowledge about the world. These objectives may be laudable, but they necessarily direct attention to elements of experience that help to achieve the desired objectives and away from others. In the case of the TRC, the focus on crimes with identifiable perpetrators is a familiar convention of quasi-legal processes. The hearings sought to go beyond the mandates of previous truth commissions, explicitly accommodating narrative, dialogic and restorative truth as well as factual or forensic truth, and valuing the "perceptions, stories, myths and memories" of those who testified.[28] This process sought to acknowledge apartheid-era crimes, but also facilitate healing and reconciliation, as part of an effort to

[27] I am grateful to Paul Gready for pointing this out.

[28] Gready points to how the focus on multiple truths is difficult to reconcile with demands for verifiable facts about what happened under apartheid (2009, 159-162).

process the past and make a liveable political settlement in which the new South Africa could emerge. However, the focus on gross violations of bodily integrity meant that accounts of structural injustices – particularly significant for women's experience of apartheid and after apartheid – were edited out (cf. Fernandes 2017, 19-21, 23-26; Schaffer and Smith 2004, 65-69).[29] The injustice in a given case does not necessarily arise due to a gap in a dominant set of shared hermeneutical resources, but rather due to a narrowness in the range of hermeneutical resources that can be acceptably and usefully deployed in a given context. This might relate to the norms of a given process – legal or otherwise – or it might relate to the norms of a particular occupational context – like the human rights and development sectors. Even where a relatively wide range of hermeneutical practices are invited – as in the case of the TRC – limitations might be imposed by the narrow focus of a process and by expectations about what speakers are likely to say. It is useful to have shared objectives and norms to guide such processes and occupations so that those involved can work together to achieve something. But this means that some elements are necessarily going to be left out.

2.2.2. Style and other hermeneutical practices

Fricker's discussion of hermeneutical injustice is focused primarily on hermeneutical gaps. However, she also includes a brief discussion of a second category of hermeneutical injustice relating to style: how the manner in which someone articulates something can cause it to be dismissed. Fricker uses the example of a scene from the film *The Talented Mr Ripley* in which a woman's (accurate) assessment of a situation is dismissed by her male interlocutor because of the emotional style with which she communicates. Fricker finds the dismissal problematic because the woman's

[29] More prominently, the focus of the TRC on forgiveness and reconciliation has been criticised for obscuring the perspectives of those who didn't want to forgive the perpetrators and for censoring expressions of anger and rage. Mrs Konile's testimony is also distinctive in this respect; she sought to use her platform to emphasise her refusal to forgive the man who killed Zabonke, asking why she should forgive when Zabonke's killer refused to forgive him, even when Zabonke asked for forgiveness with his hands up (Krog, Mpolweni and Ratele 2009, 77, 144-145, 149-150, 197- 201; cf. Young 2012).

emotional style is hiding a rational point. A female interlocutor, Fricker suggests, being used to the way women communicate, may have understood the point being made.[30] However, Fricker does not consider that the male interlocutor has a duty to become familiar with and skilled in using this alternative style of communication (2007, 160-161, 169-174). The implication is that the solution is for the woman to drop the emotion and articulate her point in a more rational way, or for her interlocutor to listen through the interference of her emotional style to identify the rational point being made. But this neglects how an emotionally charged testimony may do more than mask rational information; it might be used to communicate something entirely different that cannot be communicated rationally.[31]

Analogously, in the case of Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio*, using the collective genre of *testimonio* – where one life story is used to represent a collective experience – makes an epistemic and political intervention that would be lost in translating this story into verifiable reportage about a single woman's experience. Those challenging the factual accuracy of the text failed to use epistemic resources that are suitable for the interpretation of the collective genre of *testimonio*. Instead, they wilfully persisted in using unsuitable epistemic resources to interpret the *testimonio* as a misleading example of reportage or quasi-legal evidence. Upscaling the credibility assigned to marginally-situated knowers like Menchú does little to mitigate such wilful hermeneutical ignorance – no matter how credible she is seen to be, her claims remain contestable if they are assessed in terms of

[30] This could also be understood as a case of testimonial injustice, where the statement is dismissed as emotional because a woman made it, whereas the same statement made in exactly the same way but by a man would have been taken more seriously.

[31] In her account of deliberative communication, Young makes a distinction between what is said, and rhetoric, or how it is said; she recognises that the style of communication can "colour and condition its substantive content." That is, style – the way something is said – changes the impact of what is said, affecting "its pragmatic operation in a situation of communicative interaction." Rhetoric includes dispassionate expression as well as more embodied forms of expression, emotion and figurative expressions. She notes that "disruptive or emotional forms of expression [for instance…] can be very effective in getting people's attention and making important points" (Young 2000, 56-57, 63-70). Young's discussion of rhetoric relates to different ways of saying the same thing. My discussion goes further, to consider how certain expressive practices – like emotional expression, metaphors and non-verbal expression – might enable the expression of something that couldn't be expressed in another way.

verifiability. Rather, the dominantly-situated should "catch up and learn to use epistemic resources they lack" (Pohlhaus 2012, 733); in this case, how to interpret different genres of testimony. In this section I consider how an account of hermeneutical injustice needs to attend to marginalised hermeneutical practices as well as concepts or meanings. In the next section, I consider when such limitations constitute injustices as opposed to the necessary limitations of any given process or context.

In his prominent critique of international development, Escobar argues that the development industry brings with it a certain way of looking at the world – a logic dominated by economics – that has become the central and most ubiquitous operator of the politics of representation in much of Asia, Africa and Latin America (1995, iii, 214). Alternatives to this logic can be found by looking to grassroots resistance and local hybrid practices and knowledge. For example, hybrid economic systems might be integrated into the market, but fundamentally oriented around reproduction and care for the earth, not just the increase of profits (Escobar 1995, 95-98, 100, 168-9, 215, 219, 222-3, 225). Escobar finds that standard political science methodologies are ill-suited to document such alternatives. Local practices are not just replicable socio-economic models; rather, they are bound up with and constitutive of the life, history and worldviews of those that practise them, and must be understood according to those logics (Escobar 1995, 96, 98). Escobar recognises that it is not easy to understand such alternatives from a Eurocentric perspective, warning against two extremes: "to embrace them uncritically as alternatives" or "to dismiss them as romantic expositions" (1995, 96, 170, 219, 224-225). The meanings of alternative local practices "have to be read with new senses, tools and theories" in order to translate what is "read, heard, smelled, felt or intuited" in theoretical and practical terms (Escobar 1995, 223).[32]

[32] Escobar suggests that ethnography is a particularly appropriate approach to use in these efforts, as it involves significant contact with and efforts to understand the logics and worldviews of those whose alternatives the research aims to illuminate (1995, 95-96, 167-168, 223).

In the context of cross-cultural dialogue about development and human rights, the conflicts that arise between different interpretative communities are not just about the concepts used to describe experiences, but about different hermeneutical practices: the variety of tools and methods that are used for making sense and making meaning. As discussed above, in the negotiation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, drafters privileged liberal traditions over other perspectives. These traditions continue to be privileged in dominant approaches to human rights and development, and related institutions such as democracy and capitalist enterprise (cf. Chakrabarty [2000] 2008, 4-6; Escobar 1995, iii., 214; Kapur 2018, 8). Chakrabarty argues that political modernity is unthinkable except in terms of European intellectual traditions, and that other philosophical traditions are treated as though they were dead and other histories characterised in terms of lack or inadequacy (Chakrabarty [2000] 2008, 4-6, 32, 40-44).[33] Santos calls this epistemicide, arguing that unequal exchanges among cultures, notably in the context of European expansion, "have always implied the death of the knowledge of the subordinate culture," and the "destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledge." Where knowledges and projects "that did not fit the dominant epistemological canon" continue to exist, they are silenced or violently co-opted – "they vanish as relevant or commensurable knowledges" – resulting in a "massive waste of social experience" (Santos 2014, 92, 118-124, 153, 238).[34]

There is no reason that an account of hermeneutical injustice – as an instance of epistemic injustice – should pertain only to obstacles to the communication of reliable information, or even to the communication of knowledge more broadly understood. It is generally accepted that

[33] In contrast, Ratna Kapur argues that the richness of intellectual and philosophical traditions on the Indian subcontinent and the ways they have been subsumed into everyday life means that human rights can only co-exist, exist in tension with or be subsumed by prior worldviews and ways of living (2018, 214).

[34] In recommending a response to epistemicide, Santos focuses on different ways of knowing and calls for 'cognitive justice.' I use the terms hermeneutical justice and breadth because these are broad enough to encompass interpretative practices beyond knowledge and cognition.

hermeneutics involves discerning or recovering the meaning of texts or other phenomena. The work of Hans-Georg Gadamer has been particularly influential in the redeployment of hermeneutics to a different purpose, as a method for revealing the structure of understanding as a situated, dialogical, and practically-oriented activity (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 295; cf. Malpas 2018, ss. 2.2, 3.1; Mantzavinos 2020, s. 4). In the discussion below, I highlight how Gadamer's approach to hermeneutics can help to account for the influence of the interpretative traditions we have been trained in on how we understand the world. By engaging in cross-cultural dialogue and internal discourse about different traditions or strands of tradition as well as different lived experiences, and by learning to use interpretative practices drawn from different traditions, we can expand our interpretative horizons and learn to imagine justice in new ways.

Most accounts of situatedness refer to our relative position in social hierarchies. Literature on epistemic injustice relates this to the degree of influence we have over the development of shared epistemic resources. In contrast, Gadamer emphasises how we are situated in the traditions that we are part of. This historically-effected situatedness provides us with the hermeneutical resources that enable understanding. Gadamer argues that lived experience is not the most important interpretative reference. Rather we "belong to history" and understand ourselves in the context of a process of mediation between past and present, taking what has been passed down to us and interpreting it in the light of current concerns (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 278, 291, 295, 297, 307-310, 321-330, 334-336). Our search for understanding is bound up with the context within which we think: "a person reading a text is himself part of the meaning he apprehends." This is not limiting, but rather enabling: "[t]o be situated within a tradition does not limit the freedom of knowledge but makes it possible" (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 307-310, 321-330, 334-336, 354). The existence of hermeneutical gaps such as gaps in language only serve to emphasise Gadamer's insistence that "language is already present in any acquisition of experience [… –] although illusory verbalistic problems can derive from the dominance of linguistic conventions, it is equally certain that language is at the same time

a positive condition of, and guide to, experience itself" ([1975] 2004, 342-344, 402). Language – and especially written texts – is "*the concretion of historically effected consciousness*;" the representation of where the ongoing conversation about meaning – which stretches back through history – has got to, and where we might join in, understanding and expressing tradition in new ways (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 391-393, 438- 446, 457-459, original emphasis). "From the way that words change," Gadamer argues "we can discover the way that customs and values change." For example, "the poem awakens a secret life in words that had seemed to be used up and worn out, and tells us of ourselves[. … Language] helps to fashion the world orientation in which we live" ([1975] 2004, 446). Comparably, Ngũgĩ conceives of language as a carrier of culture as well as a mode of communication: "[l]anguage as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history." The suggestive power of language goes beyond the "immediate and lexical meaning" to include language games that emphasise the "music of our language on top of the content. The language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own" (Ngũgĩ 1986, 11, 13-16).

In Gadamer's account, our historically-effected situatedness provides us with the resources we use in trying to understand the world. But we are not trapped by our situatedness, rather we ourselves "participate in the evolution of tradition" (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 293). Our pre-judgments or expectations enable (preliminary) understanding, which can be either false or legitimate. Fuller understanding requires openness to those pre-judgments being challenged through examination of the thing at hand, in putting our own expectations at risk and experiencing the other's claim to truth (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 268-273, 294, 298-299). Gadamer argues that our expectations are challenged through experience, which he defines as encountering something new ([1975] 2004, 303). He focuses on the ways we can encounter something new by engaging in dialogue with the past, with what he calls "hermeneutical experience" (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 352, 362, 370). History is multivocal: our historical consciousness is filled with many different voices, and in historical research we have a new experience

of history whenever the past resounds in a new voice (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 285). Such new experiences disappoint our expectations (what we think we know about the world) – but this negative experience is "curiously productive," allowing us to escape from something that has deceived us and to see the world differently. "It is not simply that we see through a deception and hence make a correction, but we acquire a comprehensive knowledge" (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 347-348, 350).[35] Gadamer very clearly emphasises tradition over lived experience, but it would not be incompatible with his approach to put a greater emphasis on the importance of lived experience. This would help to address Gadamer's failure to consider the power dynamics implicit in his account. As noted above, Pohlhaus describes a tension whereby those whose lived experiences cannot be faithfully described by drawing on tradition (as encoded in language) are almost by definition those with less influence over the development of language as a shared epistemic resource (cf. Pohlhaus 2012, 728). Accounts of marginalised experiences, which shared epistemic resources are ill-suited to describe or understand, offer an important corrective to tradition.[36]

Gadamer's focus is on conversation with those aspects of the past that have been preserved (tradition) through the medium of language (which

[35] Gadamer argues that encountering tradition involves a process of mediation, whereby an individual engages with history like a partner in a dialogue in the light of a specific question or context. This results in "the fusion of horizons" where new historical consciousness is recombined with the tradition it has emerged from in a single interpretative horizon that is always moving. This process is never complete because we can never fully understand what we are involved in creating (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 301, 303-305, 367). Like Gadamer, Ngũgĩ argues for readings that engage texts as a partner in dialogue, relating tradition to current circumstances (Ngũgĩ 2012 19-20, 58-60):

> Reading globaletically is a way of approaching any text from whatever times and places to allow its content and themes form a free conversation with other texts of one's time and place, the better to make it yield its maximum to the human. It is to allow it to speak to our own cultural present even as we speak to it from our own cultural present. It is to read a text with the eyes of the world; it is to see the world with the eyes of the text. Such reading should bring into mutual impact and comprehension the local and the global, the here and there, the national and the world. Even old classical literatures of different cultures and languages can be read globaletically.

[36] Shari Stone-Mediatore recognises that the framing of accounts of marginalised experience is often culturally conditioned, reproducing dominant ideologies. However, even where this is the case, she argues that they can be read in ways that reveal their critical potential. For example, attending to their multifaceted nature and internal contradictions points to the ways they encode conflicts between resistant experience, which has concrete

encodes tradition). Notably, he highlights the value of reading "classical" texts that have endured over time (Gadamer [1975] 2004, 287-290, 297-298). He fails to consider how the preservation of certain texts and not others might be politically driven or even rather random: that the texts that endure might have endured for reasons other than their great insights; and that there are many other texts whose insights could have endured under the right (political, economic, or other) conditions. Specifically, he neglects the ways in which non-European traditions have failed to endure due to colonial suppression and neglect. But he does recognise that just as new experiences can serve as a corrective to the stories that we tell ourselves about the world, so marginalised traditions can serve as a corrective to the dominant set of shared epistemic resources. Those trying to cultivate hermeneutical justice in the face of epistemicide cannot draw on what has been lost or destroyed. But they can draw on the many traditions that have survived and evolved at the margins and on others that have been subsequently developed.

For example, An-Naʿim argues that the legacy of colonialism – and resistance to colonialism – continues to shape people's lives in Africa, through an education system that privileges European intellectual traditions and the "persistence of the inherited apparatus of colonialism" such as the state, which although it is weak, affects people's lives (2006, 19-22). In order to decentre Eurocentric perspectives and develop national constitutions that are inclusive of non-European experiences and histories, he argues that African societies should draw on "on indigenous and precolonial African traditions […and] anticolonial dissent and protest." This is challenging given that understandings of precolonial African history are shaped by Eurocentric epistemological frameworks. However, he does not suggest that Africans should try to recover precolonial traditions, rather that they should "imaginatively reclaim the agency which was denied to them during colonialism. If communities are 'imagined' and traditions are 'invented,' then Africans can imagine and reimagine and invent and

effects on people's lives, and socio-cultural regulation of experience. Accounts of marginalised experiences should be understood "as neither collections of indubitable evidence nor as mere discursive constructions but as creative responses to socially situated, multilayered, only partly constituted experiences" (Stone-Mediatore 2003, 97-123).

reinvent their societies unfettered by the hegemony and constraints of European experience and epistemology," imagining how they might have evolved if colonialism had never intruded (An-Naʿim 2006, 23, 27-28, 30-33; cf. Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger [1983] 2012).[37]

Hermeneutical resources can be disambiguated into three broad categories: *practices* for doing the work of interpretation; *concepts* drawn from language, experience and tradition; and narrative *frames* or scripts that are used to arrange such concepts into a meaningful whole. The work of hermeneutics involves making use of these resources in the process of interpretation. For example, in their discussion of the possibilities of cultural transformation for realising human rights in Africa, An-Naʿim and Jeffrey Hammond point to how people use cultural resources to construct strategies for action. These resources include historically transmitted patterns of meaning-making – symbols, stories, rituals, worldviews and designs for living – but also repertoires of social practices that can be used in the process of interpretation – skills, competencies, the application of rules and frameworks, roles or institutional arrangements (An-Naʿim and Hammond 2002, 21-27). Medina draws attention to how the privileged are trained in and contribute to maintaining their wilful hermeneutical ignorance. Following Gadamer, this negative training is part of the broader hermeneutical training we receive that ensures that we are able to understand and interpret the world, and not all of this is bad.

Considering how the traditions that we are trained in might enable as well as limit understanding provides a new perspective on hermeneutical ignorance. The training someone receive that informs and reinforces their ignorance is a training in using certain hermeneutical resources (like languages and traditions) and not others. Those who are privileged but also those who are marginally-situated are trained in using a wide range of concepts, hermeneutical practices and frames, some of which are helpful, some of which serve to reinforce our privilege, and some of which are

[37] Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that Islam – which An-Naʿim draws on as an example of a non-Eurocentric tradition – is itself associated with epistemicides, or "attempts to eradicate indigenous histories, cultures, religions and traditions" (2018, 125).

redundant or serve us badly. The latter case is a case of wilful hermeneutical ignorance that it is decidedly not in our interest to have – resulting not from laziness or our need not to know, but rather from the strong ways that our hermeneutical training shapes how we see the world and the difficulty in shaking this off. While Fricker, Pohlhaus and Medina clearly differentiate between those who are privileged and those who are not, relative privilege is often a more complex matter – anyone might be privileged in some contexts or with regards to some aspect of their identity and marginalised in others. This becomes even more complicated in post-colonial contexts in which Eurocentric traditions exist in parallel to other local traditions. A person's relative privilege in such a society – such as having a well-paid job – might be bound up in their adoption of cultural resources the use of which reinforces the privilege of another group entirely. These epistemic habits are acquired through a process of socialisation. Comparably, Medina highlights how the acquisition and maintenance of active ignorance involves a process of socialisation, and argues that parents and teachers carry particularly demanding epistemic burdens as facilitators or blockers of intellectual curiosity (2013, 146-147).

As discussed above, Ngũgĩ points to how the language used and the knowledge base transmitted at school can lead to the colonisation of the mind. The kind of hermeneutical training received at school and in religious settings is influenced by the language of instruction, cultural reference points and disciplines of time and organisation imposed in such settings. For example, Karin Barber describes how missionaries across British-held Africa introduced new disciplines of time and space, for example, seating people in rows in rectangular church and school buildings and expecting them to arrive on time. These new disciplines intentionally abstracted people from pre-existing kin and residential networks, and rhythms of life and work (Barber 2018, 37-38). In particular, the mission boarding school was used to separate children from their parents and communities and abstract them from their ancestral social values (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 12-13, 129). In Kenya, as part of the push for converts to sever ties with "evil customs," Bible stories were substituted for folktales, with mission-educated

Agikũyũ children sent into villages to tell stories about the Christian God around the bonfire (Kĩnyua 2010, 184-186; cf. Mutua 2002a, 116-117). In Uganda, the famous school King's College, Budo gave some Africans – the Baganda elite – access to British education in order to equip them to become governors. Terence Ranger cites Bishop Tucker who describes an education "on the soundest possible lines…by the discipline of work and games in a boarding school so as to build character as to enable the Baganda to take their proper place in the administrative, commercial and industrial life of their own country." Ugandans – including Kabaka (king) Mutesa of Buganda and Idi Amin – were admitted and socialised into the colonial army, and other mission-educated boys were admitted into the lower ranks of the colonial bureaucracy (Ranger [1983] 2012, 221-228). Today, most Ugandans are educated in English-medium boarding schools, with Shakespeare as a prominent part of the curriculum – although local folktales and increasingly local languages are also taught.

For Spivak, the problem is not that the education received by the middle-classes is colonial, but that their education consists in "quick-fix training" with "uncomplicated standards for success," inducting them into "business culture" (2004, 532-533, 540). Spivak contrasts middle-class education with schools for the poor, which she describes as "the detritus of the postcolonial state, the colonial system turned to rote," teaching students not to understand but merely "to spell and memorize" (2004, 551, 563). In a study of a youth empowerment programme in Kenya, Rajak and Dolan show how post-primary training in entrepreneurialism is used to draw people living in poverty into the networks and logics of global capitalism (2016). Alamin Mazrui argues that the primary effect of instruction in European languages serves economic imperatives, reinforcing economic dependency and the kind of class distinctions that Spivak describes, rather than the imposition of a European worldview (2004, 49-54). While Spivak and Mazrui resist the concept of colonisation of the mind, their accounts underscore the continuities between education and work highlighted in Ranger's description of Budo. As Escobar notes, the logic of economics – and business culture – is dominant in the international development sector.

Spivak highlights how this “quick-fix training” also influences the design of human rights interventions. As employees, NGO workers in the global South are socialised by particular professional incentives and norms: conventions related to which types of knowledge and hermeneutical practices they should bring to bear on their work and which they should not.

Through their hermeneutical training, people develop and contribute to maintaining habits of perception and reasoning, and it takes effort to break out of these. However, culture is not singular nor is it static, but it is full of tension, diversity and differentiation – even professional cultures like those of human rights and development bureaucracies and networks. Cultural change occurs in the interaction of political, cultural, economic and historical contexts with the pull and the push of processes of internal discourse and external influence (An-Naʿim and Hammond 2002, 21-29). While the use of the term epistemicide suggests that alternative traditions have died, those living in (post-)colonial contexts tend to have access to a much broader range of hermeneutical resources than the ones privileged by development and human rights. Their education at school is likely to have been supplemented by hermeneutical training in different contexts – at home, in religious institutions – and even colonially-inflected education systems are likely to include some diversity – for instance, through the inclusion of local folktales in English language textbooks. They may have been taught to privilege European languages, but also be able to speak – or have the opportunity to learn – local languages that encode a different cultural memory and different worldviews (Ngũgĩ 2009, 49-51, 90-94). Such hermeneutical training might be in colonially-inflected traditions which, regardless, present a challenge to the logics of the development and human rights sectors – like African Christianity. Or it might in be traditions and practices that continued to exist and evolve in parallel to colonially-imposed epistemologies – like oral poetry and storytelling. As well as drawing on the multiplicity of their own hermeneutical training, they can learn from cross-cultural dialogue, drawing on elements from outside their cultures to reimagine their own traditions. These diverse hermeneutical

resources can be brought to bear in efforts to reimagine conceptions of justice, dignity and freedom.[38]

2.2.3. Hermeneutical injustice, hermeneutical breadth and global interconnectedness

As discussed above, in the human rights and development sectors, non-Eurocentric hermeneutical resources tend to be systematically excluded from processes and contexts where decisions are made that affect people's lives. Below, drawing on the different definitions of epistemic injustice articulated by Fricker and by Medina, I consider what characterises such exclusions as injustices that are epistemic in nature. Even where such exclusions do not constitute injustices that are specifically epistemic in nature, I argue that they can lead to different types of (non-epistemic) injustice due to the inadequacy of the dominant set of shared hermeneutical resources – or of the set of hermeneutical resources that are currently admissible in specific contexts or processes – for addressing intractable injustices and changing circumstances. My assumption in developing this argument is that the hermeneutical resources appropriate for interpreting a given experience or encounter exist, but are ignored by or not seen as suitable for use in at least some processes and occupational contexts.

Fricker's definition of hermeneutical injustice relates to instances in which the absence of a concept or a dismissal due to style results in harm to a speaker who is systematically marginalised, by preventing them from describing their experiences or from making themselves understood. Unlike her conceptualisation of testimonial injustice – an injustice done by the hearer in the ways they listen to a speaker – she describes hermeneutical injustice as a purely structural injustice with no direct perpetrator (Fricker

[38] Spivak argues that critiques of human rights need to move beyond "a crude notion of cultural difference" to grapple with the ways in which the human rights model emerged "in the wake of the dissolution of imperial formations and global economic restructuring." She argues that the pedagogic change necessary to enable human rights workers to access "long-delegitimized epistemes" of the rural poor – the "usually silent victims of pervasive rather than singular human rights abuses" – "need not necessarily involve confronting the task of undoing the legacy of a specifically *colonial* education" but rather learning from below, having "the patience and perseverance to learn well one of the languages of the rural poor of the South" (Spivak 2004, 529-530, 550, emphasis original).

2007, 159). Under this formulation, the exclusion of specific hermeneutical resources from the set that are shared in a particular context – like human rights or development – would probably have to fulfil two conditions in order to constitute an injustice. First, the context would have to be a particularly important one with considerable implications for the (systematically marginalised) speaker – otherwise they could just participate in a different process in which the set of shared hermeneutical resources was more suitable. Secondly, the inadequacies in the shared set of hermeneutical resources would need to prevent the speaker from making themselves understood and so cause them some kind of harm.

In pointing to the interplay between situatedness and epistemic interdependence – how the wilful hermeneutical ignorance of the privileged poses an obstacle to the expansion of the dominant set of shared epistemic resources – Pohlhaus implies that hermeneutical injustice, even if structural, might also involve culpability (2012, 728-729). Medina makes this more explicit. In his discussion of white privilege he extends the concept of hermeneutical injustice to include instances in which the injustice is not done to the (marginally-situated) speaker, but is done by the (dominantly-situated) speaker to their interlocutor or (in a secondary harm) to those who are marginally-situated in society more broadly. Just because an injustice is structural, he argues, does not mean that there is no one who can be held responsible. By persisting in speech that lacks or ignores certain concepts and therefore reinforces their privilege, the dominantly-situated speaker does an injustice to those people who are harmed by the absence of such concepts in the dominant set of shared hermeneutical resources (Medina 2013, 104-109).[39] Under Medina's formulation, a hermeneutical injustice could be perpetrated by those involved in shaping the set of hermeneutical

[39] Medina recognises that the marginally-situated might be strategically silent in ways that reinforce hermeneutical injustices against them where, "given the special vulnerabilities they have accrued, it is not in their interest to [communicate about certain things … because they] are forced to inhabit communicative contexts in which they cannot exercise their hermeneutical capacities to make sense of their experiences, or they can only exercise them at high costs that others do not have to pay." Under such circumstances, marginalised groups are justified in their silence "until a more equal participation in hermeneutical practices is available to all" (Medina 2013, 101-103, 116-117; cf. Medina 2017).

resources being used in a given process or context, if they systematically ignore or dismiss resources that would better fit the experience of marginally-situated speakers who wish to participate and for whom this process or context has considerable implications. Where certain marginally-situated groups of people associate strongly with excluded sets of resources, especially in cases where the use of such resources is central to their sense of identity, the exclusion of these resources from a process or context with considerable implications for their lives – or the incorporation of elements of such resources in a problematically distorted form – is more than an inevitable limitation of the process or context at hand: it can be said to constitute an injustice.

Secondly, decisions or claims might result in avoidable injustice because they fail to draw on the hermeneutical resources best suited to making those decisions or claims. To develop this argument, I use Fricker's definition of epistemic harm (as distinguished from injustice), which she articulates in her discussion of testimonial injustice (Fricker 2007, 43-44):

> There is of course a purely epistemic harm done when prejudicial stereotypes distort credibility judgements: knowledge that would be passed on to a hearer is not received. This is an epistemic disadvantage to the individual hearer, and a moment of dysfunction in the overall epistemic practice or system […where] prejudice presents an obstacle to truth, either directly by causing the hearer to miss out on a particular truth, or indirectly by creating blockages in the circulation of critical ideas.

Fricker points to the fact that the exclusion of knowledge due to prejudice against marginally-situated speakers can result in harm, either directly, where the hearer misses out on "a particular truth," or indirectly, where the set of shared hermeneutical resources is impoverished due to "blockages in the circulation of critical ideas". In Fricker's formulation, the epistemic harm relates to a gap in reliable knowledge about the world. In my more expansive account of hermeneutical injustice, this formulation of epistemic harm could be extended to encompass harm arising from blockages in the circulation of resources for interpreting what we experience and encounter.

As discussed above, human rights and development norms were developed in ways that excluded non-Eurocentric philosophies and interpretative practices. Such epistemic narrowness is a structural problem, in which the rules of the hermeneutical game – which determine which harms can be interpreted as constituting human rights violations and how – are laid out in a way that systematically excludes certain hermeneutical resources. In some cases, those excluded hermeneutical resources continue to be deployed by people who (or whose antecedents) developed them, in parallel to human rights and other such norms. In other cases they may have been swamped by the dominant set of resources and are no longer used. Such narrowness may also result from distortion, where elements from a set of hermeneutical resources might have been integrated into the dominant set of hermeneutical resources – as, for example, in the recognition of indigenous rights in the human rights framework – but in ways that systematically change them – for example, where indigenous communities are forced to articulate their relationship with their land in terms of ownership rather than mutual dependence in order to prevent that land from being transferred to others (cf. Falcón 2015, 823). To call all such exclusions or distortions injustices probably stretches things too far. There might be certain sets of hermeneutical resources that have been abandoned for generations and rendered obsolete, and it is no injustice that they are excluded. There might be others that have been adapted and transformed, and the resulting hybrid versions, while strictly speaking distortions, might serve very well. However, in the light of the breadth of available hermeneutical resources, situations in which the range of hermeneutical resources currently admissible in decision-making contexts are inadequate for responding to injustices or changing circumstances might result in avoidable harm; such harms that might have been prevented had different resources been used. Admittedly, it is difficult to establish a counter-factual: that the use of a specific hermeneutical resource, currently excluded, would definitely have prevented a particular harm. It is easier to establish that the narrowness of the set (or sets) of admissible hermeneutical resources is at least in part to blame for the persistence of that harm. Injustices are likely to result when the dominantly-situated refuse to use a broader range of

hermeneutical resources, among which might be some that help to mitigate or prevent the harm.

In doing this work, it is not practicable to be exhaustive. As Medina highlights, "it is important to keep open the possibility that we may find more hermeneutical resources than we expected in remote and obscure corners of the social fabric." The obligation to seek out knowledge of resources used by "indefinitely many other groups" would be impossible to fulfil (Medina 2013, 103, 156). Medina proposes two maxims to delimit the scope of our responsibility: first, that we have an obligation to seek knowledge about those who we are connected with in a social network and with whom we share resources and/or social spaces; and secondly, that in seeking out knowledge, we remain open to finding out about others and vigilant about possible "limitations, distortions, lapses, and omissions of our social gaze." This work "is never completed, but needs to be revisited periodically" (Medina 2013, 156-157).

The likely scope of such work is easier to imagine in the context of the responsibilities of an individual living in a self-contained society and economy. It is much more difficult in the context of a normative framework that, such as human rights or development, claims a certain universality, or in the context of the responsibilities of individuals who are actively involved in international decision-making processes or networks. When we look at things on a global scale, everyone shares space and resources – the planet – with everybody else. It is not clear how even the biggest bureaucracies would have the capacity to seek knowledge about every differentiated group on the planet. Medina recognises that global interconnectedness means that it "is not always appropriate to restrict our epistemic and political obligations toward others to those who belong to our own local, regional or national community, or to our own cultural group" (2013, 159). Medina adds on a third maxim that helps to relate his proposals to this global scale. In order to develop adequate social knowledge, he argues that communities should correct each other and be open to correction "against the experiences and judgments of others" – both by other communities and also by their individual members (Medina 2013, 158). This approximates processes of

internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue as articulated by An-Naʿim and Santos.

Medina makes this argument in the context of an entire lifetime. In the more limited context of a time-bound process related to development and human rights, it would be even more impractical to expect those involved in making decisions and making claims to become familiar with all the hermeneutical resources that might, in theory, be brought to bear on that process. However, it could be expected that they seek out and learn to use hermeneutical resources that are different from those they usually use: this can be described as cultivating hermeneutical breadth. The cultivation of hermeneutical breadth might also include efforts to mitigate hermeneutical injustice, by paying particular attention to hermeneutical resources that are marginalised but particularly central to the identities of those involved in the process or likely to be affected by any decisions made. Different hermeneutical practices are likely to be good for different purposes. Generally, though, it can be said that using a broader range of hermeneutical resources is likely to facilitate better or more just decisions and outcomes – to the extent that those involved in any given process are open to this. Using different hermeneutical resources is likely to draw attention to aspects of the world that previously went unnoticed – as marginally-situated experiences do. The cultivation of hermeneutical breadth can also draw attention to circumstances in which the terms of the debate are limiting the range of possible solutions, and help deliberators reconsider what is important and how different phenomena relate to each other, shifting their conceptions of relative hierarchies and relationships of interdependence. Just as Medina suggests that the dominantly-situated should cultivate openness to a diverse and always potentially growing number of diverse experiences, so decision-makers or those articulating political claims would be well advised to tap into hermeneutical practices, concepts or frames that are different from those they generally use in order to help them see the world differently and to address challenges that the current set of admissible hermeneutical resources is ill-equipped to respond to. That is, those with influence over decision-making in the human rights and development sectors have a

responsibility to cultivate hermeneutical breadth. As discussed in the introduction, a key mechanism for doing this is engagement in internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue (cf. An-Naʿim 1992; Santos 2002).

2.3. Cultivating hermeneutical breadth: bridging theory and practice

Fricker argues that hermeneutical injustice is a purely structural injustice related to inadequacies in language and the unintelligible nature of certain modes of expression, rather than to the fault of an individual listener. Concepts might be articulated that fill hermeneutical gaps if members of marginally-situated groups gather together and develop a shared understanding of their experience – as US feminists did in consciousness-raising groups. This is achieved by making imaginative leaps that draw on nascent articulations of those concepts (Fricker 2007, 148-150, 159). In contrast, Medina finds that individual blame can be associated with cases of hermeneutical injustice, arguing that the privileged can be held responsible for their ignorance. As such, the solutions are slightly different – he focuses on how the virtuous listener should develop a kaleidoscope sensibility; that is, "the cultivation of an ability to keep searching for new perspectives and actively trying to expand our perceptions and thoughts by contemplating things from elsewhere," while remaining open to the fact that there may be many more perspectives out there. Encountering new perspectives is likely to lead to epistemic friction, serving as a corrective to the ways they misunderstand and misrepresent the world (Medina 2013, 200-203).

In the discussion that follows, I consider how hermeneutical injustice might be mitigated through the cultivation of epistemic friction and imaginative leaps by interacting with diverse others and by engaging with texts.[40] These practices of interaction and reading have the potential to reveal the diversity in hermeneutical resources that are already familiar, to

[40] There are likely to be many other mechanisms that have the potential to cultivate epistemic friction and imaginative leaps. In focusing on texts and interactions, I am guided by the fact that much of the literature on epistemic injustice and alternative conceptions of human rights focuses on these two practices; and our finding in the AHRC project that interactive verbal performance is a particularly prominent art form in the Ugandan context.

expand the range of hermeneutical resources available for use, and to train us to become skilled in using them. Theories of social learning, or enskillment, are a particularly helpful for thinking about how efforts to cultivate hermeneutical justice might extend beyond learning about diverse experiences to give participants the skills they need to use unfamiliar hermeneutical resources – notably marginalised hermeneutical practices. I argue that vernacular storytelling – as an alternative hermeneutical practice – brings together the interactive potential of dialogue with the seductive and imaginative potential of reading texts, creating the conditions for cultivating epistemic friction and making imaginative leaps.

2.3.1. Interacting with diverse others

Drawing on the concept of double consciousness in the work of WEB Du Bois, Medina argues that the marginally-situated have a kind of epistemic privilege. Their social position means that it is in their interest to understand and become skilled in using hermeneutical resources used by the dominantly-situated, but they also have an insight that the dominantly-situated do not have; they know that these resources are insufficient or inadequate because they cannot be used to faithfully describe their own experiences as members of marginally-situated groups (Medina 2013, 40-48, 189-198, 204-205; cf. Dotson 2014, 126-133; Pohlhaus 2012, 719). Medina coins the term ‘epistemic friction’ to describe the awareness of dissonance between the account of the world developed using the dominant set of hermeneutical resources and those experiences that cannot be described faithfully using these resources (Medina 2013, 11-12). As Pohlhaus points out, “It is this tension and the urgency it produces when epistemic resources are at odds with one’s experienced world that signals a need to recalibrate and/or create new epistemic resources for knowing the world more adequately.” This tension prompts the marginally-situated to work together to develop additional hermeneutical resources in order to describe their (otherwise obscured) experiences to each other (Pohlhaus 2012, 720). In contrast, the wilful hermeneutical ignorance of the dominantly-situated prevents them from identifying hermeneutical gaps and inadequacies and leads them to reinforce these injustices in their own

speech. As discussed above, Medina argues that the privileged have a responsibility to cultivate epistemic friction, going beyond double consciousness to develop a kaleidoscope consciousness. The primary mechanism he proposes for achieving this is engaging in sustained interactions with significantly different individuals and groups, making repeated and often failed attempts to be responsive to different perspectives and allowing those to serve as a corrective of their own. This is a long process; he argues that our entrenched ignorance typically takes generations to change (Medina 2013, 86, 200-203).

In his discussion of communicative dynamics, Medina suggests that listeners should help speakers to "render the experiences intelligible" by being appropriately responsive (Medina 2013, 113). But the hermeneutical skills associated with reasoned discussion and argumentation are likely to be poorly suited to this task in cross-cultural contexts. Where experiences and perspectives are articulated in unfamiliar terms, learning to use new hermeneutical practices is often a pre-requisite for responding to these appropriately. As the case of Mrs Konile's testimony to the TRC highlights, even where a relatively wide range of hermeneutical practices are invited, these may be perceived as incoherent by those who are not expecting a speaker to intervene in the way that they do. Pohlhaus' relational account of epistemic injustice begins to address this. It involves not just trying to be responsive to different perspectives, but learning from others how to use different epistemic resources; resources that have been developed to make sense of experiences the differently-situated learner cannot have, and to draw attention to aspects of the world they do not normally attend to. Learning to use such resources is a collaborative and embodied process. It "requires engagement with practitioners skilled in their use, placing oneself in encounters where it makes sense to use them, making mistakes and being corrected" (Pohlhaus 2012, 721). Comparably, Spivak suggests that accessing the "long-delegitimised epistemes [of the rural poor] requires a different engagement" (2004, 529). Those who wish to "resuscitate the lost cultural imperative to responsibility […] to teach oneself how to access older cultural habits in practice […] must have the patience and

perseverance to learn well one of the languages of the rural poor of the South" (Spivak 2004, 533-534, 550).

Dialogue among those who are marginally-situated in comparable ways might come more easily than dialogue between those who are marginally-situated and those who are more privileged in some aspect of their identities. In the context of her work with Afro-Peruvian women participating in UN anti-racism processes, Sylvanna Falcón combines the idea of double consciousness with Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of mestiza consciousness to illuminate the women's situatedness. This highlights Afro-Peruvian women's racialised marginalisation in Peru but also the multiple connections and borders between identities that emerge at transnational level, along economic, religious and racialised lines. For the women she worked with, their experience at the UN left them sceptical about the prospect of solidarity with US people of colour; they pointed to some delegates who had not reflected on their own power and privilege as US citizens. Falcón suggests that greater attention to learning from and about each other – in this case, about the racialised aggression that African-Americans face in the US – might help to break down such barriers to North-South solidarity (2015, 671- 676; cf. Anzaldúa 1987). Pohlhaus recognises that learning to know and understand differently is likely to be a disorienting process, opening the knower's eyes to aspects of their own situatedness it is difficult to contend with, such as their unearned privilege. Like Falcón, she recognises that there are clear reasons why the marginally-situated might be unwilling to teach the dominantly-situated how to use such resources – including the energy it requires and the absence of trust (Pohlhaus 2012, 721). The marginally-situated might have a greater incentive to engage in such a process where it is likely to result in an outcome that is in their interests. In a later essay, Pohlhaus considers how learning together might contribute to the development of relationships of solidarity. This is not just about disrupting habits of attention and behaviour, but about developing "new ways of acting in concert." It shifts attention from the question of who knows or whose knowledge to the question of who

they are knowing with and what kinds of solidarity this makes possible (Pohlhaus 2017, 20-23).

In proposing cross-cultural dialogue as a strategy to mitigate epistemicide, Santos suggests that scholars and activists should engage in dialogues involving a process of intercultural translation between "different cultural premises and symbolic universes." As Pohlhaus does, he proposes that this process should have an instrumental aim: to minimise the obstacles to defining mutually legible and acceptable political claims, in order to strengthen alliances in common struggles and offer a more realistic evaluation of possible alternatives (Santos 2014, 212-214, 221-222, 234). Santos has developed his theories in parallel with participating in the World Social Forum, an annual week-long gathering of diverse social movements and NGOs from around the world. The social and cultural diversity of participants and the diversity of their struggles gives rise to "different, and not always mutually intelligible, collective actors, vocabularies and resources, and this can place serious limitations on efforts to redefine the political arena." Santos proposes translation as a mechanism to identify what is common while maintaining intact the autonomy of the different actors involved (2006, 24-25, 131-147).[41] Like Pohlhaus, Santos points to the ways in which participants learn from others in such a process. The first elements participants present are likely to be the peripheries or margins of their distinctive knowledges and practices. He suggests that "[a]s the work of translation advances and intercultural competence deepens, it becomes possible to bring into the contact zone dimensions of knowing and acting considered more relevant" (Santos 2014, 227-228).[42] Santos recognises the

[41] Spivak, in contrast, argues that the problem of the "lack of communication between and among the immense heterogeneity of the subaltern cultures of the world […] is not solved in a lasting way by the inclusion of exceptional subalterns in South-based global movements with leadership drawn from the descendants of colonial subjects, even as these networks network. These figures are no longer representative of the subaltern stratum in general" (2004, 541).

[42] These proposals can be compared with anthropologist Tim Ingold's theorisation of enskillment, which draws on a close study of how people become skilled in a range of crafts, from basket-weaving to speech. Learners, Ingold argues, acquire skills by simultaneously doing and observing; they feel their way into a practice, adjusting their movements to approximate the movements of the person they are observing as they notice whether or not they are achieving the same result. When learners begin to acquire a skill,

importance of unequal linguistic competencies and of non-linguistic factors like body language, space, time and rhythm in such a process. However, he does not elaborate on how dialogues could be designed to take account of such factors (Santos 2006, 144-145 and 2014, 216).[43]

Where literature related to epistemic injustice might call for dialogue but tends not to specify how such dialogue might work, especially in an encounter that lasts only a few days, literature on deliberative democracy, as a "working theory," provides empirical data about how comparable dialogues work in practice and under what circumstances. It is now relatively well accepted that democratic deliberation might include forms of meaning-making that go beyond argumentation, such as greetings, storytelling, lived experience, religion, anger and passion (Chambers 2003, 318-322). Iris Marion Young's work has been key in highlighting the value of these alternative forms of communication. As literature on epistemic justice does, she argues that deliberation should include and affirm situated knowledge "as a resource for enlarging the understanding of everyone and moving them beyond their own parochial interests" (Young 1997, 399). Young recognises that such situated perspectives might be expressed "in story and song, humour and word play, as well as in more assertive and analytical forms of expression" (1997, 395-396). In the context of democratic deliberation, she highlights how the framing of the issue under consideration can undermine formal inclusion – where "the terms of discourse make assumptions some do not share, the interaction privileges specific styles of expression, [or] the participation of some people is dismissed as out of order." In order to address this, she considers the function of three modes of everyday communication that are already used in political discussion: greeting, rhetoric and narrative. Greeting, she argues, acknowledges the subjectivity of the other, fostering trust (cf. Herzog and

---

they are painfully aware of the distinction between themselves and their tools, whereas when they become skilled, it is as though there is no distinction between the two and the action carried out with the tool is effortless (Ingold 2000, 353-358, 413-416).

