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## BOOK REVIEWS

Anne M Harris. *Ethnocinema: Intercultural Arts Education*. New York / London: Springer, 2012, 201 pp, ISBN 9789400742253.

The book *Ethnocinema: Intercultural Arts Education* is a description and evaluation of the ethics and methodology of participatory media production. As a concept it can only be used in the Derridean sense of a prognostic evaluation of the potential that lies in recognising the necessity for new educational methodologies. As a reflexive but forward-looking treatise, it confronts head-on one of those boundaries of pedagogical ethnography where “emotionality and intimacy [are] legitimate components of knowledge creation process” (Wahab 2003, 638).

Harris takes us through her ethno-pedagogic journey showing how, because of the exercise of power that participants undertake, participatory video itself is enriching. Harris shows how important it is that we describe these processes and encourage others to reveal the processes by which they get to make documentaries so that the exchange of ideas and experiences might lead to the creation of new knowledge.

This book, while focusing on pedagogy also discusses the complexities arising in the production of ethnographies while emphasizing issues of authorship and representation. It explores modes of documentary production that allow for closer introspection by filmmakers around who and what they are representing, as well as giving some power to those who are being represented. Tomaselli and Prinsloo describe the principles of Participatory Video as:

maximizing transfer of skills to the subject—community, ensuring that the relations of dependency that develop between professional crews and their subjects, disempowering the latter, are prevented. That is, the crew must actively disengage themselves from the position of power, created through an asymmetrical knowledge of skills and theory and ownership of video technology (1990).

This idealism must however be tempered with a clear recognition of the fact that since it is an alternative methodology to the mainstream, it can only be constructed within the contexts of visions of an alternative society; that it challenges the power constructs of contemporary intercultural education and knowledge. It demands and projects change.

The book describes in detail the processes and contexts behind the production of seven films that reveal what the author calls, “the complexities of the performance of identity for both the researcher and her co-participants” (p. xix). The films, heavily dependent on the interview as testimony presents performative voices of the seven women (which include the author) that were involved in the project. Produced as part of the author’s doctoral thesis, it contains serious reflections on self-reflexive processes, especially those of the author/ researcher/ participant. Some of them were very revealing. For example she describes the day when it was Lina’s turn to films her. She writes, “It seemed to me that when I had the ‘camera’ (the power) Lina was sometimes rebellious or aggressive... And yet, when Lina controlled the means of production (the camera), immediately she became more relaxed, complimentary and open” (p. 34). There are many such revelations in the book that make it a gold mine to any researcher in ethnography; an intercultural communication catalogue. Watching the films one finds moments of realization, awareness, and empowerment during the narrative process itself. Grace’s story about her relationship with her mother, for example, is most revelatory.

One senses the strength and self-assertiveness in Grace’s voice as the film becomes a tool for her asserting who she is, who her family is and what her community means to her. The description and essence of those signifying moments in her life’s narrative could only have come through by the autobiographical telling of her story. To that extent the film reclaims the space of the oral history as a special kind of intensive biography interview. In this instance oral history allows researchers to learn about respondents’ lives from their own perspective while also allowing for a collaborative generation of knowledge between the researcher and the research participant. What they create during that synthesis is meaning: meaning in their feelings, their experiences, their relationship with the researcher and meaning in what they deem to be important. Their voice not only gives voice to their own life’s experiences but also give perspective to other peoples and groups life experiences.

As a form of ‘art as research,’ the short videos necessarily take the form of data. When using the interview as a data collection method the data collection component of the research process becomes evidently collaborative. The film allows the researcher and research participant to create knowledge together through the creation of a life narrative. While the research initiates the process and facilitates the telling of the participant’s story, this becomes data that is collaborative in terms of

development and subsequent availability and use. One word of warning though: this methodology also carries with it a host of ethical considerations regarding, for example, the sharing of authority over the 'data' and outputs (the thesis, book, the films and the archived interviews) which could open a can of worms.

