

Final Assessment: *African Feminist Authors and Literary Resistance*

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Final Canva Slides:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAG5jNV8RSw/ep9p2i6a5y6lOr0HEjHcbA/edit?utm_content=DAG5jNV8RSw&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton

ArcGIS Map Basics:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2c1b93920e0b49829a0f5777a9df5195>

ArcGIS StoryMap :

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2c1b93920e0b49829a0f5777a9df5195>

Wikidata Screenshot

```
7:33 PM Tue Nov 25 query.wikidata.org
1 SELECT ?author ?authorLabel
2 ?work ?workLabel
3 ?country ?countryLabel
4 ?continent ?continentLabel
5 WHERE {
6
7 #####
8 # 1. Feminist-related subjects that are widely used in Wikidata
9 #####
10 VALUES ?femTopic {
11 wd:0574153 # feminist literature
12 wd:0132241 # feminist theory
13 wd:07257670 # women's studies
14 wd:03407479 # gender studies
15 wd:048277 # women's rights
16 }
17
18 #####
19 # 2. Literary works about feminist topics
20 #####
21 ?work wdt:P921 ?femTopic .
22 ?work wdt:P31/wdt:P279* wd:Q7725634 . # literary work
23
24 #####
25 # 3. Female authors
26 #####
27 ?work wdt:P50 ?author .
28 ?author wdt:P21 wd:Q6581072 . # female
29
30 #####
31 # 4. GLOBAL SOUTH FILTER (by author country)
32 #####
33 OPTIONAL { ?author wdt:P27 ?country . } # country of citizenship
34
35 # Map country -> continent
36 OPTIONAL { ?country wdt:P30 ?continent . }
37
38 # Continents associated with the Global South
39 VALUES ?continent {
40 wd:Q15 # Africa
41 wd:Q48 # Asia
42 wd:Q18 # Latin America
43 wd:Q35518 # Caribbean
44 wd:Q55643 # Oceania (Global South regions)
45 }
46
47 SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "en". }
48 }
49 LIMIT 200
```

SPARQL Query:

```
SELECT ?author ?authorLabel
?work ?workLabel
?country ?countryLabel
?continent ?continentLabel
WHERE {
```

```
#####
#####
# 1. Feminist-related subjects that are widely used in
Wikidata
```

```
#####
#####
VALUES ?femTopic {
wd:Q574153 # feminist literature
wd:Q132241 # feminist theory
wd:Q7257670 # women's studies
wd:Q3407479 # gender studies
wd:Q48277 # women's rights
}
```

```
#####
#####
# 2. Literary works about feminist topics

#####
#####
?work wdt:P921 ?femTopic .
```

	<pre>?work wdt:P31/wdt:P279* wd:Q7725634 . # literary work ##### ##### # 3. Female authors ##### ##### ?work wdt:P50 ?author . ?author wdt:P21 wd:Q6581072 . # female ##### ##### # 4. GLOBAL SOUTH FILTER (by author country) ##### ##### OPTIONAL { ?author wdt:P27 ?country . } # country of citizenship # Map country → continent OPTIONAL { ?country wdt:P30 ?continent . } # Continents associated with the Global South VALUES ?continent { wd:Q15 # Africa wd:Q48 # Asia wd:Q18 # Latin America wd:Q35518 # Caribbean wd:Q55643 # Oceania (Global South regions) } SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "en". } } LIMIT 200</pre>
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Intro

This project maps the written geographies of pioneers of feminist resistance across Africa. This project highlights how female and marginalized voices use language as a mode of protest. By combining digital humanities tools and feminist frameworks, the project examines where, who, and when scholarly feminist works had the greatest impact on social movements, deterring violence and fighting censorship. Through Wikidata mapping techniques, close reading, and the examination of cultural and historical contexts, these works are situated as artifacts of political and social struggles that are often underrepresented in Western literary spheres. The goal of the project is to create a compilation that pushes back against oppression and shows how literary works can create and preserve collective memory.