[43] Unfortunately, the examples he provides – advocacy by the Zapatistas, the status of traditional medicine and transformations in the labour movement – are too thin to draw any conclusions from (cf. Santos 2014, 216, 219, 222, 229).

Zacka 2019, 772-773). Rhetoric, or the way that claims and arguments are expressed, can call attention to issues, frame issues in terms that are likely to resonate with an audience and facilitate a shift from thinking about an issue to judgment and committed action. Narrative can be used to articulate new concepts, generate solidarity and empathy, relating the particular to the collective, and also to enable exchange between people who disagree about the premises of the debate, helping outsiders to understand the priorities, values and cultural meanings of an individual or group (Young 2000, 53-77). In the broader context of democratic communication, Young points to how activists use non-discursive forms of expression to disrupt existing ways of thinking and "make us *wonder* about what we are doing." "[P]ictures, song, poetic imagery, and expressions of mockery and longing performed in rowdy and even playful ways" can be used to expose "the sources and consequences of structural inequalities in law, the hegemonic terms of discourse, and the environment of everyday practice" (Young 2001, 685-688, emphasis original).

Subsequent work has considered how forms of communication other than argumentation are used by participants in different deliberative processes. For example, in her work analysing asynchronous, online deliberations about the future of the World Trade Center site after 9/11, Francesca Polletta describes how personal storytelling was used in discussing certain topics – like memorialisation – to enable communication in spite of disagreement (2006, 90-104).[44] Forum users were particularly likely to use personal storytelling, rather than another form of communication, to introduce potentially unpopular or contentious opinions and topics, to puncture dominant claims and values, to show how they had changed their mind, or to communicate their respect for competing views and opinions (Polletta 2006, 82-86, 94-98). There seems to have been a convention against using storytelling to discuss certain topics, notably established policy areas apt for expert problem solving such as housing,

[44] Polletta recognises that the dynamics would be different in a context of face-to-face interaction, notably, that there would have been more back and forth, with listeners likely to participate in interpreting or even telling the story, modifying or amplifying the point of the story or telling other stories that take up the point and reformulate it(2006, 88, 93).

transport and development policy (Polletta 2006, 102-104). But, where storytelling was used, the very ambiguity of the stories – the fact that they were open to interpretation – fostered deliberation and suggested new possibilities. “That openness may make it possible for deliberators to suggest compromise or third positions without seeming to disagree with their fellow deliberators. It may allow them to advance and grasp practical possibilities that lie outside a familiar political idiom” (Polletta 2006, 107).

In contrast to the more recent uptake in the area of deliberative democracy, participatory practice in development interventions and in feminist research and activism has long incorporated a wide variety of communicative tools and approaches. In most cases the focus is on using tools like mapping, ranking, film or photography to gather information about participants’ lives. But some researchers and practitioners also use a range of different hermeneutical practices in an effort to help participants understand the world differently or articulate their existing understandings of the world in more consonant ways. For example, in one series of workshops involving participants from different feminist movements, Sara Motta and Norma Bermúdez used ritual and dance, as well as mapping and cycles of reflection and action, to help participants explore their relationship with time. When the activities were interrupted by their children playing, participants joined in with their children. This interruption drew their attention to the ways that play and laughter, the unplanned and the disorganised might open up new epistemological possibilities (Motta and Bermúdez 2019, 432-434). Motta and Bermúdez suggest that such practices and interruptions can challenge the dominant expectations of time, capability and productivity that order our lives, foregrounding temporalities that activist work makes invisible, disrupting goal-oriented mentalities and – through meditative practice – facilitating connections with ancestral wisdom (2019, 426-428, 435).

2.3.2. Engaging with texts

The focus on reading about and empathising with the experience of members of marginalised groups has long been central to the human rights project. Lynne Hunt, for example, argues that the practice of reading

epistolary novels taught their eighteenth-century readers to empathise with characters who were not like them. This empathy prepared them to accept the political innovation of universal rights where they might not otherwise have done so (Hunt 2007, 35-69). More recently, Schaffer and Smith argue that an unprecedented rise in the popularity of life-writing and literary testimonies (including the *testimonio*, coming of age story or *Bildungsroman*, survivor narratives and prison diaries) fuelled (and was fuelled by) the expansion of human rights in the 1990s (2004, 1-2, 8, 13, 15, 28). Texts might also prompt their readers to reimagine rights and question their own position. Spivak, for instance, argues that "[a] training in literary reading is a training to learn from the singular and unverifiable," facilitating an imagined encounter with "the distant other, without guarantees." For those in the metropolis, reading "the text of the other" in this way might help "to make unstable the presupposition that the reasonable righting of wrongs is inevitably the manifest destiny" of certain elite groups (Spivak 2004, 530, 532):

> The teacher can try to rearrange desires noncoercively […] through an attempt to develop in the student a habit of literary reading, even just "reading," suspending oneself into the text of the other – for which the first condition and effect is a suspension of the conviction that I am necessarily better, I am necessarily indispensable, I am necessarily the one to right wrongs, I am necessarily the end product for which history happened, and that New York is necessarily the capital of the world.

Training in literary reading requires "uncanny patience" – it seeks to tease out "the threads of the torn cultural fabric" of delegitimised epistemes, to recode ritual and habit rather than to produce knowledge. And it is without guarantees – it "hopes against hope" that the activation of such dormant structures will stop elites thinking of themselves as saviours (Spivak 2004, 558-559). With or without such training, it is difficult to predict how the often intense emotions generated by reading such stories might be channelled. While some readers may respond with solidarity and empathy, other readers may turn to such stories to reinforce their own sense of safety or even as voyeurs, taking pleasure in reading about someone else's pain (Schaffer and Smith 2004, 6-7, 25-27, 31-32). Even well-intentioned readers

tend to avoid the subversive potential of such stories, reading them without confronting the challenges they pose to the reader's assumptions and authority (Stone-Mediatore 2003, 162).

In her innovative contribution to work on epistemic injustice, Mihaela Mihai recognises that encounters with literary works – and artworks more broadly – might lead to "negative reactions that block the possibility of epistemic friction" and that "there is always a danger that we mould the epistemically marginalised into a familiar stereotypical image we already have of her, all the while remaining ourselves safe from discomfort and perplexity" (2018, 410-411). However, she suggests that certain types of artworks are particularly well-suited for use in cultivating epistemic friction without "reactionary retrenchment." Such works should highlight the structural preconditions of injustice as well as individual failures, and should be pleasurable to read, seducing the reader "to immerse herself productively and experimentally in alternative scenarios, scenarios that are uncomfortable, but also attractive and tolerable because of the pleasurable elements in art and its mediated nature" (Mihai 2018, 404-405). The inclusion of such literature in school and university curriculums and in literary canons increases the likelihood that they might "kickstart collective political action" (Mihai 2018, 401, 405, 409; cf. Medina 2013, 143-145, 220-221). Mihai argues that such artworks can create three different types of epistemic friction: ideational friction, introducing the reader to new ways of thinking about the world; moral friction, leading the reader to become outraged about injustices they had not previously noticed and to reckon with their own complicity; and experiential friction, helping them to put on an experience of the world outside their own experiential horizon like a prosthetic limb (2018, 399-401, 403-405):

> The spectator knows the representation 'is not exactly about me' – but about types, some of which are mere possibilities – and can therefore feel freer, allowing herself to learn, be captivated and vicariously experience affectively and sensorially through the representation, beyond her parochial sphere of interaction.

Mihai points to how literature can lead the reader to immerse themselves in the world and experiences of a differently situated other, but also to how it can provide insights into more abstract ways of thinking about the world (Mihai 2018, 399):

> In engaging with complex plots, questioning, interpreting and judging events and characters in a novel, poem or novella, we may become aware of the limits of our concepts and deep-rooted beliefs, and of our habits of seeing – and feeling about – the social world. Exposure to diverse uses of the same concept in different fictional circumstances helps us realise the tension between our understanding of a concept's range and its possible range.

Similarly, in his discussion of the poetry of seventeenth-century Mexican feminist Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Medina points to the role of the imagination in facilitating speculation beyond the limits of lived experience (2013, 230-233, emphasis original):

> Our experiential perspectives can be broadened with our capacity to imagine, to survey possible worlds in which alternative experiences can be had. This kind of imaginative knowledge has a crucial counterfactual dimension; even if the actual world does not allow certain experiences to be had, their possibility can be used as the basis of an alternative knowledge, an *epistemic counterpoint* to lived experience and knowledge, which is still grounded in real life and embodied experiences.

Alessa Johns argues that such imaginative knowledge has long been central to feminist and proto-feminist writing: "gender equality has never fully existed, so it must be imagined if it is to become." For feminist and subaltern activists whose strategies are "constantly thwarted by reactionary political and social forces," utopian literature allows them to "take time out to dream [… and] facilitates the imaginative speculation necessary for generating new liberating strategies in globalized world" (Johns 2010, 175).

Roland Bleiker's work in the field of international relations is suggestive of how literary texts might be used to cultivate epistemic friction in an occupational context like that of development and human rights sectors. For example, he argues that political scientists could do more to pay attention to

the aesthetic. Political scientists tend to be sceptical of the theoretical value and practical relevance of literary texts, seeing them as overly subjective and insufficiently analytical. However, Bleiker argues, by giving us new ways of noticing and speaking about things, the aesthetic can expose political metaphors (such as the balance of power) that have become so commonplace that we no longer recognise them as metaphors but think that they are reflections of reality, and can supplement these limited ways of seeing (Bleiker 2009, 11, 19-20, 27-29, 65-66, 86-93; cf. Stone-Mediatore 2003, 19-20). Bleiker considers poetry to have particular potential because of the way it stretches the boundaries of the very linguistic resources that we use in academic work, albeit in a different form (2009, 84-96; cf. Stone-Mediatore 2003, 35-37).[45] Bleiker recognises that reading and interpreting poetry is often seen as a rather elite practice (2009, 84-86, 172) – although he and others who argue this way tend to miss the ways that people engage with poetry in a range of forms, including song and religious texts. There are a range of accessible texts that a wide range of people are very familiar with reading and interpreting, including newspapers and magazines, and texts associated with their work, but religious texts have a particularly important status in practices of understanding and making sense of the world and for motivating behaviour. The close reading, interpretation and application of such texts is a central part of the lives of many people of faith. Even if they do not read novels or poetry, they are very likely to hear religious texts read out or sung during religious meetings or to read them themselves as part of their private devotions or family life.

There is a wide variety of interpretative techniques used by scholars and religious leaders in different religious traditions. For example, while he recognises that approaches to Islam that are currently mainstream are less open to human rights, An-Naʿim emphasises the diversity within Islamic theology and jurisprudence, pointing to how a tradition of interpretation in Sudanese Islam can be used in efforts to reconcile Islam with human rights

[45] The obvious next step would be to include poetry in his academic writing but, in trying to do so, he has come up against the disciplinary constraints of expectations of academic writing in the field of international relations (Bleiker 2009, 183-185).

(2008, 128-137 and 2011, 184-194). Religious texts are often used and interpreted in dogmatic and controlling ways. Yet many religious people, even those who are not literate, engage with these texts in creative ways that extend beyond the authorised. For example, Gerald West points to the way that the majority of Christians in South Africa, literate and non-literate, engage with the Bible in very different ways from trained theologians (1999, 98-99):

> where interpretation is not controlled by the literal words of the texts, but by social experience; where texts are heard and retold more than read; where texts are engaged as stories that seize and free the imagination; where biblical stories function sometimes as allegory, as parable or as veiled social criticism in a situation where survival demands disguised forms for resisting discourse; where certain texts in the canon are read and others ignored.

West compares this to Osayande Obery Hendricks' concept of guerilla exegesis among African-American Christians (1999, 98-99; cf. Hendricks 1995, 79):

> Guerilla exegesis, like 're-membering', takes whatever tools and resources are at hand, wherever they may come from, whether indigenous or imported, and uses them to sabotage and subvert dominant readings, to make new things out of old things, to find new truths in unexpected and familiar places, to redefine reality, to empower and inspire.

Such hermeneutical practices use a diverse miscellany of hermeneutical resources to hear, remember, retell and remake – or re-member – Bible stories in ways that are relevant for readers' lives (West 1999, 88, 94, 114-117; cf. Bassard 2010, 51-52, 57-61; Kĩnyua 2010, 186-187, 286, 296; Santos 2015, 75-76). In a study of vernacular hermeneutics among East African Christians, Kinyũa points to how those demanding justice have tapped into and reconfigured stories, songs and other resources from Christianity to make powerful political statements (Kĩnyua 2010, 172-175, 188-197, 212-253; cf. Maupeu 2007, 29-36). The non-religious may engage with different kinds of texts – secular poetry perhaps, or songs – in similar

ways in order to orient themselves in the world, to make sense of what they experience and encounter and to articulate compelling political claims.

Such practices, like Spivak's literary reading, are without guarantees; they might be but are not necessarily emancipatory. Even where such readings or re-memberings articulate conceptions of justice, their expression might be bound up in the expression of other oppressive ideas. For instance, Sarojini Nadar led small groups of South African Indian Christian women in literary readings of the biblical book of Esther with the aim of revealing "their internalization of the hegemonic" and uncovering more liberating interpretations. The process led participants to become more conscious of their assumptions about the text, to challenge the masked references to patriarchal norms and sexual violence, and to relate these to restrictive gender roles and abuse in their own lives and communities. However, participants also expressed sympathy with aspects of the text that represented moralistic and vengeful impulses. The limitations on the degree to which the text could prompt emancipation was, Nadar argues, "an indication of the very real constraints in their lives." Nevertheless, she suggests that the process and the questions it raised might constitute a "rehearsal for their future agency," whether or not they choose to use it in practice (Nadar 2003, 261-318).[46]

2.3.3. Engaging in vernacular cultural practices

In this thesis, I bring together proposals for engaging with fictional or symbolic texts with proposals for interacting with diverse others in proposing a methodology for participatory workshops where traditional and oral stories are told, retold and interpreted. Most storytelling workshops in the field of human rights and development focus on helping marginalised participants to articulate their experiences – to tell personal stories – often in ways that can be mobilised to make political claims; that is, on creating the

[46] In a similar exercise, male pastors were much less willing to let go of their existing interpretations of the text. For instance, they strongly resisted – and even laughed at – the implication that the text referenced sex with virgins and possibly rape, and emphasised the disobedience of the female character who is punished. They were only willing to consider criticising the king when he was reframed as an ethnic other (Nadar 2003, 287-291, 316).

conditions to fill hermeneutical gaps in the context of the communication of testimony (cf. Wheeler 2018; Wheeler, Shahrokh and Derakhshani 2020). My work supplements this literature by developing a methodology that can be used to help participants – who might be marginally or dominantly-situated or in between – to interpret and speculate about the world; that is, to cultivate hermeneutical justice beyond the context of the communication of knowledge. Looking beyond the specific and time-bound context of the participatory workshop, the following discussion points to how vernacular cultural practices – including storytelling and other overlapping genres like poetry and song – influence how we understand and interpret the world and how we conceptualise justice. Performers and audiences have used these genres both to reinforce and to contest existing moral standards, and to articulate powerful political claims. In the next chapter, I consider how these insights can be adapted to inform the design of a short participatory workshop focused on conceptions of justice within the human rights and development sectors.

My research is predicated on the well-documented observation that the stories that we tell ourselves about the world often limit what new facts we are willing or able to integrate into our worldviews (cf. Herman, Jahn and Ryan 2005, 69-70, 185-186, 520-521). Telling those stories in different ways as well as telling different stories might help to expand the scope of the political imagination, making alternative approaches seem more plausible or more acceptable. All worlds, anthropologist Danièle Klapproth argues, whether imaginative or experiential, are created in our minds using patterns of cognitive structuring. We inevitably live in conceptual worlds constructed out of the myriad mental and sensory perceptions we experience – and we construct such worlds to cohere and to be intersubjectively communicable. One way that we do this is by mapping our experiences onto conventional story structures. Drawing on cognitive research, Klapproth suggests that the canonical narrative structures that frame our experience are internalised through a process of socialisation in early childhood – at home and at school. This is a long, slow process, as the layers of these stories and the knowledge they encode are gradually revealed over the course of many

years. The cultural inputs that children absorb during these years inform how they later structure and make sense of experience (Klapproth 2004, 55-57, 75, 107-108, 114). While Gadamer argues that such traditions come together to inform a unitary interpretative horizon, Klapproth suggests that we can hold multiple, seemingly incompatible worldviews simultaneously, pointing to indigenous Australians' ability to hold both Christian and indigenous beliefs without feeling the need for fusion or reconciliation of the apparent incompatibilities between the two (2004, 72).

If these scripts influence how we understand and interpret the world, challenging these scripts, or actively comparing the different scripts that exist simultaneously in our minds, is likely to be an important part of cultivating epistemic friction – this is where my work differs from previous scholarship in the field and makes an original contribution to the research reviewed. Oral and traditional stories are a particularly well-suited resource in this process, not just because they are influential, but because they are mutable: while there might be a dominant version of a story that has been particularly influential in how someone sees the world, there are likely to be multiple other versions or ways of telling that story that can be used to counter the dominant version. These are not copyrighted texts, nor are they precious stories which we have a responsibility to do justice to, as in the case of accounts of personal experience (cf. Gready 2010). Their preservation and continued use depends on their adaptation to contemporary realities (cf. Barber 2007, 4, 210-211). As such, audiences are not just permitted but encouraged to take these resources and play around with them. This makes stories and storytelling practices – as well as other vernacular cultural practices – ideal hermeneutical resources for engaging in internal discourse; for exploring the diversity and contestability of the traditions that shape how we interpret the world, and identifying elements from those traditions that could be reconciled with and used to supplement existing human rights and development norms.

Different ways of telling and structuring stories can produce epistemic friction – disrupting what is taken for granted – and help us understand the world in different ways. As discussed above, Menchú's *testimonio* attracted

controversy when it was mis-interpreted as verifiable reportage rather than as an example of the *testimonio* genre. However, even before the *testimonio* was published, it had already been reframed; as part of the editing process, Burgos-Debray rearranged Menchú's non-chronological narrative into thematic sections. Although this might have been easier for some readers to engage with, it edited out an alternative approach to structuring the story which might have served to challenge conventions of categorisation and linear temporalities. In discussing the potential of the *testimonio* genre as an alternative to the hero narrative, Fernandes points to the unedited transcripts of two life stories collected as part of a cultural programme in Venezuela. Rather than following a chronological or linear order, these two stories emphasise relationality and interconnectedness. Fernandes does not claim that these are more authentic than edited stories. However, she does argue that the ways in which they are told reveal how the tellers' awareness of inequality and injustice arises from the connections between everyday life, cultural activity, stories told by elders, community organising, encounters with the military, and more. Such relational and contextual storytelling practices, she argues, contribute to the creation of collective spaces in which new representations can be forged (Fernandes 2017, 152-162). Such representations are not necessarily emancipatory – they might reinforce oppressive social practices and hierarchies, and police the expression of new ideas. Like any hermeneutical resource, storytelling practices can be used in multiple ways, some more emancipatory than others. Their value is in offering an alternative to more dominant discursive modes such as reasoned argumentation – an alternative that prompts participants to approach questions differently, bringing to light a different range of considerations and negotiating relationships of power in different ways.

As Tamale notes, vernacular cultural practices like storytelling tend to be particularly central in indigenous and other non-Eurocentric traditions (2020, 71, 230, 273). They can be used to help us understand such perspectives – which tend to be marginalised in human rights and development work – on their own terms. As Karin Barber points out, "[u]nlike the apparently more 'readable' forms of the questionnaire and

interview, popular culture genres are framed in the local producers' and participants' own terms" and can help to reveal the logics and worldviews of those who engage in them (2018, 17; cf. Escobar 1995, 95, 168-170, 223-224). Rooted in the oral, they capture hermeneutical practices beyond the logics associated with literacy and writing – which can facilitate complex, creative thinking, but are also associated with bureaucracy, categorisation and control (cf. Goody 2000). Barber describes oral texts as a community's ethnography of itself, combining art and exegesis within the same medium to say something important that could not be said otherwise (2007, 4-5, 14, 33, 99-100 and 2018, 18). Popular culture is at once part of history and a commentary on history; a bearer of social relations and a tool that could be used to recreate or transform those social relations through its influence on an audience (Barber 2007, 41 and 2018, 3). Throughout human history, storytelling has been an important tool for making sense of a chaotic and confusing world. Some storytelling is more entertaining than didactic or critical – but even then it is likely to reveal something about the way the teller approaches the world and what they value. Many worldviews or epistemologies, notably more relational and cooperative approaches to life, may be expressed or best understood through story. The symbolic devices of storytelling offer modes of expression and thought that allow us to express ideas that might have been difficult or impossible to articulate using plain speech.

Barber suggests that early anthropological studies tended to use popular cultural forms as sources of evidence about other phenomena. These studies paid little attention to form, or "*how* the arts express such things […] the conventions of the genre, the mode of composition, the internal structure, the inter-textual allusiveness or the audience's way of interpreting and understanding them." Yet, as she argues, "it is only through their specific form, conventions and associated traditions of interpretation that creative expressions have meaning. What they say and do is inseparable from how they say and do it" (Barber 2018, 5, emphasis original; cf. Barber 2007, 8-9, 25). Reading such creative works is a difficult task; the reader must pay attention to the ambiguities, exaggerations, ironies, allusions and silences of

the text. A specific form makes sense only in its generic context, in how it draws upon, disrupts but also constitutes and remakes generic conventions (Barber 2018, 17) and how it interacts with related genres (Barber 2007, 36-37, 60). In such creative processes, creation, performance and interpretation are not distinct processes, but interconnected and mutually constitutive (Barber 2007, 210 and 2018, 165-167). Ethnographic studies suggest that audiences across Africa do not merely decode texts but bring new meanings to them. They actively engage with performances (completing proverbs or anticipating plot turns), provide suggestions as to how a story should develop, and mine films and performances for lessons, slogans or mannerisms they can use themselves (Barber 2018, 14, 17, 160-162, 165-167). Yet, Barber argues, "[n]ot enough work has been done with popular cultural audiences in Africa: most researchers have relied on their own readings of popular texts" (2018, 166). She suggests that engaging with audiences as trusted colleagues in the task of interpretation could reveal new meanings and help scholars – or, in the case of my research, activists – to understand how such texts contribute to the task of articulating and enacting alternative ways of being in the world (cf. Barber 2007, 35, 98).

The process of composing, performing, interpreting and recomposing – or re-membering – such texts involves a kind of bricolage comparable to the guerrilla exegesis that West references in his discussion of resources for reading the Bible in South Africa. The terms 'vernacular,' 'traditional' and 'indigenous' are often associated with an exotic and static notion of traditional culture. Yet such characterisation of tradition in opposition to the modern is a colonial construction, overwriting the fluid and flexible nature of traditional culture and custom in the pre-colonial period (Barber 2007, 4, 24-25 and 2018, 41-43). Popular cultural practices have always involved incorporating and refashioning materials from a variety of old and new sources to generate new meaning and respond to change (Barber 2007, 25-26, 41, 160-162, 174-179). More recently, access to globally circulating cultural forms provides cultural producers with new tropes and images that they can repurpose to make new, locally specific meanings (Barber 2018, 130, 144, 167). Even in the face of the extreme uncertainties and relentless

injustices of cities in Africa today, Barber points to the striking efforts people make to fix and stabilise things, tracing routes and finding or creating useable forms out of a world that is chaotic, confusing and chimerical (Barber 2018, 135-137; cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). Despite the relentless obstacles and indignities of life, people across Africa demonstrate a fascination and pleasure in the border between fact and fiction, in clowning around and destabilising hierarchies, and in making art out of fakery and ambiguity (Barber 2018, 138-140, 152-158; cf. Mbembe 2001, 80-136). Combining traditional forms with elements of cultural resources from elsewhere allows new genres to emerge "when new experiences exhaust the capacity of old genres to speak of them" (Barber 2018, 173).

Such cultural forms are not necessarily emancipatory – Barber points to the way that genres like hip-hop are used to articulate conservative, moralistic responses to injustices like poverty, or promote ethnic exclusion or violence, as well as challenging power or redefining identity (2018, 154-159). Yet there is a long tradition of performers using vernacular cultural practices like storytelling and song to make political claims of the sort made in human rights work and in campaigning and advocacy dimensions of development work. These cultural resources are used not just to hide what it is too risky to say plainly, but to articulate political claims in a more powerful and compelling way, and to make engaging in political debate more pleasurable (cf. Scott 1990; Barber 2018; Tamale 2017; Kiyimba 2013). That is, they are tools that can be used not just to reveal but to make the case for alternative political priorities that arise from different ways of seeing the world. For instance, James Scott draws on a number of historical case studies to argue that there are things which are too dangerous for the oppressed to say directly and plainly in spaces where they are monitored by their oppressors (1990, 3-4, 18-19). Instead, the oppressed use the hermeneutical resources they share with their oppressors in creative ways – "rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures, anonymity" – in order to communicate in public spaces while maintaining plausible deniability about what they have said.

The more threatening and arbitrary the political environment, the more likely they are to use oblique forms to make political interventions. For the vast majority of the world's population, Scott argues, this ambiguous realm of political conflict is and always has been the principal site of public political discourse (Scott 1990, 136-162).

More recently, Barber draws on decades of detailed ethnographic work across sub-Saharan Africa to identify examples of where popular culture has been used in resistance and in negotiation between populations and the State. For example, collective song, a feature of virtually every uprising and a core part of many storytelling traditions, has been used to mobilise and inspire people and, as an accessible participatory action, to unify people emotionally (cf. Madison 2010, 4-5, 7-9). The improvisatory nature of such songs means that they lend themselves to rapid response to social change. Their poetic and musical dimensions mean that they are memorable and evocative, prompting the listener to make an imaginative link between the song and their current situation. Songs about past revolts sustain those events in collective memory and sometimes provide impetus for future action (Barber 2018, 100-101, 106-108, 111-114, 117, 176-177).

Like Scott, Barber emphasises the potential for oral texts to call into mind both innocuous and radical meanings, making them ideally suited for articulating social critique while retaining plausible deniability. She refers to the often-cited example of a Ghanaian song – *Ebi te yie* (some sit well) – based on a folk story about a meeting of animals in the forest. While this song was widely understood to refer to increasing levels of inequality after independence, the singer Nana Ampadu was able to convince the authorities that it was merely a tale he had heard from his father. However, it is important not to overstate the potential of such songs to dissimulate. For example, in Malawi, a song formerly associated with the independence struggle began to be used to refer obliquely to an incident where people were displaced from their land by the post-independence government. President Banda deduced the new meaning of the song; querying its meaning was enough to stop further performances for fear of reprisal (Barber 2018, 167-168, 176; cf. Scott 1990, 157, 160-162). The power of

cultural expression does not always lie in its obliqueness, but sometimes in the power and clarity of the message it conveys (cf. Kiyimba 2013). In very repressive situations such politically charged communication might not be possible. But even under such circumstances, popular culture can be used to "keep open a small space […] the act of creating something is in itself an assertion of the capacity for self-realisation on terms other than those prescribed by the dominant power" (Barber 2018, 129).

2.4. Conclusion

Tim Ingold describes the skill of mapping as one of retrospective storytelling, retracing our own steps or those of the ancestors. As we move into uncertain territory, our movement is informed by these stories, but also by a scanning movement, as our whole bodies reach out and respond (or even adapt) to the continually moving and changing environment (Ingold 2000, 232, 242, 244):

> To find one's way is to advance along a line of growth, in a world which is never quite the same from one moment to the next, and whose future configuration can never be fully known. Ways of life are not therefore determined in advance, as routes to be followed, but have continually to be worked out anew.

In this chapter I highlight how literature on epistemic injustice reveals the ways that the wilful hermeneutical ignorance of those who are privileged excludes marginalised perspectives. I point to the ways that wilful hermeneutical ignorance also involves exclusion of marginalised hermeneutical practices. The colonisation of the mind associated with colonially-inflected education and narrow professional incentives helps to explain why social justice activists in the global South struggle to reimagine human rights and development. But such activists often have access to other traditions and hermeneutical practices that they can draw on and transform in responding to changing circumstances. Cultivating hermeneutical breadth – becoming skilled in using a broader range of interpretative tools and approaches, or bringing familiar resources to bear in contexts where they are not normally used – can help social justice activists understand the world in

a new light and articulate different kinds of political claims. I propose vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice that combines the benefits of interacting with diverse others and reading texts. As in Ingold's account of mapping, popular cultural expression combines preservation with innovation, bringing familiar traditions together with material from elsewhere and responsiveness to our environment to enable us to generate new meaning and respond to change. The pleasure of listening to, talking about and telling stories, as Mihai suggests with regard to reading literature, might seduce performers and audiences into lowering their defences and engaging with challenging issues in a creative and potentially more effective way. By engaging in storytelling practices together, participants learn from each other, helping to create the conditions for the articulation of shared priorities and the development of relationships of solidarity. Storytelling can help participants see the world differently and also to consolidate those insights in a narrative form, reframing their ways of understanding the world and expanding their interpretative horizons. People around the world – especially those living in repressive political contexts – have long used cultural forms to make powerful political claims. In the discussion above, I highlight the political potential of vernacular cultural practices, in examples drawn from ethnographic studies. The potential of such practices, almost by definition, takes a long time to be realised, unfolding over time in sometimes unexpected ways. In the next chapter, I discuss how such storytelling practices might be used in the context of a time-limited participatory workshop. The literature discussed above, while looking at much more sustained and long-term engagement with storytelling embedded in everyday life, gives a sense of what such practices might achieve, or at least what they might start to achieve, as Nadar puts it, in rehearsals for future agency (Nadar 2003, 300). While acknowledging the limitations of these techniques, as set out above, I argue that the openness and creativity that they cultivate makes such practices particularly well suited to cultivating epistemic friction and imaginative leaps. Where trying harder to see differently might blind us to new possibilities, new perspectives might strike us as we are lost in the pleasure of creative invention.

3. Methodology: vernacular storytelling workshops

Scavenger

Ruth Kelly, York 2019

The rachety-crack of a magpie drew my eye to the treasures of the sea.

Here is a list of things that the child picked up: another—for joy!—raven or crow ripe for the plucking and cooking; a bit of old glass dulled dark with sand and salt scratches; ram's horn sea shell twisted and curled; shoe leather worn thin from the heavy tread of years and softened with sweat. Intrinsic value the verdigris of a coin that a child after G might make 'trundle-wobble' on the uneven ground in the lee of a hill.

Rhyming games tripping and twisting and tied. Old shite and detritus which when drawn into the riddle was able to stop the tongue of the child of the king they had all been trying to shut up.

Nobody else could. Not the aristocracy with their motley finery and wit. Not the merchants with their skill in fumbling in greasy tills and banter with their clientele. Not the milkmaids and barmaids and sewers and cooks with their more expressive vernaculars.

But little miss away with the sprites was more than capable of giving back as good as she got.

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe and provide a theoretical basis for the methodology used in the storytelling workshops that are the focus of this thesis. The prose poem above is an example of the kind of work that I have developed for and in the context of these workshops. My research process involved two parallel projects: my own process of developing skills in storytelling and facilitation; and designing and running participatory

workshops to test whether imaginative storytelling can be used to help social justice activists reimagine human rights and development.

In developing my own skills in storytelling, the first story I learned to tell was a Norwegian story about a prince (or, traditionally, a princess) who would never stop talking. In learning this story, I felt there was too much detail given about the random objects picked up by the young girl who would eventually beat the prince in a riddling contest. I concentrated more on the structure of the narrative and on the plot – on what happened next. However, when I told this story for the first time, to a group of children in York, the children were intrigued by the treasures the young girl collected, and were much more interested in dwelling on this aspect of the story than in finding out what came next. On reflection, I began to agree with them that the objects described are not just unnecessarily complicated details but are rather a central part of the story in themselves. With an emphasis on these details, the story served a different function: to legitimise the importance these children attached to the activity of scavenging and the objects they collected and treasured.

This is reflected in my retelling of the story in the prose poem 'Scavenger,' above. Storytelling is a scavenger's art: taking, deconstructing and recombining elements from different stories and traditions – even from relatively elite traditions like the poetry of Geoffrey Hill and W. B. Yeats alluded to in the poem – to make something new (cf. Hill 2019, 22). Folktales, particularly in their more recent iterations, often describe the cunning of the underdog – including of the "little miss" (cf. Carter 1990, 24-93 and 1992, 3-45). They can be understood as a way of asserting human agency in the face of the dispassionate and impersonal forces of fate; the agency of ordinary people in the face of the arbitrary decisions of the gods or their rulers; or, more recently, in the face of market forces and the power of "merchants … fumbling in greasy tills" (cf. Yeats 1992, 159, 'September 1913'). They reveal how elements in the world that have not been valued – "old shite and detritus" – can often turn out to be very important – to have "intrinsic value" – after all, perhaps more so than the supposedly inevitable logic of global finance (cf. Hill 2019, 31, 87). This is analogous to what my

research aims to do, by picking up and attending to ways of perceiving and making sense of the world that have been neglected, and making elements from different cultural traditions speak to each other in order to reimagine human rights and development.

My project begins with the assumption that social justice activists have got into the habit of dismissing emerging or marginalised perspectives as lacking credibility, as they are trained in and contribute to maintaining their own (wilful) hermeneutical ignorance. Drawing on their work documenting the diversity of economic practices that exist alongside global capitalism, the two feminist geographers who write as J. K. Gibson-Graham propose three techniques that researchers – and social justice activists – can adopt to unlearn an overly critical orientation. First, ontological reframing: reframing what is taken as a structural given – like capitalism – as something that is created, situated and relational. Secondly, reading for difference rather than dominance: bringing the background into the foreground, refusing to interpret diverse practices as existing merely in opposition or relation to the dominant, thereby opening up the possibility of a wider range of policy choices. And thirdly, creativity: bringing together concepts and practices from different domains in order to generate new ways of thinking and new institutional arrangements (Gibson-Graham 2008, 620-626; cf. Gibson-Graham 2006a and 2006b). This scavenger's art is useful both in making advances in theory, and in helping researchers and others to notice things that have been neglected in empirical or applied research.

My own project is primarily a normative one, although it overlaps to a significant degree with projects like Gibson-Graham's that document and nurture practical experimentation (cf. Gibson-Graham 2008, 627-628). I explore how vernacular storytelling can be used to disrupt a bias towards the status quo, helping participants to identify and articulate new priorities and proposals. In my methodology, I adapt Gibson-Graham's suggested techniques as follows: first, using reflection on and critique of well-known stories – as resistant readers – to explore and contest the roots of dominant approaches to justice; secondly, reflecting on the differences between familiar and alternative versions of these stories; and thirdly, opening space

for imagining and articulating alternatives by recomposing and retelling these stories. As discussed above, in developing this methodology, I go beyond general calls for cross-cultural dialogue to develop and test a concrete mechanism for bringing people together in ways that disrupt dominant ways of thinking and help them imagine new things. I propose using vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice; that is, rather than telling each other about different knowledge systems, participants engage with different cultural practices in order to understand differently together.

My research asks the following questions:

> How can vernacular storytelling practices be used to help development NGO workers and social justice activists in Uganda imagine and articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development?

That overarching research question is teased out along the lines of the following sub-questions:

- How can participatory storytelling methodologies be adapted to integrate more vernacular content and approaches and greater flexibility and responsiveness to participants' cultural competencies?
- How can participants use fictional or symbolic stories to articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development?
    - What contribution is made by form (narrative structure, devices, symbolic content) and what contribution is made by the practice of storytelling (thinking/seeing differently)?
    - To what extent does the articulation of alternatives emerge in the (re)composition and performance of the stories themselves, and to what extent does it emerge in the margins between exercises or in the interpretation of the stories examined/composed?
- What implications do participants' storytelling and interpretations have for human rights and development?

3.2. Participant selection and limitations

In the storytelling workshops, we brought together social justice activists with writers and artists, taking advantage of how these groups approach the world in different ways to challenge assumptions and imagine new things. In my research, participants are seen as interlocutors rather than informants, each contributing expertise that they have acquired through their own research and enskillment as well as the expertise by experience more commonly valued in participatory development projects.[47] This takes seriously the fact that social justice activists and artists have sophisticated critical, explanatory and conceptual insights to offer, which they might express in a range of different ways, from analytical discussion to creative composition. The experience that social justice activists have of the development and human rights sectors allows them to make an informed critique of their limitations – writers and artists often see these sectors in a different light, bringing a new perspective. Both groups have access to diverse traditions and epistemes that they can draw on in articulating more contextually appropriate or counter-hegemonic claims. Social justice activists' continued involvement in the sectors gives them the motivation to push for change in the transnational activist organisations and networks they participate in. The research process that informed the development of this

[47] A key critique of North-South and community-university research partnerships is the tendency of researchers from the global North to treat academics from the global South and non-academic partners as sources of data rather than of conceptual insights. Such critiques emphasise the importance of involving participants in research design and interpretation of the data, in recognition of the often considerable expertise they bring (cf. Rethinking Research Collaborative 2018, 8, 16 21; Banks et al. 2013; Banks and Armstrong et al. 2014; Pain, Whitman, Milledge and Lune Rivers Trust 2012). An emerging debate about the value of ethnography for political theory suggests that studies of how people "perceive, think about, and ascribe meaning to their environment and behaviour" could add value to the development of "systemic principles at various levels of abstraction and generality," making a significant contribution to normative political theory. Lisa Herzog and Bernardo Zacka argue for scholarly evaluation of such meaning-making practices – "interpreting their interpretations of the social world" (2019, 764-765, 772-775). Paul Apostolidis' study of precarious work is distinctive in engaging with informant contributions as theoretical insights that contribute to and challenge political theory rather than simply as data for interpretation. Although he recognises that he brings his own interpretation to informant contributions, he conducted one workshop to test these interpretations with his informants, and discussed his analysis with them more informally on numerous occasions (Apostolidis 2019, 18-23).

thesis was highly collaborative. This thesis, however, is entirely my own work. It brings together participant contributions with critical and theoretical paradigms in the form of a coherent and creatively presented written argument, and makes original theoretical and methodological contributions to academic literature, as discussed above.

In developing and testing my methodology, I have necessarily drawn on a relatively limited set of field data. For personal reasons, it was not possible for me to move to Uganda for an extended period and so my fieldwork was limited to a series of visits of between two weeks and one month. The analysis in this thesis focuses on two storytelling workshops that took place in March 2020. For practical and ethical reasons, for these workshops, I sought out participants who were comfortable enough in English to participate in the workshop without the need for translation, and who were likely to be confident enough to challenge me and comfortable enough to share their perspectives with the group. The first, three-day workshop (henceforth, the ActionAid workshop) brought together two Ugandan activists and five ActionAid colleagues – two from Uganda and one each from Kenya, India and Bangladesh – with 11 Ugandan writers and artists: 10 women and eight men.[48] Five of them had been involved in the workshops I ran with Emilie Flower in 2017 and 2018. I ran the second, four-hour workshop (henceforth, the Femrite workshop) as an open session of the weekly writing circle at women writers' association Femrite. Participants included writers and readers, some of whom identified themselves as feminists, and included six men and 13 women.[49]

[48] For the first, invitation-only ActionAid workshop, I tried to invite a mixture of men and women, of activists working on different issues in different places, and of writers and artists working in different mediums. However, participants were drawn from my existing networks and needed to be English speakers and able to commit three days to attend the workshop in Kampala without payment. As such, except for one person living in a rural area (whose travel expenses we covered), Ugandan participants were a relatively homogenous group of middle-class Kampala residents, mostly in their thirties, with similar values, and were not a representative cross-section of Ugandan activists or artists. Most of the artists and writers, aside from one musician, also had experience of working in the development sector in some capacity. All participants in the ActionAid workshop asked to be credited by name for any contribution referenced in my research or other outputs.

[49] The Femrite workshop was open to women and men in the Femrite network – the invitation was shared on the WhatsApp group – and most participants knew one another

A downside to this approach is that participants tended to come from the relatively privileged urban middle-class, with only a few participants from less privileged urban and rural contexts. Challenges with representation in my fieldwork are mirrored in the structural dynamics of the human rights and development sectors. As Spivak points out, "the work of righting wrongs is shared above a class line that to some extent and unevenly cuts across race and the North-South divide […] there is a real epistemic discontinuity between the Southern human rights advocates and those whom they protect" (Spivak 2004, 524-525, 527, 535, 541).[50] Nagar extends this critique to hierarchies within the NGO community, pointing out that "[a]lthough NGOs in the global South have become a focal point of vigorous debate, perspectives of community-based NGO activists who mobilize people on the ground have, for the most part, been absent from these debates" (2006, 151). Holding similar workshops with participants from less privileged activist networks in Uganda would be an important corrective to this epistemic discontinuity and marginalisation. As compared to my PhD fieldwork, such a project would require more time for learning about participants' lives and traditions and for building trust; would involve very different ethical considerations in terms of the expectations such a

---

and already met regularly. In the first part of the workshop we were a small group of six women and one man. In the second half, one male participant left and at least 11 others joined; there were more women than men, but men made more and longer interventions. Some participants had heard my retelling of Red Riding Hood performed two weeks previously. Again, they were a relatively homogenous group of middle-class Kampala residents mostly in their twenties and thirties although there was a little more diversity in the way they expressed their values than there had been among the first group. Out of a total of 19 participants in the Femrite workshop who returned their consent forms (some participants left before I could collect them), 10 asked to be credited by name for their contributions and two asked to remain anonymous; the others did not express a preference. While the paperwork associated with consent is not complete for that workshop, I am comfortable that all participants gave informed consent: I explained what the data would be used for at the start, in the middle and at the end; I was using a prominent Zoom microphone to record the workshop; and participants could choose not to speak and/or to leave the workshop at any point.

[50] While it was true that participants in the ActionAid workshop were situated in relatively privileged positions, many of them had very challenging childhoods. Barber suggests that a stark differentiation between the marginalised and the privileged is inappropriate in many African contexts, where families tend to straddle class lines and positions within social hierarchies tend to fluctuate (Barber 2018, 10, 169). This may be less true in major economic and financial centres like Nairobi, where Ichim points to a stark class divide between professional and grassroots activists (2017, 121-130).

process might raise, the opportunity costs of their participation, the profile of the facilitators and the power dynamics of the interactions; and would need to be conducted in at least one and probably more of the multiple local languages in Uganda, rather than in English.[51]

While they were not fully representative of the Ugandan activist community, the activists and artists who I worked with in conducting my PhD fieldwork were well positioned to contribute diverse and critical perspectives on human rights and development. In the ActionAid workshop, I invited Ugandan social justice activists and writers each working on different issues and in different contexts, and asked ActionAid to identify additional participants from other countries. This group was reasonably representative of the range of activists who might take part in transnational activist meetings. Their financial and educational status means that such activists are likely to be dominantly-situated as compared to the beneficiaries of the projects they run, or as compared to less privileged social justice activists in Uganda. However, they tend to be marginally-situated in transnational networks where many of the decisions about projects in countries like Uganda are made in the US or Europe (cf. Mutua 2016, 66-67, 116-118).[52] In the Femrite workshop, I worked with existing

[51] The ways in which I have negotiated my own legitimacy within the human rights and development sectors mean that I would tend to ask for such a process to be facilitated by someone from the same country, rather than by a white, Irish woman who knows very little about the context in which such activists live and work. However, I recognise that there may be benefits to being an outsider. The practice of working with established groups of activists can mitigate some of the power inequities involved in such interactions (cf. West 1999, 108-109). The language barriers are more challenging. These are not insurmountable if the aim is to use the methodology as part of activist training or strategy development, where the facilitator need not follow every element of the discussion. For example, when I tested the methodology in Bangladesh, participants spoke English but felt more comfortable in Bangla, especially when the debate started to become lively. The translator we had been using was doing too much interpretation and reformulation for it to be useful, so we decided that it didn't matter if I didn't understand everything and that participants could give me an English summary of anything they felt I needed to know. However, in Uganda there is no one shared language other than English, and for my PhD research I felt it was important that I could follow what was being said. The costs associated with simultaneous translation into and from multiple local languages (both for me as a facilitator, and for those participants who didn't speak the language being used) would make it impractical for a PhD project, even one like mine with more funding than is usual.

