

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

So Long and Farewell: An Editor's Final Introduction

This December 2022 issue is my final endeavor at the helm of the *African Studies Review*. It is also, rather auspiciously, the final print edition of the journal. Beginning in 2023, the journal will follow in the footsteps of many others and become an exclusively online publication. The ASR greets this development with excitement because we know it will ultimately make more scholarship accessible to greater numbers of scholars around the globe. It merits further consideration of what this means and why it is a logical and necessary step in the decolonization of knowledge production about Africa and Africans.

Over the past five and a half years, the team I have had the pleasure of leading has reshaped and modernized the journal and taken it in exciting new directions. Perhaps the two most important developments are the transformation of the editorial team into a collective, and the deepening of ties between the journal and scholars on the African continent. These developments are mutually informing. The editorial team now comprises an Editor-in-Chief, a Deputy Editor, and eight Associate Editors. Together we guide the journal, making management and editorial decisions, and run the day-to-day reviewing of submissions. Book reviews and film reviews now have their own teams, led each by a Senior Editor. Paul Ocobock has taken over from Dawne Curry as Senior Book Review Editor, leading a team of eight. Rachael Diang'a has taken over the role of Film Review Editor from Rachel Gabara, and she leads a team of six. Together they assign, edit, and supervise reviews and spearhead new initiatives.

The forty-strong Editorial Review Board provides managerial guidance at the Annual General Meeting of the journal and a great variety of other service dimensions over the course of the year. With eight new appointments this year to the ERB (including scholars from Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique, DR Congo, Senegal, and Brazil) the majority of the ERB now

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comprises African scholars, along with many others with African diaspora heritage. The ASR is now in a remarkable position, insofar as it has the deepest and strongest ties with Africa-based scholars of all African studies journals based in North America or Europe.

One of my parting joys is to introduce the winners of the two ASR prizes that were created during the first year of my five-year term. The 2022 committee has awarded the ASR Prize for the Best Africa-based Doctoral Dissertation to Abdulhadi Nadir Nasidi, a 2021 graduate of the Department of Fine Arts at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, for his thesis “A Contextual Analysis of Sufi Saint Paintings in Kano, Nigeria.” The committee observes that Dr. Nasidi conducted his fieldwork in Kano, where he interviewed artists and studied their paintings. In this city, followers of the Sufi orders, in particular the Tijjāniyyah, commission artists to paint portraits of holy figures, seeking spiritual benefits for themselves and the places where the paintings featured. Dr. Nasidi investigated how Islamic debates regarding the legality of figurative art were locally shaped, and he explored the various attitudes which the painters adopted. This important contribution to the study of art in Nigeria engages with a broader literature, drawing conclusions on stylistic points (such as the semiotic role of colors), as well as on historical dynamics (detailing how the paintings give hints regarding the local hierarchy of saints), opening up avenues for new research in the region and beyond.

The committee also designated three dissertations for the distinction of honorable mention. Bryan Kauma wrote a fascinating study of small grains (sorghum, millet, and rapoko) in Zimbabwe, with a broad chronology and a rich combination of methods and fields in his thesis, “A social, economic and environmental history of African small grains in Zimbabwe, from the pre-colonial past to the present,” defended at Stellenbosch University. Claire-Anne Louise Lester, also at Stellenbosch University, significantly contributes to discussions on the role of justice in post-apartheid South Africa in her thesis in sociology and anthropology on “Legal Truth and Discourses of Violence in Post-apartheid Commissions of Inquiry: The TRC and Marikana Commission.” Olamiposi Festus Oyeleye adds to the scholarship on Nollywood with an in-depth literary analysis of productions by two filmmakers in his thesis, “Aesthetics of Nationalism in selected films of Tunde Kelani and Kunle Afolayan,” which he defended at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. The prize committee comprised Aïssatou Mboje-Pouye, Michael Kevane, and Sadhana Manik, and the ASR thanks them for their service.

The 2022 Committee awarded the ASR Prize for the Best Anthology or Edited Volume in African Studies to *The Pan-African Pantheon: Prophets, Poets, and Philosophers*, edited by Adekeye Adebajo (Manchester University Press, 2021; originally published in South Africa by Jacana Media). The committee made the following observations: *The Pan-African Pantheon* provides in one remarkable volume over three dozen well-crafted essays on seminal Pan-Africanist thinkers, activists, and organizers. The volume examines the history and development of Pan-Africanism as a transnational idea, an

