

BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Anderson and Henry B. Lovejoy (eds.). 2020. *Liberated Africans and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1807-1896*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press. 465 pp.

This edited volume brings together regional experts from around the world to explore the experiences of a unique class of persons involved in the judicial process of abolitionism, adopting a global approach to focus on the implications and the human cost of the British anti-slave trade policies and strategies. More accurately, the purpose of the included essays is to delineate and resituate the concrete experiences of the Africans whom the British abolition act, naval enforcement, and mixed commissions were meant to help (p. 4). Therefore, the cases included here refer to the construction of the African-Atlantic space, underlying the interrelation of different nodes and spaces in the slave trade. Compared to the existing historiography, this book succeeds in providing an organic analysis of contexts and stories that should not be presented without the appropriate connections. Moreover, the volume complicates the problematic dichotomy “freed or enslaved,” showing the harshness of the apprentices’ lives. Following this line of thought, liberation from the slave ship did not mean “freedom” but rather the beginning of a protracted process that could last decades, and that varied considerably in different contexts and societies. Therefore, the chapters offer a comprehensive overview of the complex experiences, varying across contexts, related to the apprenticeship system, calling attention to masked unfree labor in English territories imposed on liberated Africans. The chosen time frame (1807-1896) is adequate to grasp both the precedents and the development of British anti-slave trade policies, focusing on their consequences as far as apprenticeships, resistance, and autonomy were concerned.

The book is divided geographically and thematically into six sections. The first part, “Origins of Liberated Africans,” explores the early development of Britain’s suppression campaign in the aftermath of the 1807 Abolition Act and the context of the Napoleonic Wars (p. 13). Therefore, the chapters included in this section suggest the longstanding importance of the policies that established the practices for dealing with foreign slave vessels, the scarce protections, and, most importantly, the labor obligations for liberated Africans. Part two is devoted to Sierra Leone, the heart of Britain’s antislavery operations. Part three focuses on the Caribbean, highlighting the diverse experiences of liberated Africans between what occurred in the British colonies—where slavery was abolished in 1834—and in Cuba, embedded in the second slavery. Considering that the nineteenth-century slave trade was principally conducted in the South Atlantic, the fourth portion of this book explores the production of liberated Africans in mid-nineteenth century Angola and the illegal slave trade to Brazil. For instance, notably connecting British antislavery diplomacy in Cuba and Brazil, Maeve Ryan’s contribution in this section underlines how British policies tackling the global suppression of the slave trade were guided by wider strategic and commercial interests (p. 18). Part five, “Liberated Africans in Global Perspective,” expands the global history of liberated Africans, presenting research on the South Atlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Cape, and the island of St. Helena. Lastly, part six, “Resettlements,” focuses on liberated Africans who were traumatically

forced to experience second involuntary resettlement, as Britain established the “disposal” policies—therefore using liberated Africans’ workforce to benefit the needs of the empire (p. 14).

The chapters of the book employ different kinds of sources while accounting for their potential shortages. For example, Allen M. Howard’s use of the 1831 Freetown census is descriptive and insightful but, at the same time, warns on how the information was obtained (p. 104). Moreover, Daniel B. Domingues da Silva and Katelyn E. Ziegler tackle the geographical extension of the slave trade, mapping its suppression in the nineteenth century in a database, based on—but not limited to—the correspondence between British commissioners, naval officers, and diplomats (p. 68). Nevertheless, this collection emphasizes that the experiences of liberated Africans should be explored in its cultural legacies, too. Thus, Shantel George proposes a study of oral narratives collected from 1952 to 2014, demonstrating how liberated Africans and their descendants remained culturally distinctive in post-slavery Grenada (p. 385).

In conclusion, this volume represents an excellent starting point for further research needed on specific and interrelated aspects of the diverse experiences of liberated Africans, hinted in the contributions included here: gender, the politics of language, community networks, and intersectional histories of identities. In this respect, I would strongly suggest this book not only to historians focusing on the African Atlantic and Diaspora studies but also to global labor history and dependency studies scholars.

Elena Barattini, *Università degli Studi di Torino*

Nathan Andrews. 2019. *Gold Mining and the Discourses of Corporate Social Responsibility in Ghana*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 227 pp.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is based on the idea that business has the obligation beyond earning profits. A corporation is responsible not only to its shareholders but to all the stakeholders—customers, suppliers, employees, social communities, government as well as towards environment. Thus, CSR consists of voluntary activities undertaken by a company to operate in an economic, social, and environmentally sustainable manner. CSR is a multidisciplinary topic and is difficult to pin down in terms of identifying a single analytical framework that helps to address its various dimensions. This is apparent from Andrews’ book which draws insights towards the critiques of theories surrounding corporate citizenship, liberal citizenship, global governance, and poverty to explore the discourse of CSR.

By embracing a much broader understanding of discourse, this book critically examines the corporate practices, policies, and interactions which together represent the material way in which CSR discourse manifests itself on the ground. Andrews’ book grows out of his extensive fieldwork, focus group discussions, and interviews conducted in 2013 in Ghanaian communities located around two project sites of Transnational Mining Companies (TMCs), namely Newmont Mining Corporation and Kinross Gold Corporation in Ghana. The text is organized into six chapters, each representing a distinct yet complementary viewpoint and serves to juxtapose official and mainstream accounts of CSR with voices and perceptions of host communities from grassroots.

The second chapter explores the meanings companies attach to their CSR activities and dilemmas associated with their actions and inactions. Here the author emphasizes the notion of “Corporate Citizenship” (CC) and highlights how it further responsabilizes the corporation. Andrews argues that the prevalence of both CC and CSR in the academic literature is quite fascinating, as these terms are not well grounded in conventional notions of the firm (p. 38). He analyzes the company websites and sustainability reports and as utilizes the personal interviews conducted with several stakeholders to highlight how corporations have represented themselves as responsible corporate citizens.

In the third chapter, the author addresses the book’s intent by highlighting the ways in which the CSR discourse serves a corporation through the mechanisms of responsabilization, thereby insulating it from more effective regulation and alienating it from real accountability (p. 75). Andrews further examines the Newmont’s flagship CSR initiative, the Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation (NADeF) as it represents one of Newmont’s most benevolent material practices. The chapter also explore five key elements of Newmont’s responsabilization, but the author terms them “sticky” because of their being intertwined with the other factors in their material manifestations. Andrews points out that CSR is neither useless nor entirely rhetorical.

The fourth chapter, “‘A Woman Can Also Speak Out’: Gender Perspectives on Responsibilization,” is very interesting. In many ways it is the descriptive core of this book as it discusses the general effects of mining on women with attention to the feminization of poverty under the premise that understandings and experiences of poverty differ between women and men. It also examines mining companies’ awareness of gender in their CSR endeavors via-a-vis the several livelihood concerns raised by women themselves (p. 105). The author devotes this chapter towards highlighting how the CSR principles of Newmont and Kinross tend to deviate from the gendered discourses of affected populations at the grassroots level.

The fifth chapter focuses on how the global CSR movement facilitates the institutionalization of unaccountability, illegitimacy, and injustice via the normative discourses it espouses. The chapter investigates how the global norms adopted by Kinross and Newmont influence their social performance in Ghana, as opposed to a merely discursive agenda meant to establish corporate knowledge, capital, and power over what social responsibility entails (p. 135). Chapter six serves as the book’s conclusion. The author here again examines three interrelated implications of the corporation’s enactment as a responsabilized entity and reveals multiple enactments spearheaded by the discourse and how the processes of enacting responsabilized corporation are perpetuated.

In this book Nathan Andrews seeks to challenge CSR as a discourse and posits it as contested discourse. While identifying the shortcomings of CSR is vital, this book goes beyond a micro critique to examine how, despite its shortcomings, the discourse of CSR manages to invest a corporation with enormous dominance over the socio-economic and political arenas of its host communities. The greatest strength of this book lies in oral testimonies and extensive fieldwork material collected, which bring vivid life experiences of communities located near the two project sites chosen for study. Andrews has succeeded in applying accurate, original thinking to one of the most important development issues of our time—that is the rapid economic and political changes occurring in Africa. Therefore, his book is an important contribution and interesting scholarly piece which attempts to fill the gap that scholars have

rarely had as theoretical and heuristic goals to improve understanding about the nature and dynamics of CSR in Ghana.

Priya Dahiya, *University of Delhi*

Michael Bollig. 2020. *Shaping the African Savannah: From Capitalist Frontier to Arid Eden in Namibia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 404 pp.

The cumulation of more than twenty years of fieldwork, scientific analysis, and archival research, Michael Bollig's *Shaping the African Savannah* explores the entangled evolution of peoples and landscape in Namibia's Kaokoveld. Labeled by the Namibian government as "unimagined, unexpected, unexplored," Bollig's work demonstrates that the Kaokoveld has long been imagined and reimagined by residents and travelers. For Bollig, changes in environmental infrastructure, the nature of hunting and pastoralism, and the interrelationship among species, technology, and capitalism have created and recreated this African savannah. By weaving together the past and the present, history and anthropology, he creates a narrative in which people, cattle, and wildlife have voice, but are also restrained and conditioned by larger structures. One such force was the emergence of global capitalism. In the nineteenth century this took the form of the Cape trading frontier. By the twentieth century, this same frontier became enmeshed with German colonialism, the South African apartheid state, and finally postcolonial resource management. During the loosely labelled "prehistory" period, herders, foragers, and cattle along with elephants and other wildlife shared resources, and accumulated knowledge and technologies such as fire. This altered with nineteenth-century firearms and elephant hunting and changed still further when the twentieth century colonial state placed restrictions on movement and criminalized certain forms of hunting. Local people, nevertheless, pushed back against both boundaries and re-established systems of "mobile livestock management."

Concepts of scientific knowledge and modernization are critical points in the formation of environmental infrastructure and knowledge. *Shaping the African Savannah* simultaneously notes the ways in which the colonial state attempted to enclose and to distinguish and chronicles the ways in which knowledge production was complex, sometimes contradictory, and intertwined with economic goals and perceptions. While early twentieth century landscape photography and scientific expeditions often rendered people part of that landscape, the colonial administrators and police officials who detailed the Kaokoveld's flora and fauna relied on local people to educate and explain the environment. In this sense, much of the scientific knowledge about the region was co-produced and domestic cattle production reflected the concerns of regional elite. Nevertheless, by the 1940s, the desire to separate the domestic from the wild, created an environment shaped by the needs of humans and domesticated animals. Both the hunting and the negotiation of space between humans and wildlife receded.

For Bollig, much of the story of the twentieth century Kaokoveld is one of humans, boreholes, and cattle triumphant, amidst shifting political perimeters. During the 1950s, an emphasis on "*ontwikkeling*" (modernization) led to an influx of staff, scientists, development experts, vehicles, and roads. Expanded use of boreholes and the increased importance of the cattle industry transformed socio-environmental relations. Foraging virtually disappeared and

wealth in livestock was spread throughout the population. However, veterinary boundaries, hierarchies of species, and the encouragement of environmental homogeneity also brought tragedy. Although much of the wildlife population remained stable between 1910 and 1970, by the 1980s environmental degradation, increased hunting, the skyrocketing value of rhino horns and elephant tusks, and the militarization of the region led to a significant drop in wildlife. The loss of wildlife also paralleled a collapse of the pastoral economy. By 1982, severe drought aggravated by restrictions on movement and increasing violence, caused the loss of 90 percent of the region's livestock. Forced to accept the famine relief distributed by the South African Defense Force, some Himba and Herero were recruited into the SADF's auxiliary forces. Nevertheless, people coped with this threat of violence and restocked their herds.

Sanga Cattle perhaps offer the best insight into questions of water, shared resources, local innovation, and endurance. Well adapted, hardy, resilient, and prized among the Himba for their beauty, Sanga cattle have remained the primary cattle breed in the region despite attempts to introduce other breeds. After independence, the new Namibian government reorganized both pastoralism and environmental governance. Conservation and NGOs influenced the resurgence of pastoralism and committees. Through the 1990s, NGOs focused on community-based resource management and conservation efforts. Outside funds flowed in as never before and influenced environmental infrastructure. The Namibian government created "new commons" by decree and committees of young, educated Namibians replaced traditional authorities as "intermediaries" between the government, corporations, NGOs and other global organizations. Wages increased as a portion of household income. Tourism and mining gained economic significance and became lens through which to view potential futures.

Shaping the African Savannah succeeds in making the global local and examines the Kaokoveld's environmental past, present, and future with nuance and sophistication. Much of the strength of this work lies in the detail and sensitivity with which Bollig approaches processes at the granular level and yet creates a story of environmental history and globalization that remains accessible to the majority of readers. In these pages, cattle, elephants, water, and wildebeest, share space and voice with herders, conservationists, and government administrators. Useful for academics, development experts, environmentalists, farmers, and industrialists, it compels the reader to contemplate not just the Kaokoveld's past, but the global future.

Cathy Skidmore-Hess, *Georgia Southern University*

Nicola Brandt. 2020. *Landscapes between Then and Now: Recent Histories in Southern African Photography, Performance and Video Art*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing. 288 pp.