[52] Sara de Jong points to the ways that the roles assumed by NGOs in the global North can reinforce the marginalisation of their colleagues in the global South, and argues, "[i]f

members of the Femrite writers' circle who responded to my invitation or decided to come along to the regular Monday meeting. Bringing together members of pre-existing networks makes it more likely that conversations continue beyond the context of the workshop to influence subsequent conversations and collective action (cf. Kesby 2005, 2058-2059).

In ways modelled by my own participation in the two workshops, this methodology has the potential to be used to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue between social justice activists from the global South and those of us from the global North.[53] In this project I am as much a participant as facilitator. I am part of the same transnational networks and communities as other participants, and I share hermeneutical resources with them from our shared work but also due to overlaps in our cultural and religious backgrounds. It is easier to begin to engage in cross-cultural dialogue with social justice activists who share some of my references than it is to do so with those whose lives and references are completely different to my own, just as Chakrabarty started by studying the Bengali middle-classes in order to theorise how attention to diverse cultural practices can help to provincialize Europe. Like Chakrabarty, "in order to carry out my critique, I needed to think through forms of life that I knew with some degree of intimacy" (Chakrabarty 2008, xviii). Before the methodology is used more widely, it would be useful to test how it works in workshops with more representative groups of artists and activists, or in a series of workshops each involving a different group of similarly-situated activists, and to introduce a comparative dimension, by testing the methodology in different countries and contexts. However, this was beyond the scope of my PhD research.

Northern NGOs continue advocating on behalf of Southern partners, the danger is that the capacities of the Southern partners are diminished to speak on their own terms […] This is reinforced by the fact that Northern NGOs, aided by their good connections and cultural capital, continue to be seen as the most reliable providers of knowledge" (de Jong 2017, 107-108; cf. Koch 2020).

[53] As discussed in the introduction, Duniya Khandoker proposed that the next step in the research should be with social justice activists who are even more privileged, such as those in the UK and elsewhere who are "taking the lead to design development."

3.3. Dialogue, power and space

In the development and human rights sectors, it is relatively common for projects to bring together social justice activists working in different places to build relationships and make shared plans over a number of days. Through his engagement with the World Social Forum, Santos has significant experience of such meetings, and his work on cross-cultural dialogue – discussed above – is informed by those experiences. Yet, as he recognises, the social spaces in which such dialogue takes place are fraught with problematic power dynamics that can hinder their epistemic potential (Santos 2014, 216, 229-230, 232-233). Without specifying further what form such dialogue might take, the default is likely to be reasoned discussion and argumentation and the shared language is likely to be English. Those who are skilled in using dominant sets of shared hermeneutical resources are likely to be more comfortable in such a discussion than participants who prefer using other hermeneutical practices.

In work comparable to that done by Santos, activist scholars Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven held a series of conversations and public dialogues with anti-austerity activists in Halifax, Canada, to "imagine the world, life and social institutions not as they are but as they might otherwise be" (2014, 3-6, 8, 17, 67-68, 70-74). A number of participants expressed frustration with how these dialogues tended to rehash debates circulating among activists since the 1960s. Reflecting on this experience, Haiven and Khasnabish consider how they might have designed the dialogues differently "in order to push past these well-trodden discursive paths" (2014, 79-81). They suggest that "new spaces of dialogue, debate, reflection, questioning and empowerment" could be created in the context of participatory workshops, in which "an awareness of difference" could lead to "new ideas, alliances, solidarities and possibilities" (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014, 244).

Participatory workshops are commonly used in international development practice. In their best iteration, they set out to enable participants to take hold of power. Academic critique of participatory

approaches in international development has suggested that the concept of empowerment is empty and meaningless; a ritual of consultation to hide the fact that the opinions of those consulted are not taken into account in subsequent decision-making (cf. Cooke and Kothari 2001). In response to these critiques, Mike Kesby makes a case for the ambivalence of power, emphasising not only its problematic dimensions but its potential: "[n]either is power inherently negative, limiting or repressive; rather it is inherently productive of actions, effects and subjects," and is continually reproduced, reperformed and, occasionally, transformed (Kesby 2005, 2040, 2045). Despite their limitations, he argues that forms of governance like participation should be deployed as "the only practical means to outflank forms of power that are more oppressive and less self-reflexive" (Kesby 2005, 2052).

Kesby suggests that participatory interventions provide opportunities to disentangle and deconstruct reality and rehearse "performances for alternative realities" (cf. Boal [1974] 1998, 141). However, he also recognises that "relations constituted elsewhere may curtail empowered performances within [such sites]," which can limit the degree to which they can be used "to circumvent normal frameworks of privilege." Facilitators can try to "prevent those occupying dominant subject positions from silencing others," but cannot prevent it entirely (Kesby 2005, 2055-2056). After the ActionAid workshop, Duniya Khandoker reflected that there is always a risk that some participants will dominate in a workshop that brings together people of different status, ages, genders and professions. She felt that this is a risk that a facilitator needs to reflect on – to consider carefully the mix of participants and how they as facilitator can balance the power in the room – but she also noted that "without risk, nothing will happen."

Transnational activist spaces rarely involve a straightforward hierarchy of power. Participants in such meetings from the global South may occupy powerful positions within their home contexts and communities, even if they are less powerful than others in the room. Further, the power of those read as dominant may be circumscribed in complicated ways. Participants from the global North, like myself, generally have more

control over the agenda and resources even when we are more junior than our colleagues from the global South. But we are often subject to the bureaucratic hierarchies, processes and procedures of the institutions we work for, which may be fundamentally unethical and which we may not have the power to change. Indeed, this has been an ongoing challenge for me over the course of my research, as I try to ensure that money awarded by a donor to pay for the contribution made by my colleagues in Uganda is released by the University of York. In response to the multiple frustrations of working with us – of what we demand, what we neglect and what we are unable to get our institutions to do – colleagues from the global South may choose to let things to slip and refuse to engage (cf. Musila 2019).

In recognition of my own complicity with such structures of power, my engagement with those I am working with in Uganda is informed by strategies Sara de Jong suggests for moving beyond "subjectivities that reinscribe dominance" in North-South solidarity, namely: "resisting divisions; establishing connections through experience; recognizing the instability of one's own position; and solidarity as a process rather than a given" (2017, 147-158). In the specific context of my own research, this involves recognising how I am implicated in the transnational hierarchies being challenged in our research; establishing connections through shared experiences of working in the development sector and of religious upbringings; recognising that all of those participating in the research might have been perceived differently and have had more or less power in a different context; and recognising that relationships of solidarity are forged in the hard work of collaboration, and cannot be assumed to exist between myself and those with whom I share an identity marker like gender (cf. de Jong 2017, 2-4, 132-134). There are many ways in which I have more privilege than the largely middle-class Kampala residents I am working with, due to my very valuable passport, my whiteness, my financial security and many other factors. Yet the differences between us are less stark and much messier than they would be if I was working with, for instance, a marginalised rural community. How these power dynamics play out in practice in each new encounter remains uncertain. This uncertainty is not so

much something to be mitigated, as something to be embraced as a dynamic that mitigates to some extent the power differentials between me and my Ugandan colleagues. Working in this way is consonant with my long-standing practice of trying to work primarily with those who are able and likely to say no when they disagree with what I propose.

Although they are often the focus of discussions on power in academic literature, the power relations between the outsider researcher and participants are often not the most salient in a workshop context. In fact, the researcher might be a useful outsider with whom participants can be a bit more open than usual. In contrast, participants drawn from the same or similar networks remain embedded in those networks long after the researcher has gone and need to attend more carefully to the power dynamics of those networks. Any intervention in the discussion is as likely to be a performance for another participant as an open contribution. Self-consciously eloquent contributions might operate as ways of demonstrating power and status, and sometimes as ways of silencing others. Attempts by participants to articulate something new or to change their minds about something – in necessarily tentative ways, as they "struggle to make sense" (cf. Medina 2013, 98) – can be cut off by the articulation of existing arguments and positions which are more fully formed and so less vulnerable to critique. In the context of the ActionAid and Femrite workshops, participants were more likely to understand the power dynamics than I was, as facilitator, partly because of my outsider status but also because I was distracted by the need to ensure that the workshop ran effectively. Some participants were willing to discuss some of these dynamics with me afterwards, but I am likely to have missed much of what was going on. Further, it is difficult to discuss such power dynamics in writing in case this comes across as personal criticism of the individuals involved, which might close down future opportunities if they were unhappy with how the situation was represented.

Whether or not such power dynamics can be easily identified and discussed, efforts can be made to mitigate them in the design of the workshop and the choice of venue. Choosing a particular space might

mitigate or exacerbate local power dynamics, changing who feels as if they are on their home turf or in an environment in which they have authority, as compared to those who feel as though they are visiting or even trespassing. In international development, common sites for workshops include school classrooms, spaces sheltered under trees in villages, NGO offices and hotel conference rooms. In the workshops in March 2020, we chose convenient spaces that we did not need to pay for and could easily access, neither of which are associated with development NGOs. The ActionAid workshop was held in the Uganda Society Library; a membership body for cultural organisations and the oldest library in Uganda, full of precious old anthropology books, heavy hardwood furniture and photographs of white colonial officials, but also shelves of recently-published books by Ugandan writers. This is also a space associated with the everyday, a place in which many of the writers participating in the workshop will have felt at home – it is regularly used for poetry circles, book clubs, literary discussions and book markets. As is done for the poetry circles that take place in the Library, we pushed the tables to the side to make space for a large circle of chairs and couches in the middle of the room. The Femrite workshop was held at the Femrite building, a space associated with more than two decades of work to promote women's writing in Uganda (cf. Kiguli 2006) as well as ongoing meetings and support among a community of writers and readers today. For the first two hours of that workshop, a smaller group of participants gathered in Femrite's small lending library. The second two hours involved a larger group of people attending the Monday evening readers/writers club, and took place outside in the courtyard until the rain drove us back into the library, crammed between the bookshelves that line the walls and the large table that fills the centre of the room. By holding the workshops in locations associated with writers' circles I hoped to emphasise the centrality of storytelling and writing in our time together rather than the logics of the international development sector.

3.4. Integrating vernacular storytelling practices into workshops

The first step in my PhD research process was to consider how participatory storytelling methodologies might be adapted to integrate more vernacular content and approaches and greater flexibility and responsiveness to participants' cultural competencies. As noted above, I define vernacular storytelling as the stories and storytelling devices members of a group are familiar with and use in communication, whether through direct allusion or in the way those stories frame what they say. The value of such familiar cultural resources became apparent in an oral poetry session Susan Kiguli ran in the first workshop of the AHRC project, in Kampala in 2017. For activist Fred Kawooya – and many of the other participants – Susan's was one of the most memorable sessions of the three-day workshop:

> We talked about the folksongs I sang when I was a child. And I don't think I have sung them so many years, but I could still remember them. And I never imagined how rich they were – I've just sung them as a child – the deep meaning.

Nine months later, at our second workshop in 2018, Fred was still struck by the way these remembered stories shape who we are:

> We live with – there's a lot of poetry there in songs; the traditional rhythms use a lot of poetic language to communicate. So we live actually poetry in our daily lives, we don't realise. […] We said [playsongs] when we were young, but it was in that discussion [in 2017] that I realised the meanings – the meanings were diverse and deep. […] Those stories shaped – made us who we are, you know, we are who we are because of certain stories.

Fred's observation about the power of familiar stories is echoed in scholarship about Ugandan storytelling. For example, Kiyimba argues that the telling and retelling of fables shape expectations and sense-making practices among the Baganda (2009, 193):

> The meanings in the fables are social meanings, influenced by convention and agreement within a particular cultural environment, and strengthened by regular reinforcement. Frequent exposure to fables with a particular

> cultural menu therefore directs the way children structure, organise and make meaning. […] It is the frequent recurrence of these images in the child's early life that makes the fables important cultural reference points, and gives them the capacity to point generations of human societies in particular cultural and moral directions.

As well as shaping identity, such stories might open up space for contestation. Kiyimba suggests that a focus on the role of fables in moral education has obscured their other functions, such as the role they play "in the construction and consolidation of the socio-cultural realities to which the members of a community variously subscribe," or the way they "test the society's receptiveness to new ideas and to differences between persons and groups within that very culture" (2009, 207-208). For example, Kiganda fables might reinforce the institution of the monarchy in Buganda but they "also provide an opportunity to interrogate this institution and to raise the question of whether might always gives one the right to rule" (Kiyimba 2009, 196; cf. Kiyimba 2013, 96). One of the things that most interested Fred from Susan's poetry session in 2017 was her discussion of how Baganda court poets used poetic language to challenge the Kabaka – or king – in an oblique way. He called for activists to build on these traditions and to create their own versions of these traditional stories and songs:

> how do we use – such [songs] and adapt them to the current realities and still use them? […] Are we creating folk songs for tomorrow? Now. Because we have heard this. And then my nation was there, people created them; do we still see people creating something similar? So that the generation to come tomorrow will find something created today.

A proliferation in the use of storytelling in participatory workshops provides a wide range of toolkits to draw on in designing a workshop.[54] Participatory practices in international development and the related use of storytelling in development, human rights and activism can be traced back to social movements in the Americas during the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Freire

[54] See, for example, Zipes 1995; Fearless Collective 2017; brown 2015; Biggs 2016; Wheeler 2018; Wheeler, Shahrokh and Derakhshani 2020. Storytelling workshops often integrate applied theatre techniques as well as storytelling practices; there is an even more extensive body of toolkits for and research describing theatre games.

[1968] 1970; Boal [1974] 1998). As participatory development practice and activist storytelling have been developed and deployed in different contexts, scholars and practitioners have critiqued the ways that these methods have been instrumentalised and abstracted from broader political projects (Fernandes 2017, 17, 21, 31-32; Cooke and Kothari 2001).

Sujatha Fernandes' critique of storytelling workshops is particularly critical of simplistic toolkits that are used in a way "that seeks to reduce experiences and histories to easily digestible soundbites in service of limited goals" (Fernandes 2017, 3-4, 13, 17). She describes how initially emancipatory approaches to storytelling embedded in feminist and workers' movements and political struggles in the 1970s were transformed into tools for eliciting empathy – representing good victims who are "just like us" – and more recently for use in marketing strategies (Fernandes 2017, 2-3, 6, 16-18, 29-32, 36). Legal hearings, storytelling workshops, 'train the trainer' sessions and training manuals provide narrative models, tropes and myths to deploy in using storytelling to achieve limited and predetermined ends (Fernandes 2017, 7-10, 12). The modern reinvention of storytelling in such frameworks draws upon a supposedly universal formula, deploying features supposedly common to every story ever told, namely archetypal agents, breach or conflict, and resolution, as in the hero's journey format that Jonah Sachs proposes activists use in designing campaigns (cf. Sachs 2012). This, Fernandes argues, is hugely reductive of diverse oral and narrative practices which don't necessarily look like this and are inseparable from everyday rituals and relationships (2017, 4-5; cf. Klapproth 2004, 373-378). Instead, she argues that an emphasis on story as relational practice – as opposed to structures and templates – can refocus attention on the places of performance, protocols of telling, and audiences that give such stories meaning (Fernandes 2017, 7).

While most storytelling manuals focus on providing templates – structures and devices that can be easily deployed – most definitions of oral storytelling describe it, as Fernandes does, as a practice, involving interaction between the performer and their audience. Story, poetry, song and movement are all likely to be intertwined in any given storytelling

performance.[55] Such a performance goes beyond the text of a specific story represented on the page or in a person's memory, tapping into oral forms of sense-making that pre-date and continue to exist alongside the written word (cf. Abdi 2010; Ngũgĩ 2012, 72-73). In her research on oral poetry in Uganda and South Africa, Susan Kiguli notes that the oral poets she interviewed "were keen to point out the importance of the performer-audience relationship and their connection to 'traditional' or cultural memory" (2012, 175-176):

> To understand the function of oral poetry, it is useful to understand the actual composition and performance processes. […] Performance is a communicative process in which performer, audience and the social practice of oral poetry are vital for the interpretation of the genre. […] The context then has not been read narrowly as constituted by the text, but as [a] socially constructed and culturally determined construct that is subject to the dynamism of change and timing.

The oral poets she interviewed represented their performances as interactions – between performer and audience but also with generations of past oral poets and musicians – that compel critical conversations (Kiguli 2012, 177, 186):

> The poets presented their performance as an intense interaction of knowledge, alternative perspectives and experiences in a way that compels both performer and audience to engage in a mental and physical conversation. They mostly thought of performance as a particular way of being, conditioned by performer, audience, time and the cultural context, which compels all participants to engage in analysis of their beliefs, perceptions and prevailing situations.

In such performances, technique and stylistics are an integral part of what gives the text meaning. In the 2017 workshop, Susan emphasised the ways in which style and content are closely intertwined; how melody,

[55] Kiguli suggests that "it seems that no community performance, in Uganda at least, can be complete without a mixture of music, dance, play and poetry" (Kiguli and Plastow 2015, 32; cf. Ngũgĩ 1986, 45, 58-59); although in the ActionAid workshop she did distinguish between narrative and poetry as different forms.

rhythm and repetition reinforce the message a poet is trying to convey and help an audience remember it:

> You can hear the sounds that are repeated – this is very core to oral poetry. Because you commit it to memory. So, repetitions help you in getting along. In oral poetry we don't actually work with formula, but we work with certain accepted devices. So we may decide repetition works because people will remember. What message do I want. Because one of the things [the oral poets I have interviewed] told me was [clicking fingers] message, message, message is very important because it's not simply entertainment. […]
>
> The pleasure of oral poetry lies in its relation to music, melody, the strong reliance on word, melody and [clicking fingers] rhythm; that trinity if I'm allowed to call it that. Words, melody and rhythm, really there is a strong reliance. If you use those and use them well then it will communicate in a very powerful and lasting manner.

In response to Susan's session, at the end of the 2017 workshop, rap artist Buka Chimey improvised a rap in Lusoga using an approximation of a traditional call and response style. In the 2018 workshop we showed a film of this performance to a larger group. Literary activist Roland Niwagaba pointed out similarities between this performance and a style of poetry he had seen his grandmother perform. This led him to reflect on the importance of technique, of repetition and rhythm:

> I thought about the method of telling- of telling those stories, if we can call it that. And the repetition, and why are they repeating those specific words, is it emphasis? So you see it begins with repetition, and like they're pumping it into your head, and then they go into the body of the piece, and then they repeat again, so it's like they repeat this thing that they think, then go into the content, and then you go with the ebb and flow of the emotions, then they bring it back and they repeat it, then they do it again. […] There's that phrase they keep on repeating which I guess is what they want you to remember. And those similarities, is it just something that happened as, you know, the storytelling methods moved around the world? The art of storytelling. Why are we telling stories the way we are telling them? Did art just… OK now I'm really going far [laughter] But yeah, it's

> put me in that space. The method is now – away from the content, the method is what I'm wondering about. About the origins of it. So.

Like Roland, I am intrigued by the "method of telling those stories […] Why are we telling stories the way we are telling them?" My analysis incorporates consideration of what is being communicated in the formal dimensions of the stories being told, the stylistics as well as the content, which all come together to create an experience that might help an audience think or see differently.

A four-hour or even three-day workshop can only ever be the very beginning of a process of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue. After the ActionAid workshop in March 2020, campaigner Jennipher Achaloi noted that it was easiest to consider how the ideas from the workshop would inform her existing work rather than completely reimagine her priorities: "it takes a while for you to go out of the space you are very much used to – you can only modify and not completely abandon." This is a real challenge for work on epistemic justice that tries to cultivate attentiveness to epistemically marginalised perspectives and worldviews. Participants might struggle to engage with what is new if they are unable to relate it to what they already know. And yet relating such perspectives and worldviews to what people already know risks distorting them in problematic ways, obscuring "the social context that animates these distinctive ways of viewing the world, as well as the women and people of colour who authored these ideas" (Collins 2019, 249).

The multiplicity of the positions occupied by prospective participants might provide some scope for mitigating these challenges. Many of those engaged in transnational activist networks do not fall neatly into either epistemically dominant or epistemically marginalised groups. Rather, while they are embedded and invested in epistemically dominant institutions (NGOs, universities) they also have access to alternative epistemologies, remembered from childhood or practiced in other dimensions of their lives, perhaps in their religious practice, family life or involvement in cultural production (see further Chapter 7). This makes them familiar with a range of different cultural resources, but also with the process of shifting between

different contexts, bringing in references from one context to influence discussions in another.

3.5. Selecting familiar and multivocal texts

Vernacular storytelling includes a range of stories that span the divide between fact and fiction. In my fieldwork, I focused on fictional or symbolic stories because they were likely to be familiar to participants, but were substantially different from the testimonial storytelling most commonly used in the human rights and development sectors (cf. Schaffer and Smith 2004). I wanted to use stories with multiple versions that would be familiar to participants from Uganda to make it easier for them to engage with, supplement and interpret the versions I used. As discussed in the introduction, I worked with two co-facilitators who could bring materials likely to be part of activist and Ugandan vernaculars: Scovia Arinaitwe is an activist, with significant experience of using activist storytelling toolkits in movement building work; and Susan Kiguli is a scholar and poet, with particular expertise in oral poetry. As part of my research, I also spent time becoming familiar with stories from Uganda and reflecting on my own vernaculars.[56]

A number of factors were involved in choosing the stories used to shape each workshop, among the many that were likely to be familiar to participants: for the ActionAid workshop, the Buganda origin myth about Nambi and Kintu; and for the Femrite workshop, the European folktale Red Riding Hood. In each case, we discussed a traditional version of the story, and then a version reimagining the story: in the ActionAid workshop, Susan's poem 'Tongue Touch Nambi Myth,' and in the Femrite workshop, my story 'Caipín Rua.' Each of these stories are bricolages of oral and written tradition and local and external influences. The diversity of these sources and the multivocality of the stories – which include suppressed

[56] While this preparatory work – which took a considerable amount of time – was an important part of the design of the methodology and was necessary to my interpretation of the data as part of an academic study, it could be circumvented in a more practice-oriented workshop by appointing two co-facilitators: one with expertise in development and human rights and another with expertise in local cultural traditions.

elements that can be reclaimed even in their most hegemonic versions – mirror and make explicit the ways that any transnational activist meeting is a confluence of local and global influences and power dynamics. In bringing together sources from different traditions, places and perspectives, these stories are reflections of internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue.

The story of Red Riding Hood is one of the best known European wonder tales, familiar from storybooks to people growing up all over the world; it has greater multivocality than many other European wonder tales as there is no recent Disney film version. Participants in the Femrite workshop were reasonably familiar with the story, although they had to work together to remember it rather than each recalling it immediately. While I had expected to be able to draw parallels with Ugandan ogre stories (cf. Tibasiima 2013), this was more challenging than expected, partly due to the short amount of time we had. The story used to shape the ActionAid workshop – the Kiganda origin story, Nambi and Kintu – comes up again and again in scholarship on storytelling in Uganda and is widely taught in Ugandan schools. Luganda is the language spoken in Kampala, and the Buganda kingdom was dominant in Ugandan politics during colonialism, so it is a good illustration of a culturally dominant narrative.[57] There are clear parallels with the biblical creation myth of Adam and Eve that may have been strengthened after Christianity came to Uganda.

These stories engage key themes in critical scholarship by Ugandan and Kenyan scholars related to human rights: gender and sexuality, the family and religion. Red Riding Hood and ogre stories relate particularly well to the theme of sexuality. Sylvia Tamale is particularly well known for her writing on female sexuality, and prominent activist Stella Nyanzi is also known for her academic work on sexuality and queer theory (Tamale 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017; Nyanzi 2011 and 2014). Both Red Riding Hood and Nambi and Kintu speak to the relationship between the individual, the family and community, and the state – key concerns in Mutua's writing on

[57] A Muganda (singular) speaks Luganda (language) with other Baganda (plural) in Buganda (territory or adjective), telling Kiganda (adjective) stories. Lusoga (language) is spoken in Busoga (territory).

human rights in Africa (1995 and 2002b). The parallels between Nambi and Kintu and biblical origin myths are illustrative of the ways that Christianity stifled indigenous culture in Uganda, a central theme in the work of Ugandan writer and theorist Okot p'Bitek (1979 and 1986; cf. Mutua 2002a, 94-125; Tamale 2020, 173-180).

As well as working with these stories, as part of my preparation for the workshop I developed a larger repertoire of written and oral stories that relate to how development and human rights are conceptualised, notably looking at folktales from Uganda and from Ireland and at stories from the Christian Bible. I sought out texts that have been used in the past to make political interventions of various sorts in East Africa, as well as types of storytelling, broadly understood, that workshop participants were likely to be familiar with. Like in oral storytelling, in developing my own versions of these stories, I explicitly and overtly used and adapted pre-existing plots and ideas, and integrated pre-existing text and quotations. This work prepared me to run the workshops in Uganda, but also approximated processes of cross-cultural dialogue, albeit in terms of my long-term engagement with a range of texts rather than engagement with other people. Academic conventions can constrain the way we think just as the conventions associated with the development and human rights sectors do; by composing stories and verse as part of the research process and by using these in my analysis, I try to supplement the relatively narrow range of interpretative practices admissible in academic research and writing. For example, in using the poem 'Scavenger' to open this chapter, I try to approximate the sense of incomplete and emerging understanding and the shift in focus – highlighting details that the reader might not usually notice – associated with cross-cultural dialogue as well as traditional forms of oral storytelling (cf. Klapproth 2004, 75, 321-326).

By preserving knowledge in story form rather than trying to abstract it and categorise it according to social science categories, I try to retain a sense of the contexts in which these stories were developed and the multiplicity of authors involved in developing them. In the forms in which they have come to us, even stories from marginalised traditions are

necessarily hybrid, influenced by and incorporating strands from the dominant traditions that they have come into contact with. Rather than trying to recreate an 'authentic' version of such stories, looking for the elusive pre-colonial, I engage with the stories as multivocal texts and consider – by myself and, in the workshops, with participants – how this reflects the mix of different influences that inform what and how we know and how we interpret the world. Just as workshops are a complex web of relationships between participants, spaces, discourses and power, so my own versions of the stories I worked with bring together material from different sources. These new combinations of content and form engage with the power in operation in the contexts in which the stories emerged and in which I became familiar with them, as well as making more visible the variety and contestability of the traditions they come from. This work is done in how I bring together content, but also in how I approach form. As part of my research process, I learned about and experimented with different poetic metres and approaches to prosody, especially those most closely related to orality; from old English and Celtic metres, to play-songs and rhymes, to ballads, rap and other forms of stress metre, to more formal classical schemes like the dactylic hexameter used in Greek epic. I also looked at how East African writers – notably Achioli writer Okot p'Bitek – have engaged with and resisted these metrical conventions.

In the storytelling workshops, and in my own process of learning and retelling stories, participants simultaneously occupy the position of novice and expert, learning how to draw on familiar resources that we have not yet applied to our work, and starting to learn about new resources that we might or might not go on to learn more about. The intention is to use this process of enskillment to equip us with tools we can immediately use to reconceptualise human rights and development in ways that are more consonant with the contexts in which we work, but also to cultivate in us a taste for finding out more about other ways of understanding and speculating about the world, as part of a process that might fundamentally transform how we think about justice.

3.6. Conclusion

In a poem composed in response to our research collaboration, 'Reaching Within Us to Beyond Us,' Susan reflects on how words began to "Take shape […] Announcing themselves / As what we know but had forgotten." These words and voices that "refuse to be captured" can "transform / The very realms / They arrest […] And they give us ability / To lay hold of the world / By removing the stitches." In my fieldwork I show that stories familiar to participants who straddle multiple epistemic worlds can be used to prompt productive internal discourse that allows participants to lay hold of, pick apart and reimagine conceptions of justice. In both storytelling workshops in March 2020, I adapted participatory storytelling methodologies to integrate more vernacular content and approaches and greater flexibility and responsiveness to participants' existing cultural competencies. Through engagement with and critique of well-known stories, we explored and contested the roots of dominant approaches to human rights and development work. We reflected on the differences between traditional versions and new compositions told from a different perspective, combining material from different sources. And we considered how the process of telling and retelling these stories can help us think differently about human rights and development. Storytelling is a scavenger's art. As discussed above, the methodology I developed adapts research techniques suggested by Gibson-Graham to disrupt what is taken as given, read for difference and generate new ways of thinking by bringing together concepts and practices from different domains. The process of reflecting on familiar stories, comparing these with alternative versions and composing new versions that emphasise different elements, has the potential to create space for reimagining relationships of solidarity and conceptions of justice.

In the next chapter I discuss the literature that informed my focus on and definition of vernacular storytelling; that is, the stories and storytelling devices members of a group are familiar with and use in communication, whether through direct allusion or in the way those stories frame what they say. I do this in verse form, mirroring in the form of the text the discussion

of the way this form – often used in storytelling in the oral tradition – was used to communicate philosophical and theoretical insights as well as providing entertainment. The following three chapters reflect on the two storytelling workshops, relating the storytelling, interpretation and discussion in those workshops to critical scholarship from East Africa on human rights and development. In presenting my own version of the story of Red Riding Hood in Chapter 5, with the discussion organised according to the logic of the story, I try to approximate for the reader the experience of listening to a story and the subsequent discussion in a storytelling workshop. In response to the ways that the discussion in the Femrite workshop focused on personal commitments and contestations of feminism rather than the logics of development and human rights work, I explore the potential for using storytelling to reimagine feminist solidarities between Ireland and Uganda. I refer to participants' perspectives, but also draw on scholarship from East Africa and Ireland to reflect themes that might have emerged had we had more time or a different group of participants. In Chapter 6, I present a version of the story of Nambi and Kintu told by participant Elijah Bwojji a few days after the ActionAid workshop. In Chapter 7, written in a more conventional academic form, I discuss the experience of sustained engagement with that story over the course of three days in the ActionAid workshop. I compare the discussion and interpretation of the story with processes of composition and performance of new versions, and consider the different contributions these two forms of engagement make to efforts to reimagine justice. I also present and discuss compositions by two participants that reflect on and consolidate our discussions in the various workshops. The concluding chapter brings together key findings from both storytelling workshops, reflecting on the implications that participants' storytelling and interpretations might have for human rights and development.

4. Vernacular storytelling: an essay in verse

> vernacular, *n.*
>
> the informal, colloquial, or distinctive speech of a people or a group
>
> storytelling, *n.*
>
> the action or activity of telling stories, or a particular story; an instance of this
>
> *Oxford English Dictionary*

4.1. Vernaculars

The popular is such a flabby old term
With far too much baggage about what it means.
Vernacular has a more specified sense:
How these people speak when they sit by themselves
And how they might speak to their mothers instead.
The differences in the vocabularies used
Depending on where or, like, who might be there.
Vernacular has its own baggage of course:
It's used in debates on which language is best.

Vernacular goes beyond phrases and words
And insider references, switching of codes;
Encompassing clothing, the ways that we move,
And whether we go for a hug or shake hands.
It's linked to the stock of the pictures we use
To help get our heads around what we perceive,
To question, make sense and decide what to do.
And Yes! we take pleasure in all of the ways
These images let us think all sorts of things.

A critic, one Barbara Christian, once said
That people of colour have often preferred
To do their theorising "in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking."[58]
It's not long since rhythm and meter were used
To make sense of things and proclaim it out loud.
The ancient Italians were always big fans.
And maybe now Kendrick Lamar's gone and won
A Pulitzer prize it might start coming back.
(Sit down now with all of these notions you've got.)[59]

A language, they say, can confine what we know
And blind us to things that we cannot describe.
Might some other languages open our eyes?
Not-English—Not-Spanish, Not-French-Portuguese
Might move us beyond an enlightenment view
To newly discover old epistemes.
And maybe Yes-English can say these things too.
From Christian again: why is this way more black
If some of us do, for a fact, speak like that.[60]

Ngũgĩ, now, might disagree on that point.
Defining vernaculars, he slips between
Our everyday talk and the words we forgot.
His first is a language that everyone speaks—
But not the elite. And his second, a key:
Collections of cultural memory prompts;

[58] Christian 1987, 52.
[59] Cf. Kendrick Lamar 2017, 'Bitch, be humble. Sit down. Be humble.'
[60] Christian 1987, 58.

Says Yeats should have mastered his *teanga dúchais*.[61]
Examples like that just confuse matters more:
What use is a language that's now hardly used?

But then—
I picked up some poems by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill
—all *scríofa as Gaeilge*, English *en face*—
And found myself slamming the *leagan Béarla*,[62]
A smatter of Irish inflecting my thoughts.
(You'd hope so with all the instruction I got.)
So maybe a bit of the Irish I learnt
Is knocking about with my sub-conscious self
And shaping the way I imagine the world.[63]

[61] Ngũgĩ 1986, 13-16, 23 and 2009, 20, 39-45, 50-51, 63-65, 82-84, 90, 113-114. *teanga dúchais:* mother-tongue.
[62] *scríofa as Gaeilge*: written in Irish; *leagan Béarla*: English version.
[63] The meter of 'Vernaculars' is anapaestic tetrameter with iambic substitution in the first (or sometimes second) foot. While this is a formal meter, it accommodates a reasonably conversational tone. There is a slight break in meter in the first line (unless the reader stresses 'is' rather than 'such' which feels unnatural) – which might encourage the reader to read the rest of the poem more naturally. Lines 31 and 34 are metrical or not depending on whether you stress the name of the language (in which case they are) or the word 'Not' or 'Yes' (in which case they aren't). There are major breaks with the meter in two places: for the continuation of the quote from Christian, from: "in the stories…" mirroring her disruptive resistance to new fashions in literary theory in the essay referenced; and for: 'But then—' in the final stanza to indicate a thinking break. There are slighter breaks in the final two feet of three lines, i.e. two trochees for 'epistemes', '*teanga dúchais*' and '*leagan Béarla*'. This might distinguish the reference to alternative ways of knowing and the material in the Irish language from the rest of the discussion. The extra syllable in the line ending Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill is related to how her name fits (one dactyl and one trochee), but could be linked to the disruptive nature of her choosing to write in Irish, which isn't widely spoken, although Irish people are required to learn the language at school.

4.2. Storytelling

All this telling of stories is practice not text.
Any narrative arc might be just an excuse
For performance, allusion and riddle and jest.
Using these narrative sources to turn tricks
With a verbal dexterity rarely distinct
From a poem or song full of rhythms and riffs.
And the audience should be engaged in the thing.
(To be fair, I imagine you're often bored stiff.)

And it's tricky to know where the line should be drawn
Between telling what happened and making things up.
All these stories we tell take on myriad form.
Some are anecdotes, others are epic accounts,
Then there's wonder-tales, parables, fables and myths;
What they used to tell then spun with stuff we say now.

Now I'm trying to read the old saga *An Táin*—[64]
It's a my-bull-is-bigger-than-your-bull-is fight,
And whatever else happens, Cú Chullain must die.
All these bloody old epics just make me feel part
Of the violence that saturates much of our past.
What about this should I want to get back?

But tradition is nothing if not fit to purl,[65]
And even the scriptures are sampled and stitched.[66]
Toccata in G: 'We do well on the whole
To unscramble continuity from tradition.'[67]

[64] *An Táin*: the (cattle-)raid. Carson 2008.
[65] Barber 2007, 210-211.
[66] Bassard 2010, 51-66.
[67] Hill 2019, 117.

The thing that makes tales like Red Riding Hood live
Is that they exist variously.[68]

4.3. Little? Little Red Riding Hood

Told at the Femrite workshop, March 2020

Ruth Kelly Does anyone, do you remember what happens?

Amanda Joy Yes, I think I do, in pieces though.

So there was this—
She was walking through the forest, right
And she was I think hungry? right
Then she discovers there's a cabin in the middle of the forest.
And she enters it.
And there's, there's a beast but he was dressed in a form of a human so
She, she thought it was
What—a human.
And then she says that: oh your teeth are so big!

I think that's the end of the story when she talks about the teeth and says: it's because I want to Eat You, that's what the beast says. But there was a whole process of describing how that animal looked like and then he would play around with telling her: oh it's because I want to *(pat you)* yeah, something like that.

[68] In 'Storytelling' the anapaestic tetrameter (with iambic substitution in the first foot in some lines) could be said to mirror the trope of retelling epic (i.e. reversing dactyls). There are four non-metrical riffs. Line four is in (epic) dactylic hexameter minus two feet. In line 20, the absence of the first two unstressed syllables makes the line pull up slightly. In line 24, the continuation of a quote from Geoffrey Hill is non-metrical, reflecting how his final book "was written in long lines with a variable number of both stressed and unstressed syllables" (Haynes 2020), departing from his previous more formal style. Note that Hill had "We do […] tradition." as the first sentence in a long line, not split across lines as I have presented it. Similarly, line 26 departs from the meter of the rest of the poem to indicate the variousness of storytelling traditions – like line 24 it has three rather than four beats.

Juliet Kushaba Eyes are big because I want to see you.

Amanda Joy Yes, I want to see you, like, yes, it was a whole description.

Juliet Kushaba The eyes are big because I want to see you.
The lips are big because I want to kiss you.
The hands are big because I want to pat you.
My dear granddaughter.

I think, I think the animal was pretending to be the grandmother. *(Yes, yes. She was pretending to be the grandmother. She was actually going to visit the grandmother. Yes.)*

…

There is a bit that I could add to the story. I don't know if it's the same story but I read a story like that, I don't remember its title. So:

When she went to forest, and entered that space,
This beast ran home and went to the-
And went and ate the grandmother
And entered her bed, right
It entered her bed
And covered up and pretended to be the grandmother.

So when the girl returned from forest I think that's when this story of:

Oh! grandmother your eyes are big
Your ears are too huge.
It's because I want to hear you clearly.

Everything, like all the features were strange, the animal kept covering up and saying it's because I want to do this, because I want to do this. And when it came to the teeth—the animal Jumped onto the girl.

Is that the story? Yes, I read a story like that but I don't remember its title. Long time ago.

Elijah Bwojji That is the story, that is Little Red Riding Hood.[69]

[69] In this thesis, I have tried to transcribe discussions in a way that reflects their interactive nature but keeps them more readable than they would be if I were to use the complex transcription conventions used to reflect overlapping speech in conversation analysis. Material in [square brackets] represents my additions, material in *(brackets and italics)* reflects another participant's interruption of what the named participant's intervention, and material in *(brackets and italics is followed by an ellipsis…)* represents the start of the next named participant's intervention. Words that begin with a Capital letter reflect emphasis, a long dash – represents a pause, and a short dash at the end of a word- represents where a participant started to say something and then pulled up short.

5. Ogre stories: situated solidarities between Ireland and Uganda

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter I explore the potential of storytelling as a mechanism for articulating shared priorities and situated solidarities between feminist activists in Ireland and Uganda. Significant work on the multiple dimensions of women's sexuality has emerged from Uganda – notably in work by Sylvia Tamale and Stella Nyanzi, and in stories and poems published by women writers' association Femrite (cf. Kiguli 2006, 179-182) – and yet development and human rights interventions continue to frame discussions of sexuality almost exclusively in terms of risk and danger. In Ireland, a legacy of brutal responses to sexual transgression continues to inflect discussions of women's sexuality, despite recent legislative and constitutional changes, notably a repeal of the ban on abortion. In this chapter, I explore these dilemmas in the first instance by presenting a retelling of the story of Red Riding Hood from an Irish perspective. I then use this story as a springboard to explore parallels and disjunctures between Irish and Ugandan perspectives on women's rights and sexuality, drawing on the perspectives of participants in a short storytelling workshop with members of Femrite in Kampala, Uganda in March 2020,[70] and on work by Ugandan and Irish scholars and writers. (The story and discussion both contain references to sexual violence.) In using the story in the chapter, I try

[70] I held a four-hour workshop at with approximately 20 members of the Monday night readers/writers club (some participants came and went during the workshop). In the first part of the workshop we were a small group of six women and one man; we focused on the Red Riding Hood tradition. In the second half we were a bigger group, in which there were more women than men, but in which men made more and longer interventions; we looked at Ugandan ogre stories and my retelling of Red Riding Hood. Some participants had heard my version of Red Riding Hood read aloud two weeks previously. Some participants have asked for any contributions they make to be accredited to them by name, others to be anonymous; I have followed that direction in this chapter. I have performed and discussed the story with academic audiences at Makerere University in Uganda, and at the universities of York and Warwick in the UK.

to approximate for the reader the experience of participating in such a storytelling workshop.

As noted in the introduction, I am Irish myself, and for six years – first as a UK employee of international NGO ActionAid and now as a researcher – I have been involved in collaborative work with activists, academics and artists in Uganda. Part of this work has been with writers – notably with poet Susan Kiguli, who introduced me to Femrite. A growing body of literature has begun to explore strategies for mitigating the inequitable power dynamics of such transnational relationships, paying particular attention to "the economic, political and institutional processes and structures that provide the context for the fieldwork [or other] encounter and shape its effects" (Nagar 2014, 85; cf. Routledge and Derickson 2015; de Jong 2017, 147-156; Newman, Bharadwaj and Fransman 2019; Coetzee 2019; Rajan 2018, 290-294.). Inspired by Nagar's work on transnational feminisms, my contribution to this literature explores how storytelling might create space for productive dialogue between such diverse worlds in a language that "can be accessed, used and critiqued by audiences in multiple social and institutional locations." This might reveal shared priorities and situated solidarities that take account of the complexity and contradictions of where we come from and the contexts in which we are embedded (cf. Nagar 2014, 5, 14, 82-88, 95-96, 161). Like Sujatha Fernandes, I emphasise how the places and protocols of telling and interpretation give stories meaning; taking culture, place and relationships as the (often imperfect) basis for political struggles, and exploring how storytelling can inform new forms of solidarity (cf. Fernandes 2017, 7, 160-161). The half-day Femrite workshop was one such context; a snapshot set within the context of participants' previous and future engagement with the stories told and themes discussed, and with each other.

The story I present brings an Irish flavour to the verbal dexterity, allusions and competitive processes of deciphering that are prized in riddling, proverbs and other orature in Uganda (cf. Dipio 2019, 4; Gulere 2016; Mushengyezi 2013, 14-38). Like much Ugandan storytelling, it integrates snatches of song and code-switching (cf. Namayanja 2008, 116-

118, 122-125; Gulere 2016, 125, 168). By sharing elements from an Irish context, which might be unfamiliar to the reader, embedded in a story which is more widely known, I engage the tension between my (cultural) situatedness and the evocation of cultural references that I am confident of sharing with at least some members of my audience. This invites audiences to consider the possibility of situated solidarity in a context of incomplete but growing knowledge of the other, as part of a process of becoming skilled in using a broader range of sense-making practices – like storytelling – which might allow us to notice more or certain types of details about neglected experiences, specifically related to female sexuality. It tests the degree to which people in one place might respond and relate (or not) to preoccupations and cultural references from elsewhere. By telling my story to Ugandan audiences, I open myself up to them dismissing it as unrelatable. Indeed, some audience members had done so when a number of people shared in reading it aloud at Femrite two weeks before the workshop. For some, this arose from difficulties in hearing and understanding the story, but for others it may have been a political move, to preserve that space as one for Ugandan stories, not stories from elsewhere.[71] This prompted me to perform the story myself at the workshop, without moderating my Irish accent, rather than have participants read it aloud. Participants were free to come and go throughout.

Presenting the story in writing functions differently from performing it in front of an audience. Asking the reader to engage with the story on a screen or on paper removes key elements of the performance text – notably the changing dynamics and musicality, especially of the words from the Irish language – as well as the potential for interaction between the audience and performer. Nonetheless, the style of writing aims to evoke elements of the performance text, bringing these into the context of academic writing, in which the non-linear and imaginative dimensions of storytelling are unusual and potentially disruptive. Including the story as an integral part of the

[71] There is lively disagreement among Ugandan writers on this issue, as well as the issue of the language in which they write. In my engagement with that community, I have been warmly welcomed by some and pointedly ignored by others.

argument asks the reader to move away from a position of analytic detachment to embrace what is not quite understood. The practice of storytelling invites the audience to become imaginatively involved in the story world, through the rhythm and music of the telling as much as through the sense of what is told (Klapproth 2004, 107-127). The aim is to prompt the reader to reflect on the themes being discussed in a way that engages their emotions and thought-processes differently from how they might be engaged in reading a typical academic essay. This exploits the potential of storytelling as tool for theorising, and the ways in which the pleasure of engaging with a story might seduce audiences into thinking in new ways (cf. Christian 1987, 52; Mihai 2018, 396, 403-405).

