**Instructions for Discussion Post on Gender, Resistance and National Culture, small group Discussion Post, due week 3, Thursday April 16, midnight deadline.**

FIRST, read the Wikipedia entries for these writers we are studying for this session:

--Molara Ogundipe

--Awa Thiam

--Abena Busia

--Catherine Obianuju Acholonu

--Lindiwe Mabuza

SECOND, read these primary texts from the Canvas files:

Theory: Molara Ogundipe-Leslie ‘Stiwanism: Feminism in an African context’

Awa Thiam, "Feminism and Revolution"

Poetry by women:

Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, “Tendril Love of Africa”

Abena P.A. Busia, “Liberation”

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu, “Harvest of War”

Assumpta Acam-Oturu, “An Agony … A Resurrection”

Lindiwe Mabuza, “Dream Cloud” and “Death to the Gold Mine!”

Here are some pointers for your reading of the above materials.

The theoretical works on African feminism are included here to give you some conceptual foundations, to help you think about issues, and debates, regarding African women’s agency and experience as you continue the literary readings for the remainder of this class. There are many ways to engage with these two articles, going forward. I will suggest just a few, here, that are tailored to the specified poetry readings for this session.

Please note that (as these articles acknowledge) there are many different African feminisms, debates regarding sexuality, gender formation, and so on. I’ve chosen these two because they are roughly contemporaneous with the literary material and are widely circulated and influential.

1. Look at Molara Ogundipe-Leslie’s theoretical article and her poem: what is the relationship between the two? Does the poem repeat the theoretical work’s ideas and arguments, or does it depart from them? In what ways do these six poems align with or depart from Ogundipe-Leslie’s seven points (defining African feminisms’ common denominators), on p.549?

2. In what ways, if at all, do these poems align with Awa Thiam’s characterization of African women as (p.122) preservers, or celebrants, of pre-colonial culture? Are there any poems that seem directly in tension with such a characterization? Are there other aspects of Awa Thiam’s theory that you see upheld, or contested, in the poems?

3. Both theoretical articles address Africa as a continent while at the same time, they differentiate nation-states within the continent as having different experiences, polities and cultures. Ogundipe-Leslie also incorporates sub-national categories of ethnic groups, into her analytic framework. Do the poems take both a continental and a national approach to their subject matter, also? What light, if any, might the poems cast on the relationship between nation and continent, or nation and race?

4. Dates, historical contextual matters—their inclusion and exclusion.

--Abena Busia’s poem inserts the year, 1983, at the conclusion of the poem. Ie, she is signalling something. Check out what happened in Ghana, in 1983, and consider what kind of commentary the poem is offering on that year and place.

--Lindiwe Mabuza, likewise, refers to specific dates in her two poems. Her ‘Dream Cloud’ is dated 5th July, 1976. Look up South African events of June 1976. What kind of commentary is the poem making on that month’s events? What kind of commentary is the ‘Death to the Gold Mine’ poem making on the September 1973 events that are glossed in the footnote?

What is the general effect on the reader of the insertion of these specific items of information?

--Catherine Acholonu’s poem ‘Harvest of War’, in contrast, does not explicitly reference a particular war. What are the effects on the reader of this omission of specificity?

--Similarly, Assumpta Acam-Oturu’s poem, ‘An Agony…A Resurrection’, does not specify the ’20 years’ that it repeatedly invokes. What are the effects on the reader of the poem’s absence of specificity?

[Sidenote: You might also notice the varying length of stanzas in Assumpta Acam-Oturu’s poem; five lines; seven lines; seven lines; eight lines; nine lines. What’s the effect?]

5. These poems make associations between the processes of biological motherhood/reproduction and those of producing/recreating a nation. What kinds of associations? [Sidenote: How do such associations compare with the poetry that you have looked at earlier in the course, all of which was written by men?]

6. As with many of the literary works, and theories, you have already read for class, these six poems evince a concern with dreams/dreaming; fire and other elements; physical and social fragmentation/dismemberment; the land/physical environment; political struggle against violent domination. Compare and contrast two of the prescribed poems for this session in their treatment of one of these concerns? [Sidenote: How do these poems’ treatment compare with that given by poetry you have looked at earlier?]

7. Think about the ways these poems situate themselves as speech—do they use first person? Second person? Third person? How, if at all, do traditional oral poetic styles surface in these works? [Sidenote: How do these works’ use of voice, speech, orality, compare with earlier poems you have encountered?]

THIRD:

Write a discussion post, that you post, to your Small Group Discussion page. It should adhere to the specifications in the syllabus for discussion posts, ie, it contains: a minimum of 300 words; at least one quotation from every primary (literary and theoretical) text that you engage with; word count stated at the end. It needs to engage with the literary texts as literary texts as well as expressions of political imagination.

I want you to explore two of the six poems specified for this session, and post on any of the questions and pointers I have outlined under the heading of ‘SECOND’, above.