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EDITORIAL

Decolonising African Studies – The Politics of Publishing

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The *Australasian Review of African Studies* remains committed to publishing African Studies research from within the Australasia and Pacific regions, and beyond. African Studies remains a niche area of research and teaching in Australia and New Zealand, and thus caters for smaller audiences than those that exist in the mainstream and busy ‘journal markets’ of the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. As a result, the numbers game of ‘publish or perish’ forced upon us decent academics and researchers - by their corporatized universities which accede to the corporate use of analytics, metrics and citation publishing criteria to measure their worth and success - pre-determines that an article published in this independently owned, managed and published journal, will not receive the same level of citations as a similar article published in a journal distributed by one of the major corporate publishing houses in the UK. Consequently, independent publishers like The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) have been marginalised from mainstream analytics and data collection agencies, and our authors have not been duly recognised by their university departments. Previous attempts by AFSAAP over the last 18 years to ‘sell-out’ *ARAS* to a corporate publisher have failed, due to our comparatively smaller membership base. Thus, unless we increased our subscription rates ten-fold, the financial profit for said corporate publisher would not make it worth their while. Fortunately, AFSAAP’s vision is about supporting African Studies in the region, and is a not-for-profit association,

with its members central to its aims. Therefore, the *ARAS* editorial team has been doggedly attempting to get the journal noticed and listed as widely as possible on all the same corporate owned lists, without this corporate support, and with some success which will be described below. However, the path continues to lead to the ‘chicken and the egg’ scenario, which is often infuriating.

Without an impressive increase in the number of citations of all *ARAS* articles (for your convenience listed at the end of this issue, in a celebration of *ARAS* articles since 1979), *ARAS* will not be considered worthy for inclusion in some of the required ‘lists’ - such as for example, the *Institute of Science Indexing* (ISI). In 2013, the *ARAS* editorial team began the process of applying for inclusion in this particular Thomson Reuters (now Clarivate Analytics) product. Five years of correspondences later, *ARAS* was advised that it does “not compare favourably” in terms of citation data “with that of other, similar titles in [their] existing coverage of the discipline” (correspondence from *Clarivate Analytics*, 30 March 2018). Given that *ARAS* is the only journal of African Studies in this region, it is disappointing that we have most likely been compared to the journals and researchers of the larger European or American markets, where there are simply more Africanists, more African Studies, and more recognition of African Studies in their universities. Comparing apples with oranges!

Having said that, to their credit, Clarivate Analytics (as formerly Thomson-Reuters) has in the mean-time listed *ARAS* in its *Web of Science Core Collection Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI)*, although we are not sure how many universities insist their authors publish in journals listed in ESCI, nor are we sure how a journal in its 40th year and 39th volume can be considered *emerging*. Nonetheless, perhaps we haven’t wasted the approximately \$700 in postage stamps sending two hard copies of this journal twice a year, to their Philadelphia address. Yet, it appears that unless we *get* listed by the ISI, many authors will be advised by their universities *not* to publish their articles with *ARAS*. Anecdotally we have heard this from potential authors in Australia, New Zealand and even South Africa, that they cannot submit their research to us because of these metric measures. So watch this space, as we continue the frustrating struggle for recognition for our authors in this corporatized metrical publishing world.

It is important to acknowledge however, that *ARAS* is already recognised by other abstract and indexing products/services including, for many years, ProQuest’s *Sociological Abstracts* and *PAIS Index* (although previously listed with their *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts*, this appears to have been cast aside in recent years without notification). We have recently also been added to the all-important European Reference Index for the

Humanities (ERIH). Yet, no matter which service provider lists ARAS, it seems the goal posts are continuously moving, as other *different* listings are required by the metrics obsessed universities.

Fortunately our attempts to be recognised by SCOPUS has been more rewarding. This only took two years of application, and finally in early 2018 ARAS was advised that it *will be indexed* with this abstract and citation database, owned by Elsevier (you know it has been a challenging process for the ARAS Editorial team when we pop the champagne and celebrate that our DOIs will now link with our authors' ORCIDs thanks to the SCOPUS listing!).