Reading Harris' own autobiographical voice in the book reveals that, while the researcher was following a specific topic, the organization of the topic was likely to be far less focused when the interview is undertaken. This is because while the narrative focuses on the individual, it immediately functions to link personal life experiences to broader historical circumstances.

The book, taking cues from cautions towards the perils of enlisting insights and aptitudes of the subjects during the research, reveals that participatory video methodologies not only examine the nature and impact of technology on communication but also explore possible strategies for intervention. It becomes therefore a necessary addition to the academy's understanding of the practice of art as research where acts of discovery reveal and form tacit knowledge. This book is a most valuable tool for both pedagogy and art research.

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Martin Mhando  
Murdoch University

Peter Curson. *Border Conflicts in a German African Colony: Jacob Morengo and the Untold Tragedy of Edward Presgrave*. Arena Books, 2012, 236 pp, ISBN 9781906791964.

This short, enthusiastic work positions itself as a contribution to the history of German colonial warfare in Southwest Africa, to Anglo-German relations in Africa, and to Australian history. Less scholarly monograph and more popular history, it more or less successfully draws attention to the transnational colonial connections which characterised the period. It also partially succeeds in drawing attention to a little known colonial border incident; albeit one which, in the context of the dramatic scale of the massacres attending the Herero-Nama Wars, was a very modest affair indeed.

Curson displays a solid working knowledge of German colonial warfare that is buttressed by his reading of some of the more important recent German and English language scholarship. While the material is dealt with competently, there is little here that is in any way new. In fact, many of the themes here have been well rehearsed and hotly contested in scholarly and popular works on German Southwest Africa. Curson, however, gives no sense of the contours of the recent and furious historiographical debate on the nature and broader historical significance of Germany's colonial genocide. In some ways this is not surprising, given that the Herero-Nama Wars are discussed, in some detail, as a means of establishing the background of the murder of Curson's central protagonist, Edward Presgrave. This is, arguably, a deeply problematic way of structuring the historical narrative. With tens of thousands of Africans falling victim to a German military struggling to contain widespread indigenous revolt, it is difficult to stifle the question, precisely what was important about Presgrave's death beyond the fact that he was an Australian? If, on the one hand, the answer lies in what his death reveals about the relationship between German, British and Australian authorities, then the opening section devoted to the details of German colonial warfare might not be the best introduction to the issue. If, on the other hand, it is to highlight the ruthless nature of the German prosecution of the war, then Isabel Hull's *Absolute Destruction*, as well as the standard works of Horst Drechsler, Helmut Bley and Jürgen Zimmerer might offer more empirical detail than that on offer here.

The highlight of the first half of the work is Curson's discussion of disease in the colony, an area that scholars such as Daniel J Walther

have been fruitfully researching recently in order to establish the nature and intent of German bio-political interventions in the colonial world (although this is not an approach favoured by Curson). On the other hand, his discussion of the place of the German colonial sphere in German politics and popular culture is less successful, contrasting unfavourably with recent landmarks in the field produced by David Ciarlo and John Phillip Short. One sees, for example, Curson refer to Gustav Frenssen's novel *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest*, in which German marines ostensibly face the villainous 'Black Fig', which seems an inventive plot device for a colonial novel (p.103). Unfortunately, Frenssen's character is referring not to a 'fig', but an ostensible 'black cowardice'; a reference to the Hereros' guerrilla tactics. A little later, Curson insists that the Reichstag was 'totally ignored' on colonial issues, an assertion that is simply untrue, as the disciplining of Supreme Commander Lothar von Trotha (which percolated upwards from the Reichstag and the Chancellor, and thence through to the Kaiser), and the background to Germany's 1907 election (the so-called Hottentot election) both demonstrate.

