

The Many Faces of Pan-Africanism

Hakim Adi. *Pan-Africanism: A History.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. xiv + 298 pp. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$36.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1474254274.

Keisha N. Blain. *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018. viii + 256 pp. Photographs. Notes. Index. \$24.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0812224597.

Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden. *African Americans and Africa: A New History.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. xiv + 266 pp. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$28.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-0300198669.

Adom Getachew. *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. xiv + 274 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$35.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-0691202341.

Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits, eds. *Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. xix + 435 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$139.99. Paper. ISBN: 978-3030529109.

Misia Kibona Clark, Phiwokuhle Mnyandu and Loy L. Azalia, eds. *Pan African Spaces: Essays on Black Transnationalism*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019. viii + 322 pp.

Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$100.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-1498581929.

Reiland Rabaka, ed. *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020. xx + 548 pp. Bibliography. Index. \$250.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-0367030667.

Imaobong D. Umoren. *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. xvi + 200 pp. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0520295810.

Njoki Wane and Francis Adyanga Akena, eds. *Historical and Contemporary Pan-Africanism and the Quest for African Renaissance*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. xiv + 260 pp. Bibliography. ~~\$\$\$~~ (£61.99). Paper. ISBN: 978-1527521476.

What is Pan-Africanism? Is it a movement for the political unification of the African continent? Is it rather a set of shared values, customs and cultures? What role does the diaspora play in Pan-African visions? Is Pan-Africanism still relevant in the twenty-first century? These are the kinds of questions that nine books published in recent years — five by single authors and four edited collections — attempt to answer. In taking these books together, we find a rich, multifarious idea and movement, of both historical and contemporary relevance. These books sit within different disciplinary fields and employ a range of methodologies. Yet, taken together, they show that

Pan-Africanism remains a vibrant field of inquiry and offers an important lens through which to understand Africa, the diaspora, and, indeed, the world.

Hakim Adi has written extensively about the history of Pan-Africanism over the last three decades. His *Pan-Africanism: A History* is the first survey of the movement to be published in the twenty-first century. It is a monumental work, which, in little more than two hundred pages, expertly guides the reader through the rich history of the movement, from eighteenth-century abolitionists to the formation of the African Union (AU) in the new millennium.

Adi details how Pan-Africanism was created by the enslaved and oppressed people of the African diaspora, before “returning home” to the African continent as part of the anticolonial struggle (the 1945 Fifth Pan-African Congress held in Manchester acting here as the crucial pivot). In this second phase, the place of the diaspora is contested, though Adi himself clearly advocates for diasporic inclusion in Pan-African solidarity. His first chapter provides a whistle-stop tour through important early figures, such as Olaudah Equiano and Martin Delany, and movements against slavery and for the “repatriation” of Black people in the Americas to Africa. The chapter concludes with the First Pan-African Conference, held in London in 1900 and organized by the Trinidadian lawyer, Henry Sylvester Williams. It is the twentieth century that occupies the bulk of Adi’s attention, but his illumination of a deeper history provides vital framing. The book proceeds in a broadly chronological fashion, with individual chapters anchored around topics such as Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association, W.E.B. Du Bois’s interwar Pan-African Congresses, the articulation of Communist-inflected Pan-Africanism during the 1920s and 1930s, African diasporic activism in France, solidarity with Ethiopia after the Italian invasion of 1935, postwar African anticolonial movements, the global Black Power movement, cultural expressions of Pan-Africanism, and, finally, institutions

such as the AU as more recent manifestations of Pan-Africanism. His conclusion teases a discussion of Black Lives Matter (“Does this mark the beginning of a twenty-first-century Pan-Africanism, or does the absence of a central concern with Africa suggest that Black Lives Matter is a manifestation of something altogether different?” [222]) but the book has little to say about the present or future of Pan-Africanism. (Adi might reasonably observe that this is because the book is a *historical* work.) Nevertheless, it is clear that Adi sees Pan-Africanism as an incomplete and evolving project that “remains as significant and relevant as in previous centuries” (220).

This is a work that wrestles with what “Pan-Africanism” means. Several writers have eschewed defining Pan-Africanism, preferring instead to identify its most important features. Adi, in defining the term, says that it is a phenomenon “concerned with the social, economic, cultural and political emancipation of African peoples, including those of the African diaspora,” underlied by “a belief in the unity, common history and common purpose of the peoples of Africa and the African diaspora and the notion that their destinies are interconnected” (2). Adi’s understanding of Pan-Africanism is certainly expansive, but it allows him to explore many instances of African solidarity that might otherwise be neglected (although it must be said that this broad definition makes his equivocation over Black Lives Matter somewhat confounding). For Adi, George Shepperson’s (1962) distinction between “Pan-Africanism” (a formal movement built around a series of congresses and organizations) and “pan-Africanism” (forms of “all-African” activity that sit outside these formal institutions, such as Négritude) is not a useful one. He instead contends that “Pan-Africanism might be more usefully viewed as one river with many streams and currents” (4).