The discussion follows the logic of the story, in the form of a commentary referring back to the text.[72] In the workshop in Uganda, before I performed the story, participants told and discussed the story of Red Riding Hood and a number of Ugandan ogre stories. These discussions included personal and theoretically-informed responses to the stories as well as a wider exploration of the themes touched upon in the story as they are engaged in a Ugandan context. In this chapter, I point to commonalities, divergences and gaps in understanding that emerged in my own engagement with Ugandan literature and in audience responses to my story, exploring the potential of such practices for articulating shared priorities and situated solidarities between activists in Ireland and Uganda.

My aim in approaching this inquiry from an Irish perspective is both to make explicit my authorial bias and to explore how my implication in political debates where I come from informs and might be relevant for my collaboration with colleagues and friends in Uganda. It could be argued that foregrounding perspectives from dominant cultural traditions should not be the focus of work reimagining transnational feminisms. However, so long as it is undertaken with attention to its partiality and incompleteness, I understand this work to have political potential. First, it exposes the degree

[72] So as not to interrupt the flow of the story, I use continuous superscripts at the beginning of short segments, in a format analogous to the numbering of verses in religious texts, rather than occasional endnotes.

to which global normative frameworks and models of intervention are influenced by stories from the European tradition, and permits exploration of their incompleteness, and of the political potential of upending and reimagining such dominant stories. Secondly, it draws attention to the "ambivalence and contestability" of such traditions (An-Naʿim 2011, 195-196), opening the possibility that alternative accounts of European tradition could be mobilised to disrupt dominant narratives and to reimagine human rights and development. Thirdly, this approach has the potential to disrupt the relatively detached 'observer' status of people (like myself) working on human rights or development issues far from home. It tries to make more explicit the ways in which our work in other places might intersect with and be informed by our emotional and political implication in analogous debates closer to home. It also performs an ethical function, reminding my Ugandan colleagues and friends that I come "from a Northern context where misogynistic practices are alive and well" (Rajan 2018, 292), and that I might benefit from their support in countering such practices (cf. Nnaemeka 2004, 372-373). To supplement and highlight the incompleteness of my situated perspective, I draw on discussions with workshop participants and on work by Ugandan scholars and writers on orature and on women's rights and sexuality.

Now let me tell you a story I know.

5.2. The story

[1]Once upon a time, somewhere in the world, a girl standing at the edge of a forest knocked on a door. It was getting dark.

[2]I was sat in the corner watching, where I always sat. [3]Behind her, the ghost of a forest hung in the air, caught in the mist. Her cap was sodden and her boots black with the dank water she had had to wade through. [4]It wasn't always this grim. Sometimes the forest floor was dry and springy and the light filtering through the branches threw dappled shade around her. [5]Other times she'd turn up, her coat ripped and her lips black and blue (she went a bit mad for the berries). [6]The taller and older the trees, the more she imagined things, seeing men in the shadows and tripping over roots and

branches. [7]But this time the mist hung dense around her and the forest was barely visible through two hundred years of fog.

[8]Inside was dim and musty and sharp. The girl felt for the familiar table, put down her heavy basket and gave her arm a rub. She waited for her eyes to adjust. [9]She knew the drill, rattling through the things she had to say, bawdy or prim according to her mood, until there was no point in delaying the inevitable any longer. “What big teeth you have,” she would say. [10]In this place where the forest was long gone, I had less patience. Sometimes I came as a little man and as soon as she put the basket down on the table, I snatched the baby inside it, replacing it with one of our own. Off I dashed skipping lightly across the bog, the child screaming in my arms, face red as a fox’s pelt, and me tossing the child in the air as I ran. And the parties under that hill, my god, like nothing you’ve ever seen. [11]But mostly I’d stay for a bit of riddling and there was no point if she could never win so I’d give her a bit of a handicap and pretend that I believed her pretending that the child in the basket wasn’t worth a silver penny.

[12]In this place she’d usually start with, “Where’s my granny?” There’s no flies on that one, she saw through the little nightcap straight off, although the whiskers on that old woman and the sharp beak on her, it wouldn’t have been everyone who could tell us apart. [13]The world was old then and the wild animals had thinned out with the trees, so we had an affinity: [14]each of us with a *caipín rua*, a thick red pelt against the cold and the rain. [15]The fire sputtered and smoked in the grate – *cad a dhéanfaimid feasta gan adhmad* only be half blinded – but I put up with it and from time to time they’d find a lump of old oak in the bog and that burned nice and bright and hot. [16]That day, as it was so cold, I couldn’t help but offer the girl the lovely little pudding I’d made with the old lady’s hot blood – there was little enough flesh on her – wafer and wine in one bite. People are into that the whole world over, dress it up nice as you like with smells and bells; [17]that Mis knew exactly what she was doing and what’s more, liked it. [18]The girl brushed bloody crumbs off her lip and smiled.

[19]As she warmed she pulled off her cap and then her coat and then her shawl and dropped them on the floor. She reached into the basket, drew out

the child and set it on her lap. [20]In another place she might have thrown her garments in the fire, but here everything she wore was so damp it would have dowsed the flame. [21]Girl didn't do her justice; she was a young woman and had known a man alright however proper she sat now on that hard chair, thick woollen skirts down to her ankles and arms fast to her sides when she danced. I shivered under my rough blanket. [22]And whatever about herself, that child was a token worth playing for. [23]"Follow the gold, you'll never get old, but the first sign of pity, you turn to bones." She was starting off easy with *Tír na nÓg*. That was some trick to get Oisín down off his horse and on his first trip back, the eejit. The years caught up with him alright as soon as he touched the ground. [24]I preened not only for knowing the answer but also because in the firelight my pelt glinted bright as Niamh's mop of gold hair. [25]The girl moved off the chair to the edge of the bed. What shenanigans could be had now! [26]The child in her arms squirmed and slipped out of her grasp to crawl around on the filthy floor.

[27]My turn now. "What a raven once told, drawn to heat in the cold." She was quick off the mark: Naoise's hair black as the wing of the bird, skin white as the snow underfoot and lips bitten red raw bright as the blood it feasted on. That Deirdre was a right dote. And throwing herself from a chariot; what a way to go, [28]really setting herself up as a rival to your one in Verona. That's a story worth resurrecting. [29]Although they're a miserable lot here, it has to be said, with all their sorrows and laments. If I wasn't careful the girl would start roaring crying again over her own lost love, long since off on his travels looking for gold in France. She moved to go back to the chair. [30]It was still lashing rain outside and the night stretched thick and black and empty until it reached the sea. [31]"You're the one who brought up the ill-fated lovers," I whined, "you could at least give us a nibble – just a little finger…." [32]She laughed and flicked her skirt at me and bent to pick up the baby and throw another bit of peat on the fire. "Ups-a-daisy; *éirigh suas a stóirín*." She dumped the child on my bed and [33]it promptly shat in its pants, filling the room with a stench almost as rank as my own. I've let people go for less before. Never mind; the game had begun.

[34]To be honest this wasn't the best time and place for riddling I've ever come across. [35]There's a fair litany of riddles and tricks that lads like Cú Chulainn and the Fianna came up with and they take a bit of telling but in the end they usually come down to killing and that can get boring after a while. Not that the place being soaked with blood is a problem for me but how can you get real enjoyment if they all pile up together like that. [36]All the same it was atmospheric with the hounds howling outside and the rain lashing the windows and the light of the fire keeping the *sí* at bay. [37]Mostly I let the girl win. I mean, riddling is as riddling does, but I've had a fair bit of that recently and [38]when the child, recently changed, fell into sleep, she wrapped it in her shawl and sat on my couch singing lullabies, her bare white shoulders the brightest point in the room. [39]"*Siúil, siúil, siúil a rún, siúil go tapaí 's siúil go ciúin*; flee, flee, quickly child, out the door by my side." If you do run, dear, clumsy child, you'd better watch you don't fall into the bog.

[40]Rock, reel and spinning wheel wagered and lost; she'll dye her petticoats alright, dye them bright as Naoise's lips on his white, pallid face that had so rarely seen the sun.

But some things don't bear telling.

[41]When I was sated I slept and as I slept everything changed and when I woke I was alone again, once upon a time, somewhere in the world, standing at the edge of a forest and knocking on a door. [42]"Get up love and get the door and let me into the house if you're not up already; and here's a bottle for yourself and I hope you don't refuse me your daughter after all that."

[43]*Siúil, siúil, siúil a rún,*
Siúil go sochair agus siúil go ciúin,
Siúil go doras agus éalaigh liom.

Is go dté tú mo mhúirnín slán.
Go safely love; go safely.

5.3. The discussion

1 The story of Red Riding Hood, with its injunction not to go into the forest alone, is a folktale that has been retold and reimagined more frequently than most (Zipes 1993, 18, 36-67, 343). Ugandan participants in the storytelling workshop were not completely confident about the details, but were able to remember the story together, remaking it even as they recalled it (cf. Barber 2007, 4; see Chapter 4). Amanda Joy remembered a girl walking through the forest, hungry, and entering a cabin to find a beast. This promoted Juliet Kushaba to recall and embellish the words of the beast; with the familiar line, "The eyes are big because I want to see you," followed by the less familiar, "The lips are big because I want to kiss you. The hands are big because I want to pat you." Juliet then paused and said she remembered a story – "I don't know if it's the same story" – in which a beast "ran home […] ate the grandmother and entered her bed," tricking the girl when she "returned [home] from the forest." "That is the story" said Elijah Bwojji, "that is Little Red Riding Hood," where the danger, like in many Ugandan ogre stories, is as much at home as it is in the forest. For those unfamiliar with the Red Riding Hood tradition, the story may still be legible due to parallels with other stories they know, such as ogre stories from Uganda that follow a similar pattern (cf. Tibasiima 2013, 182-185). This discussion considers how the variety within and differences between these traditions adds richness to discussions about women's rights. Specifically, I consider whether such stories can be used to uncover assumptions underlying different articulations of women's rights and feminism, and to facilitate communication across difference in efforts to build solidarity.

3 The story of Red Riding Hood is one I have heard and read in many versions as a child and as an adult. Yet the forests of that story are not the landscapes of my childhood. Ireland has been sparsely wooded for at least three hundred years (Hall 1997); "the ghost of a forest" in my story hangs above the more familiar stretches of blanket bog. Irish

language poet Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill emphasises the importance of *dinnseanchas* (placelore) in lyrical and storytelling traditions in Ireland, which resist or puncture the narrative arc of epic tradition with elegiac ruminations on the beauty and importance or power of specific places (2005, 156-169). Comparably, Ugandan scholar and poet Susan Kiguli argues that oral performance "can only be understood by taking account of the historical, social, psychological, and even physical surroundings in which it occurs" (2004, 52). Buganda riddling, according to Kiguli, "*Kati kiringa ekigamba omwana nti, 'tunula, laba wooli.'* […] Now, it is like telling a child, 'observe, see where you are…'" – "*Naye kikulaga nti ebyo ebintu ebibeera wano naffe nabyo byamugaso…* […] It shows you that the things around us also have value…" (cited in Mushengyezi 2013, 38; cf. Katz 2004, 62-64; Klapproth 2004, 323-324).[73] Elements of the local environment might stand in for abstract concepts, giving an "otherwise evanescent oral text its concreteness" (Mushengyezi 2013, 75-77; cf. Gulere 2016, 83). In the workshop, many of the details of the story that participants recalled after hearing the story related to the description of the environment: the ghost of the forest, the fog, the dark, the thinning trees. This seemed to give workshop participants a handle on an unfamiliar story set in an unfamiliar place. One participant said, "My favourite part was this girl, the point where her, her lips were coloured, it is blue and – black because of the berries. I don't know how but somehow I just imagined it was [a participant from Sweden] and the image really came out well, I was imagining her..."

5 Wild blueberries (*fraocháin*) are found in the gorse-covered valley of Glendalough in county Wicklow near to where I grew up; it has been told that young girls who went off to pick them on their own were later found "not in their right minds" (Ní Dhomhnaill 2005, 89, 94-

[73] I follow the transcription convention recommended by Wambi Gulere – with a line in the original language, in italics, immediately followed by its translation – to prompt the reader to engage with the vivid nature of the original language, even if it is not understood (2009, 56-57).

95). Ripe berries are highly euphemistic. A Banyankore riddle, performed in Kiruhura in Western Uganda by master-teller Katuka, refers to the activity of picking berries in the wood: "*Ahi enkyerere ihisize ziri, hariho encweera* […] Where ripe berries are, there is a cobra." On a literal level, Aaron Mushengyezi explains, this riddle "sounds a warning to children to be careful as they scamper through the bush." It is expected to be taken literally until children are old enough to decipher the layers of meaning and deeper sexual innuendo:

> *N'omugurusi oshweire omukazi muto! Omukazi muto – (yaasheka) omukazi muto n'enkyerere ihiisize! N'obu orikuzirya encweera nekwiita! Ee? Encweera egi nekwiita!* […] It is an old man who has married a young wife! A young wife – (laughter) a young wife is ripe berries! You eat them but the cobra will kill you! Eh? That cobra will kill you!

That is, according to Mushengyezi, "[t]he old man may fail to satisfy the young woman's sexual desire." Adults might underestimate how much of this meaning that children understand: as they "progress into puberty their sexual curiosity undoubtedly leads them into exploring this grey, 'transgressive zone'" (Mushengyezi 2013, 20-24).

6 The story that we know as Little Red Riding Hood is mediated by two literary versions: the first, by Charles Perrault, in which Red meets a grisly end consumed by the wolf (1697), and later, cleaned up by the brothers Grimm, in which Red and her grandmother are rescued by a huntsman (Grimm and Grimm 1812). Many if not most oral versions of Red Riding Hood end with the girl saving herself; Jack Zipes argues that the Perrault and especially the Grimm versions transform a tale of sexual initiation into one in which a helpless girl is blamed for her own rape (1993, 4-5, 7, 24-25, 31, 33, 79-81, 348-349). This Red-huntsman-wolf construction mirrors the victim-saviour-savage trope in human rights discourse, with the savage (wolf) portrayed as bloodthirsty and barbaric, and the victim (Red) as sympathetic and innocent (cf. Mutua 2002a, 10-11, 25, 29). Such tropes are particularly prominent in the human rights bestseller and popular websites, the

stories in which often centre around non-white women victims needing rescuing from supposedly savage men; such stories have been used to justify military intervention in majority-Muslim countries as well as human rights and development interventions more broadly (Anker 2012, 35-49; Fernandes 2017, 38-68; cf. Kapur 2018, 122, 135-138). Kapur points to the ways that gender is co-opted "to serve the political ends of imperialism and colonialism, through the discursive construction of the powerless and victimised Third World woman," providing an excuse for increased securitisation. This, she argues, partly explains "the dominance of the script of violence in women's rights advocacy within the realm of international human rights" (Kapur 2018, 89, 94, 101-102).

9 In Juliet's version of Red Riding Hood, the reference to the wolf's big eyes was followed by a reference to its big lips "to kiss you with" and big hands "to pat you with." Yet when I told an alternative version of the story in a way that emphasised Red's sexuality, echoing her words, Juliet said "that's an adult story. We've never read it that way!" Perrault's and Grimm's violent retellings of the story of prim little Red Riding Hood obscure the story's history as a bawdy sexual initiation tale. For example, in some oral versions, Red performs a striptease for the wolf, taking off items of clothing and throwing them in the fire. That said, Zipes argues that Perrault's version can be understood on multiple levels, with adults enjoying euphemistic details that pass child listeners by, like the colour of the little cap, red being associated with sin, sexuality and the devil (1993, 25-26).

Many later versions of the story of Red Riding Hood have emphasised its dark sexual overtones – the devouring wolf as rapist – but fewer have retained the allusion to Red's own sexual pleasure, instead blaming Red for her own violation (Zipes 1993, 34, 37-49, 64-67, 74-75, 77-78, 379-380). Some twentieth century feminist retellings, most prominently Angela Carter's, reinstate the focus on sexual pleasure; but most retain the emphasis on sexual predation, even as they suggest that Red is capable of rescuing herself (Zipes

1993, 58-61, 64-65, 343, 380; Carter [1979] 2012, 135-137). Ní Dhomhnaill in Ireland and Sylvia Tamale in Uganda both argue that patriarchy, colonialism and religion have repressed relatively positive pre-colonial conceptualisations of female sexuality (Ni Dhomhnaill 2005, 17-19; Tamale 2014, 160-169; cf. Marais 2019, 91). Tamale argues, with reference to religion, "[b]y keeping sexual pleasure in the background and foregrounding the risks and dangers associated with sexuality, practices of self-surveillance, particularly for women, are intensified" (2014, 162).

In the workshop, after hearing my alternative version of Red Riding Hood that included a striptease, Amanda asked, "how naïve could she have been […] that whole process, and then she discovers that she's already naked and gets into the bed. […] There was a lot of time to think about the decisions that she was making." Bwojji followed by saying, "if a parent does not talk to their kids about certain things, the world or society will force the kids to get to know those things." He also pointed to the ways self-surveillance is closely bound up with community surveillance: "the fault is the parents', they never told her to pay attention. […] She was the envy of the village. The mother would have been aware of this kind of society they are living in. And she would have been more cautious, would have protected her more. So even when she tells her to go to the forest, she would have given her some warnings. Because at least they would have known that the creature lives in that forest."

The human rights and development sectors may inadvertently reinforce practices of surveillance through a focus on sexual violence and health risks to the neglect of more positive explorations of women's sexuality. In 2003, southern African feminist theorist Patricia McFadden argued that responses to HIV/AIDS – "the hubbub of research, debate and 'aid'" – are moulded by "patriarchal sexual discourses […] and heterosexist expectations" of sexual behaviour, "reinforcing the deeply embedded cultural taboos and claims that define sexual pleasure and freedom as 'dangerous' and

'irresponsible'." At the same time, they conceal the ways in which HIV/AIDS has actually spread to women in heterosexual relationships (McFadden 2003). Approaching questions of female sexuality as part of interventions ostensibly about domestic violence and health positions women as sexual victims, framing women's sexuality in terms of risk and danger rather than pleasure (cf. Marais 2019, 88-89).

But surely some women do, in fact, enjoy sex and the myriad other ways in which our sexuality might be expressed (cf. Tamale 2005, 21-29).[74] For example, in a study involving low-income women in western Uganda in relationships with men, all participants except one "indicated experiences of sexual desire and enjoyment of sexual interaction with their spouses." Participants "stressed that sexual enjoyment and satisfaction can only be attained when the interaction is mutual and reciprocal, done in a relaxed and stress-free environment" (Muhanguzi 2015, 64, 66-67).[75] In the workshop, in response to the discussion about Red's naivety and the mother's responsibility to protect her child referenced above, Natasha Khadijjah suggested another interpretation. "In the story you say that the first thing she realises is that she knows it's not gran'ma, so she knows what the person's doing." Natasha wondered whether it might have been her "first time with someone. […] She knows from the beginning that this is not a family member. This is the guy, and she is aware of his arms, and then she takes everything off knowingly and she gets inside the bed. Sounds a lot like […] just a happy sexual act between two people."

[74] Stella Nyanzi proposes a broad definition of sexuality that goes beyond who women want to have sex with to include: "desire, the erotic, emotions, sensuality, fantasy, intimacy, commitment, power, relationship, negotiation, exploration, exploitation, expression, trust, personhood, belonging, identity, pleasure, entertainment, consumption, obligation, transaction, dependence, work, income, resistance, abuse, masculine entitlement, feminine propriety, respectability, spirituality, custom and ritual" (2011, 48).

[75] At the end of the Femrite workshop, a male participant suggested that some Ugandan women were very assertive in sexual encounters; they knew what they wanted and would tell their male partner if he was not doing a good job – at least before they got married.

More celebratory discussions of the multiple dimensions of women's sexuality might strategically fit this topic within culturally acceptable frames. They might focus on topics like good health rather than on the more controversial concept of sexual empowerment. They might engage and reinterpret religious texts like the Bible, given the centrality of religion to people's lives. Or they might explore and reclaim the pre-colonial by drawing on conceptualisations of sexuality in African traditional religions, tapping into traditional initiation institutions, like that provided by the *Ssenga* among the Baganda,[76] or building on the status of nudity as part of women's traditional repertoires of resistance (Tamale 2005 and 2014, 153, 171, 173-177 and 2017; Tibasiima 2013, 182-183; cf. Nabulime and McEwan 2010, 281-283, 285, 287, 291).

At times such discussions may seem, to the external observer, like capitulation to anti-feminist patriarchal and religious norms. In retelling the story of Red Riding Hood, the ambivalence of the story – does it permit expression of young women's desires and anticipated pleasure or is it just about preparing us to accept inevitably abusive relationships? – makes me feel very uncomfortable (cf. Tamale 2005, 15). In the discussion in the workshop, Juliet pointed to how the power dynamics in a relationship can lead the person with less power to pretend that they were willing to do what they did, out of fear. Natasha and others also pointed to the historical normalisation of very early marriage in Uganda – which also gives context to the oral tradition of Red Riding Hood in Europe. Picking up positive expressions of sexuality from a story that normalises something the reader finds unacceptable is troubling. In his work retelling folktales, Oscar Ranzo said that he prefers to edit this out, reframing traditional

[76] We touched upon the role of the Ssenga at the Femrite workshop, but there was not enough time to discuss it in detail. At the ActionAid workshop, looking at the story of Nambi and Kintu, a small group of women had a discussion at the margins of the workshop about how the Ssenga taught women not just how to give pleasure, but also how to receive it (cf. Tamale 2005).

stories about marriage as being about friendship instead.[77] Yet given the centrality of such discourses and cultural references to people's lives, this may be where the discussion has to begin. Obioma Nnaemeka's concept of nego-feminisms might be helpful here. "[B]uilding on the indigenous," such feminisms are "structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever-shifting local and global exigencies;" they know "when, where and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts" (Nnaemeka 2004, 377-388, 380-382; cf. Tamale 2020, 147-148).

And, after all, there is always the possibility that the external observer is wrong.

10 In retelling the story of Red Riding Hood, I unconsciously replicated a trope common to many other European folktales by giving the female protagonist a child to care for on her journey through the forest rather than allowing her to make that journey alone (cf. Klapproth 2004, 362). The courtship between Red and the narrator may reflect my own negotiation between gender identities that fit within and reinforce patriarchal institutions – like that of a mother or carer – and those that don't – symbolised by the ambiguously gendered, shape-shifting fox/wolf/*sí*.[78] The little people – or *sí* – in Ireland, far from the myth of the leprechaun popularised in the US, are evil little creatures who would steal human babies and replace them with a changeling that the parents are forced to raise. This legend may have functioned to give parents, especially mothers, a safe way to express their transgressive dislike of and desire to harm their new-born babies (cf. Warner 1994, 6-8, 36-37).

Recognising many women's ambivalence towards motherhood may help to destabilise women's association with that role. As Tamale points out, the close association between motherhood and nationalism positions women as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but this rarely

[77] The stories he is working on are designed for use in schools.

[78] For an evocative glimpse of the celebration of gender-nonconforming identities in Uganda, see Nyanzi 2014.

translates into women actually holding political power. Women, in representing the nation, must remain pure and unsullied to preserve and transmit cultural values; those who try to rewrite this script and assert their political autonomy in, for example, the use of nudity as a mode of political protest in Uganda, "are not only held in contempt but also face punitive action" (Tamale 2017, 69-70; cf. Tamale 1999). In Ireland, the articulation of national identity after independence was founded on an ideal of women as pure and unsullied; the new State punished sexual transgression (unmarried mothers) with mass institutionalisation (Fischer 2016, 822-829). The Irish Constitution explicitly defines women's citizenship in terms of the role of wife and mother (Beaumont 1997). Article 41.2 reads as follows:

> The State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.
>
> The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.

The pure Irish mother may have been of major symbolic importance for the nation, but actual women have long been marginalised politically. Mothers, especially single mothers, continue to be neglected in Irish government policy – with particular challenges around housing and childcare – even in the aftermath of an official State apology for the brutal treatment of single mothers in religious institutions in the recent past (Fischer 2017, 753-755, 759-762; cf. Enright and Ring 2020). While there have been two female presidents of Ireland (a largely symbolic role as head of state) there has never been a female Taoiseach (head of the executive).

On the other hand, Sr Dominica Dipio argues that the centrality of motherhood as a theme in proverbs from around Africa preserves traces of a matriarchal heritage that can be mobilised to challenge patriarchy. In pre-colonial matriarchal societies, she argues, the association of women with motherhood was suggestive of their power

over social and economic domains, not of their oppression: “at times a father’s identity may not even be known; and yet there is no stigma attached to this because life is organised around the mother” (Dipio 2019, 4-7, 16; cf. Tamale 2020, 147-148, 228-229). She finds in one Buganda proverb a reflection of how care work embodies the gift economy, contrasting with the exchange and profit-oriented economy aligned with patriarchy and capitalism: “A girl child is like a mutuba tree: those who profit did not plant it” (Dipio 2019, 10-11). Such networks of care are also reflected in some African proverbs about co-wives. Many such proverbs focus on competition, but some emphasise mutual support, as in the following Kiganda and Lango proverbs: “If a wife sees the stick that beats her co-wife, she throws it into the wilds,” and “A woman delivers a baby with the help of her co-wife” (Dipio 2019, 13; cf. Tamale 2020, 314). And there is an expectation that the mother should be cared for in her turn, as reflected in these Kiganda proverbs: “An aged cow suckles (the udder of) its offspring” and “He who takes anything to his mother never says it is too heavy” (Dipio 2019, 18).[13] Picking up on the phrase “the animals thinned out with the trees,” George Gumikiriza said, “from the word go I can start imagining this forest […] the patches here, the trees there and there is a patch here... And I liked how I didn’t understand some things.”

[14] *caipín rua*: red (hair/fur) cap

[15] *cad … adhmad*: what will we do from now on without trees; the first line of a traditional lament for the disappearance of Irish woods and the passing of the Gaelic order (Ní Dhomhnaill 2005, 21-22). Native forest is wild and unmanaged; in many oral versions of Red Riding Hood, Red is seen to be part of this anarchic system, able to defend herself. In the Grimm version, the huntsman, representing a new State authority over the forest, rescues her instead (Zipes 1993, 34-36). Some Ugandan ogre stories warn about the dangers of the forest, others about the dangers of home, but almost all have family or community members – mothers, fathers, siblings, the elderly and the disabled – come to the rescue. This reflects the lived reality of

interdependence that Tamale associates with the tradition of Ubuntu – a familiar idea that could be used to reconceptualise justice (Tamale 2020, 220-233). Following Spivak, such lived realities and the way they are represented in storytelling might constitute the threads of long delegitimised epistemes that can be patiently teased out as part of an effort to activate habits of responsibility and redistribution and inculcate responsiveness to the call of the other (cf. Spivak 2004, 529, 558-559).

16 The Perrault and Grimm versions of Red Riding Hood excised references in the oral tradition to the wolf directing Red to find, sometimes cook, and consume her grandmother's flesh and blood (Zipes 1993, 4, 24). In Ireland black pudding, made with pig's blood and fat, is a popular food and a plausible means for Red to consume human flesh and blood without noticing (or while maintaining plausible deniability). Ugandan writer Okot p'Bitek in his *Song of Lawino* makes a mockery of anthropologists' obsession with cannibalism in so-called 'primitive' cultures, with the persona, Lawino, expressing astonishment at the Christian mass as at a cannibalistic ritual (Okot [1966/7] 1984, 75; cf. Warner 1994, 68-79). Identifying cannibalistic-like rituals in European folklore and religion may help to upend the problematic distinction between the 'civilised' West and the 'primitive' other that is so persistent in human rights discourse.

18 One version of the classic Irish tale of a woman's transformation from *cailleach* (hag) to *spéirbhean* (beautiful woman) is that of Mis, who on finding her father dead after battle, drinks his blood and subsequently roams the wilds, killing and eating those she meets, before being tamed by way of a sex game with a harpist. Ní Dhomhnaill emphasises the connections between this story and the myth of the construction of a civilised Irish nation, pointing to how this might disempower women in practice even as it elevates us symbolically (Ní Dhomhnaill 2005, 48-49, 57-58, 80-83). Comparably, the legend of Queen Kitami of the ancient kingdom of

Mpororo in south-western Uganda has her hand over power to a man after she has sex with him, "legitimising a patriarchal order" (Mushengyezi 2009, 82-87); and the story of Nambi and Kintu locates the origins of the Buganda kingdom in a story about how divine woman Nambi was made subservient to the mortal man Kintu – his name can be translated as 'Thing.' Performers might use the moment of telling such stories to challenge or subvert assumptions about gender roles, but this might be rather subtle, difficult for an outsider to detect, and is unlikely to be recorded in transcribed versions of the tales (cf. Kabaji 2009, 137-144).[79]

Ní Dhomhnaill accesses old Irish stories and songs from records in Irish language archives (2005, 17-19, 84). In contrast, just as the Red Riding Hood we know is shaped by the Perrault and Grimm versions, the versions of traditional Irish stories I encountered at school are shaped by the elitism and ideologies of those involved in the Celtic Revival in the early twentieth century, which privileged the romantic ideal of a sensitive and chivalrous Celt despite manuscript evidence suggesting a more brutal past (Mattar 2004, 11-40, 225-227, 241-245). In the folklore collected during this period, heroic epic is well represented where other strands of storytelling tradition are not, notably stories told by women (cf. Ní Dhomhnaill 2005, 52-53; Harvey 1989). The stories are shaped by the elitism and preferences of influential collectors of folklore, like Lady Augusta Gregory, who constructed her local informants as "pure-minded and unpolitical" when they might have been anything but that (Mattar 2004, 220-224, 235-236).

In the workshop, Dilman Dila described how African storytelling involves not just one form of narration by a single storyteller, but performance: "there's song, there's dancing […] a festive, like a

[79] A reading of the transcribed texts informed by a greater degree of contextual background may well come to a different conclusion. For example, African proverbs are often read as representing women as sources of evil, but Dipio's critical and contextually-informed close reading of transcribed texts of proverbs from around Africa challenges this assumption, uncovering instead traces of Africa's matriarchal past (2019, 8).

celebratory kind of thing." As a child, he remembers sitting in the kitchen as food was cooking: "someone begins a story and then the other person says: no, no, no, that's not what happened […] at the end of the day, like three people have told that story!" Yet for the most part, written versions of Ugandan orature are presented in English and make no reference to the original languages or performance contexts (Mushengyezi 2013, xvii-xxii; cf. Okot 1978, xi-xiv).[80] A number of participants noted that even translations by Ugandan scholars make linguistic choices that reinforce colonial constructions of traditional culture; for example, using the word 'witchdoctor' instead of 'diviner,' even though such people were neither witches nor doctors. Other words lose meaning in translation; for example, the word 'ogre' implies something that is not human, but the Achioli word *obibi* represents a monster that can also be a person; that is, a shapeshifter (like the fox/wolf/*sí* in my story).

Local language versions of African folktales produced during the colonial period were influenced by missionaries who promoted the collection of folktales and controlled local-language printing presses across the sub-continent. In her study of West African literature, Moradewun Adejunmobi argues that missionary intervention functioned to construct "new forms of the local" whose supposed authenticity could be used "to deny the agency of the educated African and the legitimacy of the educated African's voice" (2004, 15-17, 24-25, 27, 185). A similar point could be made about how efforts to record supposedly authentic versions of oral texts have functioned to deny the creative agency of the individual oral performer. As Okot points out, "it is incorrect, that folk music and songs have no individual composers, but simply emerge from the

[80] When traditional stories are represented in print, key narrative features like setting, audience interaction and evaluative components – all of which embed the story in larger discursive contexts – are often removed (cf. Klapproth 2004, 155-159; Okot 1974, ix and 1978, xi-xv; Gulere 2016, 62, 73, 203).

crowd. In the Acoli context every song, every tune, had an individual composer" (1974, 3).

19 As previously noted, in the oral tradition Red Riding Hood was used as a sexual initiation tale and the telling often included a bawdy call and response account of Red's striptease for the wolf. Among the Baganda, Basoga and many other Ugandans, it is considered inappropriate to talk about sex directly, especially in front of children. Rather, as discussed above in relation to the riddle about "ripe berries," information about sex is revealed gradually over time and explored using "language layered in metaphors" (Mushengyezi 2008, 242-243 and 2013, 3-5). Riddling can offer a "witty, provocative, exploratory, playful and yet serious" way of exploring sexuality; associated wordplay or innuendo remains "decently veiled even among mixed age groups, while still making its meaning apparent." In one children's riddling session in Eastern Uganda, 45 of the 60 riddles posed were related to sexuality (Gulere 2008, 253-261). While the pleasure of such riddling seems to be as much or more in relation to breaking taboos as in the expression of desire, riddling has the potential to be more expansive. For example, in a love riddle performed by Basoga street comedian Diikuula, Wambi Gulere suggests that one phrase – "*Kitegeeza nti bwolingema obulungi [asiba amagulu] ndi tyama [asibulula amagulu]* … It means that when you catch me well [closes his legs] I will sit [opens the legs]" – alludes to the "penis and, more broadly, that what holds a woman in marriage is sex and sexual satisfaction" (2009, 57). The riddle later calls on women to respond sensitively to a man's sexual advances on pain of divorce (Gulere 2009, 61-62), but the seeds of an exploration of mutual pleasure are there. The practice of riddling presents an opportunity to exploit this potential: there may be a correct answer or set of answers fixed by tradition, but alternative answers and new meanings might be negotiated as part of the interaction between performer and audience (Gulere 2009, 64 and 2013, 142-143, 147-151

and 2016, 60-61, 72, 91-96, 101-107, 159-161, 199; cf. Mushengyezi 2013, 16-18, 28).

Ní Dhomhnaill points out that the Irish language is full of humorous sexual innuendos (2005, 17-19), but this rich vocabulary does not carry over into the English used today. Abuse – by the religious, in institutional homes, of single mothers – and control of women's bodies are writ large in Ireland's recent past. In the past few years, discursive shifts associated with the abortion referendum campaign may have created an environment more conducive to discussions about women's control over their bodies. Perhaps there is potential for this to open up into a subtle and playful exploration of what gives Irish women pleasure and the myriad ways in which our sexuality might be expressed. For instance, a recent review of sexuality and relationships education in Ireland suggests that there is appetite for moving away from an approach emphasising risk and danger towards a more positive exploration of sexuality (NCCA 2019, 18-19, 50, 64).

21 In Irish dancing, the discipline of stiff upper body alongside complex footwork – "God in the upper body and the devil in the feet" – may have emerged as a counterpoint to English stereotypes of the "unruly Irish," embodying a more docile, capable but subordinated political identity in reaction and resistance to English colonial influence (Wulff 2005, 48, 50, 58). There are also clear associations with sexual repression under a society heavily influenced by the Catholic Church. In contrast, in Buganda, Uganda, the traditional Baakisimba dance involves significant movement of the hips and waist, playing a role in preparing girls for a successful sexual life in marriage and allowing women to express sexual desires that cannot be voiced, as well as being performed before the Kabaka. After Vatican II, Baakisimba began to be performed by nuns as part of worship in the Catholic Church in Uganda. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza notes that this allowed for an expression of sexuality among nuns, partly undoing the way that their celibacy was seen to erase their status as women in

Baganda society, although this sat uncomfortably with their vows of chastity (2005, 147-151, 164, 167, 170, 174, 183-186).

23 When Oisín, lover of the immortal Niamh of the golden hair, leaves the Land of Eternal Youth to visit his home in Ireland, he falls off his horse trying to help some men move a large stone; being in contact with the land again causes him to age quickly and die.

27 On seeing a raven drinking calf blood in the snow, the child Deirdre swears to marry a man with raven-black hair, lips as red as blood and skin as white as snow. When that man – Naoise – is killed, Deirdre kills herself by throwing herself from the king's chariot. Like the versions written by influential Irish writers Lady Gregory and J. M. Synge, the version of Deirdre of the Sorrows that I encountered at school "played down the untamed female sexuality that was so important to the older versions of the myth" (Mattar 2004, 181). As compared to her source text, Gregory's version omits an incident in which Deirdre drinks Naoise's blood after his death (Mattar 2004, 223).

For workshop participants, the reference to the colour of Naoise's skin and lips seems to have prompted an association with the story of Snow White. Amanda said, "I actually remember all the white, the white folktales. Cinderella. Beautiful Rapunzel. Snow White. […] There were exciting images, you would literally actually look at the book because of the images." Dilman talked about the way a small number of publishing companies and media studios seek to appeal to certain audiences, imagining them saying: "Oh, we need to appeal to certain people, so it has to be a blue-eyed girl with blond hair and what." "*The Bluest Eye*," said Hilda Twongyeire, nodding to Toni Morrison's book. "The whitest skin," said another participant, "skin as white as snow, and lips as red as blood," echoing my description of Naoise, but also the Grimm version of Snow White (in the sanitised Disney version, her lips are "as red as the rose"). "I watch some of these Disney movies," Caroline Nalule said, "I can't believe I watched this as a kid and I thought this was ok. I feel like as you get older, you

cannot just deceive yourself and say: it's just a story. No. There are certain things that you begin to see. […] One way or other you will become aware that: um, something here is not right."

When talking about my story, participants tended to point to elements they enjoyed, emphasising connection over difference. Bringing in other stories seemed to open more room for discussing colonial and homogenising dynamics and resisting collaboration or relevance. In her provocative article *Against Collaboration*, Grace Musila wonders what would happen if the "native," being subject to the everyday injustices of transnational research collaborations, were to be indifferent, if they simply wandered off (2019, 288, 292; cf. Nnameka 2004, 362-370):

> What would emerge out of these projects if, rather than being encouraged to adopt the registers and theories legitimised by the Northern academic machinery, they [Africa-based researchers] were encouraged to pursue the questions they deem relevant, on their own terms and in their own registers? How would the texture of the academy change if it was hospitable to these registers and textures, rather than panel-beating them into adopting the monochromatic registers and accents of thought legitimised by the North?

"In order to participate fully in the shaping of knowledge about Africa, Africans NGOs," Nnaemeka argues, "should not hesitate to bite the finger that feeds them" (2004, 368).

29 In the Irish song *Siúil a rún*, a girl cries over her lost love who has gone to France to become a mercenary, emigrating, as young people in Ireland have long done and continue to do, in search of economic opportunity. While Ireland was colonised by the British, Irish people, as mercenaries, merchants and – especially – missionaries were also complicit in the colonial project. Since 1994, Uganda has been a key recipient of development aid from Ireland which funds, among other programmes, an ActionAid project combatting gender-based violence in Busoga in Eastern Uganda (ActionAid 2016, 23-24).

30 In the workshop at Femrite, heavy rain had driven us inside – we were crammed into a small dark room with the rain drumming on the roof, resonating with some of the images in the story. “The stretch of the thickness of the dark to the sea,” Bonnetvanture Asiimwe suggested, could be understood as a “description of the forest and what is in the forest […] it could even be a description of what were the men doing in the forest.” This was not my intention, but it is a striking image, with uncomfortable echoes of Africa as the ‘dark continent.’ “The girl at the door,” Bonnetvanture asked, “what is she escaping from, what’s her fears?”

31 “It reminds me,” he went on to say, “of reading Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*. When they say children are being eaten, it’s not taken literally…” While he did not explicitly discuss the ways that colonial and class exploitation in contemporary Ireland were represented in that story, he pointed to how the layers of meaning in this kind of story could be endlessly unpacked.

32 *éirigh … stóirín*: get up my darling.

33 Many if not most oral versions of Red Riding Hood emphasise Red’s cunning in tricking the wolf and saving herself. For example, in one version she threatens to defecate in the bed; in horror the wolf lets her go outside through the window and she escapes, sometimes accompanied by her siblings (Zipes 1993, 1-5, 23). In the Grimm version of the story, the huntsman, representing a new State authority over the forest, becomes the rescuer and Red is relegated to a character needing rescuing (Zipes 1993, 34-36).

In the workshop some participants compared the Busoga ogre story Mudo that I gave them to read with the Kiganda story of Nsangi. In the version of Nsangi that Natasha was told, “it is the mother who goes looking for the beast,” drawing on her own cleverness in tempting the ogre with a delicious meal. In contrast, in Mudo, the father rescues the girl, with help from the same medicine man who

helped the ogre capture her (Tibasiima 2013, 180-181).[81] These differences suggest a tension between matriarchal and patriarchal traditions in stories from different parts of Uganda – and in different versions of those stories. But Dilman and Natasha were particularly taken with how children in these stories were the victims, and adults were the heroes. While the story of Red Riding Hood centres on a child without her parents, Natasha pointed to how Mudo – the child – has no voice in that story and the parents are the heroes. They seemed not so much to be rejecting of Ubuntu in favour of the individualism of rights, as exploring the hierarchies and limitations of the way this concept has been articulated in traditional stories. Alternative articulations can be found in other traditions. For instance, Dilman compared Mudo with the Achioli story of Awili in which it is the girl's sister or brother who kills the monster she unwittingly marries, not her parents.[82]

35 Cú Chulainn is the child hero of the saga *An táin bó cuailgne* which comes, like the story of Deirdre and Naoise, from the Ulster cycle of battles and martyrdom from the north of Ireland. The wanderings and adventures of the Fianna, including Oisín's father Fionn MacCumhaill, come from the west and south of Ireland. Those involved in the Celtic Revival drew most explicitly on the Ulster cycle in constructing the myth of the Irish nation, but there is some evidence to suggest that ordinary people preferred the stories of the Fianna (Mattar 2004, 237).

39 *Siúil … ciúin*: go, go, go my love, go quickly and go quietly.

40 This picks up on images from the widely-recorded song *Siúil a rún*. Like Red Riding Hood, the representation of the protagonist in that song shifts back and forth between virtue and wantonness.

[81] In the version of Nsangi collected by Dipio and Sillars, her mother consults a "witchdoctor," who gives her a magic stick to hit the ogres with (Dipio and Sillars 2012, 254).

[82] Cf. Dipio and Sillars 2012, 229-234. Dilman emphasised how there are multiple different versions of this story, with key details changing from village to village.

42 The chorus of the love song *Éirigh suas a stóirín* can be translated as follows: rise up my darling / if you are not sitting up / open the door / and let me into the house / I have a bottle with me / I will bring a drink to the woman of the house / and I hope that you don't refuse / me your daughter. On my reading, this love song has sinister overtones of stalking and abuse analogous to those that come through in Red Riding Hood. Like the song, my story cycles back onto itself and begins to repeat, with a slight shift in emphasis and new interpretative possibilities.

43 I finished the story by singing the refrain of *Siúil a rún*: go (walk), go, go my love / go peacefully and go quietly / go to the door and escape (elope) with me / and may you go safely my darling. Amanda was particular struck by this song; a number of other participants picked up on the musicality of the rest of the story. For Oscar, the thing that stood out "was the sound of it, whether it was rhythmic or, I don't know, was musical, the rhyme… it was really the sound of it being read aloud […] because the sound was so nice, it kind of sent me to sleep and then I came back [laughter]." George described how "you get lost in the imagination and then, as your mind goes further and further, you forget yourself here […] your mind goes to a different place." Mihai suggests that literary works can help us to see the world differently, to transcend the limited horizons of our experience. By seducing the reader "to immerse herself productively and experimentally in alternative scenarios," the pleasurable elements of the story make the discomfort of such scenarios tolerable. Following Spivak, she argues, "literary works insinuate themselves into the reader's memory via the imagination […] without us being fully aware of how exactly they get us to imaginatively reconfigure our memories, beliefs and emotions" (Mihai 2018, 400, 404-405; cf. Spivak 2013). Echoes of childhood songs and rhymes are particularly evocative. The sound of a lullaby can calm us down and put us to sleep, but children's rhymes often have dark and complex themes and might be used to create, as one workshop participant said, an

atmosphere of tension and suspense. And just as she said it, it started raining again, hard against the corrugated iron roof.