Nicola Brandt's *Landscapes between Then and Now* provides an overview of the complex relationship between identity and land in the Southern African countries of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa. Brandt situates her analysis of contemporary performance and lens-based art in a rich discussion of the socio-political struggles against apartheid and colonial rule that reached a fever pitch in the 1980s and 90s. She explores how contemporary artists are responding to the idea of landscapes and questioning who has access to certain spaces and the narratives they evoke. To do this, Brandt interrogates themes such as the European aesthetic of

landscapes, the repatriation of stolen land, and the continued colonial presence on land. The book is divided roughly geographically by chapter. Within this basic geographic structure, Brandt addresses artists thematically. Separations between chapters are not absolute, and many artists reappear throughout the chapters to effectively demonstrate the entangled histories of the three countries.

Brandt discusses roughly forty artists. From the introduction, South African photographer Santu Mofokeng (1956-2020) is established as a through-line and serves as a primary example for many of the contextual and formal discussions that follow, particularly in the first three chapters. In many ways Mofokeng's extensive oeuvre—from the work he produced as a member of Afrapix during the 1980s to his meditative barren landscapes of the late 1990s and early 2000s—demonstrates the variety and trajectory of artistic strategies and approaches to politically charged landscapes that Brandt outlines in her sweeping overview. Through Mofokeng, Brandt considers the literature on social documentary practices and the “colonizing camera” by scholars such as Patricia Hayes, John Tagg, and Elizabeth Edwards (p. 69). Brandt's discussion in the first three chapters succinctly establishes how Mofokeng, David Goldblatt (South African, 1930-2018), and other artists working in South Africa, challenge western landscape aesthetics to capture embodied landscapes that speak to the colonial subject's experience of place. These chapters explore, in Mofokeng's words, landscape not as geography but rather as “about your view, where you live, where you die. That is your landscape” (p. 78).

Chapters four and five pivot away from South Africa to discuss artistic practice in Namibia and Angola more specifically. In chapter five, amidst a discussion that compares the realist memorial photographs by South African photographers David Goldblatt and John Liebenberg to the conceptual memorial in *Icarus 13 – The First Journey to the Sun* by Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda (b. 1979), Brandt addresses her own artistic practice and positionality as a Namibian artist and scholar of German descent. Her self-reflective discussion of her photographs of the removal and relocation of the Reiterdenkmal statue in Windhoek, serves as both a straightforward artist statement and a point of comparison to other artists' practices that engage with the legacy of the Namibian Genocide. In her practice, Brandt is interested in “demonstrating how competing memory politics play out in the present, especially in relation to certain structures and landscapes that hold indisputable historical significance” (p. 128). This attention to the fraught realm of memory, particularly national and colonial memory, is a core issue throughout the book.

Overall, the most space is given to South African artists, whether they are active within South Africa or in Namibia or Angola. The prevalence of South African artists is revealing of the intertwined nature of the three countries' histories and socio-political climates that Brandt reflects on. Brandt's analysis is therefore most enlightening in the connections she draws across borders, for example between Kiluanji Kia Henda and South African photographer Jo Ratcliffe (b. 1961). In this way, the book fills lacunae in discussions of artists from across Southern Africa.

Brandt's analysis of a broad range of contemporary practices—from Sethembile Msezane's (South African, b. 1991) performance during the 2015 relocation of the Rhodes monument from the University of Cape Town campus to Isabel Katjavivi's (Namibian, b. 1988) short videos that explore trauma and intergenerational memory and healing—is situated within a complex web of influences grounded in careful historical research. By examining so many artists from across

Southern Africa, Brandt successfully charts the aesthetic and ideological importance of landscape to artists working between the three countries. Although only a few artists receive sustained discussion, through an impressive number of shorter case studies and the frequent use of illustrations Brandt effectively presents the importance of landscape as a framework of inquiry in relation to lens-based practices.

Michelle Fikrig, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Anthony Butler. 2019. *Cyril Ramaphosa: The Road to Presidential Power*. Suffolk: James Currey Publishers. 496 pp.

Butler presents the biography of a complex character in a difficult fashion. At a glance, the complexity of Butler's narration is hardly readily noticeable. He tends to present a mere Christian youth activist, who went through some challenges at early stages in life on his way to the presidency. On closer examination, however, the text raises critical questions that could escape leisure readers.

The text consists of six parts. The first two set the stage of an emerging life drama that would lead from the pits of miry clay and a nearly hopeless situation which had characterized the life of an average South African Black of the time, and which had been widely accepted as the causal factor that had prevented thousands of South Africans from attaining their full potential through becoming educated. Despite the turbulent social climate, Ramaphosa was able to receive a formal education—first a basic primary education, and second the home training from a morally uncompromising father who had the habit of confiding in Ramaphosa even at the age when he appeared obviously too young and inexperienced to provide his father with adequate counsel. At the secondary education level, Ramaphosa was already becoming popular, especially as a result of his contributions among his peers in the search of truth, justice, and purpose in life. According to Butler, all these were done with the hope that South Africa could be great again.

Part three captures the transition of Ramaphosa into the mainstream of public politics, which coincidentally marks the transition of South Africa from apartheid governance to democracy. The trajectory of Butler's analysis reveals that the history of Ramaphosa from childhood to the presidency coincides with the history of South Africa from the woods of apartheid days to modern democracy. The peak of this is the end of apartheid in 1994. One expects to read about the much rumored suspicions and controversies about the biological warfare in South Africa in parts four and five, but Butler prefers discussing equally controversial national concerns and crowns it in part six with Ramaphosa's presidency of hopeful beginning.

The book's cover provides its title as *Cyril Ramaphosa: The Road to Presidential Power*. The inner title page, however, changes it to *Cyril Ramaphosa: The Path to Presidential Power*. This does not appear to be a mistake as one may think. First, the author describes Ramaphosa as an enigma, which suggests a few things. Among others, it suggests in relation to the dual titles that there was a difficulty in the drafting of the biography either to ascertain whether Ramaphosa consciously sets out on the path he took, or it was determined by external factors. How much did his family background, early youthful activities, or the size of his ethnic group and all the

merits and challenges alloyed with it in the context of South African politics place his feet on the road to the presidency? Or did he simply follow the political path that would lead him somewhere great, since path can be more tortuous than a specific road. The two titles are by any interpretation related but also meaningfully different. Whether this interpretation correlates or opposes what the biographer had in mind, it is at least less controversial that it is not an oversight. The text refrains from making predictions, but readers' elucidations can tell before the cock of the future's dawn crows.

It is, however, of striking philosophical significance to analysts and scholars that the text describes Ramaphosa as an enigma and simultaneously as a visionary awe-inspiring pragmatist. It is now left to critical readers to judge whether Ramaphosa is a pragmatist or a gifted utilitarian. Also, no one can contend it as a compliment to refer to Ramaphosa as a pragmatist rather than a visionary utilitarian having stepped aside from active participation in his farm business for pursuits in national politics. Will the interest of majority be served, or will the long run pecuniary interest of the farm or business be served?

Though the author does not pretend to present Ramaphosa as he is in himself, but rather on the basis of first-hand witnesses of Ramaphosa's close acquaintances and friends, the record remains a script against which both Ramaphosa and the author are to be assessed. The author describes Ramaphosa in various ways: as an awe-inspiring personality; a self-determining actor who acts his own script; and a charismatic, self-possessed, relentless and fearless and focused agitator, activist, farmer, negotiator, ameliorator, and political performer who takes after his father in moral character.

Aside being a biography of an enigma who is in many ways true to his name Cyril, the text has become a necessary and important contribution to available resources for scholars, authors and leisure readers of politics, history, and developmental psychology. Even music fans can find in the text the relevance of the evergreen Hugh Masekela's "Thuma Mina" ("Send me") to South Africa.

Cyril-Mary Pius Olatunji, O.F. Oluwasegunota Bolarinwa, and Shade Ade-Johnson,
Adekunle Ajasin University (Nigeria)

Stephen Chan and Julia Gallagher. 2017. *Why Mugabe Won: The 2013 Elections in Zimbabwe and Their Aftermath*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press. 193 pp.

Chan and Gallagher make an effervescent attempt to try and disentangle the perennial, complex puzzle of Zimbabwean politics, that being the late Robert Mugabe's long stay in power at the helm of the country. The book particularly focuses on trying to interrogate why Robert Mugabe won the 2013 elections in Zimbabwe.

The focus of the book is well thought out. At face value one would view a Robert Mugabe election win in 2013 as an unthinkable scenario! This is so because Robert Mugabe had held the top political posts in the country since 1980. He was prime minister of Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1987 and then president from 1987 until 2017 when the book was published. From 2000 onwards, he led Zimbabwe into a ruinous economic period with record inflation and subsequent economic collapse being experienced in 2008. This was a period of untold social and economic suffering at all levels of society. On the back of this economic collapse, evidence

shows that Robert Mugabe lost the 2008 harmonized elections to opposition stalwart leader, Morgan Tsvangirai of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Although Tsvangirai won the presidential elections, he did not do so by a constitutionally recognized majority and a re-run had to be carried out. The result of the re-run was not recognized regionally, and this led to Southern African Development Community (SADC)-led negotiations for a government of national unity (GNU). The GNU came into force in 2009. By 2013 a new constitution had been crafted and elections were to be held by the end of July in 2013. In the 2013 elections, Robert Mugabe won 61 percent of the vote to claim a sixth term as president of Zimbabwe. Morgan Tsvangirai finished second with 34 percent of the vote.

The book eloquently explores why the unthinkable happened. The authors strive to dissect why a man who had overseen the total economic collapse of the country just five years earlier could be voted back into power by such an astounding margin. Chan and Gallagher give numerous reasons for this. They allude that Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party won the elections because of the MDC party's political complacency. The MDC ran a lethargic election campaign. They assumed people would remember the suffering of 2008 and vote for them on that basis. On the other hand, ZANU-PF remained steadfast and kept sending subtle political messages to the electorate from 2009. The ZANU-PF election campaigns were well resourced with potential voters being given "gifts." Additionally, the MDC performed badly in the GNU. Besides Tendai Biti's efforts to stabilize the economy by introducing a multi-currency system, MDC figures and Tsvangirai had proved to be incompetent, corrupt, and self-serving. The MDC had no achievements of note in the GNU. The MDC had failed to differentiate itself from the characteristics of ZANU-PF. The MDC did not have anything of note to offer to the electorate. MDC's image of being a darling of the West and their neo-liberalist agenda was eclipsed by ZANU-PF's message of nationalization and redistribution of wealth to the masses through their famed indigenization and land reform programs. The indigenization agenda carried forward the "decolonisation" mantra that had punctuated the "Fast Track Land Reform Programme" in 2000. In addition to the above, the book details the political experience and competence of ZANU-PF as an imperative factor for Mugabe's win. Irregularities in the voter rolls, barriers to registration by the young in urban centers, and subtle psychological intimidation of the electorate were strategies used by ZANU-PF to win the election.

Although Chan and Gallagher manage to give a telling analysis of how Mugabe did the unthinkable in the 2013 election, there was a deeper need to focus on the Zimbabwean voter. A whole chapter should have been dedicated to the dissection of the political character and thinking of Zimbabweans. Nevertheless, the book is an enticing and educative read. The authors manage to capture salient issues in their explanation of the problem. The book will help anyone who wants to understand the politics of African ruling parties, why certain African leaders stay in power for so long, and in particular the political gymnastics of African liberation parties. It is a worthwhile read par excellence.

Ramphal Sillah, *Midlands State University (Zimbabwe)*

Simidele Dosekun. 2020. *Fashioning Postfeminism: Spectacular Femininity and Transnational Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 194 pp.

This book presents the postfeminist view and practice of educated Nigerian women residing in Lagos. The study involved interviewing eighteen women from various categories including students in higher education and professionals in the media, public relations, banking, and entrepreneurs. Debating the concept of postfeminism, Dosekun argues that it refers to “a popular cultural formation and sensibility concerning the putative pastness of feminism, rather than a distinct historical period or state after feminism, or an epistemological shift within it” (p. 3). Challenging the Western ethnocentric postfeminist views of fashion, the book offers explanations that African women understand and experience fashion in their own ways. In this sense, it is argued that fashion in Africa—as the case with non-African societies—undergoes changes through time denoting the notions of culture dynamics. The women participants in the study chose different styles of dressing or masquerade such as cascading hair extensions, immaculate makeup, and wearing high heels out of interest in something unique, which they consider would give them pleasure, a sense of freedom, and power. Despite the heteronormative public assumptions, the author explains, subjects of this study practiced postfeminist fashioning not to seduce men for sexual relations.