Adi also takes issue with the language of *black internationalism*, which he sees as the language of US academia. For Adi, *Pan-Africanism* is the preferred term, as it represents an organic activist creation (4-5). In Reiland Rabaka's edited volume, the *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism* (also reviewed in this essay), Charisse Burden-Stelly and Gerald Horne make the case for the utility of the language of *black internationalism* not as a synonym for *Pan-Africanism*, but rather "as a *conceptual framework* that specifies a form of Pan-African activism, organizing, strategy, and scholarship inscribed in, engaged with, or adjacent to international Marxist-Leninist formations" (69). My own feeling is that the terminological issue is less important than the historical framework adopted by Adi. By writing a history of various currents of thought and activism — including Pan-African Congresses, Garveyism, Négritude, and Rastafari, among countless others — Adi shows the multitude of Black solidaristic practices, and how these practices interacted with, diverged from, and commingled with one another.

As a survey, the book necessarily has to deal with several important events and organizations tersely. But it is a fantastic introduction to the subject, which will captivate readers. It is both accessible and intellectually rigorous, and proves beyond doubt the vast significance of Pan-Africanism in the making of the modern world.

A more tightly-focused monograph, Adom Getachew's *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, begins with Kwame Nkrumah announcing Ghana's independence on March 6, 1957. Nkrumah celebrated this historic moment, but urged that Ghanaian independence was "meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent" (1). A central theme of Getachew's book immediately crystallizes: how do we reconcile movements for *national* independence with goals of *Pan-African* federation and solidarity? For Getachew, Nkrumah's speech highlights an attempt to resolve this possible

tension: “This connection between Ghana’s independence and African emancipation not only looked forward to the formation of new African states but also envisioned national independence as the first step in constituting a Pan-African federation and transforming the international order” (1). In this sense, nationalism and *internationalism* were complementary forces. African and diasporic anticolonial leaders did not simply appropriate a Wilsonian idea of self-determination. They were instead engaged in a project of *worldmaking* that would reinvent self-determination; “decolonization was a project of reordering the world that sought to create a domination-free and egalitarian international order” (2). Importantly, “anticolonial self-determination always included economic as well as political independence” (25).

Based on significant archival research, *Worldmaking after Empire* operates at the intersection of intellectual history, political theory and international relations. One of the book’s many virtues is Getachew’s masterful exegesis of texts produced by a number of anglophone African and diasporic intellectuals: Nnamdi Azikiwe, W.E.B. Du Bois, Michael Manley, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, George Padmore and Eric Williams. (Of these, all but Du Bois and Padmore were leaders of postcolonial nations.) These intellectuals and political leaders concluded that “national independence required international institutions” (15). As Getachew demonstrates with great insight, they embarked on several projects during the postwar period — institutionalizing the right to self-determination at the United Nations, forming regional federations, and demanding a New International Economic Order — in order to secure a clean break from the imperialist world system, which nation-building alone could not provide.

Pan-Africanism features in *Worldmaking after Empire* as a particular strain of Third-Worldist and anticolonial politics. Getachew notes that *worldmaking* could also describe the projects of the 1955 Bandung Conference or the Non-Aligned Movement, but her focal point is

the Black Atlantic. Here anticolonial worldmaking “took a distinctive trajectory” as it drew on a critique “that began from the foundational role of New World slavery in the making of the modern world” (5). For Getachew, like Adi and many of the other authors discussed in this essay, Atlantic slavery played the formative role in the history of Pan-Africanism.

A more direct and sustained analysis of the relationship between (anti)capitalism and (anti)imperialism would have been enlightening, especially given the Marxist and socialist perspectives of most of Getachew’s worldmakers. Does the achievement of “nondomination” necessarily entail an unfaltering anticapitalism? Would these projects look different if we also considered Black feminist thought? Even if the fall of self-determination was not inevitable, and Getachew’s worldmakers believed that “The road to a universal postimperial world order was in and through the nation rather than over and against the nation” (28), did the inverse in fact offer a better path, or was it a dead end?

Black Atlantic worldmaking projects have been seen as many failures as successes. Getachew convincingly opines that the period since the mid-1970s has been marked by the triumph of neoliberalism over self-determination. Looking at the discrepancy between objectives and outcomes, is it not the case that Getachew’s *worldmakers* in fact remained, for the most part, *worldimagers*? Nevertheless, the epilogue looks with optimism towards “the Movement for Black Lives, the Caribbean demand for reparations for slavery and genocide, and South African calls for a social and economic decolonization.” These political formations, like “the worldmakers of decolonization” are “imagining an anti-imperial future” (181). Getachew has undoubtedly identified some of today’s most vital political projects, and there remains hope for a postimperial world. Her original and ambitious book makes a rich contribution to multiple disciplines and brilliantly illuminates Pan-Africanists’ radical visions of self-determination.

While Getachew has little to say about women or gender, Imaobong D. Umoren's *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles* and Keisha N. Blain's *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* make excellent contributions to our knowledge of Black women's activism during the twentieth century. Women's activism receives some important attention in Adi's book, and he consciously combats the historical "erasure" of women like the Nardal sisters (105). In Blain's and Umoren's books, however, women take center stage. The books' contributions to the histories of Pan-Africanism and Black radicalism are not merely supplementary, adding neglected women to an otherwise male pantheon (although even that would be a worthwhile task). Rather, these studies transform our understanding of radical and internationalist politics in the twentieth century. Interestingly, Umoren uses the language of *internationalism*, while Blain adopts that of *nationalism*. However, Blain's nationalist women were not simply *African American* nationalists, but rather *global* Black nationalists. Theirs was therefore an international nationalism. These works, alongside Getachew's, therefore allow us to probe the permeable boundaries between nationalism and internationalism in Pan-African history.