5.4. Conclusion

Despite or perhaps even because of their troubling and ambiguous nature, stories like Red Riding Hood can be drawn upon in negotiating how women's rights are described and promoted and in reimagining shared priorities and situated solidarities. The story of Red Riding Hood is a folktale that has been retold and reimagined more frequently than most, legible in Uganda due to its prominence in global culture and also due to analogous ogre stories in Ugandan orature. In its multiple versions, the story speaks to debates about gender-based violence and female sexuality and political agency. I engage with the story's troubled history, shifting between the celebration of Red's sexuality and cunning in the oral tradition, and literary versions which transform the tale into one in which a young girl is blamed for her own rape – or, in many feminist versions, where she fights back. Analogously, interventions to promote women's rights tend to focus on protecting women from violence, but rarely celebrate the expression of female sexuality. Translocating the story into an Irish context and comparing this with Ugandan storytelling traditions highlights parallels between Ireland and Uganda especially in terms of obstacles to women's political leadership and the repression of female sexuality. Uncovering alternative strands that have been silenced in the best-known versions of the Red Riding Hood story emphasises the complexity and variousness of cultural traditions; these are not fixed, but can be mobilised towards different political ends. "Stories," Natasha said, "are different than laws, for example, because they still allow for somebody else to understand what they want from it and they don't tell it fully. […] If you hear that story, you'd be like: oh, I kind of get it. Then when it happens to you, you still have a moment to add your own agency. […] So stories kind of do it better, they're kind of like suggestion and they allow you to have your own interpretation of reality." "[I]n the juridico-legal manipulation of the abstractions of contemporary politics by those who right wrongs," Spivak argues, "a reasoned calculus is instrumentally necessary." But this is insufficient.

Justice requires not just the righting of "singular and spectacular" wrongs, but also "changes in the habit of what seems normal living," suturing in "the ethical impulse that can make social justice flourish, forever in the mode of 'to come,' because forever dependent upon the qualitative education of the young" (Spivak 2004, 524, 531, 534-538, 548-550).

The version of Red Riding Hood presented in this chapter engages with the challenging and dark sides of cultural traditions as well as their emancipatory potential. It does not aim to be persuasive, but rather to remain in the mind of the reader, providing ambiguous images and threads of thought to mull over and tease out over time (cf. Benge 2008, 85). The effect of such storytelling practices may not be immediate, but may emerge after the audiences has puzzled over and revisited the stories they heard. In the workshop, one participant thought it was "something I can read for a long time and get bits from different paragraphs." Natasha felt that the complexity of the story reflected the complexity of women's experience:

> For me I appreciated how it was so dense. If you think of the old folktales that seem so very simple, but then if you're talking about the women's issues now, I think you've made room for how complicated they are now and how many more symbols are needed and like the layers and how hard it is to actually digest. I think that's a good thing.

Natasha felt that the ways in which feminism reflects this complexity gave her the language to describe what she had previously been unable to articulate, filling hermeneutical gaps:

> I think that a lot of times people say that feminism is the one that adds complexity to reality when it's not there, but if you are young and you don't have the language of feminism, you do realise these things, you just don't have the language. […] I know there's a lot of feelings I had as a child that I didn't know how to articulate, but they were there. […] Feminism just gives you a language to articulate what's not said. So, feminism isn't adding any complexity, it's just – making it visible.

Another participant said, "I didn't understand everything while you were reading, but just what I liked was […] the music, the tone, OK, things were flowing." But for Dilman there was a point when he got lost and "somehow,

switched off." Building relationships of solidarity and mutual understanding takes time and involves both understanding and misunderstanding, dialogue and silences. Such engagement might be intriguing even as it is sometimes confusing and sometimes resisted. Spivak suggests that "literary training, a slow mind-changing process, can be used to open the imagination to such mindsets" as "being defined by the call of the other." Such "uncoercive rearrangement of desires," she reminds us, requires "uncanny patience" and is "without guarantees" (Spivak 2004, 532-533, 558). There is only so much we could do in a half-day workshop. But my research hypothesis is that telling and retelling ambiguous stories like Red Riding Hood can create space – in the moment of telling and in our later reflections – to consider where we come from and what we desire, and how those desires might be engaged through or might influence relationships of solidarity. Such stories have the potential to do this at the same time as they prompt outrage on behalf of the other – and on behalf of ourselves.

6. Kintu and Nambi, or Nambi and Kintu

In the next chapter I discuss how social justice activists and writers participating in the ActionAid workshop used the story of Nambi and Kintu to explore questions related to gender, agency and the nature of political authority. This short chapter introduces that story, in a version told by participant Elijah Bwojji two days after the ActionAid workshop.

Kintu and Nambi, or Nambi and Kintu

Elijah Bwojji, Femrite, March 2020

My name
Is Bwojji Elijah.
Bwojji Elijah—Elijah Bwojji.

Kintu and Nambi—
Or Nambi and Kintu.
Depends where you want to come in from.

The first Muganda.
It is debatable, but—
Man who comes from nowhere.
Yes, the first Muganda.
Who lived on earth
With his cow.

And then
Some *kyana* came
Some *kyana* came from heaven
With her brother.
And then she saw the guy.
She liked him.

And then she conspired with her father
To steal his cow
So that he could go

To heaven to meet
Her father.

And when he met her father the father was—
Hesitant
To let this man
Marry
His daughter.

Well, the father decided to give this man
Tests
To prove, to prove him.

But the tests were not
For the man to prove his worth
That he could marry
The daughter.
But the tests were
For the man to get back his cow.

And then
The man met—
He didn’t do all the tests
Some were cheated for him
And he got all the tests done.

And then
He was given the, the wife
Who he never
Thought he would have.
And then the man went back to the earth.

But as they were going—
Before they went
They were told not to come back.

Because
Nambi had a brother who was

Who was bad.
He had—evil intents.

But as they were going,
Nambi remembered that she had forgotten
Millet
For her—chicken.

So she went back,
Got millet
And she found that her brother had
Returned.
And the brother said:

‘You are not leaving me here, I am bored!’
He didn’t say that I am bored.
But I feel like he was bored!

And so he goes
He comes back, he comes.
Because the first time
They came to earth
Walumbe wasn’t with them.
The brother.

So this guy says: ‘You know.
I’ve been exploring heaven.
I know every inch of heaven.
I want to see
New places.’

So Walumbe comes to earth
With Nambi as a tourist
And chooses
He chooses not to go back.
He chooses not to go back and—

Well, Nambi and Kintu procreate
They have children
Many children.
And our tourist becomes bored
With life.

And he says: ‘Oh, so help me with your kids
So that they can keep me company
And I raise them as my own
And I also feel important in this society of yours
To be like you guys.’

Kintu says: ‘No.
We shall not give you our children.
Go back to heaven.’

Walumbe becomes jealous, see.
And envy eats him
And he starts stealing their children
And killing them.

And so they try to intervene
But things become worse and worse and worse.
So Nambi goes back to her father
And confesses
Her crimes.
And then Gulu is—pissed!

But then
Because he’s a father what can you do.
Your child has come back and they need—
They need help
And because you love the girl more than the boy
Because both they were, both they were his children.

So he sends another brother to go
And get Walumbe
To bring him back.

But the brother fails.
Because Walumbe has been on this world
So he knew every single *corner*.

And Kaikuzi has just been
He has just come only once
He has just come only once
To this earth.

So Walumbe
Is more clever
Than Kaikuzi.
So Kaikuzi—doesn't
Isn't able to catch Walumbe.

So after some time
I may believe it was years
He becomes bored with earth.

And like: 'You know what.
I have to go back
For my inheritance.
If my father was there he would have produced more sons
And they would have taken my inheritance.'

So he tells Nambi
And goes back to
Heaven.

But mercifully enough
Kintu and Nambi
Produce more children.
So Walumbe cannot steal—faster
Than them producing.

So they can produce more.
Where he steals one
They produce like three or four!

So they have many children.
And the Baganda become
Come to be like that.

(Amen.)

7. Origin stories: resistant readings of multivocal texts

7.1. Introduction

As discussed in the introduction, Mutua and Tamale call on feminist and human rights activists in East Africa to develop conceptions of human rights informed by local realities and traditions and home-grown theory, in ways that help to decolonise human rights (Mutua 2009; Tamale 2009 and 2020). Where Santos emphasises the potential of cross-cultural dialogue to highlight the incompleteness of the human rights framework and other normative traditions, An-Naʿim supplements this call with one for internal discourse. Such discourse challenges the monopoly of the powerful in determining what culture says, revealing the ambivalence and contestability of cultural traditions (An-Naʿim 1992 and 2011, 182-196; Santos 2002). In this thesis, I propose vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice that can be used to overcome obstacles to dialogue, facilitating cross-cultural exchange and internal reflection on familiar cultural traditions. This can help participants to cultivate epistemic friction – to overcome wilful hermeneutical ignorance and colonisation of the mind – and can facilitate imaginative leaps – allowing participants to articulate concepts and imagine realities that do not yet exist. By picking up and attending to ways of perceiving and making sense of the world that have been neglected, and by making elements from different cultural traditions speak to each other, participants can use familiar and accessible storytelling practices to reimagine justice and begin to articulate new political claims – or to lend weight and legitimacy to the articulation of their existing concerns.

In this chapter I discuss how social justice activists, writers and artists participating in the ActionAid workshop used the story of Nambi and Kintu – a version of which is transcribed above – to reimagine justice together. I set out how the storytelling and related discussions unfolded over the course of the workshop, in the stories that participants told about their names, and

in their reflections on and recompositions of the Kiganda origin story of Nambi and Kintu. Drawing connections to other storytelling traditions, participants used these stories to explore questions related to gender, agency and the nature of political authority. These discussions modelled cross-cultural dialogue by bringing together participants from different cultures, but also in the comparison of different traditions participants were familiar with. In a process that mirrors the internal discourse that An-Naʿim calls for, participants reflected on how the stories they are familiar with shape their understanding of the world, and drew attention to the variousness of those traditions and the ways that they can be remade. Telling, discussing and reimagining familiar and accessible stories helped to reveal the assumptions underpinning dominant discourses, contest these interpretations of cultural traditions and surface devalued perspectives, and consolidate these insights. Some participants were struck by the experience of epistemic friction ; others used the process to share and refine homegrown perspectives on feminism, development and human rights, working to reconcile cultural traditions with more abstract conceptions of justice.

The ActionAid workshop ran over three days. The first day focused on the story of Nambi and Kintu, presented above as told by participant Elijah Bwojji two days after the workshop. On the second day of the workshop, Scovia Arinaitwe ran a session of personal storytelling and we considered the different ways that fictional as compared to personal storytelling could be used in development and human rights work. On the third day, we discussed other origin myths from Uganda and from the Bible. The relatively open structure of the discussion during each session meant that participants could bring back in questions that had been posed at an earlier point in the workshop; to reiterate, amend, supplement, and consolidate their

initial contributions. In my analysis of the workshop, I focus on the following questions:

- How can participants use fictional or symbolic stories to articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development? In that regard:
    - what contribution is made by form (narrative structure, devices, symbolic content) and what contribution is made by the practice of storytelling (thinking or seeing differently)?
    - to what extent does the articulation of alternatives emerge in the (re)composition and performance of the stories themselves, and to what extent does it emerge in the margins between exercises or in the interpretation of the stories examined or composed?

The presentation of the data roughly follows the first day of the workshop – I integrate subsequent reflections from the second and third days at relevant points of that first day's discussion. I supplement my analysis of data from the workshop with analysis of compositions by two participants: a version of the story that Elijah Bwojji told at the beginning of the Femrite workshop two days later (see Chapter 6); and a poem that Fortunate Tusasirwe composed in response to the workshop, presented to the Femrite readers/writers club a couple of weeks later and later edited and shared with me.[83] There is only so much that can be done in a three-day workshop, but some initial conclusions can already be drawn from the discussions; these are suggestive of how such a process might influence the development of participants' understanding of justice over time.

[83] I made suggestions for both of these compositions: I transcribed Bwojji's poem and made some small changes, in discussion with him; and I commented on Fortunate's poem during the club discussion on WhatsApp, and she incorporated some of my suggestions in her later changes. This approach was informed by my participation in the Femrite and Lantern Meet circles during my research trip in 2019: it was expected and encouraged that I offer my opinion like other participants – and also that I share my own work for others to comment on; the choice to participate in rather than observe these writing circles was useful in developing relationships. In the analysis I make note of points where I may have influenced the development of these texts.

The workshop brought together participants familiar with the development and human rights sectors, many of whom were familiar with how testimonial storytelling is used in those sectors, with writers and artists familiar with more literary versions of testimony and with fictional storytelling. As noted above, their contributions are informed by their familiarity with some of the traditions and epistemes neglected in development and human rights work, and by insights from their work and activism about the logics of the bureaucracies and networks that need to change. As all participants asked to be credited when I discuss their contributions in this thesis, it is worth introducing them briefly.

Four of the participants had taken part in two previous workshops in Kampala as part of the AHRC project: social justice activists Scovia Arinaitwe and Alex Atwemereireho, rap artist Buka Chimey, and poet and scholar Susan Kiguli. Duniya Khandoker, from ActionAid Bangladesh, was involved in all of the AHRC project activities that took place in Bangladesh; this was her first visit to Uganda. I had met three of the participants during a research visit to Makerere in 2019: Elijah Bwojji works as coordinator of the Lantern Meet poetry circle and Rachel (Abwole) Kunihira is the organisation's chair; and Joyce Wolayo is secretary to the board of women writers' association Femrite. Other participants were nominated by Femrite – Femrite officer Fortunate Tusasirwe and writer Martha Oringo – and by Lantern Meet – university student George Gumikiriza, and Charity Karungi, who runs Lantern Meet's recently established small-publishing arm and is also Abwole's sister. Pamela Enyonu and Matt Kayem are visual artists who worked with us on the AHRC project; Pamela previously helped Emilie Flower facilitate a workshop in 2019 as part of a York-ActionAid project on civic space.

ActionAid Uganda colleagues originally involved in the AHRC project had since left the organisation; ActionAid was represented by Jennipher Achaloi – who was involved in the 2019 civic space project – and a senior colleague, Nickson Ogwal, who came to the last day. Jennipher and Nickson both know Scovia well. Anindita Dutta and Collins (Howie) Odhiambo are both are involved in ActionAid International's work supporting social

movements. Anindita's background is in humanitarian and human rights law; when the workshop happened, she had just moved to Uganda where she is now based. Odhiambo has a background in journalism and is based between Denmark and his home city of Nairobi.

In their professional lives, Scovia, Alex, Jennipher and Nixon are all associated with different strands of social justice activism: Scovia with the women's movement; Alex with rural activism; Jennipher with ActionAid support to rural land rights activism; and Nixon with strategic and funding decisions as ActionAid Uganda shifts to do more to support social movements. Scovia in particular is involved in promoting social justice activism outside the context of NGO work, as she put it, in "more creative ways; building movements, operating informally to create a just society." Charity and Pamela have both worked in the development sector. The experience that Bwojji and Joyce have of running small cultural organisations mean that they are familiar with the language and logics of development aid funding mechanisms. For example, Bwojji could trot out a classic phrase about post-project sustainability – which would need to be included in most project funding proposals – while also contesting it:

> There is a succession plan; when the development NGO comes they empower at the same time and train people who will take over, make sure they train other people who take over, there is no gap – I don't think this is true [laughter].

In the discussion, participants highlighted some of the fault-lines that they had experienced working in the development sector in the global South: the way that the decisions they could make were caught by arbitrary bureaucratic logics; the pressure to respond to demand for stories of injustice or success stories; their experience of burn-out and mental health challenges; and hierarchies and abuse of power within the sector. As Anindita said, "unfortunately […] the development sector is plagued by colonialism; the same problems of power we try to address in communities also exist between us, but we very conveniently pretend as though that doesn't exist within our ranks." Nnaemeka emphasises the need to humanise

the development process, ensuring that "stakeholders' imagination, values, and worldviews are taken into account" (2004, 375-378):

> The development process, as it is expressed from outside and 'above,' has dragged Africans along while leaving behind African ideals of humanity, responsibility, compromise and the true partnership at the heart of democratic values that would have smoothed the rough edges of the so-called development in theory and practice.

In the following discussion, I consider how vernacular storytelling practices helped us to uncover and contest these dynamics, drawing on cultural traditions to begin to imagine justice in new ways.

7.2. Growing up post-colonial

On the first day of the ActionAid workshop, we asked participants to introduce themselves by sharing the story of their name. This invitation tries to disrupt the conventions of transnational activist meetings in which participants self-define according to their professional roles in the first instance, which inevitably influences the way they engage in subsequent discussions. This is not just a question of acknowledgement and rapport – as in Young's proposals for valuing greetings in the context of deliberative democratic processes – but a form of storytelling that can help participants understand each other's priorities, values and cultural meanings (Young 2000, 57-62, 75-77). It recognises that names have meaning and do hermeneutical work; unpacking this begins to reveal the multiple and often competing traditions that participants have been brought up in. This approach does not ask participants to hide their professional identities – many of them knew each other, or talked about what they did later in the workshop – but frames the discussion in terms of participants' origins and family relationships, while also leaving flexibility for participants to take the story in other directions.[84] For example, Richard Tugume quickly passed over Richard to explain how his name Tugume, which means patience,

[84] Scovia opened the discussion with a story of how she got her name. When it came to my turn, I gave a short account of the stories of Esther and Ishtar, to indicate that participants could choose instead to tell a traditional or fictional story related to their name; but most participants decided to tell the story of how they had received or claimed their names.

alludes to his grandfather's efforts to have a son.[85] He then linked his name to his own personality, describing how he helps his siblings and friends to solve problems by advising them to be patient and to wait for things to resolve themselves. Like in the genre of *testimonio*, Tugume used the story of his name to situate himself in relation to his family and friends. Others related their names to how things were going for their families at the time of their birth or to incidents in their childhoods. There was a certain ambivalence in these associations. For example, the name Wolayo – which means someone who is sick – reminds Joyce Wolayo of being very ill as a child; she chooses to "keep this name because it's a good family name for us and it's from my grandmother but it has so many contradictory meanings to it."

In her book *Growing Up Global*, Cindi Katz reflects on how children growing up in a village in rural Sudan increasingly straddle different worlds, as their sophisticated local environmental knowledge is supplemented by formal schooling, neither of which equip them for the major economic shifts – from pastoralism to large-scale commercial agriculture – happening around them (2004, 109-152). The participants in the ActionAid workshop are very different from the children in rural Sudan; the ways in which they are integrated into the global economy are much more obvious. And yet they also straddle different worlds, each giving them access to different hermeneutical resources. Their names reflect their family relationships and circumstances, cultural and religious influences, random bureaucratic decisions and the negotiation of patriarchal norms; all of which represent different arenas of hermeneutical training that can serve as correctives to the professional identities that are often centred in transnational activist workshops. Most participants had at least three names, if not many more, and talked about how they had connections to some of their names and not to others. Many participants were called a number of different names during the workshop. For example, the ActionAid colleague I was introduced to as

[85] In East Africa, the fact that someone uses two names does not necessarily mean that one is a given name and one is a surname; many people, like Tugume, use two given names (Susan Kiguli was an exception in this group).

Collins was also called ‘Odhiambo’ by some participants; others, notably Susan, called him by the pet name he told us that his mother gave him: ‘Howie,’ which means blessing.

Many participants grew up between relatives in villages and in Kampala; Jennipher, for example, “left the village at the age of ten – I came to study from the city.” Most went to English-medium schools, many to single-sex boarding schools. As discussed above, post-colonial education systems in East Africa continue to privilege European languages and references, reinforcing the colonisation of the mind and inducting students into ‘business culture’ and entrepreneurialism (Katz 2004, 109-110; Ngũgĩ 1986, 10-13, Mazrui 2004, 43-54; Rajak and Dolan 2016; Spivak 2004, 532-533, 540; Tamale 2020, 274-277).[86] Chimey was struck by how their education was designed to prepare students to be compliant: “we were moulded so good to follow instructions, but not so good enough to question the instructions.” In the workshop, participants described how random bureaucratic decisions at school led to name changes, illustrating how the education system is used to impose an arbitrary kind of order (cf. Katz 2004, 116-117). Some schools insisted that students adopt their father’s name as a surname, even though this wasn’t customary, or that they change the spelling of their names. When Joyce Mulayo was registering for her O Levels, the deputy principal at her school told them, “I’ve been seeing some of you adding names, it’s not great to have, you don’t have to have three names. Two names are more convenient.” This led Joyce to drop her official baptism name Deborah, despite her strong desire to have a name from the Bible. Decisions taken by teachers also reflect tensions between communities within Uganda. For example, a teacher made Jennipher Achaloi change the spelling of what was originally Acaloi – a name associated with the relatively marginalised Nilotic communities in the northern half of Uganda. Previously, the teacher had insisted on following

[86] A number of workshop participants, especially those from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds, had supplemented their formal education with eclectic and wide-ranging reading, picking up on different philosophies and slogans – from liberty, equality, fraternity to pan-Africanism to decolonisation – and using them to construct their identity and sense of purpose.

Luganda pronunciation conventions, from the southern part of Uganda, mispronouncing her name as A-k-alo, which means millet. But despite the teacher's decision, Jennipher retained some agency: when her brother learned at school that 'ph' was pronounced 'fuh,' she changed the spelling of her name from 'Jennifer' in response to his encouragement to "make your name fancy – make it different from everyone else."

Ngũgĩ describes colonialism – and Christian conversion specifically – as a vast renaming exercise, in which people and landmarks are stripped of their African names and "branded with a European memory" (2009, 7-15). Some participants valued their Christian names – like Joyce, who was pleased to make a connection to a "famous preacher" from the US, Joyce Meyer. Others were more ambivalent. (Michael) Matt Kayem – whose name was inspired by a Bible verse – told us, "Michael, Matthew, I wish I could cut them off, I don't really have a connection to them [… but] that's the name everybody knows me by." Others adopted new names later in life to claim additional or alternative identities. For instance, because Scovia's father had not paid bride price, her mother took away the names he had given her. After her father's death, Scovia went to look for his clan and was given the Bugisu name Kituyi in a naming ceremony. For bureaucratic purposes, "unfortunately I just had to continue with Arinaitwe Scovia because it was the formal name registered." But on a personal level, she has refashioned her identity to include all three names: "you won't find it Kituyi on my documents or any formal things, but it is the name I was given after I went to look for my people, how does that sound, so I am Arinaitwe Scovia Kituyi." Pamela (Aobo) Enyonu told us how she claimed the name Enyonu from her father – "I took it by force" – dropping Aobo because she wasn't sure of its meaning. While Scovia uses her new name more informally, Pamela managed to change her official documents to reflect the change:

> Aobo is named after my grandaunt […] as I was growing up, when I started to get into what names mean and ask people, what does it mean? And there were two conflicting – some people said it meant the first born, which I am, and other people say it meant pain. Now because I wasn't sure of what it meant so I started to let go of it, as I grew older. So, Enyonu I

> took by force; 'cos it was my father's name, and it was only given to sons, and I said, hmm, I want that name, so I took it. And it's now in all my official documents, so I took it.

Buka Chimey's name also reflects his strong sense of connection to his father and to his community. He is Ngobi David on his birth certificate, but "almost 99% of people know me by my artist name." When he decided to become a musician, his father suggested the name 'Chime' and Chimey added a 'y' to make it "sound good." The name Buka is a contraction of Bukaya, the village he grew up in: "they raised me in that community."

Most Ugandan participants were very familiar with the Kiganda origin story of Nambi and Kintu – as Susan said, "there is the assumption that if you come from this community, you may have, you may have heard it" – and I expected that they would have heard it from relatives. Yet when Scovia said that she hadn't heard it before, Abwole was surprised and asked, "did you go to school here?" It turns out that while Susan had heard the story from her grandmother, many participants had encountered the story in textbooks, like the *Nile English Course* (cf. Namayanja 2009, 110).[87] This may have been partly a generational thing – Susan has clear memories from before the 1980-81 war, whereas most others situated themselves as growing up in its aftermath – but it is also likely to relate to the dominant position of the Buganda kingdom within Uganda, as compared to other communities, nations and kingdoms.[88] When I first heard Abwole's question, I assumed her 'here' referred to Uganda, but Scovia responded by explaining that she went to school in the West (of Uganda) – by implication, not 'here' in Buganda.

[87] These were often relatively poor quality, direct translations but, as Susan said, "they really made us interested in reading."

[88] Most participants used the term 'tribe,' but many theorists are critical of the use of this term. 'Linguistic group' is more specific, but it makes it sound as though only one language is spoken in any given household, when there are often multiple languages spoken. Similarly, using the term 'ethnic group' risks erasing the ways in which participants' parents are often of different ethnicities and their children might sit between different groups and identities. For example, Pamela described herself "as an Iteso, or rather as a child of the Iteso." As such, I follow Susan's lead in using the term 'community.'

Not all participants told me which languages they speak or which communities they come from,[89] but some of the stories of their names revealed connections to different communities and languages. Rachel (Abwole) Kunhiri Masinde told us that Rachel was the name that her Rukiga great-grandmother was given when she converted to Christianity, while Abwole is a pet name from Bunyoro she was given – after her grandmother – which means a kitten climbing a tree and implies mischievousness. Rachel is the name she first introduced herself by, but when asked, she said that Abwole was the name she would prefer to be called. A number of young Ugandans I know have dropped Christian or European names in favour of their African names as part of a commitment to promoting African culture, but this is not necessarily straightforward. For example, Susan Nalugwa Kiguli is named after her "extremely elegant, extremely beautiful" aunt who was "called Susanna, from the Bible." This is a Christian name as per Ngũgĩ's renaming exercise, but Susan's remarks insist on the possibility that African references can be prosaic rather than exotic, and point to the ways that African names might also be imposed: "actually there's no exciting exotic-ness behind this name [Nalugwa], it's just from my – from the sheep clan. And I take my fath- because for the schools we went to we took our father's name [Kiguli]." As Pamela later highlighted, the practice of taking your father's or husband's name is a colonially-introduced practice; "we had our own names, marriage didn't mean we changed them" (cf. Tamale 2020, 315).

The mix of these different references is decidedly post-colonial. Ngũgĩ argues that the term 'post-colonial' lacks precision as regards the many diverse experiences of colonialism and its aftermath in different places and eras, and that the implied break with the colonial past is highly contestable – he calls for recognition of the 'neo-' in the post-colonial. But he also

[89] As far as I know, most participants identified with Bantu communities and knew Bantu languages (mostly Luganda; but also Runyankole, Lumasaba, Lusoga and others) although there were at least three with strong connections to Nilotic communities (Achioli, Lango and Iteso). Again, as far as I know, most participants were (or had been raised as) Protestants, but there were at least two Catholics, at least two people raised as Muslims and at least two self-described atheists.

suggests that if there is one thing that is constant in the concept of post-colonial it is that it absorbs the colonial into itself; it embodies the synthesis of imperial input and "the best of his own" (Ngũgĩ 2012, 49-51):

> The postcolonial embodies this new synthesis. While having its own particularity, like all other tributaries to the human, the postcolonial is an integral part of the intellectual history of the modern world because its very coloniality is a history of interpenetration of different peoples, cultures, and knowledge.

Mixing as such is not new. Barber says if there is anything that defines African popular culture (as imprecise as this notion is) it is hybridity – the appropriation of references from elsewhere to supplement and add variety to what was there before (2018, 12-16; cf. Ngũgĩ 2012, 85). References to local languages encode relationships of hierarchy and control – between Bantu and Nilotic languages, between Buganda and other nations and kingdoms – just as English encodes albeit more destructive traces of and continuities with the colonial period (cf. Ngũgĩ 2012, 60-61). Christianity is often as much part of participants' identities as the pre-colonial. This can be rather neo-colonial – statues of Jesus tend to have narrow noses and white skin, and preachers on television are often white US evangelicals like Joyce Meyer – but Christianity (as well as Islam) is also appropriated and transformed in the local context. For many Ugandan social justice activists, their religious faith or practice is a clear point of contrast with largely secular social movements in Europe. Growing up post-colonial has given participants access to a broad range of hermeneutical resources – concepts, practices and scripts or frames – that they drew upon in their discussions and in the stories they told during the workshop.

7.3. Resisting readers and reinventions

The session telling the story of our names was followed by a session led by Susan, in which we read, discussed and reimagined the story of Nambi and Kintu. This discussion explored themes related to gender, agency and the nature of political authority. Participants were resistant readers of the version they had been given, imagining other possibilities and connections

to the origin stories of other communities in Uganda as well as highlighting and contesting the associations with the biblical creation story of Adam and Eve. In discussing and contesting the ways in which this story reinforces the dominance of Buganda, participants grappled with tensions and inequalities between communities in the supposedly unitary nation state of Uganda. In their discussion of blame, they drew clear links between the story and the challenges faced by activists and woman leaders. This discussion approximates what An-Naʿim refers to as internal discourse, with participants considering and contesting the monopolised meaning of a key cultural text, guided by an expert – Susan – with significant internal legitimacy.

Susan first introduced the story that she gave us to read as the Kiganda "story of origin, as we called these stories in school, Kintu and? *(Nambi)* […] there are many versions but I've taken the version told to me by my grandmother." She only remembered to tell us that the last paragraph was an extension told to her by Professor Abasi Kiyimba – that she hadn't previously come across – when she asked us to consider "what aspects in this story do you really want to change." This may have primed discussions of what we wanted to change to focus on the (very patriarchal) extension, which gives Nambi's obstinance in going back to heaven against Gulu's orders as the justification for Kintu taking charge; forcing Nambi to kneel before him, to serve him and to refer all decisions to him, and prohibiting her from eating eggs and chicken. "To this day," said Abwole after she finished reading the story, "my grandmother does not eat chicken." I was worried that the inclusion of such an obviously contentious addition to the story would mean that participants didn't explore the more subtle ambivalences within the text. When asked what she would like to change, Abwole said "obviously the extension […] the extension is not a logical conclusion of what happened." But in the discussion, participants used the broad questions – what did you think of the myth, what did you react strongly to, what do you want to change – to explore what the story reveals about women's autonomy and the nature of political authority, picking up

on more subtle dimensions of the extension and of the rest of the story.[90] Reflecting on the story, Martha said, "disturbs your mind," prompting participants to wonder "maybe that the world wouldn't be in the state it is if certain things hadn't happened." This process continues activist traditions of using cultural expression to cultivate epistemic friction: to disrupt existing ways of thinking and "make us *wonder* about what we are doing," exposing "the sources and consequences of structural inequalities in law, the hegemonic terms of discourse, and the environment of everyday practice" (Young 2001, 685-688, emphasis original). While what can be achieved in a three-day workshop is limited, the process of discussing the story created space for participants to negotiate, renegotiate and begin to reimagine these relationships of power. Over time, the practice of noticing neglected elements and bringing together cultural traditions in new ways could facilitate imaginative leaps, helping East Africans "imagine and reimagine and invent and reinvent their societies" (An-Naʿim 2006, 28).

7.3.1. Reimagining Ugandan communities

The monopolisation of the meaning of the story of Nambi and Kintu by powerful cultural actors (cf. An-Naʿim 1992, 27-28) is most clearly reflected in the extension, where, as Chimey pointed out, Kintu "realised his power, and he defines society we are living in to be that a man has to be superior over a woman." Such traditions are naturalised, shaping ideas and behaviour; but reflecting on and contesting the stories in which they are encoded can help to expose them as constructions. For instance, Duniya argued that Kintu created the myth for his own purposes, claiming a connection with God – through his daughter, Nambi – and using that to argue that people need to obey him: "that power which is really trying to control us, and that power, that myth is really created by human beings […by] Kintu who is really creating all that bullshit things." Pamela was

[90] We discussed the following questions, first in smaller groups, and then as a larger group: "What are your thoughts about the myth, what did you react most strongly to? What aspects do you really want to change? What is the effect of reading the myth in a language different from the Luganda in which it was first told to Susan? and Create a brief conversation between Nambi and Kintu." These questions were useful in structuring the discussion and giving it momentum, even where they substantially overlapped.

struck that Duniya recognised that Kintu used the myth to claim power, without knowing that Kintu was also the first Kabaka (king) of Buganda.

Kintu's authority is established in the myth of Nambi and Kintu, reflected in the Kintu legends, made real through rituals associated with places named in the myth – like Tanda – and realised and challenged in the evolution of political arrangements. Under colonialism the British granted more political autonomy to the kingdoms of Buganda, Busoga, Bunyoro, Ankole and Toro than they did to non-monarchical communities like the Iteso, formalising kinship structures and marginalising more *ad hoc* forms of social organisation. The British considered Buganda to be the most 'developed' and 'civilised' of the Ugandan kingdoms and so granted them the highest degree of autonomy at independence (Jones 2008, 36, 42-44). Ranger argues that traditions invented and developed at King's College, Budo, where the Baganda elite were educated, in parallel with the increasing ceremonialism of the role of the Kabaka, produced a "synthesis not unlike that of nineteenth century England" ([1983] 2012, 222-223). The power of the Kabaka has been significantly weakened in subsequent political developments, and there are long-standing tensions between the Buganda kingdom and the Ugandan state, but the Baganda continue to hold a dominant position in socio-cultural hierarchies in Uganda.

The story of Nambi and Kintu reflects how orature absorbs and adapts colonial references in ways that invent and reinvent traditions like that of Baganda exceptionalism, even as it exists apart from and in parallel to colonial traditions. This is most evident in terms of the parallels between Nambi and Kintu and biblical creation myths. Discussing the experience of reading the text in English rather than Luganda, Abwole was interested in the words Susan chose to begin the story:

> In the beginning of things, the land that later became Buganda was desolate! Then the first man and his cow came from nowhere and occupied it!

Susan confirmed that her grandmother had used a phrase that can be translated 'in the beginning,' not the phrase used to introduce other stories they were told as children; "even in other versions that I had of this [story],

it was never [once upon a time]."[91] This opening echoes the first words of the biblical book of Genesis, framing the Kiganda origin story in terms of the biblical narrative. Pamela remembers starting the story differently – with a Luganda phrase that can be translated "and there came a time" – but even this, she argued, was a Eurocentric appropriation of once upon a time:[92] "I'm not even sure I know how we started stories, I feel like all these beginnings are appropriations." The story was referred to differently in English as compared to Luganda, reflecting hierarchies and ideologies associated with colonialism and schooling. Chimey asked whether Susan had intended to call the story Nambi and Kintu, "because I remember reading Kintu and Nambi." While her grandmother put Nambi first, "in English," Susan said, "it tends to go to Kintu and Nambi, I don't know why". "I think," Bwojji said, "it is that that thing is brought by British, of the man being first then the woman. It was always the other way around [in Luganda]." "He and she, never she and he," Jennipher responded, in what seemed to be an echo of grammar lessons at school. This shift in emphasis highlights how colonial ideology – about patriarchy, the written word and the status of English – inflects and becomes entangled with local negotiations of power.

Participants wondered how this story was told before colonialism and Christianity. Joyce, for instance, argued that the stories we have today might be misleading:

> the migration stories and the colonial stories, they really can't explain the origin story. These people came when the societies were already established, and then they took over with colonialism, and they were able to get these stories, these myths from local people. If you say that, you know, OK maybe it was Bunyoro-Kitara that started the whole Ugandan country, it would not be right. We would have to really look at the original stories that each of the tribes had before colonialism so we can try to paint some kind of picture.

[91] Other published versions of the story of Nambi and Kintu use the phrases "Once upon a time" (Namayanja 2009, 108; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005, 8) and "In those days" (Dipio and Sillars 2012, 67).

[92] This also has biblical echoes, in the phrase "And it came to pass."

However, not only is it very difficult to recuperate pre-colonial oral traditions, it might also be useful to engage with the current hybrid version of the story in order to examine and reimagine current political arrangements. Ngũgĩ argues that today's African states were formed through a process of "social engineering in the sense of breaking up and reordering social and territorial formations, reconstituting them as new societies in redrawn boundaries." African writers like Soyinka, he argues, could not divest themselves of what they had learned in the colonial classroom, but in their work, the Bible, Greek and Roman myths, Anglo-Irish writers and say, the Yoruba pantheon, come together in a new synthesis (Ngũgĩ 2012, 32, 42-43):

> these literary products were not derivatives. They are a synthesis forged in resistance. Without resistance there is no motion. The resulting synthesis, whether in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, speaks to Africa, the formerly colonized, and the world.

As discussed above, An-Naʿim argues for such a synthesis in elaborating constitutions that transform the territorial state imposed by colonialism into an imagined community, not necessarily by recuperating the pre-colonial, but by "imaginatively reclaim[ing] the agency which was denied to them during colonialism" (An-Naʿim 2006, 23, 27-28, 30-33).

"In my head," Chimey said, "I have Genesis in my mind," but on reflection, Abwole insisted on the ways that the structure of myths like Nambi and Kintu diverge from the Genesis story. "Is this [Nambi and Kintu] really a creation story?" Pamela asked. "When you remember the Gisu creation myth, it seems to explain where the first man came down" on Masaba/Mount Elgon. In contrast, the story of Nambi and Kintu is the story of the origin of Buganda as a political entity; with Kintu coming from 'nowhere' into a 'desolate' land – Abwole wondered if a Luganda version might use a term more like 'unoccupied' – to occupy it and establish his kingdom. Scovia felt that this was the part of the story she most wanted to change:

> if you look at the way the story begins, and I would say in the beginning, because in my belief, if you started: in the beginning, it means everything

> is new; you're just building. But then you say in the beginning, and then in the story inside the story you are talking about someone coming from somewhere which is not really the beginning.

During the workshop, participants kept coming back to the ways that Baganda beginnings are situated in terms of stories from neighbouring kingdoms and nations and the broader story of (Bantu) migrations. There seems to be a relationship, Pamela said, between Kintu and the first man in the Gisu myth: "where the Gisu stop, is where the Baganda pick up." Joyce speculated about these Gisu origins:

> these people started the Buganda culture at some point, but they migrated from somewhere better [laughter] beautiful probably beautiful as Gulu, as heaven in this case.

Abwole situated the story of Baganda beginnings in the context of the stories of the Chwezi empire – also known as Bunyoro-Kitara – that stretched across the Great Lakes region: "when the different societies started to break off, they are versions of that story" (see fig. 4 below; cf. Namayanja 2013; Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2004, 8-10).[93]

Kintu has many faces; as Susan pointed out, "there is the myth and its many versions, then there are the legends […which] portray him as someone who actually migrated from somewhere, and came and settled." Later discussions made the leap from myth to legend to history, linking the Bantu myths to other histories of continental migration and to the local slave trade and related rebellions. For example, Martha argued that stories written by colonisers overlook how "years and years of being targeted by other tribes and slavery" drove communities inland, to settle on the mountains. "In our textbooks it is written as we were running away from our dead cows" but she wondered where the Luo were coming from before they arrived at the slave stations of Bahr El Ghazal (today in South Sudan), and

[93] Odhiambo drew even larger connections, notably with the Egyptian myth of Osiris who rules over the field of reeds, a heavenly paradise by the river Nile (cf. Ngũgĩ 2009, 33-35).

talked about the histories of rebellions against slave traders where, arguably, a distinctive Achioli identity was forged (cf. Amone and Muura 2014).

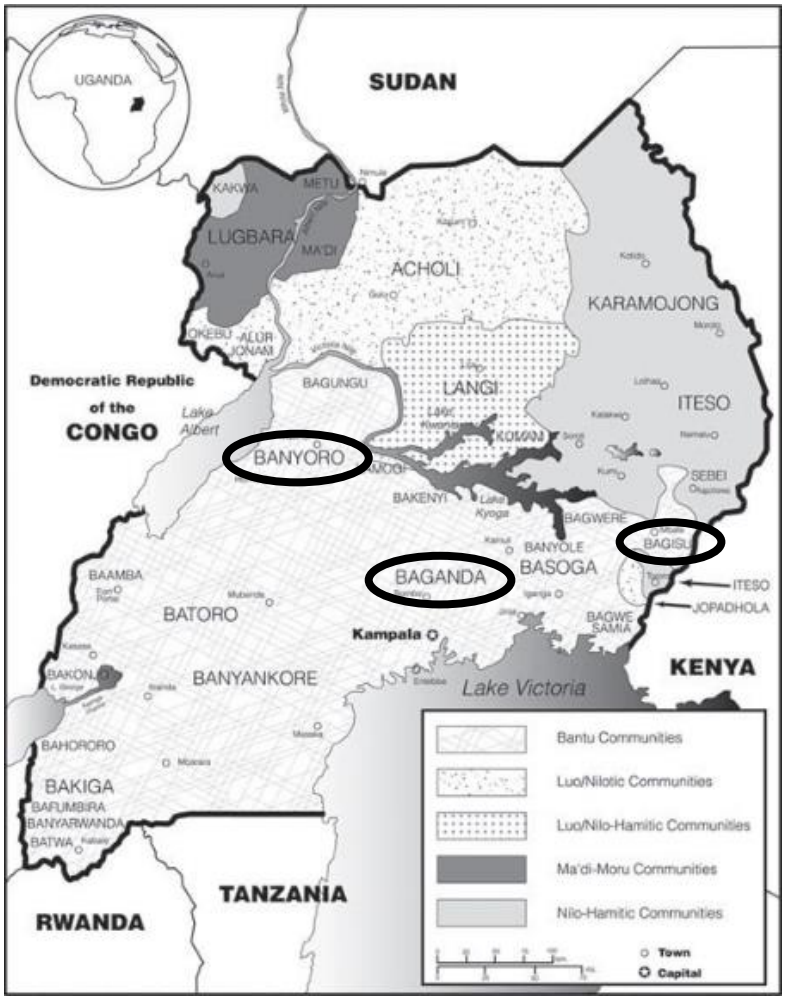

Fig. 4. Map of ethnic groups in Uganda; Bagisu, Banyoro and Baganda territories marked. Source: Minority Rights Group International, reproduced in Ricart-Huguet and Green (2018, 73).

Making connections between these different traditions is easier said than done. As Susan pointed out, "most groups go with their way of seeing, and it's very natural for them to shut out the other way of seeing and continue. Especially because there are all these unsaid frictions, power struggles." She went on to say:

> It doesn't matter what your truth is, for the Baganda, their truth is their truth – for the Bugisu their truth is their truth. The Bunyoro also have a story, and their truth is their truth. And so, and you have to also see these [stories] whether you like it or not in [terms of the] broader picture of all these migrations and all that, but also all these tensions between

> [communities…] who is better, who is more powerful, who is despised, who is not.[94]

Where Baganda participants tended to represent the story of Nambi and Kintu as distinct and self-contained, participants from other communities tended to emphasise connections with other stories, understanding each story as part of bigger regional traditions. Although the Nambi and Kintu myth can generate negative inter-ethnic emotions, Abasi Kiyimba argues that it can also be used to facilitate the completion of the unfinished project of building the Ugandan state, by appealing to those aspects of it that present evidence of a shared past and a common destiny (in press). In the workshop, Susan argued that a resisting reader can engage with origin stories in ways that reveal new possibilities:

> The stories exist not in a vacuum. There are all these other things around those stories that we may give privilege to or we may not. And sometimes a story is from who is telling it. And sometimes a story takes shape from who is hearing it.

Reflecting on the connections between the story of Nambi and Kintu and the Hindu Ramayana epic, Duniya suggested that if myths are created by human beings, other human beings might be able to change them:

> All myth creators have an association, they sit together, and then they say: how we can dominate all the world, let's copy-paste something and change the characters' names. Oh god, they are very clever. And we are very [much] clever than them.

As Susan said, "all these possibilities, all these unanswered questions, all these tensions in this story […] makes you actually come up with stories around it" that consider "questions of class, who is in control, who permits you to do things." Such new stories have the potential to contest and reimagine the relationships of power that traditional stories prop up.

[94] Oloka-Onyango acknowledges these tensions, but argues that efforts to forge links with other cultural and traditional leaders would be in Buganda's interest in their pursuit of federalism, whereas divide and rule "plays directly into the hands of the central government," reinforcing the concentration of power (2015, 459-460, 471).