ideological movement, and a global practice, featuring diverse and influential figures ranging from W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Franz Fanon, and Amílcar Cabral to Arthur Lewis, Maya Angelou, C.L.R. James, Ruth First, Wangari Maathai, and Chimamanda Adichie. The two opening essays, one by Adebajo and one by Hilary Beckles, provide a comprehensive overview of Pan-Africanism as they investigate its emergence from the “twin plagues of European locusts” (the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonialism) through some of the successes of political and cultural movements informed by Pan-Africanist thought. But the essays also engage squarely with some of the failures of Pan-Africanism, particularly the failure to live up to some of its higher ideals in the post-colonial, neo-liberal world. The subsequent essays take a biographical approach, emphasizing the humanism and personal struggles faced by these philosophers, artists, rebels, and activists as they tried, and sometimes failed, to build an internally coherent set of Pan-Africanist ideas. The essays provide original analyses written by scholars from multiple disciplines brought together in a deep investigation of Pan-Africanism’s trajectory over the last 150 years. The committee was honored to review it, and the ASR hopes it will enjoy a wide readership, especially since it has an Africa-based co-publisher.

The committee recognized both Leonardo A. Villalón’s *The Oxford Handbook of the African Sahel* (Oxford University Press, 2021), and *Women and Power in Africa: Aspiring, Campaigning, and Governing*, co-edited by Leonardo R. Arriola, Melanie L. Phillips, and Martha C. Johnson (Oxford University Press, 2021), with honorable mention. The committee comprised Sean Redding, Kwasi Konadu, and Hassan Ndzovu, and the ASR thanks them for their service.

Indeed, one of the things that most often gets lost in the academy is the voluntarism of journal work. Many of you have reviewed articles for the ASR and other publications, and for that we are grateful. The Editor-in-Chief is not a paid position, yet it not infrequently requires upwards of twenty hours a week. None of the editorial team members are paid, either. The journal operations themselves are largely entirely unremunerated service as well. The journal hires a Managing Editor (currently Nikki Parsons), and we contract the translation of abstracts into French and Portuguese, and the French language article proofreading with individuals. But the work of the editors is voluntary and unpaid. It may be viewed as counting toward service obligations for tenured and tenure-track faculty, or be considered a mark of distinction in some institutions, but I am hard pressed to think of a single example where a promotion or a salary increase was a direct consequence of the tireless labors of members of the editorial team. Nonetheless, we encourage all to step forward and volunteer their time toward the mission of the journal.

This December 2022 issue is filled with fascinating new work from Côte d’Ivoire, Egypt, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Uganda, and Africa writ large and beyond. The volume contains scholarship by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, sociologists, political scientists, cultural

studies theorists, and scholars of literature, film, and journalism. This issue is particularly special to me, not only because it is my last, but also because it brings to fruition one final gift of the late great scholar and active ASR editorial team member Teju Olaniyan. Since his untimely passing, ERB member Moradewun Adejunmobi has worked tirelessly to bring his project to fruition. We begin this issue with a forum on Pleasure in Africa.

In “Africa/Pleasure: An Agenda for Future Work” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.106>], Tejumola Olaniyan and Moradewun Adejunmobi explain that, “pleasure as a subject of sustained investigation has often occupied a minor position in African studies research. Much of this oversight derives from a tendency to view pleasure as a distraction from the serious matters that should ideally animate African studies. Accordingly, the few existing studies of pleasure in Africa concentrate on pleasure as sensation, ignoring pleasure as emotion, and other dimensions of pleasure in Africa that could attract scholarly attention.” The co-editors, and the essays that follow, lay out a more expansive agenda for future African studies research on the subject of pleasure.

Karin Barber’s “Popular poesis: language and the pleasures of everyday creation” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.105>] reveals how pleasure in language arises from the creativity of everyday life. Barber is interested in Africa’s historical and ethnographic record of linguistic play. Focusing on three examples of Yorùbá linguistic creativity, she explores how each yields distinctive pleasures, but central is the act of mutual recognition of forms of words, and attunement to the linguistic production of others.

In “Pleasures of the Nollywood Familiar and Everyday Life” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.104>], Moradewun Adejunmobi demonstrates how sequels, spinoffs, serials, and other generic works in Nollywood filmmaking are characterized by a degree of repetitive and/or affiliative familiarity. Familiarity generates specific pleasures connected to repetition, sustaining a leisure activity for viewers who lack dedicated leisure time.

In “A Mosaic of Yoruba Ontology and Materiality of Pleasure since AD 1000” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.114>], Akinwumi Ogundiran asks, what is it that exposes the long history of the meanings and meaningfulness of pleasure in Yorùbá thought and practice? Drawing from literary, archaeological, mythical, and ethnographic sources, Ogundiran examines the ontologies, materiality, and sociality of pleasure of the ordinary and institutional. Pleasurable experiences and things construct social order, define social difference, and help to build community.

