

Institution: University of Bristol		
Unit of Assessment: 26) Modern Languages and Linguistics		
Title of case study: African Print Activism: Making the work and heritage of African literary enterprises visible and sustainable		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Ruth Bush	Senior Lecturer (from 2018)	Sep 2014 – present
Dr Georgina Collins	Research Associate	Feb 2018 – present
Professor Madhu Krishnan	Professor (from 2019)	Sept 2013 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 – 31 December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

Through collaborations with non-profit, grassroots and charitable organisations, Dr Bush's research has deepened historical understanding of the need for Africa-centred models of literary production. The impacts of her research span Senegal, Cameroon, Uganda, France and the UK; transforming literary industries in Africa and empowering those working in the sector. Her research has led to the development of sustainable literary infrastructures, new forms of literary production and the establishment of literary networks supporting young and emerging writers. The beneficiaries include publishers, writers, literary translators, artists, archivists, and museum curators.

2. Underpinning research

Dr Bush (promoted to Senior Lecturer in French and Comparative Literature in 2018) has diagnosed and mapped the historically uneven relationship between African literary producers and global literary infrastructure, where dominant forms of knowledge production remain weighted towards what can be termed the 'global North' or 'Minority World'. She has investigated how African print cultures and their varied aesthetics have operated in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries against the backdrop of formal processes of decolonisation, postcolonial language politics, and the institutional structures of a colonially inflected 'Republic of Letters'. Bush's work has revealed a wealth of untapped source material. It has emphasised the role of print (on paper and on screen) as a form of social, cultural and political activism, and identified the need to support more autonomous, local and continent-based enterprises, in turn making African literary enterprises more visible and sustainable.

Decolonisation and literary institutions in France and francophone Africa

Bush's initial award-winning monograph in this area focused on inequalities in the global literary marketplace and the production of a francophone literary canon. Combining archival research and analysis of African literature in post-war France, she revealed both: the destabilising impact of decolonisation on legitimate notions of language, authorship and literary value; how the variegated African literary presence actively shaped the metropolitan publishing scene during this period of transition [3.1].

Historicising print activism in the UK and Senegal

Using new archival material and oral histories of London-based 'print activists', Bush wrote the history of the UK's first radical Black bookshop and publishing house, New Beacon Books (part of the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Dream to Change the World' project at the George Padmore Institute, London). The research highlighted the centrality of concepts of autonomy to the founders' ethos, and the varied modes of social justice activism that operated within the racialised socio-political context of 1960s Britain and in the globally networked frameworks of

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Third-Worldist thought [3.2]. In 2016, Bush then collaborated with partners in the UK, France, and Senegal on an AHRC-funded project to digitise and restore the complete archive of one of the earliest francophone African women's magazines, *Awa: la revue de la femme noire*. As PI, Bush identified *Awa* as a long over-looked source for tracing the polemical debates on the (un)translatability of feminist thought between the global North and global South, post-independence nationalism, and representations of the female body in African and diasporic cultural production [3.5]. The project signalled the crucial relationship between independent print activism and socio-political movements on the African continent over the past seventy years. It also encouraged public and scholarly understanding of less-canonical elements of francophone African women's print culture and local print innovation post-1950.

Readership and literary translation in west Africa

Bush has contributed significantly to extant work on popular print cultures and readership in Africa (previously mostly studied in the continent's anglophone regions), highlighting the highly gendered social worlds of everyday literacies, the emergence of new genres, and the kinds of textual and visual authority wielded by 'popular' print and its readers [3.3, 3.4]. Bush's current research emphasis on literary translation imperatives in the African literary commons (from 1950s to present day) has built on her archival expertise, multilingualism, and an extensive network of practical activities taking place since 2016. Bush has employed innovative methodologies in this area, using ethnographic modes of research, focus groups, workshops, and interviews, for a book now under contract with CUP, in addition to a deeper reflection on decolonial epistemology and 'indiscipline' within the Humanities.