7.3.2. Reinventing traditions: blame and agency

If the story of Nambi and Kintu is one of Kintu establishing his political authority as the first Kabaka of the Buganda kingdom, the extension, as Duniya said, constructs his masculinity, where he tries to control the daughter of God. Stories are powerful, Susan said, "how they influence us, how they compel us, how they occupy our world […] story as something that can be used to even tame you, control you." But if traditions are invented, then they can be reinvented as part of efforts to negotiate social, political and economic relations today (cf. An-Naʿim 2006, 28). Such a process of negotiation was reflected in the way that participants directed and redirected the discussion in the workshop. While Bwojji suggested using the story of Nambi and Kintu to explore how Ugandans had been controlled by the British in the colonial period, other participants insisted on focusing on what the story tells us about the relationship between men and women, and the implications for women's agency.

In describing how the resolution of the story presented in the extension helps to create the culture of oppression it also reflects, participants both pointed to and resisted parallels with Christianity: "And then God said: you Eve, you will be sub-ordinate and we rule over you. […] Am I [Scovia] supposed to believe in that Bible?" In the stories of Nambi and Kintu, Adam and Eve, and many other stories from different traditions, woman is presented as the source of all problems; she is blamed for disobeying her father. In Uganda, where regular church attendance is extremely widespread, tropes from Christianity echo particularly strongly. As Pamela said, "even when we want to widen this narrative, this story, we get back to the point of it must be something we've done. The culture of self-blame, of not blaming actual culprits, is deeply ingrained." Pamela later pointed to the implications of such narratives for our capacity to challenge injustice:

> the blame has been neatly wrapped up to be our own, of like, if you pray and your prayers are not answered: something to do with you. You didn't pray hard enough, you didn't tithe, you have generational spirits, you have a spirit husband; anybody who's been through that drama… [laughter] knows, so it's like: even this bigger power who is supposed to be taking

> care of me has passed the blame on to me and now I'm in an unfixable pattern of like: what do I do? I – it's all my fault. So we had those concerns of how our forefathers found a way to sort of tell humans to be content in their suffering.

This comment draws parallels between the human-divine relationship and our relationships with structures of human authority: whether we can hold those in authority to account, or whether, as Abwole emphasised, we are left on our own to deal with challenges. As Pamela said, "you've been groomed; then you know that when something happens that you can't explain, then: that's just life." Duniya later reflected on how blame is used to try to discourage people from changing things: "if someone fights for their own rights how easily we can say: you are the culprit."

But the version of the story that Susan's grandmother told, before the extension was added on, served to contest this interpretation, opening space for Nambi's agency. In the version of Nambi and Kintu that Abwole remembered from childhood, Kintu was the decider: he desired Nambi, pursued her and was given tests to prove himself. In contrast, in the version Susan gave us, Nambi took the initiative. Abwole quoted from the story: "'She wanted to stay with him and provide him with her company. The brothers did not-'; as in Kintu seems to be just – a prop!" Later, in plenary discussions, Bwojji said, "it's as if there's a puppet master and he's [Kintu is] only going through motions" – pointing out that all Kintu had wanted was to get his cow back and then he got caught up in this story with Nambi, almost as if against his will. Martha insisted that Kintu could have chosen not to get involved with Nambi: "he accepted, so now after that point, he is culpable!"

Bwojji was eager to "change the narrative a little bit," drawing an analogy between Kintu's response to Nambi and Ugandan colonial history,

but Martha and Abwole pulled things back to insist that Kintu should take responsibility:

Bwojji So, so, the colonialists came to Uganda and they say: eh, so Apolo Kagwa,[95] let's take you to – UK. So the man, has never seen buildings, he has never seen motorcars, so many things he has never seen, eh – so he goes to UK. And then he Sees Heaven. He's like: you know what you guys, if you partner with the white man, you can also have the Things he's having. Kintu goes to heaven. They give him beer and food; what has he been eating all this time? *(Urine. Urine!)* Urine and and and dung. *(So they got a lo-)* So you see all these beautiful things and they're giving you *(Ah bye bye)* this beautiful woman. So I don't have to talk to my cow [laughter] eh? Anymore. Like yeah, let's go!

Susan So there are *(So see…)* questions of privilege *(So see…)* here.

Martha …there we have his consent. Up to this point in the story, he's like a bystander, *(Yeah, but here's the thing…)* Nambi makes all the moves, but *(he has, he has been…)* there we have his consent

Bwojji …biased, he has been so biased, eh? That he has no way to say no. *(Ahh, I get-)* Because they gave him all this food *(But Elijah…)* and he looks at it like, full of: what?

Abwole …isn't that representative of the way we treat men *(Yes.)* and women? *(Actually!)* Women have full responsibility *(I almost feel like it's Adam and Eve.)* but the man: I don't know what happened! [sustained laughter]

Scovia Elijah, there you are! [laughter] [96]

Taking back the role of facilitator, Susan went on to discuss Nambi's shifting identity as a daughter of God – "is she divine?" – who acts human

[95] Prime Minister of Buganda, 1890-1926.

[96] As noted above, in my transcription of participants' discussions, material in [square brackets] represents my additions, material in *(brackets and italics)* reflects another participant's interruption of what the named participant's intervention, and material in *(brackets and italics is followed by an ellipsis…)* represents the start of the next named participant's intervention. Words that begin with a Capital letter reflect emphasis, a long dash – represents a pause, and a short dash at the end of a word- represents where a participant started to say something and then pulled up short.

when she is on earth, reflecting, as Pamela interjected, a "complicated relationship with women." This interactive exchange – and participant enjoyment of and playful resistance to the ways in which Bwojji tried to reframe the story – shifted what had been a fairly structured session of feedback and turn-taking into an exercise that approximated interactive storytelling. Participants used this mode to tease out complex questions of colonialism, patriarchy and privilege that might have been more difficult to talk about – and certainly less enjoyable – as part of a more conventional dialogue.

The emphasis on Nambi's agency in the version Susan gave us shifts the balance in the story, suggesting that women might legitimately act on their desires. As Pamela said, "it seems like OK there was love in this relationship […] in the beginning, if this was the first relationship, it somewhat seemed to be propagated by the woman, I mean she made the first move." This prompted Susan to wonder why her grandmother might have centred Nambi as a desiring subject in the version she told her grandchildren:

> I don't know it's making me think that this this woman is the One who who who Desires and then – her desires bring trouble. *(Yeah. Yes, yes.*) Right. But which can also be complicated, because one of the things that struck me in this story *(chaos)*, is that in most conventional stories *(confusion)* the woman does not desire *(it's true, it's true)* she's desired but this time, *(yes, it is her who desires, yes)* desires, so I don't know what grandmother had in mind.

Over lunch, a smaller group of women pointed to how traditional culture – which is not static, but constantly shifting and changing – can be used to challenge colonial constructions of female sexuality (cf. Tamale 2005 and 2008). Sex, as Scovia pointed out, "is a tool of power," something that it is not acceptable to discuss in public. But Abwole pointed to more positive pre-colonial conceptions of female sexuality:

> They taught, they- part of job of Ssenga was to teach you, one, how to give pleasure and to receive it. […] So if you really delve into- again it comes from: Christianity. … If you remove Christianity and even Islam, we had

> very different ideas of our sexuality and how it was handled. […] Among women, pleasure was a thing to be had, and it was openly discussed.

Grandmothers, paternal aunts – like the Ssenga – and others might choose to transmit culture in ways that confound patriarchal expectations (cf. Tamale 2008, 54-55); even, Susan noted, in children's nursery rhymes and play songs with layers of meaning – as in the song "Headmaster, Don't Forget Your 'Coat'" (read 'condom') – that popular singers like Halima Namakula borrow from and reinvent in more explicit forms.

While Nambi is represented as someone who desires in the version of the story Susan gave us to read, "her desires bring trouble" – they are articulated within a frame in which the scope of her autonomy is heavily circumscribed. As Charity noticed, "it's OK for the woman to fall in love, everything else is her fault – she desires but then the ill will that befalls her convinces her to be ruled by the guy." Over the course of the story, Nambi's position changes dramatically; as Charity said "Kintu gets a goddess and he reduces her to subservience:"

> She Is a goddess when she comes and meets him, but by the end of story she's just um *(ordinary model)* no not even ordinary but *(she's a maid)* I, I think she should be the protagonist in this story *(yeah)* but she's treated as an extra, (*as the antagonist actually*) you know, as an ext- (*the antagonist*) the antagonist, but as an extra and not that important.

Many participants were taken by the way the divine Nambi, who brought Kintu wealth, was reduced to the status of a maid. Odhiambo referenced Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's manifesto on feminism, questioning the idea of marriage as a prize for women: "I mean Nambi was doing Every Thing, literally everything for this-" including, Martha later said, giving Kintu his first taste of the chicken and eggs that she was later prohibited from eating. The degree of agency Nambi has in the story shifts in different versions. For example, Abwole remembers from childhood that "Nambi was helping him [Kintu] *(Yeah! I feel like that's missing.)* Nambi was helping him." She contrasted this with the version Susan gave us to read: "in the way this story is told, I feel like Gulu *(her father)* is helping him (*on her behalf*)." As

Abwole said, “depending on who is telling the story, details get – edited out.”

Each of the many versions of the Nambi story, Odhiambo said, is used to achieve different objectives, and has “managed to influence different spheres of life today.” This and other myths are at the centre of “issues around equality, inequality […] people not occupying leadership positions.” He drew links between the expectation that Nambi would be grateful to Kintu, and the question of power and political leadership:

> the world is so full of woman and men but- who actually do not like powerful women. […] It’s also how we’ve been conditioned, we’ve been conditioned, you know, to think of power as male. And then, that powerful women, or a powerful woman, is actually an aberration. […] We start asking certain questions about powerful women: is she humble? Why is she acting like this? Does she smile? You know, is she grateful enough? Because this actually came out in the other one (*the story*). Where Nambi is supposed to be grateful to this bastard, to this guy, you know [clicking fingers] what’s his name *(Kintu)* yeah Kintu. You know, is she grateful enough, you know, is she- the domestic side needs to come out more more more strongly. But we do not ask powerful men, we do not ask powerful men. And actually this I think, you know just shows the whole question around power, storytelling is also about power, and that is something that we also need to question and really pay attention to all the time.

Women are expected to smile, to be grateful, to be humble; not to be powerful. But Nambi’s trajectory led Pamela to reflect on the legitimacy of anger: “when you hear people refer to feminists as angry, frustrated, women who can’t find husbands […] obviously I’m not angry. But I was reflecting on why someone would choose to see me as angry. Yeah, so. Again, the Nambi story: I would be angry.”

7.4. Recompositions and consolidations

In this section I consider how dialogues developed by participants during the workshop and two compositions developed after the workshop consolidate and extend participants’ reflections, offering different perspectives on the story and on the themes that they set out in the

discussion. Participants used these compositions to cultivate epistemic friction and negotiate different possibilities as much by experimenting with form – different narrative structure, devices and symbolic content – as by noticing how storytelling helps them see the world differently. The previous discussion had involved discussions that approximated a process of internal discourse, comparing and differentiating the different traditions Ugandan participants were familiar with. The process of composition brought together internal discourse with cross-cultural dialogue and synthesis, generating compositions and performances that reimagined the story of Nambi and Kintu and consolidated participants' emerging insights. As in Pamela's articulation of the legitimacy of feminist anger, the fictional genre seemed to allow participants to maintain distance between themselves and the claims implicit in their stories, creating a vehicle for negotiating taboos, experimenting with how traditions might be brought together, and articulating ideas they were not yet sure of, as part of a process of struggling to make sense. The conversation opened up, then focused down, then opened up, then focused down in new ways – more open and cyclical than most deliberative processes – allowing participants to patiently tease out the threads of half-articulated ideas. In their compositions, participants negotiated the fine line between making potentially outrageous claims and saying something acceptable or expected, situating their contributions within the safety of generic conventions – drawing on transnational feminist discourse, commercial tropes, and nationalist and religious traditions.

7.4.1. Cross-cultural compositions

During the workshop, the invitation to create a brief conversation between Nambi and Kintu led to a shift in the discussion, into more experimental and creative forms of thinking, which brought together themes from the story with resources from elsewhere to remake the story of Nambi and Kintu in ways that respond to current circumstances. As soon as we started considering what Nambi might have said to Kintu when they first met, Abwole began to sing "Soul sister, hey sister" (from the song 'Lady Marmalade'). Our small group, with much more laughter and interaction than in the previous discussion, used that prompt to start considering more

radical questions: whether Nambi was humanoid, whether heavenly beings could have human form; or whether Kintu had a different form and we, their children, actually got our form from Nambi which, as Pamela pointed out "puts in question human-ness, and form." The previous discussion had touched briefly on the possibility of female sexual agency, but the collaborative recomposition fleshed this out: "Let me [Pamela] be Nambi, sliding down my rainbow. […] Was Nambi afraid; did she hide when she saw him, and like stalked him slowly, slowly: wow! He's got two legs and I've got three, how cool is that." Abwole went on,

> the way she told this, the way it is (*oh my! Pamela!*) the way she told this, I don't think Nambi was afraid. There seemed to be no fear in her *(No*) at all, *(she fell in love)* she fell in love (*as if she knew she was going to find him) (right away)* saw a Thing that she desired and said: I must have. And he seems lonely, so let me give (*my company*) my company. *(How do lonely people look?)* I don't know; sad, drawn face, not laughing. *(And how did she know that the cow was not the same as him. It could have been his wife!)*

Pamela's intervention, prompted perhaps by issues she was already considering in her artistic practice, seemed to give others permission to take the discussion in a slightly unexpected and, in the way it was articulated, consciously transgressive direction. In the performances by the other two small groups, other aspects were emphasised, relating the discussion to conventional story forms in processes of cross-cultural exchange and synthesis. The other two groups used the performance to reframe the Nambi and Kintu myth in terms of conventional formats from global culture familiar to all participants: Bollywood and Hollywood.

The small group that included Duniya and Anindita brought the Nambi and Kintu story that Ugandan participants were familiar with into dialogue with Bengali traditions, by deploying but subtly contesting the Bollywood cinematic format. "Ready," called Duniya, "one, two, three, four: action!" During the performance, Duniya sang the Bengali cinema love song Ek Palaker Ektu Dekha while other participants, laughing a lot, mimed the interactions between Nambi and Kintu – and also the cow who, Scovia said,

"was happier than the master!" Explaining the performance afterwards, Duniya said, "Nambi wants more time to have some time with – *(Kintu)* Kintu. This is her desire, [to] fall in love; love at first sight." The song Ek Palaker Ektu Dekha is sung by Kishore Kumar in the much-loved 1958 Bengali film Lukochuri, when Buddhu starts a new job in an office in Bombay and falls in love with Reeta on first meeting her. Duniya felt that it was appropriate to use as a soundtrack for the Kiganda story because when Kintu and Nambi meet, they also fall in love at first sight. But Lukochuri is not just a love story, as Sharmistha Gooptu points out, it is also an allegory of tensions between Bengali and Bombay film industries. Buddhu's brother Shankar is a composer in the Bombay industry; Buddhu saves Shankar's job by being willing to sing the nonsense Bombay film numbers that Shankar refused to write. In the film, the sincerity of the Bengali artist (in the tradition of Rabindinath Tagore) is contrasted with the crass commercialism of the Bombay film industry. But there is also a defence of Bengali singers – like Kumar – involved in the Bombay scene: at the end of the film, Buddhu stands before a picture of Rabindinath and says, "I was born in your land, but this is what I had to do!" (Gooptu 2011, 184-186).

Duniya acknowledges that her choice of the song brought in different layers of meaning, but her intentions in choosing it were more about linking her love of film to the Ugandan story: "we had that desire to make that script in film, so I said why not, we can create it now, let's start, one global movie." While Duniya agrees that Bollywood films are sometimes sillier than more serious Bengali films, she says that she is the kind of person who can enjoy any type of film, even the more commercial kind (and Ugandan participants agreed – there was a lot of discussion of Hollywood and Bollywood films at the margins of the workshop). Nonetheless, using a song from Lukochuri in a Bollywood-style remake of the Nambi and Kintu myth suggests how global cultural scripts – from Bollywood love stories to Hollywood heroes' journeys – might be reimagined and remade even as they are deployed. Susan was particularly taken by the "post-coloniality" of

this performance; the ways that it enacted cross-cultural dialogue and exchange:

> what they've just done, is this whole postcoloniality thing of hybrid. Because the song was not in Luganda. *(Yes. Yes, and we understood it.)* Yes. And we understood it, I mean, I did, I loved it, it was *(trying to create a Bollywood movie)* a love song. [laughter] […] The whole thing of having all this mixed brand, it's very interesting. These stories now come together in this now and they become like that; the development of them. But it's beautiful, I loved it, I loved the cow most. [laughter …] Interesting things about sexuality, you know that this Nambi was a very explosive one. [laughter …] This is more exciting than I thought it would be. It is overwhelmingly exciting.

Conventional formats can provide useful frames on which to hang a story; the frame might shape the story somewhat, but also makes it easier to compose. Charity explained that "for purposes of anchoring our conversation," they decided to follow a Hollywood icon: "the sexiest man alive a year ago, two years ago – Idris Elba." "Imagine him naked," Martha suggested to general laughter, "the story didn't say he's clothed, he only has a cow." In their version, as Martha explained, Nambi was the more worldly of the two:

> the caption is mainly from Nambi's side, but Kintu would have been more curious as to who are these people, where are they from, because he had never seen anyone else. So he's probably not- he had never seen a woman, so he's probably not thinking that way. And there's Nambi who's like: oh yeah, this is i- *(this is it!)*.

But how, then, did he understand her language? Martha "also wondered if he knew his name when she asked him" (remembering, too that Kintu means 'Thing'). According to Bwojji, "this is where philosophy fails, because conversation does not need words." Pamela circled back to the process of composition in our small group, emphasising the ways that more than linguistic differences were overcome:

> you try and imagine this conversation, the idea of language came in, then the idea of form came in. […] I'm sure there was some sort of sign language, there was a bit of beckoning, smiling, you know like, positive

> sign language. But then it also veered off, if Nambi was beautiful? *(There was an attraction, guys.)* That's what we said, there was like: I like you.

In her essay, 'The Politics of Translation,' Spivak argues that every act of reading or communication involves accepting the risk that the self might fray; and that our stake in our own agency "keeps the fraying down to a minimum except in the communication and reading of and in love." Translation, she argues, should facilitate "this love between the original and its [translated] shadow, a love that permits fraying" between the self and the other, and holds our own agency and the demands of our audiences at bay. The process of cross-cultural dialogue and translation is no more the exposition and interpretation of respective philosophical frameworks than it is a process of figuring each other out, losing ourselves, and falling in love. She warns against the invocation, especially "by the metropolitan feminist, who is sometimes the assimilated postcolonial," of "a too quickly shared feminist notion of accessibility" (Spivak 1993, 180-183, 191-192):

> The presupposition that women have a natural or narrative-historical solidarity, that there is something in a woman or an undifferentiated women's story that speaks to another woman without benefit of language-learning might stand against the translator's task of surrender [of her own agency and of the demands of her audience]. Paradoxically, it is not possible for us as ethical agents to imagine otherness or alterity maximally. We have to turn the other into something like the self in order to be ethical. To surrender in translation is more erotic than ethical.

If the "clearly indicated connections" of logic are the effect of knowing, then what Spivak calls rhetoric, which "must work in the silence between and around words in order to see what works and how much," is a condition of knowing in the first place. In the workshop, Pamela and Abwole were both struck by our desire for logical conclusions and sought to shake this up. In contrast, "rhetoric points at the possibility of randomness, of contingency as such, dissemination, the falling apart of language, the possibility that things might not always be semiotically organised." Spivak argues that the "jagged relationship" between rhetoric and logic – between coming to know and make use of that knowledge – is what enables us to act in the world in

an ethical way, in a political way, a day-to-day way; so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world" (Spivak 1993, 180-181, 187).

The erotically-charged and sometimes wordless exchange between Nambi and Kintu (and his cow) can be read as an allegory for the process of cross-cultural communication; of generating trust and making connections for solidarity and future collaboration. In shifting from critical discussion to an imaginative process of storytelling, the exercise in composition opened a new kind of space, which participants used to work between and around words and worlds, drawing on conventional frames and making experimental forays "in order to see what works and how much." This process involved cross-cultural dialogue and translation between participants – between Uganda and Bengal, and between Buganda and other Bantu and Nilotic communities – but also, as Susan emphasised, between texts – between the oral and the written, the past and the present, and the performance text and the audience:

> Imagining, getting these stories from the written realm back to the oral. You know what we've just done. From a story I began in the oral realm in the oral world, I put it down [on] paper, and even made the transition from Luganda to English, and made the transition from mouth to pen. Now we are back and we seem quite excited about the back and forth. I don't know what that tells you. Maybe we should think more about this. This going back and forth, and being quite comfortable in this world; we probably struggled a bit with converting it, but when we did, it gave some exciting throughts and some exciting results.

This back and forth allowed space for reflection and consolidation which participants used to gather their thoughts, linking the story to their personal concerns and interests, and to those of other participants. At times they seemed to use the story to give their concerns more weight and legitimacy and to articulate them in (subtly) new ways – but mainly they seemed to take great pleasure in playful and creative invention. This process led to a discussion of more abstract issues, including debates about decolonisation and the claim to universality made by the human rights framework, as I show in the conclusion of this chapter.

7.4.2. Unstoppable women and archetypal fathers

The interactive process of composition and performance that happened during the workshop inspired compositions by two participants – Elijah Bwojji and Fortunate Tusasirwe – after the workshop had finished. Each links back to discussions during the workshop, consolidating and integrating those discussions in ways that made sense of them in light of Fortunate's and Bwojji's different experiences and concerns. In this section I discuss how their compositions pick up on key themes in the discussion about the roles that men and women might take on and how those relate to political arrangements.

Fortunate attended both ActionAid and Femrite workshops and was rather quiet during both. More than any other participant, she emphasised how folktales are used to make it clear what women can and can't do: "to blame women for many things and giving them rules and boundaries so that they can be under them [men]." In the Femrite workshop, for example, she told a story in which one girl in a group of four accepted a piece of meat from an ogre and as a result was forced to stay with him while the others went free. The ActionAid workshop, she said at the end, left her with more questions than answers. Yet she was clearly taken with Susan's session on Nambi and Kintu and composed and shared a poem that resists these moral injunctions:

> Woman
>
> *Fortunate Tusasirwe*
>
> *(A response to the Nambi and Kintu story)*
>
> Yours is the eagle's eye
> That sees from far.
> You initiated creation on earth
> and multiplied mankind.
> And man shall not live by urine and cow dung
> But by the bread and wine that came in your hands.
> You are the Nalubaale that crosses borders
> To quench the thirst of the unaided near and far, deep and wide.

> And I don't blame you for crossing borders because
> Yours was to create a kingdom without borders.
> Woman, you are unstoppable!

Composing this poem allowed Fortunate to reflect on and respond to the discussions in the workshop, bringing in Nambi's agency in courting Kintu and bringing him new types of food; remaking the parallels with Christianity that participants discussed; and contesting divisions between different kingdoms and communities.[97] In the following discussion, I consider how Fortunate's poem reflects another theme that emerged in the workshop, consolidating a shift from considering Nambi as someone who desires to considering what she might desire – not just a relationship with Kintu, but her own world and her own life.

When I first described my project to Susan, one day in her office in 2017, her immediate response was to seek out and read me her poem 'Tongue Touch Nambi Myth' (see Appendix). While Nambi and Kintu is a well-known myth that is worth working with for other reasons, one of the reasons we chose it was because we could compare well-known versions with Susan's poem, which is a response to the story. In listening to Susan read it, Jennipher was struck by how she gives "Nambi the limelight; she's the woman in charge:"

> that is what a woman's world would look like: an ideal world. If women were in control, not of the men, but of their lives. Like you have say over who you marry, how you marry, how you live, how you raise your children, how you do everything else but a lot of times that is not the case. How I wish the portrayal in this poem was how it is in real life.

[97] As compared to the first draft, in this version Fortunate made two changes in response to comments I made: taking out a reference to an ogre – and in doing so removing the sense of blaming the one who put the boundaries in place – and substituting Nalubaale (Lake Victoria) for the word 'ocean' – which gives the poem a slightly different scope. Using Nalubaale suggests that the call for a 'kingdom without borders' relates to tensions between different communities in Uganda and beyond; but Fortunate's original reference to the ocean might refer instead – as Bwojji's story seems to do – to a personal desire to travel. Ichim argues that "identifying [human rights] defenders with their communities serves to circumscribe the range of acceptable aspirations that defenders can have" – for better living conditions, perhaps, or to move abroad (2019, 22).

This included, but extended beyond, the ways Nambi's desire was centred in the previous discussion. In Susan's poem, Kintu is invited to be part of her life, but this is not her primary focus; as Martha said, "she wanted to create her own world. Plus the man." In this discussion, Susan's poem served as "an *epistemic counterpoint* to lived experience and knowledge" (Medina 2013, 232, emphasis original), facilitating reflection on and critique of participants' own circumstances. It also provided insights into more abstract ways of thinking about the world. Comparing the scope of Nambi's desire in the story told by Susan's grandmother to the way Susan's Nambi "creates a language desire" in the poem seemed to help participants "realise the tension between our understanding of a concept's range and its possible range" (Mihai 2018, 399). "Your poem," said Abwole, "felt like just allowing us to rethink the conclusions we make from the myth."

Susan's poem opens "Nambi, daughter of God." In the discussion, she reflected on how she was troubled by what purpose Nambi's divinity served in the traditional story:

> I thought they made her divine to make her look beautiful. […] I wasn't even sure that the divinity was about power, or was it about beauty? To give her some kind of authority to even be able to have [the] audacity to approach a man, so she has to be a divine being to do that. No woman without divinity can do that, and so it was very disturbing for me.

Assigning Nambi a divine status gives her a certain power, but also reiterates the powerlessness of ordinary women. Fortunate's 'Woman' grapples with and contests the necessity of divinity. She has god-like qualities in her power to foretell the future – "the eagle's eye / That sees from far" – and she is the one who initiates creation, but not supernaturally, rather through childbirth and cultivation. Like the Christian Jesus, she will quench the thirst of those who are unaided (cf. John 7:37). But where Jesus says that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4, NKJV), Nambi is more materialistic, giving Kintu a taste of the bread and wine he had never had, not in sacrificial death – as in the Christian mass – but in life. Fortunate refuses the trope of blaming women for transgressing, and rather asserts the

validity of a different kind of political order: "a kingdom without borders." This reimagines the story as relating not just to Buganda, but beyond, telling it in a way that suggests a shared past and a common destiny with other communities in Uganda and elsewhere (cf. Kiyimba, in press). Fortunate's Woman – and perhaps Fortunate herself – is "unstoppable!"

Bwojji remarked that "we see one type of woman [in the Nambi and Kintu myth] yet we see several types of men: five. It means that man can be all these five types, and yet there's only one type of woman." But even these five different male identities might be limiting. In the discussion of the version from Susan's grandmother, Duniya had been particularly exercised in defending Walumbe, emphasising how lonely he must have been and legitimising his desire to have company:

> So I ask my team, like is anyone find[ing] out any dead body of that children. They said, no it's not in [the] story. It means, that uncle really took all babies to him, maybe they are very happy with him.

In responding to Duniya, Bwojji emphasises not so much Walumbe's loneliness, as his desire to "have what they had […] to be a parent." Retelling the story a few days later (see Chapter 6), Bwojji emphasises the link between parenthood and status:

> And he says: 'Oh, so help me with your kids
> So that they can keep me company
> And I raise them as my own
> And I also feel important in this society of yours
> To be like you guys.'

Bwojji's retelling is not entirely a new composition, but a version he recalls from being told the story in Luganda. He attentively maintains the original story even as he introduces small innovations, engaging in instauration (cf. Barber 2007, 4, 210-211).[98] As compared to the version Susan remembered

[98] During the workshop Bwojji reflected on the importance of preservation, arguing that when we "insert our outside knowledge into the story and want to forcing the characters to do things that they shouldn't be doing in the story […] the moment we change it, we are not talking about that story anymore, we are now creating another story." In retelling the story, he tries to stick closely to a version he remembers, highlighting for the listener where he is adding new material: "He didn't say that I am bored. / But I feel like he was bored!"

from her grandmother, Bwojji's version decentres Nambi: while her father loves "the girl more than the boy" and conspires with her in courting Kintu; she is represented as a *kyana* – a bad or unwanted child, used as a slang term for a beautiful woman. She is objectified in being "given" to Kintu, and is clearly blamed for Walumbe's arrival, forced to confess "her crimes" to get Gulu's help. But like Susan's poem, Bwojji's retelling gives voice to some of his current preoccupations. In the first half of the story, told in the past tense, he glosses over the details of the tests that are normally the focus of the story; the story shifts into the present tense in the second half, to relate Walumbe's adventures on earth.[99] Walumbe comes to earth not to create his own world but to escape boredom: to be a tourist, see "new places" and to get to know "every single *corner*" of this world, including the underworld. A character a bit like Walumbe pops up in Bwojji's personal story; he told us that he got his name when his childless uncle said to his father, "you already have children, I have none, so this one is mine, he will be called Bwojji," hinting at parallels between his drunkard, novel-reading uncle and himself. As in Fortunate's poem, the transgressive is recuperated and celebrated, even if this is a bit tongue in cheek.

In discussing her poem, Susan described her discomfort with the character of Walumbe; in her poem, Nambi's transgression (in a country in which family and community ties are extremely important) is in denying him: "Death raging in oblique turbulence / Is not my relative / I did not invite him here." Instead, she emphasised Nambi's connection with her mother, who does not feature in the traditional story:

> in the original story, death is the brother that Nambi brings because she went to fetch [millet from heaven]. And in the poem, Nambi's saying: in fact I even dare to disown that relationship; if it's the relationship that causes me to be chained down, I'm going to transgress and shock by also disowning relatives, and says: in fact that brother is not my brother, that

Nevertheless, through the details he neglects and those he emphasises, and by making subtle changes to the narrative, he makes his own version of the story.

[99] In telling the story, Bwojji used a few verbs in the present tense in the first half, and a few in the past tense in the second half, but otherwise the shift was so marked that, in discussion with Bwojji, I decided to make the tenses consistent in the transcription.

> Death is not my brother. Instead the voice brings the mother, and says: 'Anchored in my body / Is my mother.' I don't have you brother, I can do without brother Death. But in fact, [the] mother [who] was missing from the original story is then brought to take the place of the disowned brother that was imposed on her.

For Bwojji, in contrast, the mother is a compromised figure, associated with the colonial origins of the state of Uganda. Instead, he expressed a commitment to the Buganda nation, emphasising the importance of knowing the stories of his father and grandfather, which link him to his clan and to the Buganda kingdom:

> I cannot know who I am until I get to know who my father is. Because we come from a paternal tradition, like, we belong to our fathers, my clan is determined by my father, my tribe is determined by my father. […] Our fathers can't tell stories of their fathers. […] Their fathers were so much into work because they needed to sustain the families, and they never took any chance to actually educate children about who they are. Because the children grew up with the mothers. And so we are more inclined to know who our maternal families are than our paternal. So I was a bit sad, I was a bit sad. Because, when I started to think about the country, I saw the country like that, knowing more about the- Because the country is birthed by the colonialists. So I saw the country knowing so much [more] about the colonialism than [about] who they are.

During the workshop, in suggesting another recomposition of the story, Bwojji represented Kintu as a poor builder who comes to Buganda and falls in love with a beautiful and wealthy Nambi; there are parallels between this plot and how he described Apolo Kagwa's seduction by the British in being shown motorcars and other luxuries in the UK. Nambi, for Bwojji, represents the lure of the colonial, to be resisted; and Kintu and stories of their fathers, the more authentic expression of national (Buganda) identity. Nambi and Kintu, he argued, is an epic story that gives us an archetype of what a good father looks like:

> I see Gulu a single father, because they don't tell us about the mother. Yeah, no one has mentioned *(we don't question Jesus from God)* who raised four different, four diverse children, diverse in character, they don't

> talk so much about Musoke, but they tell us about Kaikuzi, Nambi and Walumbe. And we get to see that the father knew his children really, really well, because there are so many things. That means the father took time to play with his children. And so they give us an archetype of who a father should be like.

Bwojji's commitment to the Buganda nation seems to be entangled with his devout Christianity, and the association of Gulu with the Christian God, the father who gives his children good things (Matt. 7:11). More explicitly, he associated the father with society:

> Our fathers became the reflection of society. If our fathers empowered us, that means we will take on society with the head on, if our fathers weren't there, no one was empowering us.

He also acknowledged the complexity of these commitments and the way that they put strong mothers in the shadow:

> [a] few of us had strong mothers and yet they are always in the shadow. […] It makes me wonder why, why are we still perpetuating this narrative. Why are we still perpetuating this narrative.

But in his retelling, his act of instauration, Bwojji made the more subtle shift of recuperating the archetype of the good father and delighting in the transgression of the tourist/explorer; preserving the patriarchal lineage but also remaking it, by challenging the acceptability of the absent father and calling on men to do better. In associating the story with the nation, he also makes a more subtle point, insisting on the duty of those with political power to do right by the citizens on whose behalf they rule.

Where Susan's reimagining of the myth from a feminist perspective spoke powerfully to many participants at the workshop, Bwojji's more subtle negotiation of the story reflects the patriarchal attitudes that many Ugandans hold. Exploring these in a story allows them to be articulated without necessarily committing to them, and for them to be contested without it turning into a personal attack. Yet the patriarchal framing might disguise a more radical political commitment – women's movements, for instance, have long been pushing for men to take joint responsibility for

caring for children, including by taking paternity leave (cf. UN Women 2015, 87-89).

7.5. Epistemic friction and conceptions of justice

My discussion of the ActionAid workshop shows how storytelling can be used to facilitate internal discourse – challenging and reclaiming familiar traditions – and to put different traditions in dialogue with each other as well as facilitating cross-cultural dialogue between participants from different places. Participants used this process to consider questions related to decolonisation, feminism, development and human rights.

In telling and listening to the stories of their names, participants did more than acknowledge each other and generate rapport; they revealed the ways that multiple, overlapping hermeneutical systems – local cultures, religion, and school and state bureaucracies – have helped to shape their identities. What they shared was suggestive of the range of hermeneutical resources they might have access to. While some participants were familiar with the origin stories we discussed from home, others picked them up from English language textbooks or internet sources – reclaiming and reinventing what might have been lost. Referring to debates on decolonisation, Odhiambo called for stories like Nambi and Kintu to be recuperated from the periphery:

> this story, of course, pretty much relates with even the biblical, you know, Genesis story, but it was put in the periphery. […] One of the things we need to keep on advocating, I think, is that as Africans we need to tell our story. […] We were made to believe that our stories were very- […] they didn't really matter. But just looking at this, and just thinking, zooming out, thinking about it but then zooming out with other global politics you'll find it's actually rooted here. The things that went and came back they're actually our stories.

"You can't think about them," Susan said, "without telling; you have to tell." She pointed to how debates about decolonisation, associated with Ngũgĩ and the language debate, were "preceded by the debate of [the] tale" in work by writers like Amos Tutuola and Chinua Achebe. Echoing Ama

Ata Aidoo, Susan said that African women writers – as well as composers and oral storytellers – have been writing, but if no-one engages with their work in critical terms, they are "metaphorically killed, because their work doesn't come to the fore." In discussing and retelling the story of Nambi and Kintu, Susan argued, "we're not even agreeing with this myth, there are so many things we- the major thing we are doing, we are even refuting something, we are questioning […] what we are doing, we are bringing it to the floor and debating it […] and so that story will stay in our psyche." The story of Nambi and Kintu was particularly apt for cultivating epistemic friction; not only did it highlight the structural preconditions of injustice as well as individual failures, but participants found telling, discussing and retelling it to be pleasurable. Insinuating themselves into our memories via the imagination, such stories – like the literary works Mihai describes – "get us to imaginatively reconfigure our memories, beliefs and emotions" without us being fully aware of how they do so (Mihai 2018, 400, 404-405).

As discussed above, Mihai argues that such artworks can introduce audiences to new ways of thinking about the world (ideational friction); help audiences notice and become outraged about injustices and reckon with their own complicity (moral friction); and imagine experiences they have not had (experiential friction) (2018, 399-401, 403-405). For most people, this is likely to be a long, slow process as they engage with texts and other artworks over time. However, some participants found that the workshop process generated an immediate sense of epistemic friction. Tugume articulated his experience particularly clearly: "I don't know whether the session was too much and is entering into my brain and so on, so I think I need to digest. […] That's why I'm having a little headache I think." He highlighted how engaging with the story of Nambi and Kintu had shifted his stereotypes about men and women, promoting moral friction: "now I look at a boy as someone who wants to spoil every girl's dreams." This cast the work he had done on the youth programme 'Straight Talk' in a new light:

> And I'm thinking, if Nambi like in her head she was there and she really wanted this beautiful world, ok. Then these men came and of course spoiled it. Now I hadn't seen that yesterday until the end of discussion

> when I went home. And I'm thinking, when I was working with Straight Talk, we used to have a platform where girls – OK, the youth, sent in their questions, and we answered them and then replied them. I'm thinking maybe I gave them, I gave them maybe- *(wrong answers)* Yeah.

Tugume's new impression of the relationships between men and women could reinforce the impulses towards protection and security that Kapur critiques (cf. Kapur 2018, 89, 94, 101-102. His comments suggest that he saw men as having fairly ominous intentions, which women – like his younger sister – might need to be protected from: "I am now starting to look at every girl who is on the road as someone who is walking and she has this beautiful mind of Nambi, and Kintu and Walumbe they are there somehow, watching, waiting." However, his reflection on his experience at Straight Talk suggested that engaging with the story had created ideational friction, prompting him to think about the world in new ways: "now I'm getting to the extent of thinking maybe even marriage shouldn't be there, these women should be taking on roles and so on and we first follow them and we see how the world changes."[100]

In her discussion of decolonisation and Afro-feminism, Tamale challenges Ugandan activists to produce "homegrown feminist theory," reconsidering the links between theory and practice (Tamale 2009, 66, 71 and 2020, 40-44):

> if African women are to successfully challenge their subordination and oppression, they need to carefully and rigorously develop home-grown

[100] In another example of ideational friction, Tugume expressed surprise and struggled to make sense of a subtle reference to the possibility of romance between women in an alternative biblical creation myth I told:

> OK I just, I just have something that is a bit bothering me. The serpent was also a she? Or a he? *(Hmm) (Oh she)* Because I'm hearing people saying she, she… *(What did you remember, what did you think the serpent was?)* You know, she, she, like when it came, then talked to a woman, the serpent, that serpent must have been a man not, not a she, must have been a he *(Really? Why?)* Um. *(Girl power) (Hmm)* Because you see, I'm thinking if, if she, if a she talks to a she, that romantical aspect of it *(portrayal)* where it's um. […] *(So there can't be any romance between women?)* Em probably… [laughter] *(Sorry, you don't have to answer that!)*"

> conceptualizations that capture the specific political-economies and cultural realities encountered, as well as their traditional worldviews.

Telling, discussing and retelling the story of Nambi and Kintu offers a prompt to do so. Pamela, for example, said that the story of Nambi generated a "mindshift," and related our discussion to debates about African feminism: "it's a debate we're having, whereby we've taken feminism from Western cues. So somebody was asking, OK through this story of Nambi you know, you start to question, you know, feminist ideology from an African perspective." She emphasised the many roles that African women take on and the way her mother "wanted independence for her daughter […raising Pamela] to be able to be in charge, you know, to question, to analyse, to do things." Whereas her uncle recently suggested that Pamela's competence and the responsibility she takes on in the family is a male characteristic – as though "as a woman I could not have done this" – Pamela insists that she has already been doing these things, like her mother and her grandmother before her:

> So this story of Nambi, for me, the fact that, I felt like there's a mindshift for me, I don't know about you guys, but it's like, it's giving me ways to articulate some of my frustrations about my struggles. […] There is nothing wrong with being a woman. […] I don't have to diminish myself, squeeze myself, suppress my emotions, try and be a man, because I am a woman and I am brilliant.

She resisted the ways in which women are valued in terms of their relationships to men rather than in terms of their own competence:

> Let's just talk about – getting shit done, let's start there. Because the truth is that, statistically, women produce 75% of food, as in they're doing so much. But for a woman to have value we must bring a penis into the story, she must be married, she has she needs a godfather, a father figure, I was like, guys, this story's old.

The protective attitude towards women might be unintentionally reinforced by benevolent human rights and development interventions. For instance, Duniya followed Pamela to say that, in this story, the woman "also becomes a subject for [the] development sector to work on unpaid care

work." On the second day of the workshop, after our day reflecting on and reimagining the story of Nambi and Kintu, I asked participants to tell a collaborative story – each one giving one or two sentences – about development and human rights. In that story, participants consolidated their discussions of what it might mean for a woman to have her own world. Strong assertions of the possibility and importance of women's financial autonomy, but also the challenge of juggling unpaid work, came up against the obstacle of an unresponsive sector (cf. Ichim 2019, 12-14). In response to contributions from Pamela and Martha where women reiterate their financial dependence on men and go to an NGO to ask for financial assistance, Scovia said, "unfortunately NGOs account to donors; in their frameworks there is no provision for financial assistance, so they [the women] decide to go to radio, they go to [sensationalist and patriarchal news programme] Bukedde, to bring questions and answers themselves." Participants explored and resisted the possibility of community-driven solutions to single motherhood, some highlighting the wisdom of the elders, others resisting. Scovia, for instance, had a pregnant woman in the community say: "I cannot decide to sit here and have you determine what happens to my pregnancy," perhaps reflecting her personal experience of taking sole responsibility for her children.

Homegrown theories are not necessarily fundamentally different from existing abstracted feminist or rights discourse. But articulating these in the telling and interpretation of stories allows such theories to emerge from a different place, in a way that engages and begins to negotiate local cultural practices and traditions, and social realities and relationships. As ActionAid colleagues from around the world have recognised, in human rights work "there is a tendency to focus on the 'public sphere' (of rights), and duty bearers rather than the private/personal space […] There are hidden and invisible power dynamics within families and local communities, and often it is within these micro spaces where the most deeply rooted and internalized oppression operates" (Archer and Win 2016). The engagement of these power dynamics through storytelling – and other cultural forms such as proverbs – involves not just the implementation or translation of

abstract feminist principles but, as Nnaemeka argues, a different way of approaching conversations about justice (2004, 365, 378):

> At issue here is the personalization of theory formation in the West (Cartesian, for example) as opposed to the anonymity of a communal voice that articulates knowledge claims in African narrative forms and proverbs[. …] For African women, feminism is an act that evokes the dynamism and shifts of a process as opposed to the stability and reification of a construct, a framework. […] African women do feminism; feminism is what they do for themselves and for others.

In the collaborative story, Tugume added, "meanwhile, in that [feminist] village, the women realised the NGOs coming from abroad are not African so probably do not understand how the old systems of land and resources work." Bwojji followed with, "then the women came and warned: Sisters, we need to co-exist, this land belongs to us, someone will come from outside to steal it, we need to fight for it."

In the story of Nambi and Kintu, Martha reflected, Gulu could have controlled what happened to Nambi just as God could have removed the tree from the garden of Eden:

> But then again if he had, maybe no one would have lived. So probably you learn through the good and the bad decisions you make, and that way you're, you're more of a complex person. […] It's like, God/Gulu is saying: are you going to wait for me to tell you what is good and evil, or – are you going to define it yourself? […] We all take the tree of good and evil to define it for ourselves.

As Alex reflected, "from your story now my mind is a playground of questions. In fact, I'm we- I'm questioning the intentions of God." This discussion led Jennipher to think "about this universalism of rights." While she recognised that "there are good elements" she also highlighted the ways that rights seem as though they are "superimposed on other societies:"

> I'm starting to punch holes into some of the rights issues that we deal with. Yes. I am thinking that with all the myths that have existed in different parts of the world, Africa, Asia, Europe. […] Where then do we get the idea that there is a universal way of living, a universal way of saying

> everyone should do ABC and yet people could be happy in their own setting. And so, when we say that this is barbaric, marrying two wives is barbaric, it's archaic, it's old, it dehumanises women. And people have lived with it let's say for generations and they had no problem with it. But all of a sudden another belief system picked from somewhere else – probably it worked for them, they were monogamous in nature. And then now it comes here, and they're saying: guys, don't do that, that's bad, you must go with our ways. […] I think we should always bear in mind [the] context of the different places.