Asante Mtenje’s essay, “‘Awa ndi macheza aamai’: Examining Pleasure in Urban Malawian Women’s Social Spaces” [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.98>], focuses women’s physical and virtual social space. While often dismissed as “chitchat” and gossip, social spaces are sites of leisure where women engage in pleasurable *macheza* (play). Mtenje reconceives bridal shower social media groups as men-free spaces. Women are liberated from male interference, but at the same time they also participate in the reinforcement of patriarchal norms.

In a final pleasure forum essay, Naminata Diabate's "On Visuals and Selling the Promise of Sexual Plaisir and Pleasure in Abidjan" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.118>], the author examines imagery and news media about sexual permissiveness in Abidjan. What Diabate describes as a "pleasure explosion" highlights the presence of *homines economici*, people who are variously buyers of aphrodisiacs or body-enhancement. She views her subjects not as uninformed agents, but instead as rational actors sensitive to imagery. A pleasure economy has evolved in Abidjan centered on producing, promising, purchasing, and satisfying their needs.

Rawia Tawfik's essay, "Sudan's Normalization with Israel: A Break from the Past or Another Phase of Extraversion?" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.79>], looks behind the 2020 normalization announcement controversy for the reasons informing the momentous Sudanese decision. Adopting a historical perspective, and drawing on official Sudanese and Israeli sources, interviews, and opinion leaders' commentaries, Tawfik argues that normalization is a continuation of recent Sudanese foreign policy linked to internal efforts to solidify domestic political power.

In "Fake News' in the Sahel: 'Afrancaux News,' French Counterterrorism, and the Logics of User-Generated Media" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.63>], co-authors Lassane Ouedraogo, Matthew Kirwin, and Jason Warner, move away from Western-centric and formal news media analysis to offer an innovative framework with which to understand "fake news" in the Sahel. The authors posit that a uniquely Sahelian fake news iteration has emerged via a set of postcolonial, social justice-seeking, citizen-generated discourses in West Africa and the wider francophone African world.

Moses Khisa's essay, "The Politics of Fragmentation in Uganda: Understanding Violence in the Rwenzori Region" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.80>], examines the 2016 military raid on the Rwenzururu Kingdom, which resulted in the arrest of the king and charges of treason against the Ugandan state. In an effort to explain the violence, Khisa turns to national fragmentation caused by "kingdomization" and "districtization." Fragmentation weakens subnational concentrations of power, resources, and legitimacy. It reopens old wounds and precipitates violent encounters.

The final essay in this volume is Ato Quayson's 2020 Presidential Lecture [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.144>]. His lecture, which was delivered online because of the COVID-related cancellations, explored the ways in which African orality provides the means for a sentimental education in an era of crisis. Professor Quayson noted how the essentially polysemic character of the genres of orality impact his understanding of both literature and the African city. After tracing the texture of Accra's trotro and the continuity of sentimental education from orality to social media, he concludes by calling for a new interdisciplinary paradigm that would explore the polysemy of African orality alongside the hypertextual algorithms behind today's social media and the internet.

In addition to many additional book and film reviews, all available online and freely accessible, this issue also features five superb review essays. Nic

Cheeseman's "(Mis)Understanding Urban Africa: A Research Agenda for Assessing the Political Impact of Urbanization" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.83>], Martin S. Shanguhya's "Histories of Development in Africa" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.99>], Sheila Petty's "Mostra de Cinemas Africanos 2021: Focus on Algeria" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.88>], Xolela Mangcu's "Reconciling South Africa" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.85>], and Charles Ambler's "African Performances: On Stage and Screen" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2022.30>], all bring new scholarly and creative works into conversation with emerging themes in African studies. Adding regular review essays to the journal has been another transformative contribution by the current editorial team. I look forward to seeing many more.

The ASR belongs to the African Studies Association and its membership, and it behooves us all to participate so that the journal might reflect the diversity and complexity of the constantly shifting terrain and composition of African studies scholarship in North America and globally. We can all do this by reviewing, authoring, and contributing. And we can also do this while deepening the ties between the ASR and the ASA by attending the Annual Meeting, by attending the meetings of our sister organizations in Africa, in Europe, Britain, Brazil, Canada, Australasia, and elsewhere, and in so doing connecting the journal to the vibrant and dynamic research conducted by members, old, former, new, and yet to be.

Serving as the Editor-in-Chief has been among my greatest privileges and honors. I am pleased to know the journal will continue in safe hands under the very capable leadership of Cajetan Iheka as Editor-in-Chief and Kate Luongo as Deputy Editor.

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