Both Blain and Umoren provide a powerful corrective to studies of Pan-Africanism that have focused primarily on men. As Umoren writes, "None of these women were obscure figures in their day, but their careers and achievements were overshadowed by men" (xv), something of which the women themselves were acutely aware. She has written a dazzling account of the lives of Una Marson, a Jamaican poet, playwright, journalist and broadcaster; Paulette Nardal, a Martiniquan journalist; and Eslanda Robeson, an American anthropologist and the wife of the singer, actor and activist, Paul Robeson. Following and advancing the path trod by pioneers such

as Anna Julia Cooper, the author of *A Voice from the South* (1892), these were *race women*, “the term used to describe public women of African descent who aimed to ‘uplift the race’” (1).

They were also all, like Cooper, transnational figures. Each was born in the Americas, lived for extended periods in Europe (particularly the anticolonial hubs of London and Paris), and, in Robeson’s case, travelled to Africa and Asia as well. They formed feminist and Pan-African political, cultural and social networks through their travels, studies and writings, and were thus, in Umoren’s terminology, *race women internationalists*. The women were always on the move, and travel was central to the formation and articulation of race woman internationalist politics: “Their sojourns enabled them to create and participate in the transnational black public sphere and civil society, a figurative and physical global community beyond the imperial or nation state that engendered the growth of international organizations, associations, charities, and print cultures” (2).

Race Women Internationalists follows a chronological structure to show how these three women’s lives were entangled not so much personally, but rather intellectually and politically. Chapters focus on Black and feminist internationalism in interwar Europe; the antifascist internationalism of the late 1930s (anchored around the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and the Spanish Civil War); internationalisms during and after the Second World War; and, finally, the continuities and changes of the 1950s and 1960s in the context of “the Cold War, civil rights protests, and decolonization” (92).

Umoren’s “group biography method” (120) and chronological approach allows her to skillfully uncover the general trends of Black women’s intellectual history throughout the twentieth century, while remaining sensitive to the particularities of each of her subjects’ lives. They practiced “interconnected internationalisms”: “black feminist, Christian, anti-fascist,

conservative, radical, and liberal” (3). As Umoren demonstrates, shorthand political labels can be “too limiting,” as they “fail to take into account the flexible nature of women’s political thought” (7). Although Robeson was consistently the most left wing of the three, the ideas that she, Marson and Nardal articulated were not fixed, but changed according to both world-historical events and the particular social and personal contexts of each woman’s life. Race women internationalists were characterized by “ideological heterogeneity” (119) and they addressed intersecting concerns that could not always be neatly encapsulated by conventional political categories.

Umoren has produced a wonderful group biography of Marson, Nardal and Robeson, painstakingly reconstructing their lives by masterfully combing multiple archives — often in the face of difficulty, as Nardal’s personal papers were lost at sea in 1939. *Race Women Internationalists* is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the internationalist networks of the twentieth century, and Umoren shows the central role played by Black women in establishing such networks.

Set the World on Fire focuses on the lives of several Black nationalist women — including Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, Ethel Waddell, Celia Jane Allen, Ethel Collins, Amy Jacques Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey and Maymie Leona Turpeau De Mena — to reframe, contrary to popular historical wisdom, “the Great Depression, World War II, and early Cold War as significant eras of black nationalist ferment” (3). Blain’s book follows a broadly chronological structure to show that Black nationalism did not die with Marcus Garvey’s deportation from the United States to Jamaica in 1927, to be spectacularly reanimated by Malcolm X and others in the 1960s. Rather, it was sustained and advanced by Black nationalist women, who often espoused “proto-feminist politics,” throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. In making this

argument, Blain brilliantly recovers the lives and voices of ordinary — yet extraordinary — Black women, many of whom left behind little archival record and might otherwise have been forgotten.

Blain, while highlighting the heterogeneity of the movement, defines Black nationalism as “the political view that people of African descent constitute a separate group or nationality on the basis of their distinct culture, shared history, and experiences.” Black nationalists “advocated Pan-African unity, African redemption from European colonization, racial separatism, black pride, political self-determination, and economic self-sufficiency” (3). It is this emphasis on racial separatism that most clearly distinguishes Blain’s Black nationalist women from Umoren’s race women internationalists. While Umoren’s protagonists sought ultimately to dissolve racial boundaries, Blain’s Black nationalists held no such commitment. Nevertheless, Blain wisely cautions against understanding activists as “operat[ing] within a rigid ideological binary” (6). Indeed, much of this Black nationalist program — Pan-African unity, African redemption, Black pride, and self-determination — was also dear to Umoren’s race women internationalists. The nationalism in question was not simply territorial (although a key aspect of many Black nationalist programs was African American emigration to Liberia) and Black nationalists forged internationalist solidarities with global freedom movements. Whereas the international sojourns of middle-class Black women occupy a central space in Umoren’s book, Blain focuses primarily on the activism of working-class women. Many of these women could not afford overseas travel and therefore “sought to advance internationalism through their writings, community work, and local collaborations with men and women from various parts of the globe” (9). Taken together, these books therefore allow us to see the multiple ways in which Pan-Africanism could be

fostered, and how the global circuits of radical ideas and Black print culture promoted Pan-African sensibilities and solidarities even when activists themselves were often immobile.