The discussion of Jakob Morengo and his connection to the Australian, Presgrave, makes for interesting reading, as does the discussion of Presgrave's death and subsequent British investigations into the circumstances surrounding his death. Some real effort has been made to deal with the archival materials, and through this evidence, Curson presents a useful picture of the circumstances surrounding Presgrave's frontier murder. The official reports are all examined, as is the British response to the German investigation, which, despite Curson's sense that it was an underwhelming response, was quite serious, given that the victim of the murder was a cattle thief killed on German soil who had been openly abetting the declared indigenous enemies of the German state.

When it comes to the precise details of the murder itself, Curson's account occasionally resorts to unwarranted conjecture, which at times clouds the issues, as when he wonders aloud whether 'a Nama' sat with Presgrave on the night after he had been shot, and why Presgrave's body had not been molested by animals (p.155). As Curson admits, these things are simply unknowable; such speculation does not assist in the historical reconstruction of those events. The same is true of Curson's treatment of the attempts made by Presgrave's parents to investigate the circumstances surrounding their son's death. An interesting discussion of the lack of transparency between the British and Australian governments is unnecessarily marred by a flight into conjectural

questioning which (inexplicably and without evidence) proposes that Elizabeth Presgrave's ability to launch an investigation may have been the product of an improper dalliance with influential men (pp.189-190).

The book is clearly the product of an intense personal interest in the events surrounding Presgrave's murder. Sadly, however, this eagerness to open up the colonial murder of an Australian adventurer in Africa to historical investigation does not translate into a penetrating analysis. Much of the book is a summary of work already done by others rather than an addition to the rapidly expanding body of knowledge on German colonialism in Africa, while the author's real concern, the story of Edward Presgrave, which might well be an anecdote which speaks to the whole, remains here a story too small to sustain a monograph.

Matt Fitzpatrick  
Flinders University

Goran Hyden, *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 316 pp, ISBN 9781107651418.

"This project is a celebration of fifty years of political science research on Africa", claims Goran Hyden in the acknowledgement of his *African Politics in Comparative Perspective*, written in 2004 and re-released by Cambridge University Press in 2013 (p. vii). There certainly is something of a 'celebration' going on in this book, which has the dual aim of summarising past scholarship of Africa and presenting a set of the author's own theories on the nature of African politics. Over twelve chapters, it takes us through an overview of the continent's current predicament in fields from agriculture, gender and ethnicity – including many of Hyden's own analytical formulations like the "economy of affection" and "supremacy of politics". While many of these are useful and interesting, Hyden's celebration is so self-referential and self-authorized that it reproduces much of the neo-colonial, anachronistic representation of Africa that most contemporary scholars agree should be left in the era he is surveying.

Although the book's introduction is loaded with caveats about the methodological limits of comparativity (as opposed to contextuality), nothing can prepare the reader for a sentence like: "[a]lthough the colonial powers tried to modernize African society, they did not do

enough of it” (p. 238), or the contentions that the political forces of Africa remain “untamed” (p. 1); that pre-colonial Africa’s “level of sociopolitical complexity has generally been quite low” (p. 56); that “the weak presence of modern values” is one of two key structural factors that enable a sound understanding of African politics today (p. 47); that the lack of a “corporate class of independently wealthy individuals” keeps the African state from embracing “economic reasoning” (p. 73); or that growth in Botswana and Mauritius is due only to their ability to listen to western advice (p. 261). Is this the nonsense – out of date for fifty years - that we’re supposed to be celebrating? Instead of just providing an irritating distraction, this white noise severely constrains the book’s capacity to understand the historicity and complexity of the politics under analysis.

Among many analytical weak points, take one salient example: Hyden’s reoccurring argument that the contemporary African politics has far less to do with the legacies of the colonial state apparatus than with the agency of its post-independence leaders:

much of the political effort [after independence] was to re-traditionalize and not to modernize African societies. This anticolonial legacy and not the colonial past has shaped African politics and development in the past fifty years (p. 28).