According to Dosekun, the women “positioned themselves as knowing, skilled, and calculative consumers of fashion and beauty, hence able to make themselves in their desired image” (p. 65). We learn from this description that the spectacular femininity the women sought for was self-imagined. In clear terms, the women assumed that they were able to exercise their agency to find problems for their beauty given their social position and economic capacity to afford and use the feminine goods and services. In fact, the women’s craving for this spectacular fashion primarily centered on seeking pleasure. Men’s position towards the women’s interest in pursuing postfeminist fashioning and using the products remained positive although they were little convinced in spending too much on the items of beauty. Dosekun captures the impressions of the women that their practice of postfeminist fashioning had no racial, psychological, or political motives, but rather a matter of personal choice intended to bring pleasure. This sets the women in opposition to the popular belief in Nigeria that black women and men should wear their naturally given hair as an identity marker and black pride. As a postfeminist writer, the author underscores that the myth surrounding feminist writing on beauty that “black women want to be white because white beauty is iconic” should be exposed. She contends that black beauty cannot be contracted to whiteness as it “is a complex construct in its own right” (p. 89).

Arguing on the notions of colonial and body racism, the author stresses that such parochial Western views of black people have been detrimental to the existing local cultures, indigenous knowledge, and self-identification of the African people. In particular, Dosekun associates the loss of memory, feel, and taste for black hair in Nigeria with body racism, which results from the emerging global phenomenon. Understanding transnational culture in relation to spectacular femininity, Dosekun argues that mobility, the media, goods and services, consumerism, and social networking contributed significantly to the postfeminist fashioning by the study participant women. However, not all the women had experience in international travel and hence, those who did not have the opportunity to travel abroad were able to enjoy the privileges of postfeminist fashioning while at home through transnational connectivities.

The author adds that the women demonstrated intelligence in changing their dressing style depending on the social settings they experienced. In situations for instance, where they want to enjoy being in a café that most class-privileged people visit, they tend to dress in certain ways that conform to the standards of style by the people there, but they change their dressing styles when they visit markets or public open places. Reflecting on the women's perceptions about the patriarchal social structure they were embedded in and their practice of postfeminist fashioning, Dosekun argues that the women had mixed feelings that they experienced patriarchal influences while simultaneously enjoying the privileges of fashioning that postfeminism offered them. Further, responding to the moral and social risks of public misunderstanding they faced, the women stated that they valued intellect (showed respect) for people talking to them while assuming that the spectacular self-stylization they experienced was a significant achievement towards developing a sense of self-esteem and empowerment.

Mesfin Dessiye Abegaz, *University of Gondar*

Enrique Ubieta Gómez. 2016 (English translation, 2019). *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa*. Pathfinder Press. 249 pp.

Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa, written by Cuban journalist Enrique Ubieta Gómez, chronicles the experience of Cuban medical workers who volunteered to respond to the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. This book would be of interest to scholars of modern Cuba, the Cuban medical system, specifically the Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, and Cuba's on-going relationship with the African continent.

In October 2014, Cuba's Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade sent over 250 healthcare workers to the three Ebola-affected West African nations. In March 2015, Ubieta Gómez was commissioned to head a small press team that traveled to Guinea and Sierra Leone to report on the activities of Cuban doctors and nurses providing direct medical care at Ebola treatment units. This book is the result of that journey, and its purpose is to present Cuba's response to the Ebola epidemic in the context of Cuba's ongoing stance of solidarity with Africa and in its continuing implementation of revolutionary ideals. The book does not delve deeply into the scientific or epidemiological aspects of Ebola but is rather a "human and political account" of the Cuban experience under difficult and unprecedented conditions.

Gómez interviewed numerous Cuban healthcare workers during his time in West Africa, and their stories make up the bulk of *Red Zone*. They discuss the reasons why they volunteered, the difficulties of leaving their families to face an unfamiliar virus, their anecdotes, and lessons from the field. They share both the victories and tragedies witnessed in the Ebola treatment units. These interviews present a valuable opportunity for more in-depth investigation and future research on Cuban medical missions.

It is notable that, as revealed within their stories and profiles, many of the volunteers already had a strong connection to Africa prior to 2014. Whether through past medical missions, cultural and religious practices, military service, or family history, many of the volunteers felt solidarity with Africa at a personal level. For example, Dr. Enrique Betancourt Casanova's father was Samora Machel's physician and died in the same plane crash that killed the

Mozambican president and liberation leader. Dr. Betancourt later worked as a doctor on a mission in Angola and cites his family's history as a motivation to volunteer for Ebola response in West Africa.

The past is always present in Cuba's relationship with Africa. Included in *Red Zone* are a number of photographs; images of the Ebola response are paired with older images of Cuban doctors and leaders in other African nations during their independence movements. Gómez writes much about Cuba's history of solidarity with the continent, yet he cannot avoid placing that solidarity in the context of Cuba's fraught relationship with the United States. This can be distracting from the stated purpose of the book. A unique feature of Cuban history is that it created this solidarity on its own, independent of larger nations. Cuba sent volunteers to West Africa at the direct invitation of the affected countries, based on their shared histories, and did not need or wait for coordination from any other government. Why center the United States in a story about Cuba-African relations?

On the other hand, there would be no Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade without that fraught U.S.-Cuba history. This special medical unit was founded in 2005 as a response to President Bush's refusal of Cuban offers of assistance to areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. The enmity between the two countries continues to affect their ability to join forces during crises. Gómez discusses this further in the concluding chapter titled, "David, Goliath, and Other Reflections," in which a secondary purpose emerges. *Red Zone* provides a Cuban socialist critique of the neoliberal paradigm of international aid and development projects.

Although Ubieta Gómez heavily praises the work of the medical brigade for implementing the ideals of the Cuban Revolution, it was surprising to learn in a chapter titled, "The Women," that Cuban women were not allowed to volunteer for Ebola response, and female healthcare workers who were already on missions in West Africa were not allowed to stay. Gómez avoids critiquing this decision or questioning the weak reasons given for this policy. He does reproduce a letter from Dr. Eneida Álvarez Horta, coordinator of the Permanent Cuban Brigade in Sierra Leone, to the Cuban Public Health Ministry, expressing her dismay at the policy and asking to stay. He does not provide any quotes from the women affected.

Red Zone provides a distinctively Cuban perspective on the West African Ebola epidemic, informed by Cuba's special relationship to the African continent and specialization in international medical missions. The Cuban healthcare workers who volunteered for this emergency mission in West Africa provide their own demonstration of revolutionary ideals and international solidarity. The book's narrative casts a critical eye on the nature of international aid work, but often fails to turn that eye on itself.

Heather Jordan, *Independent Researcher*

Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara S. Isaacman. 2020. *Mozambique's Samora Machel: A Life Cut Short*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 257 pp.

The book—a concise biographical account of the Mozambican revolutionary leader Samora Machel—has a special taste due to the entanglement of both authors with the recent history of Mozambique. Since the 1960s, Allan and Barbara Isaacman have been interacting with the country, building relations in multiple ways, sometimes for short periods on research trips or as

habitual residents in their time as university professors. During this period of war, revolution, and liberation they held firm to their commitment to social justice and the struggle for freedom in Southern Africa. At first, it might sound like something that could be problematic, as in the classic formula: researchers must keep a certain distance from their object of study. But the Isaacmans handle it with mastery. Their relation to the country and its people is seen and felt throughout the book in the vivid ways they depict everyday life in Mozambique and the richness of details concerning Samora Machel's trajectory.

The book's prologue discusses and reflects upon the matters already addressed here, the authors' relations to the story they present, and the challenge of representing such a complex and ambiguous figure as Samora Machel. Of course, this is a common problem in every biographical work, but it poses a greater task due to the still disputed memory and legacy of Samora, as seen in chapter nine. This chapter and the prologue have a complementary dynamic between them, given that each shows different perspectives on the uses and politics of memory.

The discussion of the chapters will follow a chronological order whereas the narrative is organized mostly diachronically. In this sense, the first two chapters cover Machel's early life and the sociopolitical context of a *preto* living under Portuguese colonial rule. Many interesting aspects of Machel's personality are introduced here. For example, his fierce attitude towards injustice and prejudice was not a byproduct of his later socialist and revolutionary education. It was a combination of his family education and the harshness experienced and witnessed in his youth. In 1974, reflecting on his formation as a revolutionary, he said "perhaps you might expect me to say I read Lenin and all other books, but that is not the way it happened. As a boy I went with my father. He was forced to raise cotton, I learned from the way he was cheated when he brought his crop to sell. From my own life I was led to FRELIMO" (p. 49). Eleven years before this statement, Samora and a fellow anticolonialist activist fled to Dar es Salaam to join FRELIMO and fulfill his revolutionary vocation.

In chapters three and four, we delve into his liberation war years. Not only the strategies and conflicts against external foes—Portuguese colonial forces—are depicted here, but also the internal struggles that FRELIMO had to go through. Under Eduardo Mondlane's leadership, FRELIMO acquired enough prominence to become the main Mozambican anticolonial movement, later converting into a united front in order to integrate other revolutionary groups and strengthen its cause. Meanwhile, it did not take long for Samora to stand out militarily and as a leader, bringing him closer to Mondlane and guaranteeing the respect of a large part of FRELIMO's personnel. With Mondlane's murder there were some disputes over who should lead the group, resulting in a division of power in which Machel was nominated military leader. Other than the narrative that follows the military strategies and conflicts along the Tete region and Niassa river, this section ends with an interesting description of Machel's role in the peace treaty resulting from the unexpected downfall of the Estado Novo by the Carnation Revolution.

Whereas previous chapters can be divided into two parts—his early life and the liberation war years—the third part of the book is encompassed by four chapters (5-8) that cover his period as president of Mozambique and the mysterious conditions involving his death. After independence, not only had the people of Mozambique had to rebuild a country wounded by years of war, deal with the "burden of independence" (among other expenses, a \$500 million

debt related to the Cahora Bassa Dam), and deconstruct the structures of coloniality but also had to handle international pressure caused by the Cold War and the ever-growing tension between FRELIMO and the apartheid states, Rhodesia and South Africa. Furthermore, the adoption of socialism was compromised by those drawbacks, resulting in some concessions made to the neoliberal apparatus (IMF and World Bank) in 1982. However complex and turbulent the era may seem, we must not lose sight of one thing: Samora Machel kept the country united—even against RENAMO’s attempts to overthrow the government—and independent—dealing with the east and the west. Sadly, his story ends in a plane crash in 1986, about which many speculations have been made, but few have been answered by the investigations so far.

Overall, this book represents another relevant effort on the dissemination of African history as part of the Ohio Short Histories of Africa. And it poses, due to its length, as an accessible introduction to the recent history of Mozambique and a solid overview of Samora Machel’s life.

Vinicius Rosalvo de Oliveira, *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*

John M. Janzen, Harold F. Miller, and John C. Yoder (eds.). 2021. *Mennonites and Post-Colonial African Studies*. London: Routledge. 298 pp.

What do Mennonites have to do with postcolonial African Studies? Before receiving and reading this excellent edited volume, and reflecting on the title, I thought that maybe Mennonite missionaries had had some continental wide effect on African Christianity which I was unaware of. But this was not the case at all. This volume is about the various African Studies scholars and researchers from the Mennonite tradition—which stresses service to others in particular—who have contributed to the field of African Studies since independence. More precisely, as laid out in the introduction, the book claims to examine the evolution of postcolonial African Studies—particularly decolonization and development—through the lens of scholars of African Studies from the Anabaptist tradition. Intensely personal at times, and biographical in scope, this collection of essays takes its readers through four general sections: Pioneers, Professors, Practitioners, and Observations from the outside.

The Pioneers section highlights three early Africanists from the Mennonite tradition: Donald Jacobs, Melvin Loewen, and Davide W. Shenk. What struck me as very interesting about this section was the overlap in American religious institutions, African religious movements, and American academic institutions among Jacobs and Shenk in particular. Jacobs began his career as a Mennonite missionary in Tanganyika in the 1950s and became deeply affected by and a participant in the East African Revival. Fascinated by the religious encounters in East Africa, Jacobs earned a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology at New York University by 1961 and afterwards returned to East Africa to apply his anthropological insights to his missionary enterprise. David Shenk, alternatively, was born in Tanganyika to Mennonite missionary parents in the 1930s. By the 1940s, Shenk was significantly influenced by the East African Revival as well and also did some graduate work at New York University where he crossed paths with Jacobs. He returned to East Africa as a missionary and spent a significant amount of his career engaging with Islam originally in Somalia and later Kenya. Jacobs and Shenk were

both Mennonite missionaries in East Africa, were both students at NYU, and were both significantly influenced by the East African Revival.

Several Anabaptist scholars of Africa and practitioners in Africa emerged in the 1960s and 1970s who worked across the African continent: in the Horn of Africa, (several scholars in) the Congo, Cameroon, Kenya, and Zambia. Some of the scholars and practitioners were first engaged in Africa through the Mennonite Central Committee's Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) or the Pax program. Many participants in these programs were American conscientious objectors to the war in Vietnam—a product of their non-violent Anabaptist culture—and ended up teaching in various parts of Africa. From there, graduate studies in African Studies ensued—at universities such as the University of Chicago, Northwestern, Indiana University, and UCLA (with many studying French in Belgium for work in Francophone Africa)—that launched them into teaching careers in African Studies or working for various aid, health, and development agencies. I was quite surprised to learn that so many from the Anabaptist tradition in the US—a very small sliver of white America—were involved with African Studies; it reminded me of the American Jewish community involved in Chinese and/or Buddhist studies (a community in which my father is a member).