Nevertheless, the Black (inter)nationalism that Blain describes was in many ways peculiarly African American. Unlike Umoren's selection of protagonists, which crosses national, imperial and linguistic boundaries, the women on which Blain focuses were all from the United States, or at least spent a significant portion of their lives there. (Blain does, though, occasionally turn her attention to activism in other corners of the Black Atlantic, such as Britain and Jamaica.) While Black nationalists were committed to building transnational links, they were especially concerned with domestic US problems. At a meeting in Chicago in 1932, Gordon, a sometime Universal Negro Improvement Association member and the founder of the Peace Movement of Ethiopia, declared that in emigrating to West Africa "the Negro would escape from the economic, racial and political problems which confronted the race in the United States" (47). The emigrationist movement was framed primarily as a solution to the problem of US racism, rather than that of European colonialism in Africa. When continental African issues were considered, emigrationist programs were often characterized by "civilizationist" ideas that diasporic Africans would play a leading role in African development. However, while Black nationalist politics were marked by a US perspective, the internationalism of the movement was striking, and many Black nationalist women held a genuine commitment to anticolonialism, as is made particularly clear by the book's later chapters.

One of the most controversial aspects of Black nationalist women's activism was their cooperation with white supremacists who, for very different reasons, shared certain Black nationalist objectives. For instance, during the 1930s Celia Jane Allen "pursued an unlikely political alliance with Mississippi Senator Theodore G. Bilbo, a well-known white supremacist

who actively supported racial separatism — and, by extension, black emigration” (78). Blain recognizes such collaborations as “errors in judgment” (7) but explains that, with Black people facing racist violence and suffering under second-class citizenship, these decisions were “neither irrational nor haphazard” (105). Her ability to tell these stories critically yet empathetically demonstrates real skill.

Both Blain’s and Umoren’s books would have benefited from a deeper engagement with Communism, which was a powerful strain of Black radicalism during the twentieth century. How would the inclusion of a Communist woman have influenced Umoren’s study? (Robeson undoubtedly held Communist sympathies, but Umoren has little to say on this matter.) Black Communist women, such as Claudia Jones and Louise Thompson Patterson, whose lives neatly overlapped with Marson’s, Nardal’s and Robeson’s and who similarly had much to say about racism, sexism, colonialism and fascism, were leading theorists of the “triple exploitation” of class, gender and race that has become so foundational to much Black feminist thought. Blain explicitly excludes Communists from her study of Black nationalist women. However, given the Communist Party of the USA’s Black Belt theory, which held that African Americans in the South constituted an oppressed nation with the right to self-determination, Communist women were also, in a sense, Black nationalists, even if they rejected the “black capitalism” that Blain sees as a central feature of Black nationalist ideology (7). Jones’s essay, “On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt” (1946), encapsulates this tradition. Exploring this particularly Communist articulation of nationalism could have afforded even greater insight into the rich world of Black women's thought and activism. Nevertheless, both books are fantastic additions to the literature on Pan-Africanist history.

Nemata Amelia Ibitayo Blyden's *African Americans and Africa: A New History* offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between Africa and the diaspora. For Blyden, this is in part a personal story. The daughter of an African American mother and a Sierra Leonean father, her family history has been defined by a succession of Atlantic crossings. The violence of the Middle Passage, the freedom dreams of Black American colonists in West Africa, the Black Atlantic sojourns of the twentieth century — all of these have profoundly shaped the history of both Blyden's family and that of Africans and the African diaspora collectively.

Starting with the dawn of the slave trade and ending with Barack Obama's presidency, Blyden examines "the many ways African-descended men and women chose to engage and identify with, influence, and impact Africa over the centuries" (12). Her scope is cinematic, and *African Americans and Africa* draws on the latest scholarship to highlight a multitude of these engagements and influences. For instance, Blyden discusses recent excavations that have found "evidence of African rituals being used in burial practices" in free Black settlements (72), the invocation of African identity as a source of pride by figures like Prince Hall and Phillis Wheatley, and the growing numbers of African migrants to the United States in recent decades. Like Blain, she explores the emigrationist movement with reference to both its emancipatory and paternalistic impulses: "Divine providence, back to Africa proponents argued, had brought them to the United States, allowing conversion to Christianity and its concomitant civilization and preparing them for a 'return' to Africa. There they would uplift their African brothers and sisters through the light of Christianity" (20).