Astute ARAS readers will have noticed the addition of Document Object Identifiers (DOIs) since volume 37, 2016 (essentially these are a hyperlink to each article). Owned by CrossRef, to which publishers pay an annual fee, an individual DOI is generated for each published article, in a tedious online process, by which the publisher completes a form, providing all sorts of detail, including the author's name(s), the title of the(ir) article, their ORCID number, and the URL to which the article is already published on the publisher's own website. The publisher also devises the DOI pattern. So for example, in our case, this DOI - <https://doi.org/10.22160/22035184> is specific to ARAS - and links to our website URL - <http://afsaap.org.au/publications/aras/> - where we upload all ARAS articles anyway. Now in order to join the metric brigade, we also have to create individualised DOIs for each article following a logical pattern of numbers or letters, such as - <https://doi.org/10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2017-38-2/11-33> - which is simply a link to ARAS 2017, volume 38, number 2, pages 11-33, a fascinating article by Theo Neethling on "China's evolving role and approach to international peacekeeping: The cases of Mali and South Sudan". The CrossRef service provides a metrical analysis on the number of citations our articles receive, with quarterly reports telling us the top 10 articles accessed (as seen in Table 1 below).

CrossRef provides metadata to other services such as ORCID (which is 'free' for authors to apply for, and gives them a unique code and can even generate their own QR Code), which then enables all other metadata collection services and the general public to cross-reference you, your research and your publications. While this is not an altruistic service provided for free for the betterment of human society, it does assist in the academic's vain attempts to get their due recognition in their respective departments, and provides a measure of their success - all publically available online!

Table 1: Top 10 ARAS DOIs (in 2017)

| |
|---|
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/129-146 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/80-106 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/56-79 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/33-55 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/107-128 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2017-38-1/65-85 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/9-32 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/3-8 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-1 |
| 10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2017-38-1 |

Source: CrossRef 2017.

But, what is the actual cost of these metrics? In financial terms, for *ARAS*, it would be around \$500 annually in fees (to the lists) and \$20,000 in management costs (if we had a paid secretariat). Fortunately, the latter is provided pro bono by the *ARAS* editors, passionate about African Studies in the region. For other academics in general, perhaps the costs are in their chiropractic bills or yoga class fees, as they are forced to bend over increasingly backwards to meet these ever shifting goal posts!

In Australia, for many years a journal's success was measured by its ranking within the *Excellence in Research for Australia* journals. Since 2009, *ARAS* has been ranked at Level C (ERA ID 18727), because it is a multi-disciplinary journal, and African Studies is not recognized as a specific *Field of Research* (FoR), such as Political Science, which has its own FoR code of 1606. Unfortunately for *ARAS*, only 'A' ranked journals were considered worthy vestibules for an aspiring academic's article. And so, even though in 2012 these journal rankings were removed by popular demand, their legacy remains in the academy, and academics are advised not to publish in anything but 'A' ranked journals, or journals listed with the commercial and corporate data and analytics businesses.

It is no longer enough for a journal such as *ARAS* to publish relevant research to its target audience; and be available in hard copy, and electronically through *Informit Databases* (owned and operated in Australia), and the AFSAAP website www.afsaap.org.au. It would seem that the academy would have us sell-out to a corporate publisher, and if that is not an option, therefore preferably not exist. We are guilty of bringing down the statistical measures of publication success, but we will not be silenced. *ARAS*

will continue its independent publication into the future (afterall, we have just signed a contract with SCOPUS until 2050 at least!).

The segue here, for these tedious revelations is the controversial publication of ‘The Case for Colonialism’ written by Bruce Gilley and published in the *Third World Quarterly*. Apparently this article did not survive the peer review process, but was published anyway, and without consultation with its International Editorial Board, whom subsequently all resigned over this. I threw my arms up in disgust and annoyance at what appeared to me to be a tactic of the *TWQ* editor - to gain ‘hits’ and citations through notoriety, merely to meet those corporate analytic and metric demands. I threw my arms up again in frustration when I realized the *Third World Quarterly* is considered an ‘A’ ranked journal, and already had the SCOPUS indexing that we at *ARAS* so craved. Yes! You can call it professional jealousy! But, it is still frustrating when you try to do the right thing, but just can’t compete. Therefore, as *ARAS* Editor I was delighted to be able to re-circulate to my colleagues in AFSAAP, an online petition seeking to have the Gilley article withdrawn. The petition was started by Associate Professor Jenny Heijun Wills from the Department of English, and Director of the Critical Race Network, at the University of Winnipeg.¹ I also specifically advised our membership *not* to raise the metrics of the *TWQ* article or journal by clicking on their DOI or URL, since this just reinforces the editor’s decision to publish, and I provided a link to read it independently of these metadata services (although that link is no longer active - see <http://fooddeserts.org/images/paper0114.pdf>). In hindsight, I should have taken that opportunity to remind our subscribers to click-away on all of our DOIs in their spare time to increase our metadata! Nonetheless, what I did do was remind AFSAAP members –

that as African Studies Scholars, and as subscribers to one of the few independent journals on African Studies (The Australasian Review of African Studies) we have a responsibility to uphold the intellectual rigour to ensure knowledge is shared, and research is used in a positive way. This recently published article in the *TWQ*, a so-called top ranked journal in development studies, just demonstrates how ridiculous the ‘citation’ pressures have become, and how they