The final section of this book, "Observers from the Outside," added a very interesting perspective on the prior chapters. Three scholars—Steven Feierman, Paul Gifford, and Emily Welty—gave perspectives on the chapters in this volume. Feierman reflects on the similar ways in which Jewish and Mennonite communities were influenced in the US by the Second World War, and ways in which Jewish communities became nationalistic and political whereas the Mennonite communities remained pacifist; Feierman ultimately calls for a divorce of religion from nationalism. Like Gifford, I agree after reading these essays that the American Mennonite contribution to post-colonial African Studies deserves to be celebrated, but I also agree with Welty's serious critique of this volume, where so few of the authors reflected directly on issues of gender, race, and class, and how these issues affected how the scholars and activists were perceived and the work that they were producing.

Ultimately, this volume is a wonderful account of a generation of scholars and practitioners of and in Africa from the Anabaptist tradition that made a profound impact on African Studies. It had the honest and vulnerable feel to Bronislaw Malinowski's *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967), about scholars and researchers from the Global North, often unprepared, conducting fieldwork in the Global South. One feature that surprised me about this volume was the lack of research into African Christianity—a massive social force on the continent—by scholars and researchers from the same general religious tradition. The East African Revival, for instance, seriously affected the spirituality of the Mennonite pioneers in the first section of this book, but none became serious scholars of this important movement in East Africa. John Janzen engaged the Kimbanguist movement in the Congo in his master's thesis and David Shank did spend his career studying the Harrist movement and other AICs in the Ivory Coast. Interestingly, John C. Yoder attempted to study African Christian history, but couldn't find a supervisor in graduate school at Northwestern. It struck me as odd that scholars and researchers affected so intimately by their own Christian community in the US did not then

engage in scholarship on African Christianity. I wish I could have been at the ASA conference that gave life to this book so I could have asked this question.

Adam Mohr, *University of Pennsylvania*

Alexander Johnston. 2020. *In the Shadow of Mandela: Political Leadership in South Africa*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing. 369 pp.

In the Shadow of Mandela by Alexander Johnston boldly discusses the political leadership struggles in South Africa since the late President Nelson Mandela era. The book critically looks at the nation's political culture under the dominant political party, the African National Congress (ANC), and evaluates the efficiency of its leadership in recent years. Mandela was a post-apartheid symbol, a molded product of the ANC with an ephemeral presidency but an everlastingly influential legacy. Johnston determines that Mandela's predecessors fall short of his legacy by methodically critiquing the leadership of former South African presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. The work concludes with a more hopeful yet cautious assessment of the current South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa. The book has four parts.

Part One, "Leadership and Post-Apartheid Politics," explains South Africa's history of apartheid, the utopian hopefulness in the immediate post-apartheid era under Mandela, and the void left for his predecessors in becoming transformative political leaders. It assesses the previous scholarship on political leadership, including the 'Great Man' theory, before honing what political leadership looks like specifically within post-apartheid South Africa. There is a discussion of South African political leadership alongside themes of political economy, political culture, identity politics, classism, corporatism, populism, the complexities of the ANC's single-party dominance, and what that has meant for presidential leaders and 'collegiate' or non-heads of state leadership.

In Part Two, "Leadership in the Haunted Present: Legacies and Lost Leaders," the author further develops the argument of how South African political leaders pale in comparison to the greatness of Mandela through several criteria. One criterion is to assess the extent citizens see themselves in the leader. Next, there should be an evaluation of the leader's ability as a political party manager; the leader's efficacy in the role as chief of governance and policies; and lastly, evaluating the circumstances of how they entered and exited the office. Per Johnston, "there has been an ebb and flow to the Mandela legacy, according to the political needs of the moment, the audience and whichever advocate or critic is addressing it. However, two themes have dominated these contests: possession and betrayal" (p. 91). Johnston further describes the concept of South Africa's haunted past as a double-edged sword that both helps and hinders leaders and institutions, such as the ANC, whom he describes as living in the past and fostering an environment of stunted growth.

Parts Three and Four discuss former presidents Mbeki and Zuma leading to current South African President Ramaphosa. The book describes Mbeki as a political elite whose ascension, though not entirely smooth, was more easily facilitated by his interconnectedness with elites within the ANC. Several obstacles characterized his tenure as the president and as his political power descended, Jacob Zuma ascended. Zuma's presidency, however, abruptly concluded once a failed vote of no-confidence resulted in his decision to resign. "The melancholy lesson of

the Mbeki-Zuma years appears to be that insofar as there is a leadership pattern, it is of discontinuity and destruction. This is remarkable, given the degree to which the ANC has practiced ancestor worship and demands continuity with pieties, rituals and founding documents" (p. 252). The book concludes with a more hopeful account of the Ramaphosa years in saying, "Cyril Ramaphosa is of all people other than Mandela himself the future who symbolizes the transition away from apartheid and for the first time ever he brings to the highest level of leadership the democratic spirit of the 'inzile' struggle" (p. 292).

Looking ahead, Johnston provides recommendations for both President Ramaphosa and the ANC to avoid political stagnation. Ramaphosa must "find his own leadership agency while still professing continuity, unity and in the end subordination to the collective will of the ANC. He has to create his own personal support base without alienating other interests and factions in the ramshackle edifice of the ANC's broad church" (p. 310). The book also urges that Ramaphosa should properly deal with the country's populism while reaching the country's masses without the appearance of pandering to specific groups. Additionally, the author cautions that "If the ANC learns from its leadership history, it can move towards a more balanced leadership model" (p. 312).

In the Shadow of Mandela is an honest, thought-provoking analysis that gives an unapologetically in-depth account of the complexities of political leadership influence, political culture, and the dynamics of political parties in South Africa. Johnston's challenging of the status quo of South African politics is an unflinching effort to hold individuals and institutions accountable for not progressing toward more transformative leadership. This book would be beneficial in advanced-level undergraduate or graduate-level courses. Moreover, African scholars and Africanists alike would appreciate the addition of the book's original political leadership analysis of contemporary South Africa to their libraries.

Constance Pruitt, *Howard University*

Rebecca Jones. 2019. *At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English*. Suffolk: James Currey. 298 pp.

Notions of creative ingenuity and critical immunity abound in most traditional cultural spaces such as that of the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria. Hunters, the aged, and travelers are preeminent in literary productions in this regard. It is within this context that Rebecca Jones's book, which focuses on a comparative analysis of travel writing within the written and orature traditions of English and Yoruba literary cultures, is premised. This important book foregrounds travel writing in a way that connects to the authenticity notion conferred on travelers as cultural producers among the Yoruba. Laying bare multiple discourses and layers of textualities, Rebecca Jones draws from extensive ethnographic sources to affirm the critical and creative diversities replete in the source texts across the two literary conventions. It seems clear that her ambition in the book is to amplify and "domesticate" travel writing's hybridity, ambiguity, and slipperiness (p. 7). This, in a sense appears to be vigorously pursued in the book, especially in her wide conception of literary culture. It allows her the latitude to aggregate different sources to elucidate her thesis. Of particular interest is how she explores the world of non-fiction writing represented by newspapers and other forms of popular writing.

In chapter after chapter, Jones stirs critical conversations relating to the taxonomy of oral and written textualities in the comparative linguistic climate of Yoruba and English. Dwelling subtly on the aesthetic value of the transition from orature to written traditions, the book provides insights into the interconnectedness of creative imperatives as explicated in the textual references. The book further unclothes the transmutation of lived experiences through appropriate embellishments. The author invites attention to the “crossroad” and intersection of artistic creativity and intercultural aesthetic diffusion. Aligning, in a unique way, an aspect of popular culture and its associated modernity, travel writing is foregrounded as a viable literary sub-genre. The book deploys penetrable language in a way that advertises itself as a theoretical exploration and path-breaking intervention by the same breadth. While acknowledging the preeminence of travel as an enabling construct in Yoruba literary creativity, especially in her consideration of D.O Fagunwa’s works, the author skillfully connects this to a larger discourse of popular arts and its inherent regenerative capacity.

There is a sense in which the book positions the metaphor of “crossroads” to engage the experience of multiple layers of Yoruba creative ingenuity from both aesthetic and religious perspectives. Drawing copiously from the Yoruba worldview and philosophy, Jones demonstrates that the Yoruba literary culture is at the center of the cultural sensibilities of the people. This explains why she conceives of crossroads as epitomizing “both the opportunity that such moments of transition and encounters with difference offer, and the confusion that they might sow” (p. 41). It is evident that Jones’s foray into Yoruba worldview serves her purpose in individuating aesthetic consciousness using the paradigm of *Esu*, the Yoruba trickster deity, who unfortunately is a victim of neocolonial epistemological misconceptions.

What comes across in reading this book, is the original thinking that Jones has put into its writing. She is neither constrained by disciplinary orientations nor theoretical underpinnings. She proceeds to offer a book that connects with pre, post, and neo-colonial consciousness in the study and appreciation of popular culture from traditional oral sources to more contemporary platforms such as blogs enabled by information and communications technology.

At the Crossroads: Nigerian Travel Writing and Literary Culture in Yoruba and English is a rich and refreshing addition to the growing body of literature on African popular and cultural studies. What distinguishes the book is not just its comparative finesse but its conscious attempt at globalizing literary aesthetics from the rich repertoire of sources which form the crux of travel writing. Rebecca Jones has successfully repositioned the Yoruba aesthetic canvass by weaving both the metaphysical realities with the literary and cultural imperatives.

Oluwole Coker, *Obafemi Awolowo University*

Yusuf M. Juwayeyi. 2020. *Archaeology and Oral Tradition in Malawi: Origins and Early History of the Chewa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. 242 pp.

Despite their dominance, the Chewa people of central Malawi have not attracted extensive scholarly research. Yusuf Juwayeyi’s book contributes to the literature on this largest ethnic group in the country. Through fourteen chapters, the author documents the origins and history of the Chewa from prehistoric times to the dawn of British colonial rule in the 1890s. Like previous scholars, the Chewa oral traditions and 16th-century Portuguese documents remain

significant sources of information for this book. Unlike earlier scholars, however, Juwayeyi relies extensively on material remains which he excavated at an Iron Age site of Mankhamba in central Malawi. This area served as the Chewa headquarters. The result is a work that confirms and clarifies earlier observations about the Chewa. Like others before, the book depicts the Chewa as builders of the Maravi Empire, which extended from Nkhotakota in the northern region of the country to the northern Zambezi valley. Maravi, we are told, was the “Portuguese rendering of the term ‘Malawi’ by which the Chewa referred to themselves” (p. 1). Also corroborated is the story that traces the group’s origins to the Luba area in the present-day Democratic Republic of Congo. Besides linguistic evidence, which links the Chewa to the Bantu-speaking peoples of Luba, 13th-century Mawudzu pottery excavated at Mankhamba resembles Zambia’s Luangwa pottery. The two have a strong semblance with the Luba pottery, suggesting connections among the peoples responsible for its making. Again, ethnographic evidence, manifesting through the Chewa practice of using masks in traditional rituals, is similar to that of the Luba peoples.

Juwayeyi’s work provides a definite chronology and pattern of the Chewa migrations and complements well the previous studies. His evidence suggests that from Luba, this western stream Bantu-speaking Chewa travelled to Malawi in two teams. The first was that of the pre-Maravi who entered the country around the 12th century through Zambia, taking a southeastern direction. Their first point of settlement in Malawi was Kaphirintiwa-Msinja, situated along the Mozambique-Malawi border. Here, they established a rain-making shrine under Makewana, an influential priestess and chiefly figure. The second group, the Maravi, was under the leadership of the Phiri clan and arrived later at Kaphirintiwa-Msinja. According to Juwayeyi’s archaeological evidence, this group arrived in Malawi around the 15th century. Together, the two agreed to co-exist, with Makewana taking responsibility for societal and spiritual affairs. At the same time, the Kalonga—the title given to the Phiri rulers—emerged as the secular leader. Henceforth, Makewana became influential in the choice of subsequent leaders among the Phiri. From this locality, the Kalonga embarked on an expansionist drive, establishing his capital at Mankhamba in central Malawi while sending out his henchmen to different places within the central and southern regions of the country. Popular names among the Chewa, such as Lundu and Undi who settled, respectively, in the Lower Shire Valley of Malawi and Zambia/Mozambique border, are believed to have come from Mankhamba.

Against the 1970s reading of the Chewa history, Juwayeyi insists that Mankhamba, not Manthimba, was the Maravi Empire’s headquarters. The otherwise difficult to trace Manthimba location contrasts with Mankhamba, which has yielded enormous archaeological artifacts ranging from pottery, iron, copper objects, and glass beads to cowrie shells and Chinese porcelain. Apart from pottery and iron, the rest of the artifacts were imported items the Chewa exchanged for ivory, iron implements, salt, beeswax, and others. Such products suggest that long-distance trade was a significant aspect of the Chewa’s economic life. Faunal remains and farm implements further indicate that the Chewa practiced mixed farming, producing cereal crops and rearing animals such as cattle, goats, and sheep.