3. References to the research

Books

- 3.1 **Bush R** (2016), *Publishing Africa in French: Literary Institutions and Decolonization 1945-1967*, Liverpool University Press, (Winner of First Book Award for Scholarship, African Literature Association; to be double-weighted 4* in REF), 90,000 words [Available on request]
- 3.2 **Bush R** and Bernard J (2016), *Beacon of Hope (a popular history of the UK's first radical black bookshop, New Beacon Books) – poetry by Jay Bernard; essay by Ruth Bush*, New Beacon Books. 12,000 words. Available in illustrated online format with interactive timeline and publications gallery here: <https://www.georgepadmoreinstitute.org/the-pioneering-years> [Accessed 27 October 2020]

Journal Articles and Special Issues

- 3.3 **Bush R** (2019). African Readers as World Readers, *Edinburgh History of Reading*, Edinburgh University Press, pp.289-312. 8,000 words [Available on request]
- 3.4 **Bush R** and Ducournau C (2020). African audiences: making meaning across media, Special Issue of *Research in African Literatures*, **51.1**, [co-authored introduction; co-authored 8,000-word peer-reviewed article on three francophone African "big magazines" and ideas of the public; 8 further peer-reviewed articles by international scholars]. pp.vii-xv (introduction, 4,500 words): <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrilite.51.1.01>; pp.45-69 (article, 9,000 words): <https://doi.org/10.2979/reseafrilite.51.1.04>
- 3.5 **Bush R** (2016). Mesdames, il faut lire! [Ladies, You Must Read!]: Material Contexts and Representational Strategies in the First Francophone African Women's Magazine, *Francosphères*, **5:2**, pp.213-236. 7,000 words, <https://doi.org/10.3828/franc.2016.15>
- 3.6 **Bush R** and Krishnan M (2016). African Print Activism in the 21st Century, special issue of *Wasafiri Magazine*, **31:4**, pp.1-2 [Interview piece authored by Bush; Co-authored introduction; commissioned peer-reviewed articles; poetry; fiction; translation; artwork], <https://doi.org/10.1080/02690055.2016.1216267>

Grants Linked to the Research

- **Bush R** (PI), *Literary Entrepreneurship, Arts Management and Cultural Industries on the African Continent*, ESRC Impact Acceleration Awards: 2016, GBP3,029 and 2017, GBP15,000

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- **Bush R** (PI), [Popular Print and Reading Cultures in Francophone Africa](#), AHRC Global Challenges Research Fund (Translating Cultures/Care for the Future International Development Award), AH/P007856/1, 2016, GBP75,114
- **Bush R** (PI; on parental leave from Apr 2018, when Krishnan M took on acting PI role), *Arts Management and Literary Activism (AMLA) feasibility study and scoping exercise for literary translation and creative writing training provision in sub-Saharan Africa (Botswana, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Senegal, Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe)*, GCRF Pump-Priming Award, 2018, GBP48,642
- **Bush R** (CI), [Creative Writing and Translation for Peace](#), AHRC Follow-On Funding, AH/S005889/1, 2019, GBP83,898

4. Details of the impact

Dr Bush's research has contributed decisively to transforming the African literary landscape. It has led to social, cultural and economic impacts for literary activists, archivists, curators and museums, as well as the wider public, across francophone Africa and the African diaspora.

Established new, multilingual, literary networks across multiple African countries

Bush's research has influenced a cultural shift on the African continent, from a primarily economic model of literary entrepreneurship, to a politically motivated notion of literary activism. As the founder of Writivism Festival and the Centre for African Cultural Excellence (CACE) (Uganda) notes 'It was while in South Africa [during the #RhodesMustFall protests] that I read Ruth Bush's work on New Beacon Books [3.2], and given closer interactions with Ntone Edjabe at Chimurenga [influential Pan-African cultural collective], it became clearer to me that the work the countless literary initiatives are doing is more political than professional. To borrow Fanon's words, they are creating new humans' [5.1].