A more critical analyst would understand that the nationalist project was flawed *because* of its hardwired pursuit of the modernity implicit in colonialism’s civilising mission, not for the lack of it. Modernity, in other words, is a far more problematic concept than this book appreciated – a point which has been made by libraries of scholarship promptly ignored by the author. Hyden has many good things to say about the undemocratic, closed nature of the “movement” mentality (p. 29) of the newly independent state. But without understanding that the origins of this mentality come from the twin “arbitrary” and “absolute” characteristics of the exertion of colonial power (Ake, 1996, 3), the analysis can only go so far. For Hyden, the closed, violent and undemocratic political apparatus of the colonial state inherited by nationalists does not factor into the reasons why these characteristics continued after independence. An especially strange conclusion considering the work done to the opposite conclusion by Young (1993), who by all accounts, seems to have influenced Hyden’s thinking on many fronts.

Beyond these analytical flaws, the representational ethnics of the piece remain its most distinctive feature. To read *African Politics in Comparative Perspective* is to mire oneself in the debate about the merits of its popular comparative approach – indeed, given the time Hyden spends pre-emptively defending this method in the introduction, this seems to be a debate that he’s prepared for. He readily accepts, for example, that reductionism is a necessary evil in the positivist social science method (p. 4). Yet for all his foregrounding he fails to see that the epistemological roots of his comparative objectivity actually betray a Eurocentric origin that *necessarily* relegates African difference to the status of a non-western pathology. Hence, resounding through the book’s unapologetically modernist teleology is the “first in Europe then in elsewhere” logic of global historical time that Chakrabarty has so convincingly identified in the supposedly disinterested academic analyses of the non-west (2000, 7). From this weak footing it’s unsurprising that Hyden felt the need to remind us of the self-evident fact that “Africa’s history does not begin with European colonization, as is often assumed” (p. 14).

Enlivening the complicated context of African differences is not, as Hyden seems to suggest in his introduction, as task that must be jettisoned in the name of comparativity. At its best, comparative politics engages *with* difference. At its worst it merely states *that* the other is not the same. Take for example the point that economics in Africa has not (yet) been separated from society. Rather than providing yet another opportunity to point out that Africa lags behind its western destiny, such a difference, in true comparison, should make us in the west question whether it is we who have broken from a norm: that only the relatively recent advent of neo-liberalism permits us to think that economic relations are somehow a non-social affair.

To be sure, there are babies in the bathwater. On top of the useful summaries of many of the trends in Africanist scholarship – the chapters on ethnicity and the ‘external dimension’ in particular – many of Hyden’s own theoretical innovations, like the ‘economy of affection’ (chapter 4) and his perspective on ‘Big Man’ political culture, provide interesting theoretical observations that are well worth reading, and should continue to contribute to the debates about African politics. But there is more going on here. Given that this is a book that will remain on countless undergraduate reading lists, at stake is whether the entire field called “African Studies” will be more Bernard Lewis than Edward Said: whether it will allow the difference of African culture, history and politics to be more than just Europe’s shadow. This is the

epistemological battleground in which Hyden's 'celebration' unwittingly and unknowingly finds itself. Babies aside, that's a fight worth winning.

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Sam Wilkins  
Institute of Postcolonial Studies, Melbourne

Daniel Branch. *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011, 366 pp, ISBN 9780300148763.

Daniel Branch's overview and analysis of modern day Kenyan politics in *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963-2011* provides a well-balanced and factual overview of events, with sufficient hints of gossip, and glimpses into the world of centralised personality politics, to make for a very enjoyable read.

Whilst generic overviews of post-colonial African states have been compiled in vast numbers, it is Branch's attention to detail that sets it apart from others. Events in modern day Kenya are meticulously researched, with pertinent issues elucidated by the use of direct quotes. When speculations or rumours are addressed, they are evaluated as just that. Differing opinions are weighed up, with Branch directing the reader to the most plausible outcome, without succumbing to the temptation of accepting gossip as gospel.