¹ see the petition at https://www.change.org/p/editors-of-the-third-world-quarterly-retract-the-case-for-colonialism?recruiter=409526319&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=share_petition

[are] obviously giving voice to outrageous and shameful opinions (Lyons, 2017).

Further to this, I continued to remind members to submit their research and articles to *ARAS*, and be damned with the corporate demands of their respective universities. However, this is a battle that *ARAS* cannot win alone, and requires authors to resist the corporatized pressures placed on them – the colonization of their research communications – which is not that easy when you need that academic job.

A further outcome of these pressures on academics *not* to publish in anything but ‘A’ ranked journals, is that they are forced to *reject* any notions of publishing in anything else that is not of this so-called ‘required’ level of esteem. For example, as a result of such pressures, it was with much regret that in its 40th year, the Annual AFSAAP Conference Proceedings publication was cancelled due to the extremely low submission rate of final conference papers by conference participants. Most participants simply declared that they had written papers but had to submit them to ‘listed’ journals only, or not publish them at all (that is, if they can’t be published in a ‘listed’ journal, then it is better not to publish at all because that ‘metric’ would bring down their university’s overall metrics for so-called esteemed publications, all in the name of ‘excellence in research’).

Thus, many researchers have been advised not to publish in any conference proceedings (even with an assigned ISBN and/or E-ISBN), or in lower ranked journals, and certainly not in an independent journal such as *ARAS*, even though it has high standards, a respectable rejection rate, is double blind peer reviewed and has a targeted audience for such research. As I stated in that invitation to AFSAAP members,

submit your articles to *ARAS*, as we are proud of our tradition of publishing properly peer reviewed articles that enables AFSAAP members to share [their] fabulous research ... *ARAS* does this on a shoestring budget and has not needed to bend over backwards for corporate publishers, or the pressures to meet all of these ridiculous metrics as measured by other corporate companies, which are buoyed by the university administrators and the over-zealous bean counters. *We certainly do not approve of giving valuable publication space to such shameful views as the TWQ has done.* (emphasis added: Lyons, 2017)

The response I got from this emailed invitation was understandably mixed. On one hand, some agreed and signed the petition (which now has over 7000 signatures), while on the other hand some disagreed with the process considering it to be a type of censorship – reading the efforts to retract the publication of Gilley’s article as an attempt to silence a worthwhile debate. Neither view questioned my own motivation to promote the petition – which was based mostly on my frustration that it appears that proper adherence to the peer review process with respect to academic integrity doesn’t matter, as much as belonging to the ‘lists,’ ‘ticking the boxes’, and getting the citations - all measured and reported in the corporate loop described above. We may as well just count the ‘likes’ we get or the ‘hashtags’ we generate, to determine our fates or even the success of an independent journal such as *ARAS*. These are the corporate gatekeepers silencing the debate: The tree still falls in the forest, even though nobody heard it. The subaltern do speak – we just need to listen. Independent journals publishing articles deemed relevant to smaller regional audiences are worthwhile and should not be silenced, nor colonized by these corporate global forces and practices.

Therefore, bringing these two themes together, I agree that a worthwhile debate is needed, and this can only be achieved with proper adherence to the peer review process, and this edition of *ARAS* is testament to that. Indeed, this issue of *ARAS* tackles the issues of colonization, re-colonisation and de-colonisation head-on. The withdrawal of the *Third World Quarterly* article the ‘Case for Colonialism’ written by Bruce Gilley in 2017 raises many questions that we should be dealing with in academic and public discourse.

Scott MacWilliam’s article ‘Africa’s Past Invented to Serve Development’s Uncertain Future’ provides a timely critique of the saga surrounding the publication of Bruce Gilley’s controversial article “The Case for Colonialism” in the *Third World Quarterly*, arguing that while Gilley’s case is somewhat flawed, silencing this question serves little purpose in academic debate. MacWilliam concludes that “The virtue of the call for the return of colonial governance is that it at least makes clear the increasingly prevalent assertion that democracy should be a lower priority than development.”