There is no singular or neat narrative here: "Often prompted by changes occurring in the United States itself, the relationship with Africa has had ebbs and flows" (12). Again, here we find consonance with Blain's *Set the World on Fire*, which shows how Black nationalist

women's emigrationist programs in the mid-twentieth century were often informed by a desire to escape US racism. The case of Martin Delany is illustrative. As Blyden notes, Delany "supported the emigration impulse" but "did not completely reject his birthplace" — "He promoted an African American exodus more vociferously during historical moments when it seemed black Americans were destined for perpetual subservience and inequality in American society, but he did not give up on the notion that they might find justice in the United States" (117). He thus moved away from an emigrationist position during the Civil War, and served as an officer in the Union Army. After the counterrevolution that marked the end of Reconstruction, he set his sights on Liberian emigration. There would be similar ebbs and flows in the twentieth century. While the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 ushered in an era of significant Pan-African sentiment, the 1950s saw a "strong anti-Communist strand [emerge] in the rhetoric of some black leaders as they distanced themselves from African issues. . . . Hesitant to criticize their government and its policies, black Americans embraced their American identity" (160).

The book's range is its greatest strength and greatest weakness. As a survey history, it is rich with sketches, anecdotes and biographies. It is also marked by ambivalence, and presents little in the way of an argument, other than that the relationship between African Americans and Africa has been historically contingent. As is also the case with *Set the World on Fire*, it seems that in *African Americans and Africa* we are hearing one side of a conversation. Continental African voices become more prominent in Blyden's later chapters, but they are largely absent throughout most of the book. Writing about a conference held in Atlanta in 1896, Blyden muses that "we might wonder what Africans on the continent might have thought of a conference held in the United States with an agenda purporting to be in aid of their redemption. We can surmise that they did not see themselves as candidates for African American beneficence" (126). This is

an important point that deserves further interrogation. What did African American ideas about Africa — particularly those pertaining to emigration — look like from the other side of the Atlantic? However, as Blyden herself writes, the book is not “exhaustive,” but is rather “an introduction and a gateway” that should inspire future research (11-12). Hopefully future scholars will rise to meet this challenge. Blyden has presented us with a stimulating and highly readable introduction to the subject. The question of African and African American (and more widely, African diasporic) connections is a vital one, which should be taken up by historians and social scientists.

Recent years have also seen the publication of a number of edited collections on the topic of Pan-Africanism. The biggest and broadest is the *Routledge Handbook of Pan-Africanism*, edited by Reiland Rabaka. This huge volume brings together many of the leading scholars of Pan-Africanism from a wide range of disciplines, including history, sociology, politics and economics. Indeed, many of the contributors work in the interdisciplinary fields of Black studies, gender studies and postcolonial studies. The book is divided into seven sections, which cover: the intellectual origins, historical evolution, and radical politics of Pan-Africanism; Pan-Africanist theories; Pan-Africanism in the African diaspora; Pan-Africanism in Africa; literary Pan-Africanism; musical Pan-Africanism; and the contemporary and continued relevance of Pan-Africanism in the twenty-first century.

Like Adi, Rabaka in his introduction grapples with the question of what exactly Pan-Africanism *is*. He observes that “few Pan-Africanists, historians or otherwise, have come to consensus regarding exactly what Pan-Africanism is and what it is not” (2). Indeed, the very title of his introduction highlights the “intellectual elasticity and political plurality” of Pan-Africanism, and he advocates a plural terminology of *Pan-Africanisms*. The diversity of Pan-

Africanism(s) is attested to through contributions that cover strains and articulations of Pan-Africanism such as Black nationalism, feminist and LGBTQIA+ politics, Afrocentricity, and Black Consciousness, as well as expressions of Pan-Africanism in artistic and cultural forms. Finding forms of coherence and unity within this diversity, Rabaka writes that “Pan-Africanism is simultaneously an idea *and* a movement, a kind of intellectualism *and* activism, a theory *and* a praxis. It exists whenever people of African ancestry recognize and resist the particular ways continental and diasporan Africans have been racialized, colonized, enslaved, oppressed, and exploited” (5). It is, in its simplest terms, “a simultaneously intellectual, cultural, social, political, economic and artistic project that calls for the unification and liberation of all people of African ancestry, both on the African continent and in the African diaspora” (8). According to Rabaka, Pan-Africanism had a formative period that can be traced to enslavement, then matured in the period between the Pan-African Conference held in London in 1900 and the All African People’s Conference held in Accra in 1958, and has continued to develop in multiple ways in the period since.

Like other books discussed in this review, the volume also seeks to challenge earlier accounts and analyses of Pan-Africanism that have focused on the ideas and activism of men. Rabaka notes in the introduction that “As black feminism, African feminism, Caribbean feminism, and Pan-African feminism have long emphasized, scores of women of African ancestry have contributed to the Pan-African idea and movement” (6). Chapters by Ashley D. Farmer, Lyn Ossome, Simphiwe Sesanti and Kathleen Sheldon in particular attest to the important role that women have played in the development of Pan-Africanism (and women’s ideas and activism also appear in many other chapters). The volume as a whole is particularly sensitive to intersecting oppressions and resistances, and chapters by scholars such as Adriaan

van Klinken, and Surya Monro, Zethu Matebeni and Vasu Reddy demonstrate the importance of LGBTQIA+ ideas, activism and experiences to understanding Pan-Africanism. This attentiveness to intersectionality, and the vital injunction that *Pan-Africanism* must by definition extend to all Africans regardless of gender or sexuality, is one of the volume's greatest strengths.