One obvious limitation in this work is Juwayeyi’s over-reliance on Samuel Josia Ntara’s *History of the Chewa* (1973) for his oral sources, without seriously interrogating it as an authentic historical piece and not a literary work as it was previously considered in Malawian

schools. Worth consulting also should have been other sources of Chewa oral traditions, such as those collected by historian Kings M. Phiri in the 1970s. Such an observation should not discredit an otherwise good book, which goes beyond informing us about the origins and history of the Chewa to outlining how research on local ethnic groups in the country has advanced over time. Also under discussion is the discipline of archaeology, the very methodological underpinnings that define the field, and how scholars trained in it go about producing usable data. The multiple illustration figures Juwayeyi presents combine well with the author's easy-to-read language, making it easier to understand the arguments. This book should appeal to college students, scholars, and those working in departments of culture and antiquities.

Gift Wasambo Kayira, *University of Malawi*

André Mbata Mangu (ed). 2020. *Regional Integration in Africa: What Role for South Africa?* Leiden: Brill. 193 pp.

In this slim, eight-chapter book, the contributors set out an important objective: "to take stock and assess South Africa's role in [African] regional integration" (p. 185), including its present challenges and future prospects. Alas, the book only partially fulfils this objective. While the authors are not afraid of confronting South Africa's recent darker moments, such as the ugly period of violent xenophobia against Africans of other nationalities resident in the country, the book is largely descriptive, rather than analytical, leaving the reader with a much greater sense of the what, instead of the why.

Writing about African regional integration requires distinguishing between its rhetoric—of, say, a united Africa—and its realities. Although the authors state their intention to go beyond both a functionalist analysis and South Africa's near neighborhood of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the book focuses more on the ideology of Mandela and the nature of South Africa's legal obligations rather than on the complex, underlying politics of regional integration. Although Mandela's views provide a necessary foundation in assessing post-apartheid South Africa, the pursuit of regional integration has largely fallen to his successors. Of them and their governments, there is little discussion. Moreover, the book largely overlooks the implications of the distinctions, and possible contradictions, between South Africa as a geopolitical actor and the South Africa of a partisan, and ephemeral, president, and government.

While there are forays into South Africa's engagement beyond SADC (the chapter on Côte d'Ivoire being a notable example), there is relatively little in the book that analyzes South African engagement with the key non-SADC institutions of African integration, particularly the African Union, but also the other regional economic communities. This is an unfortunate gap and leaves this reader wanting more. For example, since the authors assert that ECOWAS is "incontestably Africa's most integrated sub-regional organization" (p. 109), an analysis of South Africa's role in regional integration both with ECOWAS as a whole and with its individual member states would have been useful.

Two of the book's eight chapters, including that on Côte d'Ivoire, are in French. Although this reader speaks French and could read those contributions, the book could have benefited

from the inclusion of English-language abstracts, to avoid these chapters being overlooked by the non-Francophone. This is also a pity because the Côte d'Ivoire chapter is one of the book's more interesting contributions and speaks to the role South Africa can play beyond its own sub-region.

Analytical weakness in articulating a clear connection to the book's integration theme affects the otherwise detailed account of South Africa's recent nadirs. For example, while the authors' clear disappointment in South Africa's all too frequent failures is evident, the account of South African xenophobia towards migrants is, as far as regional integration goes, characterized in terms of South Africa's failure to live up to its SADC commitments rather than in relation to the larger implications for regional integration, beyond a broad statement that "practices related to African migration that foster xenophobia undermine all efforts towards regional integration" (p. 127).

The book also suffers from some uncritical assertions that could have been questioned by the authors. Writing in relation to Zimbabwe and Madagascar, one author writes that South Africa "has been exemplary in regional peace diplomacy," (p. 98). At least some Zimbabweans and Malagasy may beg to differ. Later, in the chapter on case studies of South African involvement in the Burundi and Madagascar peace processes, the analysis portrays South Africa's efforts almost entirely positively, where South Africans attempted "to achieve a deep understanding of the problem [and] the pursuit of inclusive peace processes" (p. 159). However, the wider record of South African peace making—both in the sub-region and further afield, such as in South Sudan more recently—is decidedly more mixed.

Perhaps the book's strongest chapter is that by Siphamandla Zondi on the pursuit of developmental regional integration. Zondi provides a useful account of the historical development of economic integration in southern Africa, dating back more than a century, as well as the important distinction that market integration will not necessarily advance more normative forms of integration, either in the SADC region or more broadly.

The authors are right to conclude that more work is needed on the processes of African regional integration, beyond the continent's sub-regions, and the book offers a substantial and wide-ranging research agenda to pursue. While this book provides some useful contributions to our understanding of South Africa's role in African regional integration, it does so unevenly, and, ultimately, many questions are left for others to answer.

Aly Verjee, *Rift Valley Institute*

Massocki Ma Massocki. 2020. *The Pride of an African Migrant*. Yaoundé: Pierced Rock Press. 178 pp.

The Cameroonian columnist, activist, and pan-Africanist Massocki Ma Massocki has authored the biographical text, *The Pride of an African Migrant*, published in 2020 by the Cameroonian press Pierced Rock Press. It is divided into ten chapters: "Colonization," "Bad Governance and Neocolonization," "The Journey to Paradise," "Paradise Lost," "Human Rights," "Soul's Journey," "Pride and Dignity," "Globalization," "Development," and "Denouement." In these chapters, Massocki reflects on the condition of migrants and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, having as his main plan his own journey as a foreign student, and, later, asylum seeker in England. It was a journey that, at a given moment, crosses Jimmy Mubenga, an Angolan killed

by immigration authorities in London when he resisted deportation aboard a British Airways flight.

The work is marked by a persistent tension between the imaginary and the real world. First of all, Europe is seen as an earthly paradise for Africans, who see the continent as the only way out of the daily political and social instability in which they often live. They face journeys that often cost them their lives through the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea. Arriving in Europe, these Africans are faced with a situation of marginalization and vulnerability of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. It is in this context that, according to the author, another imaginary proves to be false—seen as a region where human rights are respected, European territory is selective, not granting to these Africans access to basic rights guaranteed by international standards and treaties.

Another central discussion in the work is about pride: African pride, stolen by decades of colonialism and neocolonialism, would be responsible for the African's pessimism in relation to their land, seeing migration to the global north as the only way out. The book emphasizes the role of the media for the continuation of this pessimistic and low self-esteem view of Africans. According to the author, the Western media only portrays bad things about Africa. If the African's self-esteem is already low, due to historical social processes, as an immigrant with irregular migratory status in Europe, the African would then lose all his self-esteem: exposing himself to situations like marrying a European even without any affinity, simply to get a permanent visa. For Massocki Ma Massocki the African would be completely stripped of his pride.

Massocki Ma Massocki denounces, in his book, several situations of serious violation of the human rights of migrants in England: indefinite detentions in migratory centers, torture, deportation of unconscious people, among other situations. Such circumstances lead the reader to question if human rights really exist for the migrant population in the European country. It is important to understand, through the author's words, a contradiction that serves to further dehumanize the condition of asylum seekers and irregular immigrants in England. There is an autonomous body responsible for immigration matters, the UK Home Office, and immigration, at least theoretically, is not a police matter, unlike what happens in Brazil, for example, where the Federal Police is also responsible for migratory control. Yet, the treatment given to migrants with non-regular status is the same as that given to criminals—Massocki reports experiences where he was handcuffed or even searched and kept naked in a cell.

An autobiographical book with a clear influence of Eastern philosophies and Rastafarian culture, *The Pride of an African Migrant* constitutes an important denunciation of the terrible treatment meted out by British authorities to undocumented immigrants.

Felipe Antonio Honorato, *University of São Paulo*

Achille Mbembe. 2019. *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press. 213 pp.

Necropolitics, originally written in French by Achille Mbembe and translated by Steven Corcoran, takes on the task of explaining the source and forms of major challenges that we face in the contemporary world, particularly the re-emergence of racism, populism, and nationalism as both political and social movements. The book consists of six chapters and provides powerful

critiques of liberal democracy and racism along with a discussion of political violence, post colonialism, and decolonization.

Mbembe starts by elaborating on what he called the “the Nocturnal Body of Democracy” (p. 15) that harbors desires in direct opposition to the usual violence-free and peaceful representation of democracy. He explains how this led to slavery and colonialism, which is used to justify racial inequalities and the institutionalization of injustice and violence. In the second chapter the author laid the foundation for his theory of necropolitics by explaining how democracies represent societies of separation and enmity, and he presents his critique of the tactic of separation found in societies by illustrating their desire for an enemy such as foreigners and refugees, the desire for apartheid, and even extermination. He further explains that by developing a state of insecurity, what he termed as the security state, spreads fear rhetoric and contributes to the rising violence against out-groups.

The author elaborates his main theme of necropolitics in chapter three. Relying mainly on Michel Foucault’s concept of biopower—the use of social and political power to control people’s lives—Mbembe argues that necropolitics, which involves the act of placating life to the power of death, determines the relationships between terror, sacrifice, and resistance. He further asserts that the concept of biopower is inadequate to explain the “contemporary forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death” (p. 92). He goes on to demonstrate how necropolitics or necropower makes it difficult to separate between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, and martyrdom and freedom in the contemporary world. In chapter four, Mbembe articulates the current era as “a time of planetary entanglement” (p. 93). It combines fast capitalism, soft-power welfare, and the application of digital technologies and underscores the possibility of the elimination of the political by capital that represent the threat of state-capture by businesses. The fifth chapter employs Fanon’s arguments of cultural, systemic, and anti-black racism that are widespread today and applies Fanon’s theory of radical decolonization to resolve the apparent conflict between the principle of destruction and the principle of life. Mbembe also uses Fanon’s notion of care as a shared vulnerability that would yield new understandings of the human that may go beyond humanism. In the sixth and final chapter, Mbembe extends his critiques of liberalism and boldly asserts that racial pessimism stems from liberalism. In his concluding remarks—the ethics of passerby, he raises the absurdity of the notion of freedom that conflicts with the practice that largely considers the accident of being born somewhere as the main determinant of one’s fate.

The book is well written and organized, but it largely requires prior knowledge on many of the issues covered, making it difficult for general readers to understand the concepts. Thus, the book serves as an excellent reference for readers who have some knowledge on Foucault’s concept of biopower and Fanon’s works. The critique of racism and its nexus to liberal democracy makes the book an extremely valuable resource for those who are trying to make sense of the politics of contemporary world and explain the rise of ultra-nationalist and populist governments and movements across the globe.

Zerihun Berhane Weldegebriel, *Addis Ababa University*

Besi Brilliant Muhonja. 2020. *Radical Utu: Critical Ideas and Ideals of Wangari Muta Maathai*. Athens: Ohio University Press. 170 pp.

Besi Brilliant Muhonja has provided a valuable, fresh insight into the multi-faceted life of Wangari Maathai, especially as a scholar. *Utu* is the Swahili word for *ubuntu*, explained in the proverb “I am because we are; we are because I am.” Maathai referred to the concept as “what it means to be human” (p. x). At the heart it means a strong sense of community. Maathai’s work as a conservationist and political activist was communal.

Maathai is best known in Kenya and globally as a conservationist and political activist. But she was also a scholar and a prolific author. Muhonja guides us through some of Maathai’s key writings that unfold her critical thinking and the communal concept of her work. The book features Maathai’s writings but wisely begins with a chapter on her activism and ends with a chapter on her legacy. In between is a detailed study of Maathai’s ideas. Maathai, who earned a Ph.D. (University of Nairobi) in biology and in 2004 was the first black woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. From her early activism in Kenya in the 1970s, she never really slowed down.

Maathai (known popularly as Wangari) in 1977 founded the Green Belt Movement to encourage women to plant trees. She saw no division between conservation and political freedom. In 1992, when mothers of political prisoners contacted her about organizing a public protest, she joined forces with them. This reviewer was standing next to Maathai amidst the protesting mothers as police closed in, beating a group trying to protect the mothers and scattering the mothers with tear gas.

As Muhonja points out, for Maathai activism was “a way of life” (p. 121) linked to “gender issues, food security, health, and democracy” (p. 120). This is all part of Maathai’s philosophy and legacy, the author argues. Part of that legacy is the existence of the popular Karua Forest in the capital city, Nairobi, where parents and children stroll the trails and find relaxation and peace even during the pandemic. In 1998, she joined a nonviolent protest against government plans to sell the forest for private use. She and opposition members of Parliament were physically attacked trying to plant trees there. Wangari was treated at a Nairobi Hospital.