Although the book focuses on domestic politics, Branch ensures that key events are evaluated within the global context that has played a behind the scenes role in Kenyan politics. In particular, the book takes into account the lingering influence of the British in the post-colonial period, the impact of the Cold War and the subsequent post-Cold War period. Although a more in depth analysis into Britain's influence in the years immediately following independence would have made for a fascinating read (and perhaps sufficient for a book in its own right), overall, domestic Kenyan politics are evaluated with adequate consideration of external pulling powers.

The book's chronological, rather than say a thematic approach to the evolution of Kenyan politics, is of benefit to the reader. The sequential approach aptly highlights key recurring themes in post-colonial politics, allowing the reader to interpret more recent events, such as the 2007 post-electoral violence (and the ongoing trial at the ICC) not just as stand-alone events, but rather in the context of entrenched, and increasingly finessed, practices.

Key issues that particularly benefit from a chronological explanation are incidents of pre, and sometimes post, electoral violence, pervasive networks of patronage, ethnicity as a tool of political (and sometimes violent) mobilisation and the role civil society has played in Kenya's development.

The chronological nature of Branch's work ensures that father and son combinations (Kenyatta and Odinga) and also the longevity of politicians - we are introduced to a young Mwai Kibaki in the description of the party that followed Kenya's change to self-rule in 1963 (p.6) – are very clear. Branch ensures that the role of the tight knit Kenyan elite in the formation, transformation and (in the eyes of some) the decay of the Kenyan state are critically analysed throughout the entire book.

The expanding networks of patronage as a method for control are also spelled out. From the maintenance of a close circle of political elite under Jomo Kenyatta to Moi's dispersed approach whereby "he extended and redirected the networks that distributed state resources from the centre to certain key allies in every district and constituency of the country" (p.173) the increased role corruption has played in the Kenyan state is well documented.

Although not a large focus on Branch's work, the evolution of domestic dissent that has plagued all post-independence leaders is captured nicely throughout the book. With the euphoria of the immediate post-colonial period waning, and the lack of Jomo Kenyatta's promised *uhuru na kazi* (freedom and work) materialising, uprising amongst citizens is clearly documented. Branch documents dissent ranging from the community backlash over the suspicious death of Thomas Mboya to the role played by Universities as centres for anti-government protests noting that "between 1961 and 1980, the University of Nairobi was closed on no fewer than twenty-five occasions due to demonstrations" (p.144). Following on from this, from the role of the church during Moi's leadership to the role played by influential activists such as Wangari Maathai, methods of anti-government dissent are documented, and their evolution tracked through the book.

Although the role of Kenyans abroad, either in exile or by choice, is mentioned periodically, the role of the Diaspora, and their impact on Kenyan politics, is not addressed in detail. Attention to this could add an additional element to the analysis, especially in light of the increased use of social media both within Kenya and amongst the Diaspora.

From the recurring issue of centralised power versus devolution, to factitious coalitions and ongoing feuds between the political elite, Branch paints a picture of relevance to date; politics in Kenya is a zero sum game where alliances can be broken, repaired, and broken again.

Overall, Branch's work serves multiple purposes. The ease of reading ensures that this book can serve both as an introductory guide to Kenyan politics for a novice, however due to Branch's attention to detail, the book is also a useful piece of work for the more well-read scholar of African politics, keen to deepen their existing knowledge, through well researched analysis and glimpses into the lives of the elite and hints of scandal along the way.

Anna Rabin  
Dragoman Risk Consultancy

William G. Martin, *South Africa and the World Economy: Remaking Race, State, and Region*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013, 271 pp, ISBN 9781580464314.

William G. Martin, Professor of Sociology at Binghamton University, presents a wide ranging yet detailed account of the political and economic history of South Africa in his book *South Africa and the World Economy: Remaking Race, State, and Region*. The book is reflective of Martin's familiarity with the history of South Africa, and provides a particularly detailed account of British-Afrikaner relations as well as South Africa's political economy during the inter-war years.