As part of this shift in thinking, Bush, Prof Krishnan (Bristol), and Dr Wallis (Exeter) were invited to develop and facilitate the annual Arts Managers and Literary Activists (AMLA) workshops (2016-2018), which brought together 60 literary activists from over 15 countries across the continent, in partnership with Writivism and CACE. The workshops provided access to inspiring examples of literary activism in Africa, and have led to a more formalised and autonomous AMLA network (52 individual/organisations are now members). They were followed by mentorship by established African literary activists of five new literary initiatives across East, West and Southern Africa. These include: Abidjan Lit literary collective (Côte d'Ivoire) which has since held seven live literature events (audience of c.100) and set up (March 2020) the 1949 Library, Côte d'Ivoire's first reading room for African women's writing - they maintain an active social media presence (3,600 Facebook followers on 23 Oct 2020) and website, through which they offer translation and editing services, literary tours, and reading events for children and young adults; and Mawazo Africa Writing Institute (Uganda) which has held 3 writing workshops for 18 authors, leading to two novels currently in press with Mawazo-Huza Press series [5.2]. In 2018, Bush commissioned and managed the production and distribution of a substantial feasibility study conducted by Dr Georgina Collins. Based on interviews with over 60 translators, publishers, academics, and writers, the bilingual report has attracted widespread interest (1,172 downloads in English; 607 downloads in French; 150 physical copies distributed to study participants), including from many literary professionals based in other countries not involved directly in the study – Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, Madagascar, South Africa, France and the US. Working with Bakwa Media (Cameroon – participants in the AMLA network) and Abidjan Lit in her research on literary translation, Bush co-developed and delivered a creative writing and literary translation workshop which took place in Yaoundé in 2019 with 24 participants. The latter was the first of its kind on the African continent and drew directly on findings and demand established by the feasibility study. It resulted in the publication of Bakwa Books Anthology, *Your Feet Will Lead You Where Your Heart Is/Le crépuscule des âmes sœurs* (2020; launch delayed due to Covid-19). It has led to economic impact: Bakwa Media now have contracts with Parisian literary agent Pierre Astier to publish a translation of Hemley Boum's *Les jours viennent et passent* by one of the participants in the Bakwa workshop; and one participant in the Bakwa creative writing workshop has signed to the British literary agency, Laxfield Literary Associates [5.3].

Inspired new forms of curatorial practice and contributed to cultural heritage preservation and interpretation in the UK and Senegal

Bush's research on Black British publishing [3.2] has brought economic, educational and cultural benefits for New Beacon Books (NBB) and the George Padmore Institute (GPI – a key archival hub for Black British history and cultural activism). During this REF period:

- Her research informed a successful exhibition at Islington Museum (May-Aug 2015), attended by over 5,000 people, giving visibility to NBB's political and cultural role;
- Bush convened a book club (four editions in 2014, total attendance c. 100), which brought new people, including local schoolteachers, to NBB and the GPI;
- Her research provided a stepping-stone for both organisations to consider their future sustainability, which led to three successful grants from HLF, Arts Council England, and Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust (totaling GBP105,228 between 2016-2020). The funding helped GPI host 7 events and appoint a 'poet-in-residence', Jay Bernard, whose poetry was published alongside Dr Bush's essay, and subsequently in the collection *Surge*, which won the 2018 Ted Hughes Prize [5.4].

Through the AWA project [3.5], international audiences and staff and visitors at the *Musée de la Femme Henriette Bathily* (MUFEM) and *Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire-Cheikh Anta Diop* (IFAN-Ch. A. Diop), in Dakar, Senegal have gained new understanding of Senegalese print heritage and its associated social and political role. In 2016, Bush worked with these established, but under-resourced, institutions on a new multimedia exhibition and website archive of AWA – one of the earliest African women's magazines. The AWA website presents the 'scattered archive' as a digitised magazine. It has had 4,464 users (as of 27 Oct 2020), 26 percent of whom are based on the African continent, with most African users based in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Congo-Kinshasa [5.5].

The exhibition ran at MUFEM in Dakar from November 2017 – April 2018, attracting c. 3,000 paying visitors, before moving on. It was reproduced in Montpellier (March-April 2018; c. 1,000 visitors – a freely accessible event in the university library corridors, launched as part of the *Semaine de l'Afrophonie*) and Bordeaux (May-July 2019; c. 1,000 visitors, also hosted without entry charge in the university library, as part of the *Afrophonie week*); a planned transition to Marseille (June-July 2020) was postponed due to Covid-19. The exhibition heightened awareness among cross-generational international audiences of AWA as a pioneering publishing initiative in a formative period of history for Senegalese women. One visitor commented, 'This exhibition plunged me back into a mirror, a world, a familiar and distant dimension [...] a period anchored within me'. Another visitor (based in Guinea-Conakry), and President of the *Fondation Solidarité Féminine de Guinée*, wrote of her 'joy in discovering through this magazine the path forged by these Black women. These spaces which give women the opportunity to express themselves. Thank you again for this beautiful initiative.' The exhibition received national and international press coverage, including front page of the national Senegalese daily paper, *Le Soleil*, a *Radio France Internationale* programme (broadcast in English), and TV5 Monde news segment [5.6].