Her activism had a larger impact, Muhonja points out: empowerment of women, though she “focused on being human” (p. 46), not only being a woman (p. 46). When a Member of Parliament threatened to “circumcise” her if she visited his home area in the Rift Valley, she responded: “The issues I’m dealing with require the utilization of what’s above the neck. If you don’t have anything there, leave me alone” (p. 47).

Muhonja’s writing, for the most part, is clear. There are moments when academic writing may leave the non-specialist a bit put off as in this phrase: “Grasping the idea of utu-sensitive democratic spaces as underlying indigenous modes of governance unlocks new schemes for analyzing and addressing the current binds experienced in crafting and performing leadership and citizenships across the continent and beyond” (p. 67). Aside from such statements, the reader discovers aspects of Maathai less known than her brave political and environmental activism.

Fortunately, Muhonja does not make the error some scholars do of drowning out the voice of their subject of inquiry with their own scholarly conceptions. Maathai’s ideas and her own words form an important part of this work. The author traces Maathai’s life through her writing. “Using her work—primarily the book *The Challenge for Africa*, speeches, and

interviews—I track and define the crises of identities, citizenship, and leadership that materialized out of this history” (p. 66). Wangari Maathai ends her own memoir *Unbowed: A Memoir* with a story she often told of a hummingbird repeatedly trying to douse a forest fire with its beak full of water. While frightened forest animals scoffed at the attempt, the little bird responded: “I’m doing the best I can.” Muhonja’s book reminds us that Wangari Maathai did exactly that.

Robert M. Press, *University of Southern Mississippi*

Dawn Nagar. 2020. *Politics and Pan- Africanism: Diplomacy, Regional Economies and Peace-Building in Contemporary Africa*. London and New York: I. B Tauris Publishers. 290 pp.

Dawn Nagar’s *Politics and Pan-Africanism* is a well written and brilliant interrogation into the state of economic and political integration in Africa, which comes at a time when the continent is lagging behind in terms of intra-continental and intra-regional trade. Nagar currently researches on political economic and security issues of Africa’s regional integration and the greater move towards a Continental Free Trade Area. She writes with so much passion providing theoretical perspectives on convergence and divergence in the African context as to enable anyone interested in understanding the events in the African integration process to easily grasp her line of argument. This book encompasses and summarizes previous knowledge on Pan-African economic integration and Pan-African security convergence, which has often surfaced within the premise of regional economic groupings.

The book is divided into eight chapters through which the author carefully builds an historical analysis of Pan-African integration endeavors focusing on the activities of COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), EAC (East African Community), and SADC (Southern Africa Development Community). These multi-national organizations have been at the forefront of integration by taking the initial step to form the Tripartite Free Trade Area, which served as the first sign towards a continental union which has taken the guise of CFTA (Continental Free Trade Area). As the Cotonou Agreement, which has been the overarching framework for relations between the EU and the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries, rounds up as 2020 ends, there is a need for the African continent to secure its future. This book steps in with a series of precautions to be taken while converging into a single continental economic area. The author further warns that while “convergence implies a tendency for the poorer countries in the group to grow more rapidly than the richer ones... there are doubts in terms of empirical evidence” (p. 27).

The author is also not reluctant to lay emphasis on acknowledging that Pan-Africanism has been an unbelievably slow process, which started even before these countries gained independence. She does not shy from identifying the reasons for this slow process, which she ties to the self-interests of individual states and also to the erroneous preferences of African leaders to establish relations and deal instead with exploitative and more powerful international states. She repeats on multiple instances that the role of foreign powers, who remain actively involved in the Africa’s political and economic activities to their advantage while the continent continues to face “poor economic growth” (p. 185). This ongoing

involvement continues to serve as a major diverging force working against the Pan-African dream.

While highlighting the views of other scholars that “African economies are not ready for macroeconomic convergence” (p. 34), Nagar in identifying the problems related to monetary unification warns that in pushing forward trade liberalization, African governments must avoid converging currencies. This is because the results could be divergence in economic growth due to differences in levels of macroeconomic developments. The issue of uncoordinated diversity has always been a problem in Africa coupled with diverse historical backgrounds and geographical settings. This has culminated in these countries belonging to one or more economic groupings and diverse currencies with each having its own set of rules, which has dealt a considerable blow to Pan-African economic integration over the years. (p. 148)

In an effort to chart a path of economic and security convergence and achieve Pan-Africanism, the writer judiciously proposes a five-pronged approach. In it, she advises a careful loosening of the continent’s economies from the powerful external states, which is very important towards avoiding trade diversion. The author in the five-prong approaches urges strong economies in the continent to trade carefully with their global partners in order to avoid diversion, encouraging more trade amongst developing countries from the Caribbean and Pacific. Also, she proposes the introduction of a trade compensation mechanism in the continent, an initiative which she believes will serve as incentives to mitigate the shocks of interregional trade on smaller economies. She goes further to advise that for the sake of meeting up with the timeframes set, stronger economies in the continent must relax their stringent trade protectionist and domestic industrial policies. The fourth approach proposed by the author is “that development-led regional integration must be a dual benefit for both stronger economies and smaller economies” to foster convergence in a trade bloc. Finally, her last approach touches one of the most sensitive obstructing factors of convergence, transport. She thus calls for reduction in transport and transaction costs, which would lead to greater spatial agglomeration and also specialization (pp.188-89). The author’s careful analysis and presentation of facts argues that the new integration project for Africa in the guise of the ACFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area) will if not carefully monitored and designed, be old wine in a new skin, exhibiting the very ills that have limited prior Pan-African projects.

Nagar aims at finding ways of connecting regional integration with the liberalization of regional trade arrangements linked to economic growth and therefore concludes that smaller countries could exploit regional and possibly continental integration schemes to emerge stronger. The author’s incorporation and extrapolation of a neo-classical realist approach to integration allows the reader to be able to imagine the intent of states in their interest for integration based on their capabilities and resource possessions.

Collins Nkapnwo Formella, *National University of Public Service (Hungary)*

Kemi Okgunyemi (ed.). 2020. *African Virtue Ethics Traditions for Business and Management*. Northhampton: Edward Elgar. 172 pp.

Ogunyemi’s *African Virtue Ethics Traditions for Business and Management* provides a good primer to virtue ethics traditions, yet the title is awkward for those not familiar with the terminology.

This short book has a clear plan, outline, and purpose. The first and last chapter are by the editor and provide an overview and summary for the rest of the book. In the introductory chapter, Ogunyemi states that the traditional African outlook “is directed towards the individual becoming a more responsible member of society and a better person for the community” (p. 3). The book deserves the use of the word “African” as seven nations and one geographical area are represented. The countries are located across the continent in West Africa (Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria), East Africa (Kenya), Southern Africa (South Africa), North Africa (Egypt) and the Indian Ocean (Mauritius). Diversity and inclusion are also represented by the nine female and thirteen male contributors.

The work’s purpose is “to bring together virtue ethics traditions from the continent and share these samples of a rich African cultural heritage with the rest of the world, with a special emphasis on their real and potential applications to business and management” (p. 2). As stated, the continent is represented well. With many examples, the newcomer to African virtue ethics will become well acquainted with their various forms. The use of proverbs as epigrams is inspired as it sets the tone for what follows in each chapter. They offer a great way to introduce African readers to those from other regions of the continent and Western readers to the wisdom of diverse African cultures.

Chapter four is the most entertaining and illustrative contribution. Abban-Ampiah, Yobanya, and Ofori-Dankwa liberally share Akan taboos (“People are not supposed to sing whilst eating” - p. 47), proverbs (“Wisdom must be applied to win the heart of the elderly” - p. 48), community regulations (“You are not allowed to shake a widow’s hand at the funeral” - p. 51), and Ananse stories. The largest part of this chapter relates the virtue ethics of Ghana, but it is sparse in the explicit application to business and management. Even so, the astute business reader can make those connections with little trouble.

The strongest chapter is Chapter nine in terms of fulfilling the promise in the title by explaining the relevant virtue ethics and applying them to business and management. Olatubosun and Nyazenga delve into the theoretical foundations of Ubuntu philosophy and relate them to emerging business management principles. The authors also conducted a study which combined interviewing seven asset owners and online research. According to the authors, “Ubuntu philosophy ought to be taught in business schools and paired against classical and modern management philosophies so that the future African business leaders can own them” (p. 151).

Chapter seven begins with a short description of Mauritius and its business environment touching on religion, women’s emancipation, and digital business. Next, Ramma, Akaloo, Beefun, and Hurreeram conducted a qualitative study which involved 40–45-minute interviews with two participants. The authors conclude: “In some way, reputation emanating from honesty and trust is in itself a valuable marketing tool” (p. 112). While acknowledging that Mauritius may seem culturally distinct from the rest of Africa because of its history and multiethnicity, the authors demonstrate that it shares many of the same virtue ethics traditions with countries on the continent. In Chapter three, Ogunyemi, Mansi, and Azab write of creativity, innovation, and the intersection of generations in the workplace. This discussion adds value because business and management practices are not static anywhere, but rather they change over time.

The book is not flawless. The chapters are uneven in the level of citation and academic rigor with Chapter six as the weakest. In this chapter, there are several facts that deserve to have the source noted as the information is not common knowledge, i.e., “In 2017, Asians were recognized as the 44th tribe of Kenya” (p. 87). Mundina and Martinez list both proverbs and riddles as important, but only give examples of proverbs (“A blind sheep might chance across rain water” - p. 89). This reader would have liked to have some examples of riddles as well.

This book is recommended for people wanting to learn about value ethics traditions and doing business in Africa. In Chapter eight, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Yusuff, and Ikwuegbu remind readers of the importance of this slim volume when noting that Western practices are often by default accepted as “best practices” worldwide. Some caution must be used though to sift the material because the academic rigor varies.

Amy Crofford, *Southern Nazarene University*

Tony Perman. 2020. *Signs of the Spirit: Music and the Experience of Meaning in Ndaou Ceremonial Life*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 269 pp.

In his *Signs of the Spirit: Music and the Experience of Meaning in Ndaou Ceremonial Life*, ethnomusicologist Tony Perman who has authored major scholarly papers on Mbira music, religious experience, aesthetics, and Zimbabwean popular music, presents an ethnographic report espousing on the worldview of Ndaou people of Zimbabwe relating to spirit-mediumship/possession with emphasis on the performance process/practice as well as conceptualization of the efficacy of musicking in it. The book’s content is arranged in three sections beginning with “Prologue,” where Perman explains his utilization of C. S. Peirce’s postulations on semiotics, and interpretively foregrounds the relevance of his key thematic foci—music, experience, and meaning—to his study. Vividly, he explains how each subject of his foci relates to his proposed analytical trajectories based on his utilization, which copiously illuminates on their interconnectedness on the worldview(s), performance experience, and the functionality of spirit-mediumship/possession among Ndaou adherents.

In the second section captioned “Foundations,” Perman introduces the pathways to his ethnographic adventure, beginning with the genesis of his research interest and the propelling factors, and how he ended up researching on the topic in Zimbabwe. He also relayed pertinent and relevant insights about the locale of his study, as well as illuminating information on key individuals who assisted with his data gathering.

The third section titled “Ceremony at Horus Farm” elaborately explores the Madhlozi performances (spirit mediumship/possession) traditions of Chipinge’s Ndaou communities, espousing on the historical, spiritual, musical, and political contexts in relation to contemporary Ndaou people’s life and culture. Elaborately, his discussion revolves around the contexts of music, the realities of derivable experience, and what the performance portends from the Ndaou people’s worldview. More so he elucidates on the Ndaou people’s philosophy and suppositions regarding the efficacy and functionality of music in spirit mediumship/possession, noting that “musicking is a powerful means through which to experience life” (pp. 3-4), because “musicking contributes to powerful emotional and spiritual experience” (p. 4). Furthering, he explains how “spirit mediumship drives ritual action, making emotion and spirituality central

features of social life" (p. 18). In addition, he elaborates on the agency of spirit mediumship performance gatherings as rituals that "brings people together and shapes their collective approach to the feature" (p.19). Extensively, he explains the supposition of the Ndau people that "most commonly, spirits are 'awoken' with performance" (p. 55), through detailed explanation of how and why the inclusion of drumming, singing, clapping, chanting and other motifs of musicking are upheld by the Ndau people as efficacious.

In his discussion on the Ndau people's worldview concerning spirit manifestation phenomenon in mediumship contexts, he presents relevant shades of their interpretive community inclinations and social construction of reality on ontology on spirits. These revolve around the following variables: suppositions suggesting that spirit mediums play a vital role in the ongoing dynamics of interconnectedness between the dead and the living which the community view as crucial to their progress; the relevance of the inclination that people are born with spirits and that these spirits can be ancestors, outsiders, or aggrieved spirits; the suggestion that mediums can have several spirits, even though the spirits choose only a single medium; the belief that ceremonial performance practices enhances spiritual relationships by enabling people to focus on habits that bring the other partner (the spirit) in the relationship to the fore; that mediums consciously allow their spirits to embody them and assume consciousness; that communities use music or dance to awaken spirits in their mediums and encourage them to dance; and that the living depends on *madhlozi* spirits for protection, guidance, and security in the face of constant personal, familial, and communal challenges (pp. 66-68).