Jennipher's tentative exploration of these ideas was cut short because of time. But such a perspective hints at the possibility of bottom-up translation, where local contexts inform the development of the global human rights regime. Tamale, for instance, argues that decolonising family law "entail[s] acknowledging the diverse family/marriage arrangements that existed in pre-colonial African societies and critically engaging with the imported notions of 'family' introduced by the colonialists for their own interests" (2020, 339).[101] Such critical engagement may lead to recognition of the legitimacy of non-monogamy for women as well as men, or perhaps, as Tugume suggested, that "maybe even marriage shouldn't be there."

7.6. Conclusion

Ugandan participants' internal discourse about the story of Nambi and Kintu was informed by other local traditions – notably origin stories from communities outside Buganda – and by noticing and contesting the ways that local traditions may have been influenced and shaped by colonialism and Christianity. It was the fact that the story of Nambi and Kintu was hybrid and multivocal that was interesting; retaining the problematic elements and references was more useful than trying to recuperate an approximation of what the story might have been like before colonisation. Justice is negotiated in the context of power relations – and such ambivalent stories are reflections of negotiations that can be contested and countered as well as perpetuated. The instability of traditional stories – the fact that they

[101] For discussion of the variety and flexibility of pre-colonial marriages and domestic and sexual arrangements in East Africa, see Tamale 2020, 306-312 and Stephens 2016.

exist in multiple versions – makes them ideal for playing around with, to imagine how justice might be negotiated differently.

These negotiations are reflected in the negotiations between participants as they discussed and reimagined the story of Nambi and Kintu. For example, Bwojji's attempts to use the story to reflect on how Africans were seduced by colonialism were sabotaged by other participants insistent on emphasising the ways that women's lived experience offers a new perspective on the story. Both alternative traditions and alternative experiences enabled a more comprehensive understanding of social realities. Participants related these insights to their personal lives, political arrangements and activism. For instance, the ways in which participants who were not from Buganda drew connections with other communities in Uganda – through myth, legend and history – suggested how such stories might be used to imagine a more expansive community as part of reimagining the territorial state.

While cross-cultural dialogue had been part of this initial conversation – notably in emphasising the ways that blaming women was a feature of many different cultural traditions – this really came into its own when participants began to reinvent and reimagine the stories. The processes of composition and performance were lighter and less intense but also more experimental than other forms of discussion. This more expansive process resisted the ways that the powerful assert a monopoly over cultural meaning, proposing new ways of being men and women in the person of a more audacious Nambi, confident in her sexuality and claiming her place in the world, and a Walumbe who delighted in taking care of the children he adopted. Participants used references from elsewhere – a love song from a Bengali film and a Hollywood film star – to remake the traditional story to respond to current circumstances. After the workshop, while Fortunate's poem reinstated Nambi as goddess and imagined more expansive political arrangements, Bwojji's retelling involved instauration, attentively following a version he had been told even as he emphasised details that reflected his own concerns. Engaging with the story – especially listening to Susan's

poem – gave Charity confidence that "[at] any point in my life, I can take back my storytelling, my pen."

At the end of the workshop, participants reflected on how we can use fictional stories in ways that we cannot use stories of personal experience; including the way that the discussion of Nambi and Kintu prompted discussion of how universal norms like human rights might relate to and be reconciled with other perspectives on and traditions of justice, dignity and freedom. That will be the focus of the next chapter.

8. Conclusion: implications for development and human rights

> Somewhere there is this voice saying this is what you should believe. And now we are also coming as individuals and asking: is this what we should believe? So I think there's something about complicated *(relationships)* relationships *(with truth)* yeah, with truth, because then we are not taking everything just as we received. We are taking it and sieving it and sometimes – ah – trying to wrestle with it to make, you know, to make meaning of it.
>
> *Susan Kiguli, ActionAid workshop*

8.1. Introduction

In Medina's work on epistemic injustice he highlights how the marginally-situated might struggle to make sense of experiences that "do not yet have standard formulations" (2013, 97-101). The ActionAid workshop involved a process of struggling to make sense of what we have been trained to believe, as Susan put it, "sieving it and sometimes – ah – trying to wrestle with it to make, you know, to make meaning of it." In this thesis I argue that the hermeneutical injustices identified in literature on epistemic injustice should be understood as encompassing not just marginalised lived experience but marginalised traditions, epistemes and repertoires of resistance. The exclusion of such hermeneutical resources from a given process or context amounts to injustice when they are particularly central to the identity of a group whose members are involved in or affected by decisions made in those forums. By attending to marginalised traditions, epistemes and repertoires of resistance, my research responds to calls for cross-cultural dialogue, cultural transformation and decolonisation of human rights (Santos 2002; An-Naʿim 1992 and 2002; Tamale 2008 and 2020, 187-234). Expanding the range of available hermeneutical resources – the cultivation of hermeneutical breadth – helps to mitigate such hermeneutical injustices and also gives social justice activists and decision-makers access to a broader range of tools and approaches for understanding the world and

making claims and decisions in response to intractable challenges and changing circumstances.

I argue that vernacular storytelling is a particularly important hermeneutical resource to learn to use as part of a commitment to cultivate hermeneutical breadth. Hermeneutical resources can be disambiguated into three categories: concepts drawn from language, tradition or experience; interpretative practices; and frames or scripts used to organise information. Storytelling (and the related genres of song and poetry) encompasses all three: it conveys traditions and enables the articulation of new concepts; it provides us with frames that inform which elements we notice and which we discard; and as an alternative hermeneutical practice it can be used as a mechanism to help composers, performers and audiences understand, make sense of and speculate about the world. Storytelling is central to many of the epistemic traditions that are marginalised in the human rights and development regimes, a practice that makes tradition speak to changing circumstances. Reimagining the conventional stories that draw our focus towards certain elements and away from others can help to shift our focus, expanding our interpretative horizons. While a fuller account of the cultivation of hermeneutical breadth would need to consider a wider variety of hermeneutical practices – as I propose to do in my post-doctoral research – storytelling is an ideal place to start.

In my fieldwork, I test whether vernacular storytelling practices – as an alternative hermeneutical practice –can be adapted for use in a participatory workshop, to help development NGO workers and social justice activists in Uganda imagine and articulate alternative conceptions of human rights and development. In designing the storytelling workshops in which I explored this research question, I reviewed a wide range of tools and methodologies used in participatory storytelling workshops. As part of the AHRC project, I worked with Emilie Flower and Susan Kiguli to explore the question of how to integrate more vernacular content and approaches and greater flexibility and responsiveness to participants' cultural competencies into participatory arts-based workshops. This informed the design of the two storytelling workshops which are the focus of this thesis, where participants told,

discussed and reimagined familiar and multivocal stories in their multiple versions. I adapted Gibson-Graham's techniques for unlearning an overly critical orientation as follows: first, using reflection on and critique of well-known stories – as resistant readers – to explore and contest the roots of dominant approaches to justice; secondly, reflecting on the differences between familiar and alternative versions of these stories; and thirdly, opening space for imagining and articulating alternatives by recomposing and retelling these stories (cf. Gibson-Graham 2008, 620-626).

In selecting the stories to use in these workshops, I identified texts with particular relevance for themes that are central in critical work on human rights and justice produced by East African scholars: gender and sexuality, the family and religion. These stories are well-suited for use in cultivating epistemic friction. They speak to the structural preconditions of injustice as well as individual failings, and the process of remembering and reimagining these familiar stories is likely to be pleasurable for participants (cf. Mihai 2018, 404-405). As part of my preparatory work, I spent time becoming familiar with stories from Uganda and reflecting on my own vernaculars. This equipped me to analyse participants' discussions and compositions with reference to the cultural and generic contexts they are embedded within. This thesis situates these findings within the context of key theoretical and critical paradigms, making original theoretical and methodological contributions to knowledge both in terms of the substance of my discussion and – in the more creative sections in Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 – in terms of the form in which I present it.

In my discussion of the two participatory storytelling workshops in Uganda, I consider how participants used fictional or symbolic stories to uncover and negotiate conceptions of justice privileged in human rights and development work. I show how vernacular storytelling can be used to bring diverse cultural traditions to bear in contexts where they are not normally admissible, helping social justice activists in the global South overcome their (wilful) hermeneutical ignorance – whether this is maintained in order to reinforce their own privilege, or results from their colonially-inflected education and induction into business culture and the logics of the networks

and organisations they are embedded within as a result of their work and activism. I highlight the value of using texts that are multivocal and hybrid, bringing together different strands of tradition that participants are familiar with but that tend to be marginalised in development and human rights work. I show how such stories and storytelling practices can be used to cultivate epistemic friction, revealing how cultural traditions inform and reinforce dominant discourses. Participants were able to draw on marginalised interpretations, lived experience, and cultural references from elsewhere to reimagine these traditions and communicate across difference. I consider the contribution made by formal devices used in storytelling – such as structure, rhythm and imagery – and that made by storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice that prompts participants to understand the world differently together.

In the Femrite workshop I used the well-known European folktale of Red Riding Hood and Ugandan ogre stories about Mudo and Nsangi to explore the potential for the articulation of shared priorities and new forms of solidarity between Ireland and Uganda. The discussion in Chapter 5 models the experience of a storytelling workshop for the reader, using my retelling of the story of Red Riding Hood from an Irish perspective as a springboard to put traditions and academic literature from Uganda and Ireland into dialogue in exploring the theme of female sexuality. As in my brief discussion of the stories of Ruth and Esther in the preface, I use the story of Red Riding Hood to highlight the ways that I, as a privileged, white Irish woman, am complicit in the structures of violence that I seek to challenge – but also how my own liberation might be related to that of my colleagues, friends and fellow activists in Uganda. By presenting this discussion in the form of a story and commentary, I ask the reader to move away from a position of analytic detachment to embrace what is not quite understood and become imaginatively involved in the story world. In the Femrite workshop, participants were struck by the imagery and the musicality of my story, which seemed to give them a handle on a relatively unfamiliar story in an unfamiliar setting. Our discussion led them to consider the story of Red Riding Hood in new ways, reflecting on the moral ambiguity of references

to sexuality, and drawing parallels with other texts related to colonialism and race. Some participants got lost in the story, while others appreciated the complexity of the characterisation, which helped them to consider the complexity and ambiguity of their own experience.

In the ActionAid workshop, I worked with Susan Kiguli and Scovia Arinaitwe to engage with the Kiganda origin myth of Nambi and Kintu in the light of other origin stories – the stories of participants' names, origin stories from elsewhere in Uganda, and biblical origin myths. In Chapter 7 I provide a detailed account of the way that participants engaged with the story over the course of a three-day workshop bringing together a mix of social justice activists, writers and artists from Uganda and elsewhere (Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Ireland). In my analysis of this workshop, I consider the extent to which the articulation of alternatives emerged in the (re)composition and performance of the stories themselves, and the extent to which it emerged in the margins between exercises and in the interpretation of the stories examined and composed. The initial discussion of the story allowed participants to consider and question the nature of political authority and female autonomy, raising and relating discussions to issues of ethnicity and religion that are rarely discussed in transnational activist meetings. The subsequent process of recomposition and performance enabled imaginative leaps, allowing participants to reimagine the world more expansively and to consolidate their insights in new versions of the story. Some of their compositions represented radical departures from or remakings of tradition – questioning form and imagining a borderless kingdom. Other participants engaged in instauration – preserving and remaking the story at the same time (Barber 2007, 4, 210-211) – taking pleasure in the story of love at first sight and a father's or uncle's love for his children.

In the ActionAid workshop, the internal discourse about the Kiganda tradition was supplemented by discussion of parallels with other cultural traditions familiar to Ugandan participants – notably Christianity – and with elements from unfamiliar cultures introduced by other participants – notably Hindu traditions and Bengali cinema. This process of internal discourse and

cross-cultural dialogue helped participants to relate and reconcile different traditions they were already familiar with, and allowed for communication across different cultures and perspectives, facilitating a good natured and open negotiation with and around patriarchy (cf. Nnaemeka 2004, 378). There is only so much that can be achieved in a three-day workshop – and the extent to which this process may have generated epistemic friction and enabled imaginative leaps can only be assessed over time. But some participants clearly articulated an experience of experiential, moral and ideational friction during the workshop: they related dilemmas the characters faced to their own concerns; they identified injustices and, in some cases, reckoned with their own complicity in them; and, especially through their engagement with Susan's retelling of the story in her poem, used the story to expand the potential scope of familiar concepts – like that of desire – and begin to imagine a world that does not yet exist. This process informed critical reflections on decolonisation, feminism, development and human rights.

In testing this methodology, I have tried to think through "forms of life that I knew with some degree of intimacy" (Chakrabarty 2008, xviii). I worked with people in Uganda with whom I shared experiences and cultural references – especially in terms of our experiences of Christianity and of the development sector. Participants also brought references that I was less familiar with, drawn from their multiple, overlapping identities and perspectives, and from their work and activism that straddles local-level struggles and global solidarity and advocacy networks. In the ActionAid workshop, Susan as co-facilitator had significant internal legitimacy. She was able to draw on the symbols of Ugandan culture and history and speak the language of her own people – as well as bringing an awareness of the diversity within the room – and she was familiar with some of the concerns and priorities that participants had, while also making space for the unexpected to emerge (cf. An-Naʿim 2011, 195). In the Femrite workshop I had no co-facilitator, but participants brought their own perspectives and experience – as they did in the ActionAid workshop – drawn from their

familiarity with different storytelling traditions and their understandings of feminism, human rights and development.

The ambiguity and ambivalence of the stories we used opened up space for considering what it means to be human and to engage with the stories more critically, not just as receptive audiences, but as resisting readers. The negotiations in these stories reflect the complexity of real-life negotiations – between men and women, between people from different places and between political communities. As reflected in the collaborative story told about development, considering such stories helped to ground analysis of injustice in local social realities while also providing space to imagine how things might be different. Such stories also allowed for communication across difference – between different interpretations of stories from the same place, and between people and cultural traditions from different places. Some participants found it difficult to relate to material from another cultural perspective – on hearing my version of Red Riding Hood or an alternative biblical creation myth I shared – particularly where they lacked the cultural references that made these stories speak to other participants. Cross-cultural dialogue and the process of translation highlight parallels but also divergences, areas of shared understanding but also areas where participants cannot relate. For some of those participants this was an obstacle to their engagement, but other participants took pleasure in what they did not fully understand, responding to the musicality and imagery of the stories, which seemed to open up imaginative space for considering new connections but also for enjoyment. In my discussion I highlight the importance of pleasure and desire in prompting openness to new perspectives and to new relationships and forms of solidarity. Like for Red and the wolf, transnational solidarity networks require courtship across difference, a process of translation and learning that does not promise full understanding. As Spivak argues, such a process requires “uncanny patience” and is without guarantees (Spivak 2004, 558), but it might facilitate friendship and cast light on unexpected areas of commonality, as well as giving participants resources to disagree and challenge each other indirectly. Highlighting the importance of process and practice for the

development of theory, Nnaemeka argues "for the possibilities, desirability, and pertinence of a space clearing that allows a multiplicity of different but related frameworks from different locations to touch, intersect, and feed off each other in a way that accommodates different realities and histories" (2004, 362-363). Vernacular storytelling seems like a good place to start.

In this conclusion I consider my final research question, related to the implications of participants' storytelling and interpretations for the human rights and development sectors. I first discuss what the traditional, fictional stories we used in the workshop can be used for as compared to the personal storytelling privileged in human rights and development. I then go on to discuss how such an expansive process might be used by social justice activists sitting between local struggles and global systems of governance and solidarity – and how the insights and claims generated through such a process might relate to existing norms and interventions. I conclude by considering future directions for research.

8.2. Comparing fictional to personal storytelling

In the epigraph to this thesis, I cite a short poem by Rabindrinath Tagore, which Okot p'Bitek uses as the epigraph for his book of Achioli folktales, *Hare and Hornbill* (Okot 1978; Tagore 1916):

> TRUTH in her dress finds facts too tight.
> In fiction she moves with ease.

As Susan reflected in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, in the ActionAid workshop, we considered the nature of truth and belief: how we have been conditioned, who creates and promotes influential stories and why, and how alternative or reimagined versions of those stories might reveal new possibilities. In *Hare and Hornbill*, Okot points to the ways that traditional stories travel and are "moulded and recast again and again in translation and according to the novel influences under which they became subjected." He encourages fuller engagement with the originality of each performance of such folktales. The assumption is often that "every story has a standard text; but this is a completely wrong assumption. For every person tells a story in his or her own way" (Okot 1978, xi-xiv). Although our

capacity for reflection is limited by our conditioning through language and through our vernaculars, presentation and behaviours – what Bourdieu calls *habitus* (1990) – the assumption in this thesis is that such conditioning can be disrupted by adopting new epistemic habits (cf. Mihai 2016). I propose vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice, equipping social justice activists to retell the stories that have influenced us in new ways.

Where storytelling is used in development and human rights work, this tends to be personal rather than fictional storytelling. In the ActionAid workshop, we included a session on personal storytelling – using the well-known story-of-self template – on the second day. Participants found this an intense but deeply significant process. After the session, participants considered the differences between fictional and personal storytelling and what each might be good for. This comparison was necessarily limited and specific, comparing the experience of telling, discussing and retelling origin myths with the heavily curated personal storytelling exercise we engaged in, but it gave rise to insights that are more broadly applicable.[102] As discussed above, Mihai suggests that artworks that are particularly suitable for cultivating epistemic injustice draw attention to the structural preconditions of injustice as well as to individual failings (2018, 404-405). Both personal and fictional stories can be used to analyse social conditioning and relationships of power. However, participants in the ActionAid workshop noted that it felt easier and more appropriate to use fictional stories such as Nambi and Kintu to do this than it would have been to use the personal stories that other participants shared.

In the personal storytelling exercise in the ActionAid workshop, each participant shared details of challenges they had faced and overcome with a small group; other members of the group listened carefully and then commented on what they had shared. Participants felt that listening to these

[102] A number of participants set this discussion within the context of the use and abuse of personal stories in the development and human rights sectors – how stories are gathered in extractive ways without proper respect for the teller and for the importance of relationships, and often without the right consent in place (cf. Gready 2010).

stories generated a sense of accountability to the person sitting in front of them. In this exercise, Charity reflected, they were compelled to drop their guard and got "caught up in the muddled emotion. […] I can't think, OK fine, what lesson can I take from this. I'm thinking, this human being across from me is broken and in need of help." In considering the potential of personal storytelling, we discussed the risk that other participants might not be respectful of the stories that are told. A number of participants emphasised how important it was to ensure that facilitators have the maturity and the appropriate skills and training to respond to participants in distress.[103] Scovia and Charity pointed out that such sessions are likely to raise difficult issues – which participants might have successfully buried – and emphasised the importance of making time for participants, as Charity put it, to be "kind of put together before they are sent home for [the] day."

"Fiction," Martha reflected, "felt safer." A number of participants said that they felt more comfortable using the Nambi story analytically – "one feels more freedom perhaps," Anindita said, "to analyse, to pick it apart, to question it" – where they would have found it ethically problematic to do the same with personal stories. Pamela, for instance, felt a greater sense of detachment when considering the story of Nambi and Kintu:

> I found the Nambi story more useful if I was trying to solve a problem, because I was detached, I was indifferent, so my mind was clear, the feeling was clear. While with the personal story I was like: hold on, this is not your play field. […] I'm not going to get somebody's personal stories and use it to tear apart and draw charts and things like that, but I can easily do that with a fictional story.

A number of participants pointed to how fictional stories brought to light political issues and global problems, where the personal storytelling session

[103] This might also be needed for fictional storytelling. For example, in the workshop in Bangladesh in December 2019 at least three participants found the invitation to recall and share stories that they remembered from their childhoods to be very triggering, leading to significant distress. I hadn't expected or prepared for this; I was extremely lucky to be working with Duniya who has training in counselling and exceptional interpersonal skills and had pre-existing relationships of trust with most of the participants.

was more focused on emotional connection.[104] Participants agreed that the kind of personal stories used in development and human rights work tend to focus on specific violations and individual struggles rather than on bringing the structural preconditions of injustice to light. As Anindita reflected, "I think often we actually search for those [personal] stories that can speak to broader themes and issues and it's hard, it's hard to find them." Fictional stories are more adaptable partly, as Odhiambo said, because they exist in multiple versions:

> going back to story about Nambi […] there's so many versions of that story, so what that tells us with fictions, you know it can be [that] it's adaptable […] it could be written in different versions […] for different context[s].

Odhiambo suggested that fictional stories are particularly well-suited for illuminating structural injustices:

> when you're looking at fictions, I think it also helps you to look at the intersections, and then zoom out, you can work at a broader level. So, for example, Nambi's story, sharing that yesterday, issues around gender comes, issues around patriarchy, issues around leadership. You know, so, so you can actually connect so many things. You cannot connect so many things with personal stories. It kind of, kind of (*it feels rude*).

He felt that fiction can help to facilitate conversations about potentially controversial issues such as LGBT+ rights without putting individuals at risk:

> this just gets me thinking into, when we have difficult conversations. So, and that's also where I feel fictional stories [are] really playing a big role, subjects that people will not always want to discuss. […] It's difficult you know to talk about it more openly if you were to speak in a very, to a very conservative audience on LGBTQI+ issues based on your personal stories, people start looking at you differently right based on our context here. But

[104] Duniya disagreed – she emphasised how personal storytelling can also be used to analyse political issues, arguing that sharing personal experiences is "more concrete, more realistic" than using fictional stories. She demonstrated how the identification of common themes in the personal stories her group had shared might be used to illuminate patriarchal power structures and described how participants might engage analytically with published testimonies that they can identify with.

> I've seen fictional stories really working a lot on that like without really putting someone on the spot. But then the message is got, like people analyse it.

I also asked participants to consider what details someone might leave out in telling their personal story. For some participants, asking the question seemed to call into question their openness during the exercise and the sense of deep connection that they felt as a result. For example, Anindita said that members of her small group "felt we didn't hold anything back, we felt completely open and safe and secure." However, others found the question easier to engage with, noting in particular that in telling their personal story they were unlikely to include details that made them look bad, that were too revealing, that made them feel uncomfortable, or that were sensational or legally problematic. As Pamela said, "these stories that present me in a bad light, I'm still an egotistic human, so there are some stories that, yeah, yeah, that's not good (*you leave out*)."

As discussed above, literature on epistemic injustice suggests that personal storytelling from a marginalised perspective can be used to cultivate epistemic friction, both for those who are telling the story – raising their awareness of the disjuncture between their own experiences and dominant stories told about the world – but also for the privileged, as they consider how those experiences differ from their own. However, as I noted in the preface, identifying with marginalised characters can also obscure the relative privilege of the reader. The impulse towards empathy can lead us to imagine ourselves as being similarly-situated to those whose voices we are reading – or to imagine them as being similarly-situated to us. For example, in the personal storytelling session, both Anindita and I acknowledged the ways in which our upbringings were significantly more privileged than those of other participants, but other participants challenged this, emphasising the details of our stories that were like their own and amplifying and perhaps exaggerating the challenges we had faced in order to find common ground. This was deeply touching and an important emotional dimension of the development of relationships of solidarity, representing other participants' insistence that we can be included in

common struggles in spite of our privilege. Making these connections was particularly important for Anindita, who had just moved to Uganda to start a new job with ActionAid: "as an Indian sitting in this group, when I heard certain stories, I was like, ah, it happens in different countries in Africa as well, and that was my connection." As Duniya reflected, "until we are try[ing] to find out our common grounds, it's not possible to move together." However, this can also close off space for discussion of our inevitable complicity – as privileged actors, both educated in elite institutions – in perpetuating some of the injustices that we seek to challenge and that other participants might be subject to.[105]

Arguably, engaging with fictional storytelling makes it easier to consider complicity and generate epistemic friction that disrupts wilful hermeneutical ignorance because it is not about our own experiences but "about types, some of which are mere possibilities" (Mihai 2018, 405). In the story of Red Riding Hood, for instance, I can discuss the way that the wolf has a relationship of power over Red – or respond to how others point this out without being defensive – while privately acknowledging my own privilege and power in the context of transnational activist networks and remembering times where I have taken up space to the exclusion of others, without having to expose myself to judgment. As well as in Tugume's commendably open reflection on his own experience of epistemic friction discussed in the previous chapter, this comes through in the ways that participants related the experience of engaging in storytelling to development and human rights, as discussed in the next section.

8.3. Homegrown conceptions of justice

In their critical scholarship on human rights, An-Naʿim, Mutua and Tamale suggest that practitioners should look to local articulations of justice as part of a process of cross-cultural dialogue, cultural transformation and

[105] This may also focus attention on elements that are common to a number of stories, distracting attention from the specificity of each story and, perhaps, from elements that are more salient to each individual. Stories that are too different from the others told – for instance, those told by participants from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds – are often marginalised in the process.

decolonisation of human rights. By taking account of the specific political, economic and cultural realities and traditional worldviews that lead to subordination and oppression, their advocacy and campaigning priorities are more likely to be responsive to local struggles rather than to transnational blueprints (Mutua 2009, 22-25; Tamale 2009, 66, 71 and 2020, 40-44). Framing political claims in terms of local institutions and traditions recognises the stronger loyalties populations have to such normative regimes, as compared to relatively legalistic rights paradigms and technocratic development norms (cf. An-Naʿim 2002, 4-5; Tamale 2008, 59-63 and 2020, 220-233). This approach takes the existing human rights regime as "a very important and useful, though not necessarily definitive or exhaustive, framework for the internal and cross-cultural social construction of rights at the local, African and global levels" (An-Naʿim 2002, 5). Alternative local conceptualisations of justice, dignity and freedom can draw attention to gaps in existing global normative frameworks and have the potential to fill the gourd (An-Naʿim 2006, 23; Mutua 2002b, 70). The ongoing process of articulation and reformulation of rights that Mutua describes has strong parallels with Medina's call for the cultivation of a kaleidoscope sensibility: "[e]ven after agreement, the doors must remain open for further inquiry, reformulation and revision" (Mutua 2002b, 72; cf. Medina 2013, 200-203).

In development and human rights interventions, it is almost too easy to go in equipped with familiar, loaded terms, imposing predetermined categories and blueprints rather than remaining open and responsive to contextual factors. In the ActionAid workshop, Susan contrasted activist stories – which "are also in so many ways purpose driven, so you are concentrating on the goal as well as on what happened" – to Irish storytelling traditions that emphasise the importance of identity, place and belonging. In response, Pamela said, "I wonder – just that omission, is that the reason that some of our solutions were flawed?" In response, Scovia wondered whether this was one of the reasons that development work fails to deliver real change:

> [In] one of my classes in my degree of human rights, there was a discussion around development work not designed to deliver change. And, and there was a debate around that. And so talking about fiction stories, and being able to think about more broader themes in terms of setting, in terms of wanting to, like, have broader themes with which to work with. Could that also contribute to the reasons why we don't deliver real change? […] Just like thinking wild because I'm a part of this development work but I want to do things differently and I want to- So just thinking could this be- So just thinking out loud. […] Because we are just picking things to fit in a certain logframe[106] which does not necessarily fit into this other world that we claim to be working [towards]."

Drawing on articulations of the self in Adi Śaṅkara's writings on non-dualism or *advaita*, Kapur argues that the pressures of engaging in feminist or human rights activism directs practitioners towards doing rather than being (2008, 216-223, 226-227):

> Within both the discursive and the material terrain of human rights, there is regrettably little or no pause for reflection, but rather a continuous focus on how we as individual selves, such as feminists or human rights scholars, can theorize and/or even actualize freedom for others even before we have successfully freed ourselves from our own deep conditioning, unmitigated phobias, discriminatory schemas and powerful sense of privilege and entitlement.

Without such reflection, she argues, practitioners are likely to categorise and politicise grievances in ways that reinscribe trauma and move the marginalised subject further away from the goal of freedom (Kapur 2018, 227). Feminists, Spivak argues, "must think of a different kind of diversified itinerary for teasing out the relationship between human rights and women's rights rather than cultural conservatism, politically correct golden agism, or ruthless-to-benevolent Eurocentrism" (2004, 549). In this thesis, I suggest that vernacular storytelling could be part of such an itinerary, prompting reflection that could lead to a more contextually responsive categorisation

[106] A planning tool widely used in development interventions, short for logical framework.

and negotiation of grievances, and to greater self-awareness within transnational activist networks.

Tamale suggests that the process of conscientisation – following Freire – "is an effective vehicle for developing new perceptions and worldviews." It has the potential to transform "tendencies and practices which foster injustice and inequality," allowing learners to connect knowledge encoded in cultural traditions – "e.g., story-telling, song, lamentation and dance" – with modern systems (Tamale 2020, 233-234, 272-273; cf. Freire [1968] 1970). Such a process of conscientisation approximates what Medina describes as the cultivation of epistemic friction, helping participants to overcome their (wilful) hermeneutical ignorance and colonisation of the mind. The design of the storytelling workshops that I reflect on in this thesis were informed by participatory principles derived from Freire's work, providing a space for social justice activists to reflect on the contexts and traditions that have influenced how they understand the world and their work, and on their capacity to transform that reality. After the ActionAid workshop, Scovia reflected, "there is something it does to your thinking when you listen to those stories, when you read them and discuss them […] you're constantly interrogating your thoughts." Rather than providing the answers, she felt that looking at traditional stories like Nambi and Kintu encourages participants to ask questions and "gives you a broader perspective on how to think about things." In the same discussion, Anindita was taken less by the differences between personal and fictional storytelling than by the differences between storytelling and the legal frameworks that she usually works with:

> my learning of human rights has been so different. Legal, completely legal – international humanitarian law, human rights law, fact, evidence – so to even think about emotion and personal storytelling (*is already powerful*). It's a different path, I mean to merge the two is not easy still in my head. Separate compartments.

As Natasha observed at the end of the Femrite workshop, stories are not law. Where law sets everything out, stories "don't tell it fully" but provide audiences with hermeneutical resources that they can draw on in responding

to changing circumstances, adding their own agency. I suggest that storytelling provides social justice activists and decision-makers with a broader range of resources they can use in deliberation, negotiation and communication across difference, notably facilitating engagement with culture "as an arena for political and ideological struggle" (Nnaemeka 2004, 374). The interactions in the storytelling workshops led participants to reflect on the work they were doing on behalf of others, the work they do on behalf of themselves, and the (often hidden) power dynamics within transnational activist networks and organisations.

After the ActionAid workshop, Anindita reflected that using different forms – like fictional storytelling – provides a completely different frame to look at rights violations, using a different type of language that is "perhaps more relevant to the people we are working with" and that "keeps our creative interest and our emotional attachment alive to the work we do." The ambiguity and complexity of the stories we worked with led Pamela, Charity and Natasha to reflect on their own activism, giving them new ways to articulate their frustration and the complexity of women's experiences. This, as Charity put it, gives them the confidence to "take back my storytelling, my pen" and, as Natasha said, to "allow themselves to be seen" in "the full potential of their being." In retelling the story of Nambi and Kintu after the ActionAid workshop, Bwojji subtly explored a new way of understanding what it means to be a man – as an attentive father who gets to know his children and empowers them. For Tugume, the process of engaging with the story of Nambi and Kintu led him to question whether he had given the right advice to young women in his work on the Straight Talk programme. The storytelling process created a space in which participants were asked to suspend understanding, question their assumptions and resist the impulse to turn the other into something like the self. Vernacular storytelling can help participants to understand where others are coming from, in terms of their historically and culturally effected situatedness as well as their position in social hierarchies. By acknowledging the possibility of different desires and priorities, such a process could be used to encourage

participants to reflect more honestly on what works, how much and for whom (cf. Spivak 1993, 181, 183, 191-192).

Such practices could be incorporated into development and human rights work to facilitate the shift that Kapur recommends from doing towards being (together), and from planning immediate actions towards thinking and reflection – perhaps as part of strategic planning, team-building or movement building processes. The process of telling, discussing and retelling familiar stories helps to move participants' attention from what is in front of them to what could or should be on the horizon, and from the surface to underlying structures and systems. It can help social justice activists to understand and engage with hidden power – the specific political, economic, culture realities and traditional worldviews that lead to subordination and oppression – and consider how this might be contested by drawing on neglected traditions and imagined possibilities. While such a process is without guarantees, findings from the two workshops suggest that it has the potential to generate epistemic friction – to overcome wilful hermeneutical ignorance and colonisation of the mind – and facilitate imaginative leaps – allowing participants to articulate concepts and imagine realities that do not yet exist. After reading a draft of Chapter 5, Natasha wrote to me to say that "the biggest disaster of colonialism institutions or rule etc, is the mental slavery, these cuffs on imagination." To reclaim their moral agency in the light of colonisation of the mind, "Africans have to do something unimaginable like trust themselves to have enough moral conscious[ness] to build new narratives of human rights." Multivocal stories that encode negotiations between pre-colonial heritage and other traditions can be used to explore how current power arrangements inherit and are entangled with these historical patterns. By reflecting on these stories in their multiple versions, participants are likely to be able to uncover emancipatory elements within familiar traditions. By retelling those stories and composing new versions, participants can remake those traditions by bringing in these emancipatory elements as well as elements from other contexts and cultures, developing ways of articulating justice – and perhaps even new conceptions of justice – that are responsive to current conditions.

Such negotiations can help to recalibrate the relationships between social justice activists and the communities that they come from or are part of, but also have the potential to challenge the problematic power dynamics and fill the incomplete gourd of transnational activist discourse. As Anindita said during the ActionAid workshop, "unfortunately […] the development sector is plagued by colonialism; the same problems of power we try to address in communities also exist between us, but we very conveniently pretend as though that doesn't exist within our ranks." The process of storytelling has the potential to shift the terms of the debate, creating the conditions for the emergence of new perspectives. Like any process, it can be monopolised by powerful individuals making self-consciously eloquent contributions that serve to silence others. However, as an alternative hermeneutical practice, it can be used to shift the conversation out of well-trodden discursive paths and facilitate a different type of interaction that leaves more room for struggling to make sense and coming to know. By emphasising skills other than those of logical reasoning, this process might facilitate expression by those who feel excluded by the logics that tend to govern discussion in the development and human rights sectors. The hero stories associated with dominant logics of human rights (Sachs 2012; Slaughter 2006 and 2007) can reinforce cultures of self-sacrifice, heroism and martyrdom, with serious implications for the wellbeing of social justice activists (cf. Nah 2017). Stories such as Red Riding Hood can be used to explore and contest highly gendered constructions of heroism in the European tradition. Stories such as Nambi and Kintu, can be used to explore alternative logics of reciprocity and interdependence and to shed light on the implications of non-Eurocentric philosophical traditions such as Ubuntu for conceptions of justice (cf. Tamale 2020, 220-233).

Spivak argues that it is the jagged relationship between what she calls rhetoric – coming to know – and the clearly indicated logical connections that are the effect of knowing that enable us to act in the world in ethical, political and day-to-day ways (Spivak 1993, 181). Making the connections between rhetoric and logic is more easily said than done. Many participants in the ActionAid workshop left with more questions than answers, some

enjoying the freedom from the need to come to logical conclusions. Pamela, for instance, suggested that "we need to stay hungry. Stay hungry." But others, Anindita in particular, struggled with the lack of order and wondered how what we did together might relate to our different fields of work:

> I found some cracks or some dissonance among the three days. That might be my slight desire for order and organisation at some level. That, you know, day one was a high with the story, with the new story that I discovered, and myths and fictional stories. Day two was very intensive in terms of exposing and talking about personal stories. And then whether it was about choosing one over the other, whether it was about, I don't know, finding your space, your purpose between those two forms, I guess I am walking out very hungry, and puzzled as to whether we did somewhat achieve the purpose of the workshop as you had in mind as the creator. And how then do we apply, utilise it in our respective fields of work. Very hungry.

As reflected in the previous chapter, participants in the ActionAid workshop critically reflected on the implications of the process for their understandings of development and human rights. However, we did not work with these ideas more systematically to consider how they might inform their work and activism. In many cases, such translation is likely to happen unconsciously, in ways that individual participants might not fully understand. But in the context of using storytelling as a hermeneutical practice with a group of social justice activists who already work together or might be inspired to do so as a result of their interaction, it is worth setting out how more conscious and deliberate connections might be made.[107]

[107] The experimental nature of the ActionAid workshop meant that I did not make time for this. A more conventional workshop structure could include this as the focus of the third day, in which insights from the previous two days are consolidated through creative composition, categorised using various participatory tools and related to concrete project design or advocacy agendas, both to question and expand the scope of those agendas, but also to consider whether and how storytelling could be used as an approach within them. The risk is that this is likely to channel and contain what has been achieved in the workshop, relating it only to agendas where it seems to have most immediate relevance, and therefore limit the scope for any epistemic friction that participants experience to change how they think in unexpected ways. A number of participants in both workshops said that they needed time to digest and reflect on the experience. In the AHRC project, bringing together participants and others to consider and discuss creative responses to

As discussed in Chapter 2, shared norms allow us to communicate justice claims in ways that others are likely to respond to. Yet some injustices are neglected in the ways that existing norms are interpreted and applied. In arguing for the value of an ethnographic sensibility in normative political theory, Lisa Herzog and Bernardo Zacka point out that "even if there were a universal core of moral principles to be discovered […] the specific meaning and tangible features given to them would vary greatly depending on culture and context" (2019, 765). Taking a more positivist approach, even where there are a set of normative principles articulated in law – as in the case of human rights – the ways in which these are interpreted and applied to specific dilemmas is informed by culture and context (of society, but also of the decision-making body) as well as by procedural constraints and the distinctive facts in any given case. The narrowness of certain approaches to rights is not necessarily encoded in the law (or in development norms) but can be challenged as activists propose new areas of emphasis and new interpretations.

Starting with an abstract set of norms or established priorities and applying those to a specific context is likely to draw attention to some dimensions of experience and not to others. Starting with a story that is part of that context and allowing abstractions to emerge or be noticed along the way is a more open process, with the potential to reveal priorities, power relations and possibilities that might otherwise have gone unnoticed. Social justice activists who engage in such a process can then track back to see how they might strategically use existing norms in ways that support such homegrown priorities and claims. Attending to a greater range of possible claims might draw attention to areas where interpretations of existing norms are narrower than they could be, or where certain norms are neglected. Although there are procedural constraints in many decision-making processes, decision-makers also draw on historical, political and cultural factors to interpret norms and to increase the persuasiveness of their

experimental workshops about six months after the initial workshop seemed to work well. Although some elements of the experience are lost over this time, the elements that are recalled are likely to be those that have particular significance for participants.

decisions. In her account of the production of human rights discourse in UN spaces, Falcón argues that the negotiation and mediation between dominant, legalistic understandings of human rights and constellations of alternative feminist and antiracist claims has produced innovations, such as the integration of activist language and priorities in the questions and concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. “In their advocacy, they [activists] take the platforms, inspirations, values, ethics, and ideas from the counterpublic constellation and use them to decipher how dominant understandings of human rights can be challenged, re-interpreted, and re-imagined” (Falcón 2015, 816, 820-824).

8.4. Directions for future research

In my PhD research I have considered and tested the potential of vernacular storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice, which participants can become skilled in as part of a commitment to cultivating hermeneutical breadth. As discussed in Chapter 3, the methodology could be tested with more representative groups of participants, including groups of more privileged activists who are, as Duniya said, “taking the lead to design development” and groups of activists who are less comfortable with English. Introducing a comparative dimension – by comparing, for instance, workshops in Bangladesh, Ireland and Uganda – would help to clarify the ways in which the method helps participants engage with local negotiations of power and to distinguish this from how it might be used to inform and transform transnational solidarity networks and systems of governance.

A fuller account of what it might mean to cultivate hermeneutical breadth would require consideration of a broader range of hermeneutical practices, comparing how different practices might make different contributions to creating the conditions for better and more just decision-making. Aside from storytelling (and the related genre of poetry), critical scholarship on human rights has highlighted two other practices with particular potential: leisure and play, and religious thought and practice. As discussed in the literature review, believers as well as sceptics have long

used and remade religious texts to make powerful political statements. An-Naʿim highlights the potential for religious faith to motivate the pursuit of justice and calls for religious traditions to be reconciled with human rights. His focus is Islam, but he suggests that other communities should engage in similar processes of internal discourse with regard to their own traditions (An-Naʿim 1992, 2002 and 2011; cf. Santos 2015). In contrast, Kapur points to non-liberal religious traditions such as nondualism as being better suited to the pursuit of freedom than human rights – essentially a system of governance and control – can ever be (2018, 180-238). Religious traditions are deeply flawed, and Christianity in particular is strongly associated with colonial oppression and epistemicide (cf. Kapur 2018, 214-216; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, 125; Mutua 2002a, 32-33, 94-111). However, there are also feminist, anti-racist and social justice traditions within Christianity that grapple with the problematic dimensions of Christian tradition and seek to remake them (cf. West 1999; Bassard 2010; Schüssler Fiorenza 1994; Tamale 2020, 182-186). The same can be said for other religious traditions that are monopolised by the powerful and used in oppressive ways. Insights from indigenous spirituality and other non-proselytising religions are harder to access, especially where they have been neglected, suppressed or read through the lens of monotheism (cf. Mutua 2002a, 112-125; Okot 1979). But where such traditions can still be accessed (cf. Okot [1971] 2019) or have been reinvented, they might inform fuller understandings of justice and interdependence.

As noted above, Kapur argues that the human rights sector directs practitioners towards doing rather than being (2018, 227). Leisurely forms of sociality and play – which prioritise being over doing – have the potential to disrupt the temporalities, instrumentality and demand for productivity associated with human rights, development and activism (Chakrabarty [2000] 2008, 180-213; Motta and Bermúdez 2019, 426-428, 435). In her work with children in a rural Sudanese village, Katz points to the power of play for reimagining and reinventing the world (2004, 95-108). Play and the right to play have received significant attention with regard to children, but less with regard to adults. Article 24 of the Universal Declaration on Human

Rights relating to the right to leisure has been understood primarily in the context of the right to paid holidays from formal employment. However, there is potential to develop the interpretation of the right to leisure to account for the imaginative potential of leisure practices and how this intersects with women's disproportionate responsibility for unpaid work, as well as the class and caste dimensions of the right (cf. Chakrabarty [2000] 2008, 207-213). A conceptualisation of the right to leisure grounded in social realities might give more attention to the importance of leisure *in* work as well as leisure *from* work. This could help to illuminate the logics of progress and efficiency prioritised especially by the development sector. Disrupting these logics in work as well as in rest might help to inform better and more just responses to growth-fuelled climate change and oppressive working conditions in global production networks, among other issues. As in the rural decision-making that Trinh Minh-ha describes in *Woman, Native, Other*, "[n]ever does one open the discussion by coming right to the heart of the matter. For the heart of the matter is always somewhere else than where it is supposed to be" (1989, 1).

In my PhD fieldwork, I used storytelling to help participants engage with conceptions of justice and imagine the world in new ways. In this thesis, I offer some suggestions for how participants might draw on the insights from such processes to inform their engagement with the development and human rights sectors. In combining art and exegesis in the same medium, storytelling and other oral texts can be used to reflect upon as well as to reflect and speculate about the world (cf. Barber 2007, 4-5, 14, 33, 99-100). However, these insights might not speak directly to contexts and processes determined by other logics. Future research could articulate more clearly a framework for the interpretation and translation of vernacular cultural practices on their own terms, to provide guidance on how to relate the experimental process of coming to know with the more instrumental aim of acting in the world in ethical and political ways (cf. Spivak 1993, 181). Different elements are likely to be emphasised in the context of specific instrumental aims than are highlighted in the context of more exploratory and expansive processes. Relating insights from vernacular cultural

practices to decision-making informed by very different logics is likely to transform and perhaps to distort such insights. However, by making the strange familiar and the familiar strange, engaging in a broader range of hermeneutical practices has the potential to disrupt, supplement and potentially transform conceptions of justice, in ways that equip social justice activists and decision-makers to act in response to ever-changing circumstances.