Martin Klein’s contribution to this issue ‘A Critique of Colonial Rule: A Response to Bruce Gilley,’ extends this critique of Gilley’s article, and further examines the flaws in Gilley’s central argument that Africa needs to be recolonised. Klein provides a critique of colonial rule which determines that decolonisation was a positive step and there should be no going back to a colonised future.

Leon Mwamba Tshipaka's article 'Curbing Inequality Through Decolonising Knowledge Production in Higher Education in South Africa', provides a decolonial critique of South Africa's higher education system. In particular, Leon Mwamba Tshipaka argues that the system based upon colonial and apartheid foundations must be transformed to address the inequalities inherent in South African society.

The 'postcolonial hangover' inherent in these three articles is that, despite their arguments, they are communicated here, out of necessity, through the gatekeeping format of the practices of the peer-reviewed academic journal, which gives them their double blind peer reviewed academic credentials to speak.

Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama's article, 'There is really discrimination everywhere': Experiences and consequences of *Everyday Racism* among the new black African diaspora in Australia', is being published in this volume below, at a time when in Australian political debate, the value of spending money on *Africans* has been questioned. Senator Pauline Hanson (no surprises here) has criticised Australia's first African-Australian Senator, Lucy Gichuhi whom regretfully got some facts seriously wrong when she 'tweeted' that there would be 10,000 Scholarships available through the *Australia Awards* program for African Students (see Elton-Pym, 2018). This might be the case for China's Africa scholarships program, but here in Australia, the actual number of scholarships on offer for African students is only 474 out of a total of 4,031 scholarships for developing countries in 2018. Of these, only 155 are long term MA or PhD studies, and 319 are for short-term study periods (see DFAT, 2018; Lyons, 2012; 2013). What these figures show is that African countries are a lower priority for the Australian aid budget, but nonetheless important for both the diplomatic effect and most-likely the mining and agricultural sector, in which the majority of students will be studying. What the media debate on 'Gichuhi's mistake' shows is that there are still 'no votes in Africa' for Australian politicians (see Lyons, 2012; 2013, p.216). The racist attitudes behind Hanson's remarks were only matched by Senator Fraser Anning who declared that "the money would be better spent on supporting *white* South African farmers" enabling them to emigrate to Australia (emphasis added, see Elton-Pym, 2018). Therefore, it is timely that Kwamena Kwansah-Aidoo and Virginia Mapedzahama publish this research on 'everyday racism' in Australia, as it affects the lives and identities of African-Australians. Their research is profound and illustrates some disturbing trends in our democratic society. The ARAS editorial team recommend this article becomes compulsory reading for all Australian politicians.

Abay Gebrekidan's contribution to this volume, "African-Australian Identity in the Making: Analysing its Imagery and Explanatory Power in View of Young Africans in Australia", is also a timely reminder in this region that 'Africa is not one country'. There are indeed 55 African states or countries, and the membership of Australia's African diaspora are derived from many different cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds. Gebrekidan's research based on qualitative interviews demonstrates the 'self-categorisation and self-identification' among young African-Australians' in relation to this broader label. What this article shows is the general ignorance and lack of knowledge in Australia to understanding the African context, and this has negative effects on the sense of belonging among African-Australian youth. If only 'African studies' was taken more seriously here in Australia!

Helen Ware and David Lucas in their article 'Africa 'Pretty Underdone': 2017 Submissions to the DFAT White Paper and Senate Inquiry', provide an Africanist analysis of the submissions and inquiry in preparation for this 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. The fact that they begin with the statement "Public discussion of Africa in Australia is hard to find", should reaffirm the above cases and examples of racism and misunderstandings that journals such as *ARAS*, and associations such as AFSAAP, have an obligation and an important role to play in contributing to this public discourse in the Australasia and Pacific Region. Again, we must not be silenced by the current corporate demands on the academy. Ware and Lucas argue that the Senate Inquiry was not well advertised, and submissions from relevant stakeholders was thus low, thus leading to the 'self-fulfilling prophecy, that there is very little interest in Africa in Australia'.

Hence, this issue of *ARAS* provides a detailed bibliography (prepared by this Editor) of all of the articles published since 1979 in this journal – 39 Volumes over 40 years, to demonstrate that there is interest in Africa, there are stakeholders interested in public discussion and informing public policy on African issues, and importantly, *ARAS* continues to be an important academic journal of interest to wider audiences.

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