Historical Context

This project examines feminist authors in Africa, paying particular attention to the historical factors that restrict the circulation of these writers' work. African feminist works have been marked by colonial legacies, political surveillance and uneven access to publishing infrastructure, all of which shape how their texts move beyond their immediate communities and cities. By understanding these limits on circulation, we aim to show how questions of language, censorship, geography and global literary gatekeeping influence which voices are heard in the feminist landscape. Across Africa, feminist authors have consistently reshaped anti-colonial and feminist protest movements (Orton, 2018). Their works circulated through pamphlets, oral performances, community storytelling and publications to challenge governing and patriarchal systems (Orton, 2018). Pioneers like Adeline Masquelier and Una Osili infused their writing with critiques of gender oppression and state violence (Wikidata, 2025). By using their experiences and identities, feminist authors expanded upon political discourse, critiques and collective testimony through language.

Female scholars in Africa's history have played a pivotal role in transforming uprisings during periods of censorship, military regimes, and political struggles. These women used writing as a tool to articulate grief, rage, and solidarity during periods of uncertainty. Their work often circulated through feminist collectives and activist materials and used language to convey the lived experiences of colonialism, authoritarianism and gendered violence (Miller, 2020). These authors were advocates for revolutionary discourse and expanded upon the intersectionality of struggles related to gender, class, and race.

A clear example of these dynamics can be seen during the apartheid era in South Africa (Adebajo, 2007), when Black feminist authors wrote under intense political surveillance and state censorship. Many female authors circulated their work during this period through underground channels of literary journals, community theatre culture, and oral performance (Orton, 2018). Formally owned publishing houses were controlled by the apartheid state or white owned presses that refused Black feminist writing (Miller, 2020). Their work often critiqued racialized gender violence and the policing of Black communities (Orton, 2018). This illustrates how colonial and

apartheid-era infrastructure directly shaped who could publish (Hlongwane, 2019), how work circulated and which feminist interventions were allowed to enter the public sphere.

Theoretical Frameworks

An intersectional lens is central to this project's goals. Written work do not emerge from a single axis of identity, but truly from the overlapping experiences of gender, race, class, language and sexuality. These intersecting conditions shape both the context of the work and the pathways of circulation. For many, writing becomes a way to navigate the layers of colonial history, patriarchal norms and state-imposed restrictions on expression. Understanding the importance of the intersectional lens allows us to see how barriers to circulation are never just political; they are tied to how the different layers of our identities are valued, marginalized or erased within local and global literary systems.

This StoryMap treats mapping not as a neutral act, but as an interpretive practice shaped by power dynamics. Drawing on concepts from spatial and geohumanities, our map visualizes the circulation of African Feminist works as a spatial argument; the gaps and absences reveal how global literary systems privilege certain regions, languages and identities.

Casanova's world literary system is particularly relevant, arguing that literary circulation depends on literary capital, which is unevenly distributed across global centres and peripheries. When mapped, this hierarchy becomes visible: African authors often appear at the periphery of global circulation networks, with far fewer translation routes or internationally recognized publications. This reinforces how colonial legacies and linguistic dominance continue to shape how feminist voices are recognized transnationally.

By applying these frameworks, the map becomes a diagnostic tool, showing how cultural visibility is constructed, how colonial infrastructures restrict movement, and how feminist authors confront these structures. The spatial patterns in our visualization, therefore, reflect not only where writing travels and how literary power operates.

Methodology

Mapping feminist authors across the continent presents methodological obstacles tied to censorship. Works that are emerging from zones of conflict and rural areas amongst authoritarian regimes may lack extensive digital documentation. This project found a series of issues with incomplete entries for publication dates, language and incomplete geographic origins.