8.5. Conclusion

In exploring the potential of storytelling as an alternative hermeneutical practice and testing the methodology with social justice activists and writers in Uganda, my PhD research makes a substantial and applied contribution to projects aiming to develop multicultural conceptions of human rights and development, and to decolonise conceptions of justice. In this chapter, I point to the ways that fictional storytelling can complement personal storytelling as a mechanism for cultivating epistemic friction, helping participants to disrupt and reimagine dominant ways of understanding and speculating about the world. I suggest that social justice activists and decision-makers can draw on these more expansive, multivocal articulations of justice to develop relationships of solidarity, to design interventions that are responsive to local negotiations of power, and to expand the repertoire that they can draw upon in advocacy and decision-making anchored in existing norms, drawing attention to norms and possible interpretations that have been neglected. I suggest a number of avenues for taking this research in new directions, by testing the methodology with more diverse groups, introducing a comparative dimension to the analysis, and considering the use and interpretation of a broader range of marginalised hermeneutical practices, such as religious thought and practice, and leisure and play.

In my discussion I highlight the ways that the human rights and development sectors are flawed, but suggest that they still have the potential to be used in the pursuit of justice. Just like other cultural traditions, the cultures of human rights and development are contestable and multivocal, and the associated norms can be put to a range of uses. In my ongoing

research, of which this thesis is part, I try to equip social justice activists to imagine justice in ways that are not constrained by the logics of the sectors, to respond to changing circumstances and to realise the full potential of existing norms, even as the possibility of developing new ones remains open (cf. Mutua 2016). While I point to the importance of testing this methodology with a more representative group of people, perhaps its most significant potential is for those who are in relatively privileged positions, as a mechanism to help us overcome our wilful hermeneutical ignorance. Storytelling has the potential to help us, as Duniya said, to do the real work of "see[ing] our real personality in the mirror," providing a structured framework – about types, about mere possibilities – to help us engage with the complex emotional responses that this is likely to give rise to.

In identifying myself as a fellow participant and social justice activist alongside those I have worked with in Uganda, I recognise the ways in which my privilege and professional background make me complicit with the very injustices that I contest. Part of this complicity relates to the protection of my privilege and status in a way that erodes the space available to others, which needs to be challenged. Another part relates to my engagement with imperfect structures of governance in efforts to push for change. The same might be said, to a greater or lesser degree, of many of those who, like me, have chosen to engage with the human rights and development sectors as part of our commitment to justice, dignity and freedom. I know that my own motivations for being involved in social justice activism are complex – partly driven by self-interest, curiosity and the pursuit of pleasure – and that my capacity for ignoring reality and reluctance to make significant changes in my life are shored up by wilful hermeneutical ignorance as well as fear of uncertainty. However, I hold on to the hope that by working with and learning from others, I and others like me can overcome our conditioning and defensiveness and begin to understand, imagine and act in the world differently. "First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with the others / And in the end – with time and luck – to dance" (MacNeice [1939] 2012, 10).

None of our hearts are pure, we always have mixed motives,
Are self-deceivers, but the worst of all
Deceits is to murmur ‘Lord, I am not worthy’
And, lying easy, turn your face to the wall.
But may I cure that habit, look up and outwards
And may my feet follow my wider glance
First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with the others
And in the end – with time and luck – to dance.

From Autumn Journal iii, Louis MacNeice

Appendix

Tongue Touch Nambi Myth

Susan Nalugwa Kiguli

(For Bonnie Shullenberger)

Nambi, daughter of God,
Unfolds the stairway of heaven
For a glimpse of a world
Away from the elevation of the skies.
On earth her eyes lie on a man
Who eats dung for food
Urine for wine
Her eyes repose
And the daughter of God lends
Vision desire.
She creates a language desire
She says:
There is a banquet in heaven
Come my arms will support your flight.
Come to where rivers wave waists
And hills sit crosslegged
Where trees swing yellow fruit
And mountains wear snow crowns
Where cows have long conversations with swans
And streams murmur to gesturing reeds.
Come witness the laughter of waterfalls
Laughter that dives into rocks
And glides over space
Spraying souls with dizziness
Of freedom and shock of courage.
Come see the mirrors in the stream
How they turn faces over

Shaping unimaginable possibilities
See how they tease you with what you know
And make a mark on chances of discovery.
The rolling stream is your seeing
Your contradictions
Like feathers floating in the midriff
Of a slithering brook.
Come enter into our heaven
And let your cow graze among ours
Become part of our being
Do not seek to understand our habits
Venture to know them.

I am part of our world
I live here as my father's daughter
I do not seek to deny paternity
Nor do I dissolve my individuality
Look I am a community and yet a single soul.
I choose to come with you
I choose my walk
I see my point of exit
I come with the pride of my knowing
I choose to descend to earth
To make my own world
Come, listen I have a tale to tell.
I descend to earth
With seed from my father's fields
With the cattle from his kraal
I come to live in my own world
Look I bring my father's banana trees
But I do the planting
I fashion out my own garden
I water my own fruit

Look I take the millet seed
And plant my own millet field
I make my own life.
I have a tale to tell
I make my own hearth
And place these stones
To make a meeting place
To provide a talking place
To bear an idea haven
Listen I am telling a tale.
Anchored in my body
Is my mother
Holding me together.
I take many forms
Where I touch life grows.
(Death raging in oblique turbulence
Is not my relative
I did not invite him here
Or bring him in the arms of rebellion.)
I cultivate a circular field
No tree behind the other
Life sings in the branches.
I from the inside

Make the outside
Forming a place
Where
Our daughters and sons
Shall raise their faces
Shall reach out with their arms
As far as those mountains
Which dwell in the clouds.
I call from the compound

Putting thatch upon this roof
Every blade is adding shape
Every stalk points upward
To freer spaces
Listen I am singing
A song within this tale
A harmony
Where our daughters' voices
Are clear and strong.
These daughters made of our flesh
Are stepping out
In the morning light.
Adorned in beams of a daring sun
Daughters defy the silence
In the smog of time
Pronouncing the presence
Of resolute voices.

Note: The poem draws strongly on the Nambi and Kintu creation myth from Buganda Kingdom (Uganda).

Bibliography

Abdi, Ali. A. 2010. "Clash of Oralities and Textualities: The Colonization of the Communicative Space in Sub-Saharan Africa." In *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on Development, Education, and Culture*, edited by Dip Kapoor and Edward Shizha, 147-164. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

ActionAid. 2016. *Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: Women and Girls Struggle for Justice in Uganda*. https://uganda.actionaid.org/publications/2016/walk-mile-her-shoes-women-and-girls-struggle-justice-uganda.

ActionAid Uganda. 2017. *5th Strategy Paper 2018-2022: Strengthening Struggles for Social Jusice*. https://uganda.actionaid.org/publications/2017/actionaid-uganda-5th-strategy-paper-strengthening-struggles-social-justice

Adejunmobi, Moradewun. 2004. *Vernacular Palaver: Imaginations of the Local and Non-Native Languages in West Africa*. Clevedon, England: Cromwell Press.

Amone, Charles, and Okullu Muura. 2014. "British Colonialism and the Creation of Acholi Ethnic Identity in Uganda, 1894 to 1962." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 2: 239-257.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Anker, Elizabeth S. 2012. *Fictions of Dignity: Embodying Human Rights in World Literature.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed. 1992. "Toward a Cross-Cultural Approach to Defining International Standards of Human Rights: The Meaning of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment." In *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus*, edited by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, 19-43. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed. 2002. “Introduction.” In *Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in Africa*, edited by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, 1-11. London: Zed Books.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed. 2006. *African Constitutionalism and the Role of Islam*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed. 2008. *Islam and the Secular State*. Harvard University Press.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed. 2011. *Muslims and Global Justice*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

An-Naʿim, Abdullahi Ahmed, and Jeffrey Hammond. 2002. “Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in African Societies.” In *Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in Africa*, edited by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, 13-37. London: Zed Books.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.

Apostolidis, Paul. 2019. *The Fight for Time: Migrant Day Laborers and the Politics of Precarity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Archer, David. 2011. “Developing a New Strategy for ActionAid to Advance a Human Rights-Based Approach to Development.” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 3, no. 3: 332-354.

Archer, David and Everjoice Win. 2016. *Core Insights to Shape ActionAid’s Future HRBA*. ActionAid International internal document.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. (1968) 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Banks, Sarah, and Andrea Armstrong, with Mark Booth, Greg Brown, Kathleen Carter, Maurice Clarkson, Lynne Corner, Audley Genus, Rose Gilroy, Tom Henfrey, Kate Hudson, Anna Jenner, Robert Moss, Dermot Roddy, and Andrew Russell. 2014. “Using Co-Inquiry to Study Co-Inquiry: Community-University Perspectives on Research.” *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 7, no. 1. http://jces.ua.edu/using-co-inquiry-to-study-co-inquiry-community-university-perspectives-on-research.

Banks, Sarah, Andrea Armstrong, Kathleen Carter, Helen Graham, Peter Hayward, Alex Henry, Tessa Holland, Claire Holmes, Amelia Lee, Ann McNulty, Niamh Moore, Nigel Nayling, Ann Stokoe, and Aileen Strachan. 2013. "Everyday Ethics in Community-Based Participatory Research." *Contemporary Social Science* 8, no. 3: 263-277.

Barber, Karin. 2007. *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons and Publics: Oral and Written Culture in Africa and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barber, Karin. 2018. *A History of African Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bassard, Katherine Clay. 2010. *Transforming Scriptures: African American Women Writers and the Bible*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Baxi, Upendra. 2008. *The Future of Human Rights*, 3rd ed. New Dehli: Oxford University Press.

Behl, Natasha. 2019. "Mapping Movements and Motivations: An Autoethnographic Analysis of Racial, Gendered, and Epistemic Violence in Academia." *Feminist Formations* 31, no. 1: 85-102.

Beaumont, Caitriona. 1997. "Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948." *Women's History Review* 6, no. 4: 563-585.

Benge, Okot. 2008. "Folklore and Politics: The Concept of Leadership in Achioli Oral Performances." In *Performing Community: Essays on Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 70-86. Oslo: Novus Press.

Bhambra, Gurminder K., Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, eds. 2018. *Decolonising the University*. London: Pluto Press.

Biggs, Victoria. 2017. "Stories on the Fault Lines: Storytelling, Community, and Memory among Israeli and Palestinian Youth." PhD dissertation, University of Manchester. uk.bl.ethos.706269.

Bleiker, Roland. 2009. *Aesthetics and World Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boal, Augusto. (1974) 1998. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Translated by Charles A. McBride, and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride. London: Pluto Books.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2007. *Sketch for a Self Analysis*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity.

Briggs, Morgan and Roland Bleiker. 2010. "Autoethnographic International Relations: Exploring the Self as a Source of Knowledge." *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3: 779-798.

brown, adrienne maree. 2015. "Outro." In *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, edited by adrienne maree brown, and Walidah Imarisha, 279-281. Oakland: AK Press.

brown, adrienne maree, and Walidah Imarisha, eds. 2015. *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*. Oakland: AK Press.

Campbell, Joseph. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: MJF Books.

Carpenter, Charli. 2014. "*Lost" Causes: Agenda Vetting in Global Issue Networks and the Shaping of Human Security*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Carson, Ciaran, trans. 2008. *The Táin: A New Translation of the Táin Bó Cúailnge*. London: Penguin.

Carter, Angela. (1979) 2012. *The Bloody Chamber: And Other Stories*. London: Folio Society.

Carter, Angela, ed. 1990. *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales*. London: Virago.

Carter, Angela, ed. 1992. *The Second Virago Book of Fairy Tales*. London: Virago.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. (2000) 2008. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chambers, Simone. 2003. “Deliberative Democratic Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6: 307-326.

Chilisa, Bagele. 2012. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Christian, Barbara. 1987. “The Race for Theory.” *Cultural Critique* 6: 51-63.

CIVICUS. 2006. *Civil Society in Uganda: At the Crossroads?* Kampala: DENIVA. http://www.civicus.org/media/CSI_Uganda_Country_Report.pdf

Coetzee, Carli. 2018. “Unsettling the Air-Conditioned Room: Journal Work as Ethical Labour.” *Journal of the African Literature Association* 12, no. 2: 101-115.

Coetzee, Carli, ed. 2019. “Roundtable: Ethical?! Collaboration?! Keywords for our Contradictory Times.” Set of contributions to *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31, no. 3: 257-313.

Cohn, Carol. 1987. “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals.” *Signs* 12, no. 4: 687-718.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 1991. *Black Feminist Thought*. New York: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2019. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2012. *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Cooke, Bill, and Uma Kothari, eds. 2001. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.

Dauphinee, Elizabeth. 2010. “The Ethics of Autoethnography.” *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3: 799-818.

de Jong, Sara. 2017. *Complicit Sisters: Gender and Women's Issues Across North-South Divides*. New York: Oxford University Press.

de Jong, Sara, Rosalba Icaza, and Olivia Rutazibwa. 2019. *Decolonization and Feminisms in Global Teaching and Learning*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Denzin, Norman K. 2014. *Interpretative Autoethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Dipio, Dominica, and Stuart Sillars. 2012. *Traditional Wisdom: Folktales from Uganda*. Nairobi: ComMattersKenya.

Dipio, Dominica. 2019. "African Motherhood Proverbs and Worldview: A Matriarchal Perspective." *Legon Journal of the Humanities* 30, no. 1: 3-23.

Dotson, Kristie. 2014. "Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression." *Social Epistemology* 28, no. 2: 115-138.

Douzinas, Costas. 2000. *The End of Human Rights: Critical Thought at the Turn of the Century*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Ellwood, Robert. 1999. *The Politics of Myth: A Study of C. G. Jung, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Enright, Máiréad, and Sinéad Ring. 2020. "State Legal Responses to Historical Institutional Abuse: Shame, Sovereignty and Epistemic Injustice." *Éire-Ireland: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Irish Studies* 55, no. 1-2: 68-99.

Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and the Unmaking of the Third World*. New Jersey: Princeton.

Eyben, Rosalind. 2009. "Hovering on the Threshold: Challenges and Opportunities for Critical and Reflexive Ethnographic Research in Support of International Aid Practice." In *Ethnographic Practice and Public Aid: Methods and Meanings in Development Cooperation*, edited by Sten Hagberg, and Charlotta Widmark, 71-98. Uppsala: University of Uppsala.

Eyben, Rosalind. 2013. "Gender Mainstreaming, Organizational Change, and the Politics of Influencing." In *Feminists in Development Organisations: Change from the Margins*, edited by Rosalind Eyben, and Laura Turquet, 15-36. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

Eyben, Rosalind, and Laura Turquet. 2013. "Conclusion: The Politics of Marginality." In *Feminists in Development Organisations: Change*

from the Margins, edited by Rosalind Eyben, and Laura Turquet, 193-202. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

Falcón, Sylvanna M. 2008. “Mestiza Double Consciousness: The Voices of Afro-Peruvian Women on Gendered Racism.” *Gender and Society* 22, no. 5: 660-680.

Falcón, Sylvanna M. 2015. “Constellations of Human Rights.” *Critical Sociology* 42, no. 6: 815-826.

Fearless Collective. 2017. “Fearless Futures: A Feminist Cartographer's Toolkit.” AWID. https://www.awid.org/resources/co-creating-fearless-futures-feminist-cartographers-toolkit.

Ferguson, James. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Fernandes, Sujatha. 2017. *Curated Stories: The Uses and Misuses of Storytelling*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fischer, Clara. 2016. “Gender, Nation, and the Politics of Shame: Magdalen Laundries and the Institutionalization of Feminine Transgression in Modern Ireland.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 41, no. 4: 821–843.

Fischer, Clara. 2017. “Revealing Ireland’s “Proper” Heart: Apology, Shame, Nation.” *Hypatia* 32, no. 4: 751–767.

Flower, Emilie, and Ruth Kelly. 2019. “Researching Like an Artist: Disrupting Participatory Arts-Based Methods in Uganda and Bangladesh.” In *Participatory Arts in Participatory Development*, edited by Paul Cooke, and Inés Souria-Turner, 223-240. Abingdon: Routledge.

Freire, Paulo. (1968) 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Herder and Herder.

Fricker, Miranda. 2007. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fukuda-Parr, Sakiko, and Bhumika Muchhala. 2020. “The Southern Origins of Sustainable Development Goals: Ideas, Actors, Aspirations.” *World Development* 126: 104706.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1975) 2004. *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer, and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum.

Garuba, Harry, and Okot Benge. 2017. "Lateral Texts and Circuits of Value: Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino and Wer pa Lawino." *Social Dynamics* 43, no. 2: 312-327.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006a. *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006b. *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2008. "Diverse Economies: Performative Practices for 'Other Worlds'." *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 5: 613-632.

Gifford, Paul. 2016. *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Giladi, Paul, and Nicola McMillan, eds. 2018. "Special Issue: Epistemic Injustice and Recognition Theory." *Feminist Philosophical Quarterly* 4, no. 4.

Goodale, Mark. 2009. *Surrendering to Utopia: An Anthropology of Human Rights*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Goody, Jack. 2000. *The Power of the Written Tradition*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Gooptu, Sharmistha. 2011. *Bengali Cinema: 'An Other Nation'*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Gready, Paul. 2009. "Novel Truths: Literature and Truth Commissions." *Comparative Literature Studies* 46, no. 1: 156-176.

Gready, Paul. 2010. "Introduction – Responsibility to the Story." *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2, no. 2: 177-190.

Gready, Paul, and Jon Ensor. 2016. "What do Human Rights Mean in Development?" In *The Palgrave Handbook of International Development*, edited by Jean Grugel, and Daniel Hammett, 453-470. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Grimm, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm. 1812. *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen*. Berlin: *in der Realfchulbuchhandlung*.

Gulere, Cornelius Wambi. 2008. "Riddles and Taboos: Exploring Boundaries in Discussing Reproductive Health." In *Performing Community: Essays on Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 249-263. Oslo: Novus Press.

Gulere, Cornelius Wambi. 2009. "Riddle Performance: The Evasive, the Popular and the Enigmatic in the Written Form." In *Performing Change: Identity, Ownership and Tradition in Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 45-65. Oslo: Novus Press.

Gulere, Cornelius Wambi. 2013. "The Popular Form and Structure of Riddle Discourse in Lusoga." In *Performing Wisdom: Proverbial Lore in Modern Ugandan Society*, edited by Dominica Dipio, and Stuart Sillars, 139-158. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Gulere, Cornelius Wambi. 2016. "Riddles and Riddle Discourse in Lusoga Language and Culture: A Performance-Centred Approach." PhD dissertation, Makerere University.

Haiven, Max, and Alex Khasnabish. 2014. *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity*. London: Zed Books.

Hall, Valerie. 1997. "The History of Irish Forests since the Ice Age." *Irish Forestry* 54, no. 1: 49-54.

Haraway, Donna J. (1984) 2000. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century." In *The Cybercultures Reader*, edited by David Bell, and Barbara M. Kennedy. London: Routledge.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Harding, Sandra. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Harvey, Clodagh Brennan. 1989. “Some Irish Women Storytellers and Reflections on the Role of Women in the Storytelling Tradition.” *Western Folklore* 48, no. 2: 109-128.

Haynes, Kenneth. 2020. “Hill, Sir Geoffrey William.” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by David Cannadine. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hendricks, Osayande Obery. 1995. “Guerilla Exegesis: ‘Struggle’ as a Scholarly Vocation: A Postmodern Approach to African-American Interpretation.” *Semeia* 72: 73-90.

Henkel, Heiko, and Roderick Stirrat. 2001. “Participation as Spiritual Duty: Empowerment as Secular Subjection.” In *Participation: The New Tyranny*, edited by Bill Cooke, and Uma Kothari, 168-184. London: Zed Books.

Herman, David, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds. 2005. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Herzog, Lisa, and Bernardo Zacka. 2019. “Fieldwork in Political Theory: Five Arguments for an Ethnographic Sensibility.” *British Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 2: 763-784.

Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan, eds. 2004. *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation? Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development*. London: Zed Books.

Hill, Geoffrey. 2019. *The Book of Baruch by the Gnostic Justin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. (1983) 2012. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holden, Philip. 2012. “Postcolonial Auto/biography.” In *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, edited by Ato Quayson, 107-136. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Horn, Jessica. 2020. “Decolonising Emotional Well-Being and Mental Health in Development: African Feminist Innovations.” *Gender & Development* 28, no. 1: 85-98.

Howard, Jo, and Joanna Wheeler. 2015. “What Community Development and Citizen Participation Should Contribute to the New Global Framework for Sustainable Development.” *Community Development Journal* 50, no. 4: 552-570.

Hunt, Lynne. 2007. *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York: Norton.

Ichim, Irina. 2017. “‘I Am My Brother's Keeper’: The Politics of Protecting Human Rights Defenders at Risk in Kenya.” PhD dissertation, University of York. uk.bl.ethos.752629.

Ichim, Irina. 2019. “The Capacity Building of Human Rights Defenders and (Dis)Empowerment: An Analysis of Current Practice.” Human Rights Defender Hub Working Paper No. 6. York: University of York. https://www.hrdhub.org/workingpaper6.

Ingold, Tim. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge.

Jansen, Jonathan, ed. 2019. *Decolonisation in Universities: The Politics of Knowledge*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Jayawickrama, Sherine, and Alnoor Ebrahim. 2013. “Building and Governing a Democratic Federation: The ActionAid Story.” Hauser Institute Report. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Kennedy School. https://cpl.hks.harvard.edu/publications/hauser-institute-publications/reports.

Johns, Alessa. 2010. “Feminism and Utopianism.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, edited by Gregory Claeys, 174-199. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Ben. 2008. *Beyond the State in Rural Uganda*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Kabaji, Egara Stanley. 2005. “The Construction of Gender through the Narrative Process of the African Folktale: A Case Study of the Maragoli.” PhD dissertation, University of South Africa.

Kapoor, Dip, and Edward Shizha, eds. 2010. *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on Development, Education, and Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kapur. Ratna. 2018. *Gender, Alterity and Human Rights: Freedom in a Fishbowl*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

Katz, Cindi. 2004. *Growing Up Global: Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kelly, Ruth. 2018. "Speculative Fiction and Resistance: Stories from Octavia's Brood." *Cultivate* 1. https://cultivatefeminism.com/protests-speculative-fiction-and-resistance

Kelly, Uma. 2004. "Confrontations with Power: Moving beyond 'the Tyranny of Safety' in Participation." In *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation? Exploring New Approaches to Participation in Development*, edited by Samuel Hickey, and Giles Mohan, 183-195. London: Zed Books.

Kendrick Lamar. 2017. *DAMN*. TDE/Aftermath/Interscope.

Kennedy, David. 2004. *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kennedy, David. 2012. "The International Human Rights Movement: Still Part of the Problem?" In *Examining Critical Perspectives on Human Rights*, edited by Rob Dickinson, Elena Katselli, Colin Murray, and Ole W. Pedersen, 19-34. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kesby, Mike. 2005. "Retheorizing Empowerment-through-Participation as a Performance in Space: Beyond Tyranny to Transformation." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 4: 2037-2065.

Kidd, Ian James, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., eds. 2017. *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*. London: Routledge.

Kiguli, Susan. 2004. "Oral Poetry and Popular Song." PhD dissertation, University of Leeds.

Kiguli, Susan. 2006. “FEMRITE and the Woman’s Position in Uganda: Personal Reflections.” In *Words and Worlds*, edited by Susan Arndt, and Katrin Berndt, 169-183. Trenton: Africa World Press.

Kiguli, Susan. 2012. “Performer-critics in Oral Performance in African Societies.” *Kunapipi* 34, no. 1: 172-188.

Kiguli, Susan, and Jane Plastow. 2015. “Exploring Poetic Voice in the Uganda Women’s Intergenerational Theatre Project.” *African Theatre* 14: 30-40.

Kĩnyua, Johnson Kĩriakũ. 2010. “The Agĩkũyũ, the Bible and Colonial Constructs: Towards an Ordinary African Readers’ Hermeneutics.” PhD dissertation, University of Birmingham. uk.bl.ethos.512541.

Kiranda, Yusuf, Michael Mugisha and Michael Mbate. 2020. *Civil Society in Uganda: Broadening Understanding of Uganda’s Civil Society Ecosystem and Identifying Pathways for Effective Engagement with Civil Society in the Development Process.* Kampala: Centre for Development Alternatives and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. https://www.kas.de/en/web/uganda/single-title/-/content/reality-check-11-civil-society-in-uganda

Kiyimba, Abasi. 2009. “Talking Animals and Cultural Identity: The Role of Fables in Constructing Ganda Community Psyche.” In *Performing Change: Identity, Ownership and Tradition in Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 183-208. Oslo: Novus Press.

Kiyimba, Abasi. 2011. “‘The Domestic Relations Bill’ and Inter-Religious Conflict in Uganda: A Muslim Reading of Personal Law and Religious Pluralism in a Postcolonial Society” In *Displacing the State: Religion and Conflict in Neoliberal Africa*, edited by James Howard Smith, and Rosalind I.J. Hackett, 240-280. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Kiyimba, Abasi. 2013. “Proverbial Imagery in Contemporary Political Discourse in Uganda.” In *Performing Wisdom: Proverbial Lore in Modern Ugandan Society*, edited by Dominica Dipio, and Stuart Sillars, 79-124. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Kiyimba, Abasi. In press. “The Kintu Myth and the Construction of Ethno-Political Identities in Uganda. *African Journal of History and Culture*.

Klapproth, Danièle. 2004. *Narrative as Social Practice: Anglo-Western and Australian Aboriginal Oral Traditions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Klotz, Audie, and Cecelia Lynch. 2015. *Strategies for Research in Constructivist International Relations*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Koch, Susanne. 2020. “‘The Local Consultant Will Not Be Credible’: How Epistemic Injustice Is Experienced and Practised in Development Aid.” *Social Epistemology* 34, no. 5: 478-489.

Kothari, Uma. 2005. “Authority and Expertise: The Professionalisation of International Development and the Ordering of Dissent.” *Antipode* 37, no. 3: 425-446.

Krog, Antjie. 1998. *Country of My Skull*. London: Cape.

Krog, Antjie. 2010. “In the Name of Human Rights: I Say (How) You (Should) Speak (Before I Listen).” In *Qualitative Inquiry and Human Rights*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Michael D. Giardina, 125-135. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Krog, Antjie, Nosisi Mpolweni, and Kopano Ratele. 2009. *There Was this Goat: Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony of Notrose Nobomvu Konile*. Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Larok, Arthur. 2018. “Pushing Back: Lessons from Civic Activism in Uganda.” In *Examining Civil Society Legitimacy*, edited by Saskia Brechenmacher and Thomas Carothers, 11-13. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/05/02/examining-civil-society-legitimacy-pub-76211.

Li, Tania Murray. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press.

MacNeice, Louis. (1939) 2012. *Autumn Journal*. London: Faber and Faber.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2010. *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Malpas, Jeff. 2018. "Hans-Georg Gadamer." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/gadamer.

Mantzavinos, C. 2020. "Hermeneutics." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), edited by Edward N. Zalta. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/hermeneutics.

Marais, Kylie. 2019. "Calls for Pleasure: How African Feminists are Challenging and Unsilencing Women's Sexualities." *Agenda* 33, no. 3: 87-95.

Mattar, Sinéad Garrigan. 2004. *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matthews, Sally. 2017. "Colonised Minds? Post-Development Theory and the Desirability of Development in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 12: 2650-2663.

Maupeu, Hervé. 2007. "L'Intellectuel Populaire et l'Imaginaire Politique: Le Cas de Joseph Kamaru." In *Songs and Politics in Eastern Africa*, edited by Kimani Njogu, and Hervé Maupeu, 23-47. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers.

Mazrui, Alamin M. 2004. *English in Africa: After the Cold War*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Mbembe, Achille. 2001. *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

McFadden, Patricia. 2003. "Sexual Pleasure as Feminist Choice." *Feminist Africa* 2. http://www.agi.ac.za/agi/feminist-africa/02.

Medina, José. 2012. "Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities." *Social Epistemology* 26, no. 2: 201-220.

Medina, José. 2013. *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and the Social Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Medina, José. 2017. “Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, edited by Ian James Kidd, José Medina, and Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr., 41-52. London: Routledge.

Merry, Sally Engle. (2006) 2009. “Legal Transplants and Cultural Translation: Making Human Rights in the Vernacular.” In *Human Rights: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Mark Goodale, 265-303. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Mertens, Donna M., Fiona Cram, and Bagele Chilisa. 2013. *Indigenous Pathways into Social Research: Voices of a New Generation*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mignolo, Walter, and Catherine Walsh. 2018. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mihai, Mihaela. 2016. “Theorizing Change: Between Reflective Judgment and the Interia of Political *Habitus*.” *European Journal of Political Theory* 15, no. 1: 22-42.

Mihai, Mihaela. 2018. “Epistemic Marginalisation and the Seductive Power of Art.” *Contemporary Political Theory* 17, no. 4: 395-416.

Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Minh-ha, Trinh. 1989. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Motta, Sara C. and Norma L. Bermúdez. 2019. “Enfleshing Temporal Insurgencies and Decolonial Times.” *Globalizations* 16, no. 4: 424-440.

Mugo, Micere Githae. 1991. *African Orature and Human Rights*. National University of Lesotho: Institute of Southern African Studies.

Muhanguzi, Florence Kyoheirwe. 2015. "'Sex Is Sweet': Women from Low-Income Contexts in Uganda Talk About Sexual Desire and Pleasure." *Reproductive Health Matters* 23, no. 46: 62-70.

Mushengyezi, Aaron. 2008. "Children's Play Songs of the Baganda: Audience Dynamics, Form and Social Value." In *Performing Community: Essays on Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 235-248. Oslo: Novus Press.

Mushengyezi, Aaron. 2009. "Heroic Women in the Legends of Ankole and Kigezi." In *Performing Change: Identity, Ownership and Tradition in Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 69-89. Oslo: Novus Press.

Mushengyezi, Aaron. 2013. *Oral Literature for Children: Rethinking Orality, Literacy, Performance, and Documentation Practices.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Musila, Grace. 2019. "Against Collaboration – Or the Native Who Wanders Off." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 31, no. 3: 286-293.

Mutua, Makau. 1995. "The Banjul Charter and the African Cultural Fingerprint: An Evaluation of the Language of Duties." *Va. J. Int'l L.* 35: 339-380.

Mutua, Makau. 2002a. *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mutua, Makau. 2002b. "The Banjul Charter: The Case for an African Cultural Fingerprint." In *Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in Africa*, edited by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, 68-107. London: Zed Books.

Mutua, Makau. 2009. "Human Rights NGOs in East Africa: Defining the Challenges." In *Human Rights NGOs in East Africa: Political and*

Normative Tensions, edited by Makau Mutua, 13-36. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mutua, Makau. 2016. *Human Rights Standards: Hegemony, Law, and Politics.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Nabulime, Lilian, and Cheryl McEwan. 2010. "Art as Social Practice: Transforming Lives Using Sculpture in HIV/AIDS Awareness and Prevention in Uganda." *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 3: 275-296.

Nadar, Sarojini. 2003. "Power, Ideology and Interpretation/s: Womanist and Literary Perspectives on the Book of Esther as Resources for Gender-Social Transformation." PhD dissertation, University of Natal Pietermaritzburg. http://hdl.handle.net/10413/3449.

Nagar, Richa. 2006. "Postscript." In *Playing with Fire: Feminist Thought and Activism through Seven Lives in India*, Sangtin Writers, 132-155. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nagar, Richa. 2014. *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring Feminisms across Scholarship and Activism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Nah, Alice. 2017. "Wellbeing, Risk and Human Rights Practice." Human Rights Defender Hub Policy Brief 1, University of York. https://www.hrdhub.org/policy-briefs.

Namayanja, Saidah. 2008. "Oral Folklore Performance in the Buganda." In *Performing Community: Essays on Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 113-127. Oslo: Novus Press.

Namayanja, Saidah. 2009. "Representations of Masculinity in Ganda Myth." In *Performing Change: Identity, Ownership and Tradition in Ugandan Oral Culture*, edited by Dominica Dipio, Lene Johannessen, and Stuart Sillars, 106-120. Oslo: Novus Press.

Namayanja, Saidah. 2013. "Mythical Implications in the Origin Stories of the Baganda and Bagishu." In *Performing Wisdom: Proverbial Lore in Modern Ugandan Society*, edited by Dominica Dipio, and Stuart Sillars, 11-20. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Nannyonga-Tamusuza, Sylvia. 2005. *Baakisimba: Gender in the Music and Dance of the Baganda People of Uganda*. New York: Routledge.

Narayan, Deepa, Robert Chambers, Meera K. Shah, and Patti Petesch. 2000. *Voices of the Poor: Crying Out for Change*. Washington DC: World Bank.

Narayanan, Pradeep, Vineetha, Gayathri Sarangan, and Sowmyaa Bharadwaj. 2015. "Charting New Territory: Community Participation at the Centre of Global Policy Making." *Community Development Journal* 50, no. 4: 608-623.

Narberhaus, Michael, and Aryne Sheppard. 2015. *Re.imagining Activism: A Practical Guide for the Great Transition*. Smart CSOs Lab. http://www.smart-csos.org/tools-publications/publications.

NCCA. 2019. *Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary and Post-Primary Schools*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. https://www.ncca.ie/media/4319/report-on-the-review-of-relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse-in-primary-and-post-primary-schools.pdf.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. 2018. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. 2010. *Development Theory: Deconstructions/Reconstructions*, 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

Newman, Kate. 2011. "Challenges and Dilemmas in Integrating Human Rights-Based Approaches and Participatory Approaches to Development: An Exploration of the Experiences of ActionAid International." PhD dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Newman, Kate, Sowmyaa Bharadwaj, and Jude Fransman. 2019. "Rethinking Research Impact through Principles for Fair and Equitable Partnership." *IDS Bulletin* 50, no. 1: 21-42.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 2009. *Something Torn and Something New: An African Renaissance*. New York: BasicCivitas Books.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 2012. *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ní Dhomhnaill, Nuala. 2005. *Selected Essays*. Dublin: New Island Books.

Nnaemeka, Obioma. 2004. "Nego-Feminism: Theorizing, Practicing and Pruning." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 29, no. 2: 357-385.

Nyanzi, Stella. 2011. "From Minuscule Biomedical Models to Sexuality's Depths." In *African Sexualities: A Reader*, edited by Sylvia Tamale, 47-49. Cape Town: Pambazuku Press.

Nyanzi, Stella. 2014. "Queer Pride and Protest: A Reading of the Bodies at Uganda's First Gay Beach Pride." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 40, no. 1: 36-40.

Okot p'Bitek. (1966/7) 1984. *Song of Lawino & Song of Ocol*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Okot p'Bitek. (1971) 2019. "Religion of the Central Luo." In *Lawino's People: The Acholi of Uganda*, edited by Tim Allen, 379-518. Zürich: Lit Verlag.

Okot p'Bitek. 1974. *Horn of My Love*. London: Heinemann.

Okot p'Bitek. 1978. *Hare and Hornbill*. Oxford: Heinemann.

Okot p'Bitek. 1979. *African Religions in Western Scholarship*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau.

Okot p'Bitek. 1986. *Artist the Ruler: Essays on Art, Culture and Values*. Nairobi: Heinemann.

Oloka-Onyango, Joe. 2009. "NGO Struggles for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in UTAKE: A Ugandan Perspective." In *Human Rights NGOs in East Africa: Political and Normative Tensions*, edited by Makau Mutua, 51-74. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Oloka-Onyango, Joe. 2015. *Battling over Human Rights: Twenty Essays on Law, Politics and Governance*. Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG.

Oloka-Onyango, Joe, and Sylvia Tamale. 1995. "'The Personal Is Political,' or Why Women's Rights Are Indeed Human Rights: An African Perspective on International Feminism." *Human Rights Quarterly* 17, no. 4: 691-731.

Pachirat, Timothy. 2009. "The Political in Political Ethnography: Dispatches from the Kill Floor." In *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, edited by Edward Schatz, 143-161. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pahuja, Sundhya. 2011. *Decolonising International Law: Development, Economic Growth, and the Politics of Universality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pain, Rachel, Geoff Whitman, David Milledge, and Lune Rivers Trust. 2012. *Participatory Action Research Toolkit: An Introduction to Using PAR as an Approach to Learning, Research and Action*. Durham: Durham University/RELU/Lune Rivers Trust. https://www.dur.ac.uk/socialjustice/toolkits/participatoryaction.

Perrault, Charles. 1697. *Contes de la Mère l'Oye*. Paris: Librarie Claude Barbin.

Pohlhaus, Gaile, Jr. 2012. "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance." *Hypatia* 27, no. 4: 715-735.

Pohlhaus, Gaile, Jr. 2017. "Knowing without Borders and the Work of Epistemic Gathering." In *Decolonizing Feminism: Transnational Feminism and Globalization*, edited by Margaret A. McLaren. London: Rowman & Littlefield International. Citations are to the accepted manuscript: https://www.academia.edu/37584299/Knowing_without_Borders_and_the_Work_of_Epistemic_Gathering.

Polletta, Francesca. 2006. *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rabindranath Tagore. 1916. *Stray Birds.* New York: The Macmillan Company.

Rajagopal, Balakrishnan. 2003. *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements, and Third World Resistance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rajak, Dinah, and Catherine Dolan. 2016. “Remaking Africa's Informal Economies: Youth, Entrepreneurship and the Promise of Inclusion at the Bottom of the Pyramid.” *The Journal of Development Studies* 52, no. 4: 514-529.

Rajan, Hamsa. 2018. “The Ethics of Transnational Feminist Research and Activism: An Argument for a More Comprehensive View.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 2: 269-300.

Ranger, Terence. (1983) 2012. “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa.” In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, 211-262. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reilly, Niamh. 2011. “Doing Transnational Feminism, Transforming Human Rights: The Emancipatory Possibilities Revisited.” *Irish Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 2: 60-76.

Rethinking Research Collaborative. 2018. *Promoting Fair and Equitable Research Partnerships to Respond to Global Challenges: Research Findings.* https://rethinkingresearchpartnerships.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/fair-and-equitable-partnerships_research-report-public.pdf.

Ricart-Huguet, Joan, and Elliott Green. 2018. “Taking It Personally: The Effect of Ethnic Attachment on Preferences for Regionalism.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 53, no. 1: 67-89.

Ross, Fiona C. 2003. *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*. London: Pluto Press.

Routledge, Paul, and Kate Driscoll Derickson. 2015. “Situated Solidarities and the Practice of Scholar-Activism.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, no. 3: 391-407.

Sachs, Jonah. 2012. *Winning the Story Wars: Why Those Who Tell – and Live – the Best Stories Will Rule the Future*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2002. “Towards a Multicultural Conception of Human Rights.” In *Moral Imperialism: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Berta Esperanza Hernándes-Truyol, 39-60. New York: New York University Press.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2006. *The Rise of the Global Left: The World Social Forum and Beyond.* London: Zed Books.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2014. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Santos, Boaventura de Sousa. 2015. *If God Were a Human Rights Activist*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Schaffer, Kay, and Sidonie Smith. 2004. *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. 1994. *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*. New York: SCM Press.

Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sharma, Aradhana. 2008. *Logics of Empowerment: Development, Gender, and Governance in Neoliberal India*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Shetty, Salil. 2018. “Decolonising Human Rights.” Speech delivered at the London School of Economics, 22 May. https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/DOC1084632018ENGLISH.pdf.

Shizha, Edward. 2010. “Rethinking and Reconstituting Indigenous Knowledge and Voices in the Academy in Zimbabwe: A Decolonization Process.” In *Indigenous Knowledge and Learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa: Perspectives on Development, Education, and Culture*, edited by Dip Kapoor and Edward Shizha, 115-129. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Slaughter, Joseph R. 2006. “Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The ‘*Bildungsroman*’ and International Human Rights Law.” *PMLA* 121, no. 5: 1405-1423.

Slaughter, Joseph R. 2007. *Human Rights, Inc. The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Smart CSOs. 2013. *The Great Transition Story Strategy Guide.* http://www.smart-csos.org/tools-publications/publications.

Smart CSOs. 2014. Civil Society in Transition: Our Broken Stories – Seeds of New Stories – a New Activism?" http://www.smart-csos.org/tools-publications/publications.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson, and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-313. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1993. "The Politics of Translation." In her *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, 179–200- New York: Routledge.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2004. "Righting Wrongs." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3: 523-581.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 2013. *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Stephens, Rhiannon. 2016. "'Whether They Promised Each Other Some Thing Is Difficult to Work Out': The Complicated History of Marriage in Uganda." *African Studies Review* 59, no. 1, 127-153.

Stone-Mediatore, Shari. 2003. *Reading across Borders: Storytelling and Knowledges of Resistance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Tamale, Sylvia, and Joe Oloka-Onyango. 1995. "'The Personal Is Political,' or Why Women's Rights Are Indeed Human Rights: An African Perspective on International Feminism." *Human Rights Quarterly* 17, no. 4: 691-731.

Tamale, Sylvia. 1999. *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2005. "Eroticism, Sensuality and "Women's Secrets" among the Baganda: A Critical Analysis." *Feminist Africa* 5: 9-36.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2008. “The Right to Culture and the Culture of Rights: A Critical Perspective on Women’s Sexual Rights in Africa.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 16: 47-69.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2009. “Law, Sexuality, and Politics in Uganda: Challenges for Women's Human Rights NGOs.” In *Human Rights NGOs in East Africa: Political and Normative Tensions*, edited by Makau Mutua, 51-74. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Tamale, Sylvia, ed. 2011. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Cape Town: Pambazuku Press.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2014. “Exploring the Contours of African Sexualities: Religion, Law and Power.” *African Human Rights Law Journal* 14: 150-177.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2017. “Nudity, Protest and the Law in Uganda: Inaugural Professorial Lecture.” *Feminist Africa* 22: 52-86.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2020. *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press.

Tibasiima, Lilian Bukaayi. 2013. “‘Mudo’: The Soga ‘Little Red Riding Hood’.” In *Performing Wisdom: Proverbial Lore in Modern Ugandan Society*, edited by Dominica Dipio, and Stuart Sillars, 173-185. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

UN Women. 2015. *Progress of the World’s Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights.* https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/progress-of-the-worlds-women-2015.

Vogler, Christopher. 1998. *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions.

Walsh, Catherine, ed. 2013. *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas Insurgentes de Resistir, (Re)Existir y (Re)Vivir. Tomo I*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Walsh, Catherine, ed. 2017. *Pedagogías Decoloniales: Prácticas Insurgentes de Resistir, (Re)Existir y (Re)Vivir. Tomo II*. Quito: Ediciones Abya-Yala.

Warner, Marina. 1994. *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time*. The 1994 Reith Lectures. London: Vintage.

West, Gerald. 1999. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Wheeler, Joanna. 2018. "Troubling Transformation: Storytelling and Political Subjectivities in Cape Town, South Africa." *Critical African Studies* 10, no. 3: 329-344.

Wheeler, Joanna, Thea Shahrokh, and Nava Derakhshani. 2020. "Transformative Storywork: Creative Pathways for Social Change." In *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change*, edited by Jan Servaes. Singapore: Springer Reference. https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-981-10-7035-8.

Wulff, Helena. 2005. "Memories in Motion: The Irish Dancing Body." *Body & Society* 11, no. 4: 45-62.

Yeats, W. B. 1992. *The Poems*, edited by Daniel Albright. London: Everyman's Library.

Young, Iris Marion. 1997. "Difference as a Resource for Democratic Communication." In *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, edited by James Bohman, and William Rehg, 383-406. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Young, Iris Marion. 2001. "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy." *Political Theory* 29, no. 5: 670-690.

Young, Sandra. 2012. "Hospitality in a Postapartheid Archive: Reflections on *There Was This Goat* and the Challenge of Alterity." *Research in African Literatures* 43, no. 2: 115-137.

Zacka, Bernardo. 2017. *When the State Meets the Street: Public Service and Moral Agency*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ziai, Aram. 2017. "'I Am Not a Post-Developmentalist, But…': The Influence of Post-Development on Development Studies." *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 12: 2719-2734.

Zipes, Jack. 1993. *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.

Zipes, Jack. 1995. *Creative Storytelling: Building Community, Changing Lives*. New York: Routledge.

Zirakzadeh, Cyrus Ernesto. 2009. "When Nationalists Are Not Separatists: Discarding and Recovering Academic Theories while Doing Fieldwork in the Basque Region of Spain." In *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, edited by Edward Schatz, 97-117. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.