The volume also looks to the future of Pan-Africanism. The incompleteness of decolonization occupies a prominent place in the minds of several contributors, attesting to the neoliberal and neocolonial counter-revolution outlined in *Worldmaking after Empire*. William Ackah, after observing the continued oppression and exploitation of Black people around the world, calls for a “renewed Pan-African politics ... that focuses on rights, justice, reparations, and recognition for all African descendants” (48). Similarly, chapters by Mark Langan, Guy Martin, Abu Girma Moges and Mammo Muchie, Tim Murithi, and Mueni wa Muiu, among others, suggest blueprints for African liberation and make the case for the continued relevance of Pan-Africanism for creating a better future for those on the continent and in the diaspora. That said, the result is a multitude of voices, rather than a unified manifesto.

Even in such an expansive volume, not every avenue can be explored. Studies of the anglophone world predominate, and discussions of Latin America in particular are conspicuously absent. But Rabaka is candid about the book's “omissions and elisions” (15) and shows an awareness that this is a topic that cannot be exhausted. What he and the volume's contributors have produced serves as both an excellent introduction to a knotty and complex subject and a provocation for future researchers to tackle the manifold questions that underpin, animate and are generated by the book.

Visions of African Unity: New Perspectives on the History of Pan-Africanism and African Unification Projects, edited by Matteo Grilli and Frank Gerits, also brings together scholars from

multiple disciplines to discuss some of the most important episodes in Pan-Africanist history, although its scope is less wide than Rabaka's book. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), founded in 1963, occupies a central space in *Visions of African Unity*, as does its successor, the African Union, if to a slightly lesser extent. Grilli and Gerits state in their introduction that their aim is to clarify the OAU's "contribution to international norm-making" (9), which has remained underexplored in the field of international history. The volume's primary concern is at the level of high politics, diplomacy and security, especially during the Cold War and the era of decolonization. A number of chapters also discuss more recent events and phenomena, in which the issue of human rights becomes a more prominent theme.

Like Getachew, the contributors to this volume are concerned with how African politicians and intellectuals approached the thorny matters of sovereignty, statehood and governance from Pan-Africanist perspectives. As the editors state, by the 1960s "Pan-Africanism had matured into a political philosophy while plans for continental and regional integration were omnipresent" (2). However, this philosophy "had many different iterations" (3), as the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere and Haile Selassie each suggested different paths to and visions of a united Africa.

For Alice Musabende, the "political collectivist 'African identity'" is "an elusive one," but, she argues, "the very strength of an African collective identity then lies in its indeterminacy" because of its ability to appeal to multiple actors (347). This lack of agreement as to what exactly constitutes "African identity" helps to explain what is perhaps the volume's central theme: *competing* visions of African unity. Chapters by the likes of Kathryn Nash, Kate Skinner and many others identify fault lines that have derailed, halted and slowed various African unification projects. In recognition of such difficulties, Chris Saunders writes of the AU's Agenda 2063,

which envisages “an integrated continent, politically united,” that “history suggests that grandiose visions are unlikely to be realised” (151). More optimistically, Toyin Falola formulates a series of policies to achieve a united Africa, covering areas including economics; education; sport and entertainment; political and military systems; and science and technology. He concludes that these policies “will achieve a united and well-developed Africa in the interests of the people: our poor, struggling masses. The concept of African unity is not a far-fetched vision” (394).

Grilli and Gerits promise that the volume “goes beyond an institutional analysis of the OAU by exploring cultural, economic and non-state aspects of the OAU” (3). Several chapters, including those by Alexandra M. Dias, Myra Ann Houser and Paraska Tolan-Szkilnik, discuss the role played by national liberation movements in constituting Pan-Africanism. It is in these chapters in particular that the importance of non-state actors emerges. As Dias writes in her chapter about insurgencies in the Portuguese colonies, “looking at the interplay between liberation insurgencies, newly independent states, and an African international society” acts as a corrective to “the many scholarly works that have tended to privilege the study of [the] expansion [of international society] both from a Western and a state-centred perspective” (186). Many non-state actors discussed in the volume are, though, at least, *would-be* state actors. Lamine Doumbia and Ousmane Diouf’s chapter provides one exception, as through the use of ethnographic narrative interviews they investigate “to what extent the dreams of African intellectuals on African unity were part of the grassroots conversation in French West Africa” (107), and conclude that “daily life was made up of manifestations of African integration that kept the project alive” (126).

The volume's introduction contains a "plea" to "increase the accessibility of African archives" (4) and invokes Achille Mbembe to argue that "the state archive is a site of power and archival technologies are means to exercise rule" (13). But — Doumbia and Diouf's use of narrative interviews and Chedza Molefe's important postscript about archival sources and practices notwithstanding — it feels like there is more to be said here. Many of the contributors employ what seem to be conventional archival approaches without comment. And is demanding that archives become more accessible — no doubt an important and principled demand — in itself sufficient to resolve or challenge the ways in which power is exercised through archival technologies?

Such issues deserve further consideration, but *Visions of African Unity* succeeds in bringing together a host of important voices to discuss some of the most crucial issues in Africa's recent history. Many contributions are written with a real sense of urgency, reminding us that visions of African unity cannot simply be consigned to the past, and that they will continue to animate African intellectuals, politicians and peoples for years to come.