For staff at MUFEM and the original founders of the magazine, the exhibition valorised and raised MUFEM's international profile, bringing c. 3,000 visitors and raising revenue (c. GBP3,500) through entry fees and sales of related items. There was a wide range of enthusiastic comments on the 'commentary wall', several school groups, and a well-attended (300+) launch event. The exhibition was included in the official programme of the *Ateliers de la Pensée* (a major annual African/Diaspora intellectual and artistic gathering, organised by Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr). Staff at the MUFEM spoke enthusiastically of the project during our evaluation meeting in April 2019 ('Awa was a hit!' commented one gallery attendant). MUFEM were inspired to keep the 'commentary wall' for subsequent exhibitions, enabling them to continue capturing audience responses and showing a long-term commitment to changing their practices [5.6].

Staff at IFAN-Ch. A. Diop (who undertook the digitisation) have benefitted from involvement as an integral part of the project. Training was provided, building capacity and enthusiasm in a

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chronically under-resourced institution where there is little opportunity for continuing professional development. The local and international success of the project's digital element and the exhibition has encouraged the team at IFAN-Ch. A Diop to continue with independent work on this material and new digitisation initiatives. They contributed to an International Women's Day event in March 2018 by producing their own video montage of the magazine to screen at events. They have secured further funding via recently awarded grants in France: IUF (EUR75,000) and Erasmus (EUR34,480) [5.7].

Inspired new artworks

The AWA project has generated broader interest in the material and in preserving heritage digitally, leading to new understandings of the representation of African women in the public sphere. American artist, Fahamu Pecou, decided to use an AWA cover as the basis for a new artwork, "Jigéen Bu Bé Fenkna (Dawn of Woman)", exhibited in New York in summer 2018. Multiple requests were received via the digital portal to use AWA images for projects (forthcoming Editions Gallimard book on Women and Literature; Dakar-based tailor, Njit Couture, found design inspiration in the magazine's photos; the Instagram "Africa Style Archive" featured 2 images, with 341 likes (23 Oct 2020); *SWAG Something We Africans Got* African art magazine featured a 13-page illustrated spread), alongside enquiries from elderly people involved in the original project, or inspired by its premise (e.g. Guinean Women's organisation; daughter of original printer of AWA magazine, Awa Hélène Diop) [5.8].

Influencing policy on international collaborations

Bush's extensive experience in research collaborations has contributed to ensuring long-term productive collaborations with colleagues based on the African continent, especially in historically francophone regions (she was awarded an ERC Starting Grant worth EUR1.5 million in September 2020). She contributed to the APPG coalition's (Africa; Diaspora, Development and Migration; Malawi) report on UK visa refusals for African visitors (launched July 2019) by providing written evidence for the APPG meeting and inquiry convened by Chi Onwurah MP in 2019 [5.9]. The evidence provided by Bush highlighted that African visitors to the UK (2016-2018) were twice as likely to be refused a visa, which subsequently prompted a parliamentary debate around use of algorithms to process visa applications (Hansard, 19 June 2019, vol. 662). Bush has personally pursued four instances where a visa has been refused or delayed for a project partner, requesting evidence, contacting the Royal African Society, Ambassadors in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, and subject associations (African Studies Association UK). In two instances this enabled a visa decision to be overturned. This work has become a vital element of the research process for Africanist scholars based in the UK in the current political climate.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Email from Founder of Writivism (April 2018)
- 5.2 Writivism AMLA workshops and mentoring: Evaluation reports, reviews and social media
- 5.3 Feasibility report; media coverage of Bakwa project and rights acquisition
- 5.4 Heritage Lottery Fund report extracts from GPI; GPI newsletters (2014-2017); email from Founder of GPI confirming follow-on funding (October 2020)
- 5.5 Google Analytics user data for www.awamagazine.org (3 November 2017-26 October 2020)
- 5.6 AWA exhibition: Testimonies and evaluations from visitors (April 2019); media coverage
- 5.7 Emails from staff at IFAN-Cheikh Anta Diop (2018-2019)
- 5.8 Emails from artist Fahamu Pecou; African Style Archive creator, Tosin Adeosun; Art magazine editor, Alix Koffi; tailor, Papa Malick Sy Diallo, Nijit couture; Image of Fahamu Pecou's artwork; SWAG magazine cover and contents (issue 10)
- 5.9 All-Party Parliamentary Group Report (2019), [Visa Problems for African Visitors to the UK](#) [Accessed 27 October 2020]; Evidence submitted to APPG by Bush, Krishnan and Wallis (January 2019); Financial Times article (July 2019), [Africans twice as likely to be refused UK visa, say MPs](#) [Accessed 27 October 2020]