This project uses SPARQL querying, Wikidata reconciliation and GIS mapping tools to navigate these data gaps. Visualization platforms like ArcGIS support geographical storytelling. Acknowledging this missing data is part of the methodology as it reveals where digital inequalities have obstructed literary preservation and global circulation. The mapping process acts as an analytical tool, but it also acknowledges inaccessibility in the areas of Africa.

Our project takes direct inspiration from Brenda Orton's argument that feminist creative works function not merely as art, but as archives of resistance (Orton, 2018). In her analysis of women's play texts under apartheid, Orton shows how creative forms, particularly theatre,

become tools for documenting “herstory” through the lived experiences, strategies of endurance, and political agency of women whose voices were otherwise silenced by state power. What echoed with us is Orton’s insistence that artistic expression can preserve histories that official archives actively suppress. This idea became a methodological guide for our own digital mapping work.

Much like the South African playwrights Orton examines, many African feminist poets write from within conditions marked by surveillance, censorship, and political instability. Their poems function as parallel records of upheaval, testimony, and memory. Orton’s framework helped us see these poetic works not only as literary texts but as geographical traces of resistance—stories rooted in place, shaped by movement and the systems of circulation that have historically restricted African women’s access to publication.

By understanding language as a form of documentary practice, we approached our map as a way to visualize what Orton calls the “herstories” that emerge through feminist creativity. Mapping where and when these poems were written, published, or censored allowed us to see how women’s intellectual labour circulates despite political barriers. Orton’s emphasis on artistic expression as an act of political witnessing ultimately guided our commitment to treating each poem in our dataset as a spatial record of feminist struggle.

Featured Authors

Una Osili (Q32979516) - Encouraging Giving to Women's and Girls' Causes: The Role of Social Norms

Adeline Masquelier (Q4681963) - How is a Girl to Marry Without a Bed? Weddings, Wealth, and Women’s Value In An Islamic Town of Niger

Jacqueline Ackerman (Q33058526) - Giving to Women and Girls: An Emerging Area of Philanthropy

Debra Mesch (Q33104309) - Gender differences in charitable giving

Data Stories and Patterns

Our visualization reveals clear geographic patterns: feminist poetic resistance clusters across North and East Africa, particularly in Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Nigeria—regions marked by strong literary traditions and histories of political struggle. These points fall along linguistic and cultural corridors shaped by Arabic and Swahili networks, demonstrating how language infrastructures influence where women’s writing circulates. The absence of data from Central and Southern Africa underscores the uneven visibility of African feminist poets in global archives. Together, these patterns show how geography, censorship, and literary infrastructures shape the movement and preservation of feminist poetics.

Conclusion

In summary, the research done alongside this project reveals that resistance is a key driver of feminist works. It continues to push women and marginalized communities forward

across history and into the future. Let this map be an invitation to rethink whose voices shape our literary history, across the globe. By amplifying feminist voices, we can further reflect upon the cycles of circulation and the dangers of censorship, literary gaps and threats of erasure.

Quote Inclusion

“Cycles of forgetting in canon formation require insight into how different media are carriers of ideology.” (Mandell, 2016, p. 515)

-Gender and Vernaculars in Digital Humanities and World Literature , Page 233

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Query Appendix

7:33 PM Tue Nov 25

query.wikidata.org

13%

```
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16    }
17
18    #####
19    # 2. Literary works about feminist topics
20    #####
21    ?work wdt:P921 ?femTopic .
22    ?work wdt:P31/wdt:P279* wd:Q7725634 .    # literary work
23
24    #####
25    # 3. Female authors
26    #####
27    ?work wdt:P50 ?author .
28    ?author wdt:P21 wd:Q6581072 .            # female
29
30    #####
31    # 4. GLOBAL SOUTH FILTER (by author country)
32    #####
33    OPTIONAL { ?author wdt:P27 ?country . } # country of citizenship
34
35    # Map country → continent
36    OPTIONAL { ?country wdt:P30 ?continent . }
37
38    # Continents associated with the Global South
39    VALUES ?continent {
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41        wd:Q48        # Asia
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