Martin's central thesis is that South Africa's position in the world and within the Southern African region stems from a series of struggles to shape racialised relations both within sub-Saharan Africa as well as globally. He concludes that the fate of the people of South Africa has been shaped by the highly unequal and racialised world economy with which South Africa has had a troubled relationship. In order to illustrate this Martin takes the reader through South Africa's economic and political history from the Boer War through to the present-day rule of

President Jacob Zuma. The detailed chronology provides many examples that support his thesis on a regional level, however it is not until the final stages of the book that South Africa's racialised relations with states in the global North are fully explored.

Martin asserts that while post-Apartheid South Africa is non-racialised, a feature lauded by the West, it remains the very characteristic that has reduced investor confidence and seen South Africa fall out of favour with global capital, core states and international financial institutions. This contradictory relationship has effectively ensured the failure of efforts to reverse the racial inequalities constructed over the past 400 years. Martin argues that under Apartheid rule South Africa was seen as part of the Anglo-American sphere and as an important part of the global financial system. Yet the post Apartheid era has seen the country categorised as part of the "dysfunctional African world". While South Africa has been de-racialised through majority rule the country's new leadership and the state itself are no longer treated as part of the dominant Anglo-American group, as occurred previously.

Martin argues that South Africa's unique migration patterns are a strong example of the country's racialised relations. He suggests migrants *from* South Africa tend to use legal channels and are predominately wealthy, educated and highly skilled. Conversely immigration *into* South Africa largely consists of poor, low-skilled individuals who often move into the country without utilising legal channels. For Martin, this pattern is derived directly from neo-racist principles that underlie neo-liberalism. He argues through this example that South Africa is replicating the role of the rich core countries towards its own periphery, the Southern African region. Martin goes on to suggest that these migration patterns, along with falling employment levels, increasing inequality, capital flight and an increasing reliance on primary production are a consequence of embracing the Washington Consensus. He highlights the automotive industry as one area where the government successfully intervened in the economy with encouraging results. However, as the author also acknowledges, the conditions under which Botswana, South Korea and Japan pursued a developmental state model with greater state guidance, an alliance between state, labour and industry and a focus on meritocracy were hardly replicable in South Africa. Moreover, it has been argued that South Africa does not possess the strong state-labour relations or the corporations that would be willing to accept greater government regulation and intervention into planning. While Martin is correct to suggest that the ANC's pursuit of

neoliberal policies has had severe consequences for the South Africa's economy it is unclear which alternative models the state could have pursued given the need for international acceptance at the commencement of majority rule.

Martin concludes that South Africa's willingness to adopt the neoliberal policies of the Washington Consensus has entrenched the racial divide in South Africa. While this observation is compelling, the most interesting contribution of the book remains Martin's discussion of what he sees as the implications of declining global power of the United States and Europe. Martin argues, that post Global Financial Crisis there exists an opportunity for South Africa to re-make itself through engagement with Asia. Noting that China is now the largest import and export market for South Africa, he suggests that relationships with Asian countries may redefine South Africa's role in the world economy. It may be that these states do not view South Africa as part of the "dysfunctional African world" or that this description is not part of their lexicon.

While the historical background that makes up the first four chapters of the book is interesting, it is at times dense and perhaps not all entirely relevant to the book's conclusions as outlined above. Nonetheless, it would more than likely be of interest to readers of this book. Also, in addition to the long-run racial discrimination that has shaped the political and economic features of South Africa, Martin on occasion refers to the gender-based discrimination that has taken place. It would be interesting to see an intersectional approach to the issues of race and gender and the implications this has for the development of black and coloured women in South Africa explored further in the text.

Overall, Martin makes an important contribution to the scholarship on the political economy of South Africa. Although the book includes a highly detailed account of the historical relationships within the region, the most interesting discussion appears in the final chapters. The book poses an interesting question for the future of the country, if there is a sustained decline in US and European power, does this create opportunities for countries such as South Africa to radically alter their place in the global order? And if so, will these opportunities be embraced by the current leadership?

Ainsley D. Elbra  
University of Sydney