So, Perman's contribution in this book can be summarized thus: that he carried out an ethnographic study of Ndau spirit possession ceremonies in the rural communities surrounding Chipinge, Zimbabwe, focusing on the role(s) that music plays therein; and that he discusses the performance practice in relation to the contexts and nuances of the derivable emotional experience. Thus, Perman's contribution in this book represents a valid template for scholars and students envisaging similar study, particularly how semiotics can be applied to achieve appreciable plausibility in an ethnographic study of this and related kinds. Moreso, Perman's approach is an unambiguous recognition of the interpretive community's perspectives on an ethnography study's subject or text, which represents a clear adherence to a widely acknowledged good practice.

Emeka Aniago, *University of Nigeria - Nsukka*

Peter H. Reid. 2020. *Every Hill a Burial Place: The Peace Corps Murder Trial in East Africa*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press. 308 pp.

Every Hill a Burial Place: The Peace Corps Murder Trial in East Africa is a legal thriller. The story is about the death of a young woman Peverley "Peppy" Kinsey who dies in a remote corner of Mwanza Region, Tanzania, in 1966. Her husband, fellow Peace Corps Volunteer Bill Kinsey, says it was an accidental fall off a rock outcropping. Local witnesses and police investigators claim that he killed her with a metal rod. Bill was quickly jailed by the new Tanzanian government and faced a charge of murder, for which the penalty was hanging. How will the

case turn out? This is where the author's skill as both a legal researcher, and as a storyteller comes through.

The author Peter Reid himself was a young Peace Corps Volunteer in Mwanza in 1966 and revisits the case over forty years later. In doing this, he conducts retrospective interviews, and returns to Tanzania. He also obtains the official Peace Corps correspondence, and even some of Peppy's letters. I finished what I expected to be a dry academic text in a few days staying up late to do so. Not what one generally expects of a book from a university press! But the day-to-day descriptions of the trial in particular made the book a page turner. At the end of each chapter, I felt an urgency to read further.

But Reid's book is not only a legal thriller, it is first a portrait of Tanzania's legal and diplomatic system just after the country's 1961 independence, and secondly a history of the American Peace Corps. Could Tanzania, which had few trained lawyers and medical examiners, mount a trial in a remote corner of the new country? Should Peace Corps, with its emphasis on volunteers living like host nationals, assert diplomatic privileges? Should the US government foot the substantial legal bills needed to mount a defense for a Peace Corps Volunteer?

And then what about international attention? Because the case involved Americans and the Peace Corps, Tanzanian papers, *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and newspapers from Bill Kinsey's home state of North Carolina weighed in. The case attracted broader attention, too. Moscow's *Tass* news service even asserted that the case illustrated how poorly qualified young Americans were to work in Tanzania. At the opposite end of the attention spectrum, a radio host, future North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, suggested the US Marines should be sent in to rescue the defendant.

As for the death itself, the accounts were ambiguous. The young Peace Corps teacher couple went for a picnic near the school where they taught. According to Bill, Peppy suffered a twenty-foot fall from a kopje. Or did she? Tanzanian observers from over one hundred yards away claimed to have seen Bill beating her with a metal rod. And indeed, a metal rod and stone were recovered that had Peppy's hair and blood on it.

Bill was placed in jail, to await trial where he received visits from the American embassy, attorneys, and others who feared the case would damage the reputation of the Peace Corps. Notably, Bill and the Peace Corps described the prison conditions favorably—comparable to American prisons, they said. The investigation went forward, and six months later came to trial. The prosecution was poorly funded, relying on investigations by local attorneys, police, and medical examiners. Witnesses to the death testified in Kisukuma, which was then translated into Swahili and finally to English, which was the courtroom language. As for the defense, it was well-funded first by the Kinsey family, and later by the US government. As a result, the investigative power of the prosecution was quickly outstripped by one of East Africa's best lawyers, consultants from the United States, and well-paid medical witnesses. In the end, the U.S. Marines stayed home, and the Peace Corps put on a show of staying uninvolved in the proceedings. Bill was fortunate that his father could afford the legal defense, even as a legislation quickly went through Congress modifying the Peace Corps Act to cover such legal costs.

Every Hill a Burial Place has several potential audiences. For a general audience, it is just a good read. If you like a John Grisham legal thriller you will enjoy this book. For Africanists, this book is interesting legal history. Tanzania's legal system in 1966 was still strongly influenced by the British and Indian colonial codes, out of which it emerged; indeed, the judge in the case was British. The author does a good job in describing how this system meshed—and did not mesh—with the world of Tanzania at that time. The trial itself was a carefully prosecuted, diplomatically sensitive case. The other academic audience that would have an interest are diplomatic historians. It is interesting following the machinations of American diplomats seeking to protect the reputation of the Peace Corps, and the Americans involved. Meanwhile Tanzanians sought to protect their judicial system from American neo-colonial insistence on international standards for defending the American volunteer.

Missing from *Every Hill a Burial Place* are accounts from the African participants in the trial. Despite copious documentation of foreign views (e.g., defense lawyers, judge, pathologists, Peace Corp volunteers and staff, diplomats, etc.), the Tanzanian view is lacking. Witnesses died by the time the book was written, and Reid was unable to locate the police officers, prosecutor, magistrate, medical officer, and others. Thus, *Every Hill a Burial Place* is an American book, focused on an American story.

Now for the spoiler. The judge assisted by assessors, found Bill Kinsey not guilty, because evidence pointing to guilt “beyond a reasonable doubt” was lacking. Kinsey was released and returned to the United States where he first worked for Peace Corps, before establishing himself in a distinguished academic career focused on African development.

Tony Waters, *Payap University (Thailand)*

Pamela Reynolds. 2019. *The Uncaring, Intricate World: A Field Diary, Zambezi Valley, 1984-1985*. Durham: Duke University Press. 190 pp.

The Uncaring, Intricate World, as its full title informs us, is the personal diary of a year's work by an anthropologist working in the northwest region of Zimbabwe. It is a companion work to her academically oriented *Dance Civet Cat: Child Labour in the Zambezi Valley* (1991) and the ethnography co-written with Colleen Crawford Cousin, *Lwano Lwanyika: Tonga Book of the Earth* (1994).

Reynolds begins the book with a lengthy introduction giving the background of the Tonga people with whom she lived and worked for six years. The story behind her diary begins as early as 1955 with the start of construction on the Kariba Dam on the Zambezi River, resulting in the relocation of the Tonga people away from the Zambezi valley and into an inhospitable hinterland. Reynolds writes about her experiences doing research on child labor among the Tonga a generation after this dislocation. She includes a map of the region, introduces us to people with whom she worked, providing considerable cultural background, and describing the various points of contact between the people and the governmental structures present in that area. She describes her own cultural adaptation and living situation as she conducts her research, and through that we begin to get a feel for what is coming in the diary. We also get to know the author herself, a knowledge that deepens in the diary itself. Reynolds tells us what this diary is intended to do, and what it is not intended to do. As early as page three of the

introduction, Reynolds writes that the diary “offers no high theory, no sustained account of method, nor does it resemble Bronislaw Malinowski’s self-interrogation ... What it does is trace the effects of indigenous dispossession on the lives of children after their families had experienced dislocation from the place of their birthright.”

The actual diary begins on page 31 with the first entry in a typical diary format of place, date and time: “Chitenge, Mola. September 1, 1984. 5:45pm.” This format is found through the rest of the book. As one turns the pages, the reader is compelled to keep reading. In the process of turning each page, we meet new people who become endeared to us as we read. We meet older members of the community. We meet children, pre-teens, and teenagers who assume the roles and responsibilities of adults. We learn of the varied and complex relationships among the various individuals as well. The more we read, the more we identify not only with Reynolds, but also with the people of Chitenge village. Through her story telling, we become acquainted with these people and come to know them, their problems, their successes, their frustrations, their joys, and their sorrows. We share the joy of babies being born, and not many pages later, we mourn the death of one we feel we have come to know. We not only learn but feel what it is like to be where these people are. We want to keep reading, to know these people better, and to be a part of their lives like Reynolds is a part of their lives.

We also feel Reynolds’ personal frustrations. Describing her work and data gathering, she confesses on, “I feel, this morning, very ignorant and rather daunted by all there is to know” (p. 44). A few pages later, she again exposes her feelings. More and more involved with the children she is studying, she tells us, “I am consumed by inadequacy...The children come to me hungry, yet I do not feed them” (p. 59). We also feel the shock that she feels through moving between cultures. Subsequently, Reynolds describes leaving Chitenge to return briefly to her home in Harare. After spending months in the bush, sleeping in a thatched shelter three meters above the ground, she transits through a luxury hotel on the banks of Lake Kariba and writes, “Jarring is the transformation. Here I sit in a plush hotel room in Bumi Hills Hotel, with a fan overhead and a melting chocolate on my pillow. The transformation bewilders me, and I feel ill” (p. 96).

As we read, we cannot help but conclude that the book’s title is very appropriate. We come to know the culture and relationships of the Tonga people as extremely intricate. It is also revealed that, with respect to the Tonga people, most entities making decisions affecting them have been uncaring. Reynolds helps us see these intricacies, and we finish reading caring about these people.

David W. Restruck, *Seminário Nazareno em Moçambique*

Richard Shain. 2018. *Roots in Reverse: Senegalese Afro-Cuban Music and Tropical Cosmopolitanism*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press. 216 pp.

In the early- to mid-twentieth century, a music genre from the Afro-Diaspora made its way back across the Atlantic to West and Central Africa. Afro-Cuban music became extremely popular in these regions and influenced the music of countless musicians, ranging from Vicky Longomba in the Congo to Pape Seck in Senegal. Richard Shain’s *Roots in Reverse* traces the development of Afro-Cuban music in Senegal where it has long been a significant and influential genre. For this

study Shain used a number of interviews with Afro-Cuban musicians and those people associated with the genre in Senegal, as well as participant observation methods. He likewise made use of a large number of Senegalese archival sources, literature, and memoirs. Shain's interdisciplinary work adds to the study's impact. *Roots in Reverse* is a significant addition to the historical literature on music in Senegal, which has tended to focus mostly on hip-hop.

Shain argues that by examining how Senegalese citizens deployed Afro-Cuban music in various areas of their lives, the tensions involved in the creation of a post-colonial national culture can be better understood (p. xx). Ultimately, his examination of Afro-Cuban music and its reception in post-independence Senegal leads him to the conclusion that, "the coalescence of this public [around performances by Afro-Cuban musicians] helped form a national modern identity for Senegal, rooted in the tropical world of the black Atlantic" (p. 51). Shain's argument falls within a historiography of music in Africa that has shown the critical role music played in forming national identities after the end of colonialism, as discussed by Emmanuel Akyeampong (1996), Marissa Moorman (2008), Nomi Dave (2019), and others. However, Shain's work differs in that its subject is a particular genre, rather than strictly a locale or time period. By emphasizing the role that this specific genre has played in the historical processes that create a national identity, the author fills in a critical gap in the historiography of Senegal.

A key discussion found in Shain's work is the differences between Léopold Senghor's vision of cultural citizenship in Senegal and the competing version offered by Afro-Cuban groups, particularly No. 1 Band (p. 83). While there are similarities between the views embodied in Afro-Cuban music and Senghorian negritude's conception of cultural citizenship, Shain states that Senghor envisioned a national culture that prioritized (Francophone) cosmopolitanism over cultural authenticity. Within Senghor's rejection of Afro-Cuban music as relevant to the decolonization process in Senegal comes an implicit critique of the contribution of African music and popular culture to the development of a 'post-colonial' state (p. 21). While Shain concentrates on this divergence in negritude and Afro-Cuban music, similar processes can be seen in the prioritization of French language education over indigenous languages, among other topics. As the author demonstrates, Senegal's post-independence process of decolonization was often exemplified by the music one enjoyed.

Roots in Reverse adds to another body of literature that has grown in recent years which examines how cultural decolonization often occurred in a radically different manner, and arguably in a more expansive way, than in the political realm. Afro-Cuban music became the genre of choice for young individuals in the early decades of decolonization due to its Diasporic sound and African roots. For example, the author writes that the Senegalese Afro-Cuban band Orchestre Baobab's "artistic trajectories in the 1970s trace the development of a decolonized Senegalese popular culture, national in scope and veering away from French influence" (p. 69). *Roots in Reverse* shows how this genre, and those that came after its heyday such as m'balax, have contributed to the process of decolonization by offering an alternative cultural touchstone to Senghor's state negritude. Shain's work is therefore a valuable addition to recent scholarship, like Tobias Warner's *The Tongue-Tied Imagination* (2019), which have similarly discussed the decolonization of popular culture in Senegal. His emphasis on Afro-Cuban music as one of the primary avenues of cultural decolonization in Senegal pushes the scholarship to consider other spheres of decolonization outside of the political realm.