Njoki Wane and Francis Adyanga Akena's edited volume *Historical and Contemporary Pan-Africanism and the Quest for African Renaissance* also approaches vitally important questions surrounding African liberation from an interdisciplinary perspective. The introduction opens with a quotation from Thabo Mbeki's 1996 speech, "I am an African," which Wane identifies as part of a long tradition of envisioning an "African Renaissance" (1). Mbeki's historical and contemporary interlocutors include the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Cheikh Anta Diop, Maulana Karenga, Molefi Asante, Ama Mazama, C. Tsehloane Keto, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah and Malcolm X. For Wane, what these figures have in common is that they "have pointed out that the key to our emancipation is located in our connectivity and our ability

to unlock the collective memory of the past and present” (2). Wane’s use of first-person pronouns reveals her own identification with such projects. Indeed, this book is itself intended as a contribution towards the African Renaissance. In particular, the contributors are concerned with the lingering effects of colonialism, as, even after the postwar “African world revolution” shook the foundations of the global order, “it is clear that emancipation did not translate into mental and cultural freedom” (2). This concern with “mental and cultural freedom” explains the inclusion of several of the intellectuals on the above list (the works of Karenga and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o — the latter perhaps a surprising omission from Wane’s initial list — figure especially prominently in the introduction). While Grilli and Gerits’s volume primarily explores Pan-Africanist visions at the level of the state and government, this volume is more concerned with the cultural, linguistic and philosophical realm. As Vera Ogiormua writes in her chapter, neatly encapsulating the spirit of the volume, “The colonized mind is the challenge we face as a continent” (76). However, I would caution against drawing too neat a binary, as many Pan-Africanists have seen the political and the cultural as two sides of the same coin. Indeed, many of the volume’s contributors look to issues such as identity and culture to explain why political projects of African unification have failed. Moreover, some of the volume’s chapters, such as Munya Kabba’s contribution, which uses an Arendtian understanding of power to analyze crises of political governance in Africa, would not be out of place in Grilli and Gerits’s volume.

Around half of the volume’s contributors, including Ahmed Ilmi, Sein Kipusi, Michael Onyedika Nwalutu and Felicia Ihuoma Nwalutu, and Vera Ogiormua, reflect on their positionality and ground their arguments and analysis in their personal experiences. In doing so, the authors powerfully illustrate the all-pervasiveness of race and racialization in shaping human encounters and relationships, and how academic scholarship cannot be coolly detached from

such processes. Several contributors recount experiences from childhood, which are often about their school education and the alternative (often more valuable) forms of knowledge imparted by older family members, as part of these personal meditations. Take, for instance, Ann E. Lopez's reminiscences of facing racism and classism, as well as Eurocentric curricula, in school, while outside of the formal education system her "philosophy and beliefs" were shaped by her grandmother's "stories, proverbs and sayings" (48).

Several chapters, such as those by Kwando M. Kinshasa, Ajamu Nangwaya and Adwoa N. Onuora, and Ibram H. Rogers, explore diasporic African identities and the persistence and reconfigurations of African cultural, spiritual and religious practices in the diaspora. These shared experiences and mutual identifications are part of what David Irwin terms "the black transnational space" (172) in his study of Afro-Cubans and African Americans. African ideas survived the crossing of the Atlantic in a number of ways, including in the form of religious syncretism, as Hermia Morton Anthony illustrates in her discussion of female "prayer warriors." During a 1935 protest in Saint Kitts, these women "wore guards — necklaces bearing tiny pouches containing elements to provide protection, associated with the African-based religious tradition, obeah, while proclaiming Christian prayers and psalms" (165). Gender and women's agency also provide important analytical frameworks in other chapters, such as Francis Adyanga Akena's contribution about women's involvement in Ugandan insurgent movements.

The book could have been better organized. Wane ends the introduction by offering a summary of each chapter, but does not use this as an opportunity to put them into conversation with one another. This might be because, aside from the general theme of "African Renaissance," some of the chapters perhaps do not have a great deal in common. For instance, Nwalutu and Nwalutu's chapter about asylum seekers and border securitization is an excellent

piece of scholarship in its own right, but its connections to the volume's broader themes are tenuous. More editorial heavy-lifting might have given the volume greater coherence. This quibble aside, the volume collects many valuable voices who provide rich insights into what forms African liberation has, can and must take.

Pan-African Spaces: Essays on Black Transnationalism, edited by Msia Kibona Clark, Phiwokuhle Mnyandu and Loy L. Azalia, also approaches Pan-Africanism from a cultural perspective, but in a very different manner to Wane and Akena's book. The volume collects essays written by "bicultural" Black people — that is, "people who self-identify as Black, and who navigate multiple Black cultural spaces" (3). (This language of *navigation* recurs throughout the volume, indicating how its bicultural contributors have had to carefully plot the way they interact with people in different settings.) The book is divided into seven sections comprising both personal and scholarly essays, as well as poems. The sections are organized around the themes of: Black migration; Black transnationalism and identity formation; West African migrants in the US; Ethiopian migrants in the US; Black migrant experiences in South Africa; Caribbean and African American communities in the US; and Afro-Latinx identities. Most of the essays have a confessional or autoethnographic quality, in which the respective author uses their personal story — often of childhood and early adulthood — to explore broader social and cultural phenomena. Other chapters — such as Tolulope F. Odunsi's exploration of the appropriateness of affirmative action for Black migrants to the US; Shelvia English, Dayne Hutchinson, and Kat J. Stephens's study of Afro-Caribbean experiences in the US; and Krista L. Cortes's chapter about Puerto Rican identity in Northern California — follow more traditional scholarly conventions.

The introduction opens with a series of questions: “What does it mean to be Black and bicultural? Or to inhabit multiple Black or African cultural spaces? What are some of the complex ways people of African descent identify as African, African American, Black, Coloured, and so on?” (3) The editors stress that in this collection, “identity is not approached in a dichotomous manner, but as a series of interwoven experiences that influence how one moves between and among new and old identities” (5). Navigating different spaces requires “cultural frame switching” — “the practice of moving between cultural contexts, and knowing and exhibiting the appropriate cultural cues in those contexts” (5).

Pan African Spaces locates itself in the increasing global migration of the twenty-first century, in which “an increasing number of people of African descent have found themselves in multiple Black cultural spaces” (6). There are, as such, important resonances with Blyden’s and Umoren’s books, in which international travel plays a foundational role in Pan-African consciousness and identity formation. Many of the essays detail the disorienting effects of migration on the respective author, and how that author has since come to understand, and often embrace, their multiple cultures and identities. Contributors discuss a recurring slate of cultural markers — food, language, attitudes towards sex and dating — as informing feelings of difference, belonging, inclusion, and exclusion. As Yelena Bailey writes of her Ethiopian and African American heritage, “Being multiethnic and yet completely Black, I have developed a fluid and complex understanding of my Blackness. I learned that the meaning of my Blackness is often dependent on context” (130). Notably, Black migrants to South Africa seem, in general terms, to have found it more difficult to balance multiple identities than have Black migrants to the US (although given the highly personal and individual nature of many of the essays, it is difficult to draw too bold a conclusion from this trend). Margaret Eva Salifu memorably

describes balancing her Ghanaian and American identities as “having [her] kenkey and eating it too” (103).

The book’s language of *biculturalism* sometimes comes under strain. The authors allow for cultural entanglement and mixture in their essays, but the term *bicultural* itself seems to imply the existence of two — and no more than two — relatively distinct cultural identities, and therefore struggles to do the complex work required of it. For instance, in one essay, Kibona Clark writes of her experiences navigating her African American and Tanzanian cultural heritage. With her Ghanaian husband, she is raising her son “to claim all three cultures as his own” (52). Or alternatively, take Sayuni Brown writing, “I’m Black, then a woman, then African, then Ugandan” (161). *Bicultural* seems unable to capture or accommodate such statements of identity. Cassandra St. Vil writes in her contribution that “within the massive, worldwide sociopolitical group of Black peoples, there are members who hold bi-, tri- and multicultural identities” (209). The language of *multiculturalism* is an important modification, even if it is a term usually associated with societies rather than with individuals. However, even this language still seems to imply that cultures remain largely fixed and distinct. As such, it would have been interesting to see a discussion of the idea of *transculturation*, a concept most closely associated with the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1940). Transculturation is the process by which cultures merge and converge into something new. Its language captures the *mixture* of identities and cultures, as well as simply their *coexistence*.

That said, *Pan-African Spaces* provides a brilliant insight into a range of Black experiences and identities. With contributions from scholars and writers from across Africa and the diaspora, it allows the reader to understand Blackness as a global phenomenon while never losing sight of its diversity.

Collectively and individually, then, these books contribute immensely to our knowledge of Pan-Africanism, and its pasts, presents and futures. It is, perhaps, impossible to define or summarize Pan-Africanism in a single sentence (or even a single book) as the authors of and contributors to the books reviewed here can attest. It has seen many different iterations (political, cultural, spiritual) in many different times (the era of slavery, the era of colonialism, our own “postcolonial” era) in many different places (the Americas, Europe, Africa itself). Some broad themes can be drawn from these books: the centrality of travel to Pan-African consciousness; the role played by women in developing Pan-Africanist ideas and movements; the relationship between the peoples of the continent and the peoples of the diaspora. But perhaps more than anything else, the books highlight the sheer diversity of Pan-Africanism, its fractures and fissures, and the many competing ideas of what exactly the unity of African peoples means or should look like. Nevertheless, many of the books strike a bullish tone. Their authors are mindful of both the failures and successes of Pan-Africanism so far, and find cause for hope in the movements of today. Of course, those who seek liberation are bound to be eternal optimists. There is no other way.

I’m writing this essay only one year after the global Black Lives Matter demonstrations of 2020, perhaps the most obvious expression of Pan-African sentiment in recent years. Prompted by the murder of a Black man, George Floyd, by a police officer in the United States, protests spread across the world. In Britain, my home country, demonstrators toppled a statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader, and dumped it in Bristol Harbour. In front of our eyes, the Black Lives Matter movement is continuing the Pan-Africanist tradition of articulating a global Black solidarity while grounding itself in particular local and national conditions. Scholars of today and

tomorrow will have more to write about Pan-Africanism, not just because its history is so rich and complex, but because its present and future are, too.

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