Overall, Shain discusses the complexities involved in the creation of a national culture in post-independence Senegal in a clear and in-depth manner. While there are a few notable absences, such as possibly discussing women and the roles played by gender in Senegalese Afro-Cuban music more deeply, *Roots in Reverse* is an important addition to the literature on music in Senegal and the Black Atlantic. Shain's interdisciplinary methods and broad source base allows this study to be accessible to a variety of disciplines, as well as the general public. This examination successfully demonstrates Afro-Cuban music's importance to Senegal's decolonization process.

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Noah Tamarkin. 2020. *Genetic Afterlives: Black Jewish Indigeneity in South Africa*. Durham: Duke University Press. 248 pp.

What makes us who we are? Is it chromosomes and compounds, or characteristics and culture? In this book, Noah Tamarkin, an anthropologist at Cornell University, propels us into the swirling complexities that face the Lemba people of South Africa as they attempted to "prove their existence," not just to the government during Apartheid, but to the world at large who seemed to be (and may still be) perplexed about the existence of a people that are South African and Jewish. Tamarkin's research on the Lemba people, the Lemba Cultural Association (LCA), and their history and ethnic origins span more than a decade. His book provides an overarching overview of previous works by both the Lemba people and scholars who study this group and phenomenon. Having established that the Lemba possess predominantly European and Jewish ancestry, Tamarkin stresses the importance of interpreting this data in the proper context involving oral history and cultural heritage along with the DNA results. Through the introduction Tamarkin provides a succinct overview of the history of the Lemba people, building an important foundation for the following chapters.

Chapters one and two discuss how the LCA chose to take part in outside genetic testing as a way to affirm their already shared understanding in their South African and Jewish identity. With such a scientific backing, they hoped to strengthen their case as they fought for recognition as their own unique tribe by the South African government during Apartheid. Interestingly, Tamarkin, who self-identifies as a white, American, transgender, feminist, Jew, documents that the Lemba people related to them not just as a researcher but as Lemba like themselves – "She [Hilda] told me that because I am a Jew, 'it means you are a Lemba'" (p. 58). However, no genetic testing was required for Tamarkin to be considered Jewish in the first place, which left the author questioning their own experiences where some people need to "prove" their ethnicity while others are taken at their word.

Chapters three through five share the specific ideas, issues, problems, and obstacles that many individual Lemba people in the LCA surmounted in efforts to become "legitimized" by the South African government, including court battles and disputes over chieftaincy, land occupancy, and religious observances before and after apartheid. In particular, Tamarkin details how in many ways religious rituals are policed and politicized by the government and those that oppose Lemba legitimacy. The epilogue outlines what the Lemba still face, such as the pressure to give up practicing Christianity in order to be considered "Jewish" by the outside

world. Additionally, many think that since the DNA tests prove that the Lemba were in fact Jewish and of mostly European decent, then they could not also be African.

When it comes to the style of writing, Tamarkin provides an essential perspective to both the “hard science” of genetic testing and the “soft science” of social anthropology. As a Jewish person (and now, a Lemba) Tamarkin interjects their own unique personality while presenting their data, challenging the notion that all academic research must be devoid of humanity, of any personal understanding, in order to be subjective and “scientific.” Tamarkin perfectly focuses on the data whilst bringing humor, blunt discourse, personal insight, and a bit of vulnerability to this study.

Genetic Afterlives is an instructive, interesting, and important addition to the humanities. It sheds light on a group of people that most laypersons are not familiar with, and provides detailed descriptions of the social, scientific, and cultural implications that face not just the Lemba, but all persons interested in DNA data research. On a more personal note, I take and give these words from Tamarkin as a parting nugget of truth that I found insightful – “...relatives—even ‘blood relatives’—are not found, but made and unmade” (p. 123).

Kimberley Burns, *University of Oklahoma*

Melissa Thackway and Jean-Marie Teno. 2020. *Reel Resistance: The Cinema of Jean-Marie Teno*. Rochester: James Currey. 256 pp.

Reel Resistance: The Cinema of Jean-Marie Teno by Melissa Thackway and Jean Marie Teno is a work that eloquently combines textual, archival and ethnographic research of the highest quality. It quite commendably attempts to showcase the rise of Teno’s forte as a documentary (even feature) filmmaker, with a postcolonial/critical intention and deliberateness. Both Thackway and Teno document and delineate the factors responsible for an awesome career of a controversial-diasporic-figure, whose cinematic imagination, politics, poetics, and postcolonial temperament does not exclude the reeling of a marginalized milieu back on the continent (Cameroon). On her part, Melissa Thackway convincingly and philosophically defends her tenacious and consistent stance by reechoing the critical idea (among others), which she first stated in 2019 (in her chapter in Harrow and Garritano, *Companion to African Cinema*, p. 444), that “(f)rontiers, borders, lines—be they geographic, imaginary, mental, visible or invisible—traverse the history of African and diaspora auteur film(s) with striking constancy and recurrence of the leitmotif.” This notion features extensively in this offering. Thackway profoundly reminds us that Teno creates and offers his immediate world the muteness, noise, sounds, views, hopes, anxieties, trappings and contradictions of independent African states, the lies and fallacies that are associated with political emancipation and liberation, the rough edges of African democracy, the cruelties of military interventions in politics, the frailties of the exilic figure, citizenship in postcolonial Africa and the constant resistance of radicals—in a troubled continent riddled by violence and political imbroglio.

Melissa Thackway, as well as Jean Marie Teno conceptually and operationally provide the meaning of documentary and how it relates to Africa, including the conditions of its past and present. The authors guide the reader through a diachronic history of a film practice, while juxtaposing it with the evolution of African cinema. Thackway pitches Jean-Marie Teno within

the annals of African documentary filmmaking and justifies this illuminating fact in the text by delightfully addressing, and rigorously explicating, the main themes, structures, tropes, characters, traits, resistant-prowess, subjects and the aesthetics that engulf Teno's cinema. They also reveal their individual and mutual thoughts on Teno's decolonizing films, and how memory, subjectivity, resistance, countersigns, and the counter-subversive conventions of filmmaking reel the past and the present epistemes, of Africa in every single film.

The book covers some interesting but critical dialogues and conversations between Thackway and Teno about his works to date, while featuring, surprisingly, some brilliantly written essays by the filmmaker himself. These contain intellectually cogent and interesting issues which centrally and considerably cover his thoughts about the universe of his films, filmmaking on the continent, Africa and exile life, as well as the future of African (documentary) filmmaking and film festivals.

The text is interspersed with beautiful pictures of Teno in his formative years as a budding filmmaker to the present period and locations with fellow filmmakers, actors, crew members, cities, film shoots, and so on. These pictures give voice, sub-textual significance, and representation to the eloquence and character of the book. The reader will find this representational form very attractive due to its absence in most critical and important texts on African cinema today. The book reads like a definitive and pioneer effort on Jean-Marie Teno, and the tremendous works he has produced in more than thirty years of filming Africa.

In the works of Teno, there is this, to reference Rachel Gabara's 2020 *Black Camera* article "Complex Realism" (p. 32), "assertion of objectivity, of a perfect match between reality and its representation" — a view on colonial documentary filmmaking that is neither divorced nor separated from ethnographic filming, which is relatively located in Teno's work. Yet Teno also surreptitiously questions the reality(ies) no matter how grim and offers representation which ought to define those realities. He thus challenges our imagination to think deeply about our postcolonial African existence, and what we stand for rather than what has been bequeathed to us — whether in political or cultural terms and through the subject of identity.

This book is testimony to the long-standing collaborative relationship between Melissa Thackway and Jean-Marie Teno, as well as revealing a tremendous relationship even between Teno and the consistency of the message process of his cinema. The mutual assemblage of an incredibly unique text by a stellar scholar and remarkable filmmaker of global repute is a sufficiently complete book of history on documentary filmmaking on the continent. In addition, it equally shows how much further the scholarship and intellectual knowledge productions of African filmmaking can travel.

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Brian Willan. 2018. *Sol Plaatje: A Life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 770 pp.

Socio-historical developments, culture, literature, and anti-colonial movements in Africa deserve greater attention than they receive from global academics. Africa continues to be a continent of political thinkers, dedicated nationalists, leftist scholars, anti-colonial heroes, and a great intellectual heritage, but most of them remain unknown and unexplored. The problem

Africa faces is that it remains viewed and represented not as a major player in the overall context of global socio-political changes. Thus, many African thinkers who have made comprehensive contributions to the socio-political development of global modernity have been overlooked. For instance, the politics of establishing Che Guevara over Thomas Sankara demonstrates the factors behind controlling global attitudes towards Africa, and especially the fuzzy reality of racism in global politics in imparting white heroes as cult figures. The underlying philosophy of such methods can be seen in Sol Plaatje's life, and therefore, Brian Willan's *Sol Plaatje: A Life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, 1876-1932* attempts to bring South African history into the forefront of academic debate. Willan, author of this masterpiece, has been a Plaatje scholar for around four decades and has authored a 1984 biography of Plaatje (*Sol Plaatje: South African Nationalist, 1876-1932*) and in 1996 a selection of his writings (*Sol Plaatje: Selected Writings*). The present book is a meticulously researched and comprehensive biography of Plaatje (9 October 1876 – 19 June 1932), a South African intellectual, writer, and politician. One of the features of this book is its attempt to collect as many materials as possible and describe the life of Plaatje with minutest details. Of course, it is a historical reading of which Plaatje is the central character, but it locates him on Africa's broad canvas and seeks to understand his life in the context of industrialization and nationalism in Africa.

Structurally, the book is divided into eighteen chapters dealing with the childhood, socio-cultural life, and political participation of Plaatje. Chapters one to five present the background that shaped Plaatje's life from childhood to adolescence. This passage describes the Berlin Mission Society's work as one of the decisive influences in Plaatje's life (p. 2). The most significant proof of the Berlin Mission Society's influence is demonstrated through examining the etymology of his name. This inquiry on his full name presents the historical elements of his life by showing how each part of his name, Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, maintains a mixture of Christian-Tswana influence. This is why Willan explains that it is the background to adopting African-Christian ideas into a life that makes Plaatje different from his other contemporaries (p. 37). That is, Willan observes that Plaatje's desire to be different in life and to secure achievements led him to work in the office of Charles Bell, a magistrate and civil commissioner in Mafeking (p. 88), and Plaatje's desire was to write the Cape Civil Service examination (p. 101).

Further chapters explore Plaatje life as a politician, his visit to London, his association with the South African Native National Congress, and his eldest son's involvement in a student riot (p. 340). Apart from these biographical sketches, what I find most relevant in this book is the description of the 1918 influenza epidemic. As of 2018, when this book was firstly published, there was no news of a worldwide outbreak of the Covid-19 virus. However, Willan's vocal voice about how the epidemic wreaked havoc in Kimberley and caused the deaths of thousands of people takes us directly to our time where the Covid-19 virus is playing the dance of death. In addition, the description of Willan about the horrors of the 1918 influenza pandemic that "households in which entire families were stricken were asked to hoist a red flag so that help could be summoned" (p. 341) reminds us of the frightening memories of another virus that the world experienced precisely one hundred years ago and the need for new preparations in 2021.

Besides depicting Plaatje's life in this way, Willan explains how Plaatje dedicated his life to social change in Africa, so that "Throughout the autumn of 1919 Plaatje continued the

campaign, addressing meeting after meeting. Sometimes, it was as many as three in one day” (p. 357). Further, the book locates Plaatje’s life in the larger context of his travel abroad to London, the USA, and Canada, and within South Africa to the Orange Free State, Transvaal, and the Eastern Cape, and his life as a journalist. Even though it is a biographical book that comprehensively evaluates Plaatje’s life, it sheds light on some inquiries beyond a usual biography. For example, in Chapters sixteen and seventeen, Willan deals with the literary contributions of Plaatje. Chapter sixteen details how Plaatje contributed to the development of the Setswana language by translating Shakespeare’s works. Willan shows that Plaatje was interested in translating many of Shakespeare’s works, but he could only translate the *Comedy of Errors* in his lifetime (p. 482). The rest of his works, except *Julius Caesar* which was published posthumously in 1937, were either lost or disappeared. Willan painstakingly shows that Plaatje’s translations of the *Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, and *Romeo and Juliet* were lost, and “it is one of the great tragedies in South African literature” (p. 482). Chapter eighteen presents a detailed examination of Plaatje’s *Mhudi*, the first novel by a black African to be published in English. Through *Mhudi*, Plaatje explores the development of Mzilikazi’s kingdom in what became the Transvaal and critically looks at the Euro-centric narratives on Africa.

Does an individual really have the ability to control the course of history? Is history not just about individuals swimming with the flow? Through the analysis of Plaatje’s life, this book attempts to answer the above question, and shows that individuals can change history and become a major driving force. Indeed, as a biography, this book is an inquiry into Sol Plaatje’s life. Therefore, the subject matter of the investigation is centered on an assessment of his life situations. Of course, there may be disagreements and newer corrections in the context of further academic research over time. Nevertheless, until such new works appear, this study will remain one of the most relevant books on South African socio-political life and the life of Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje.

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