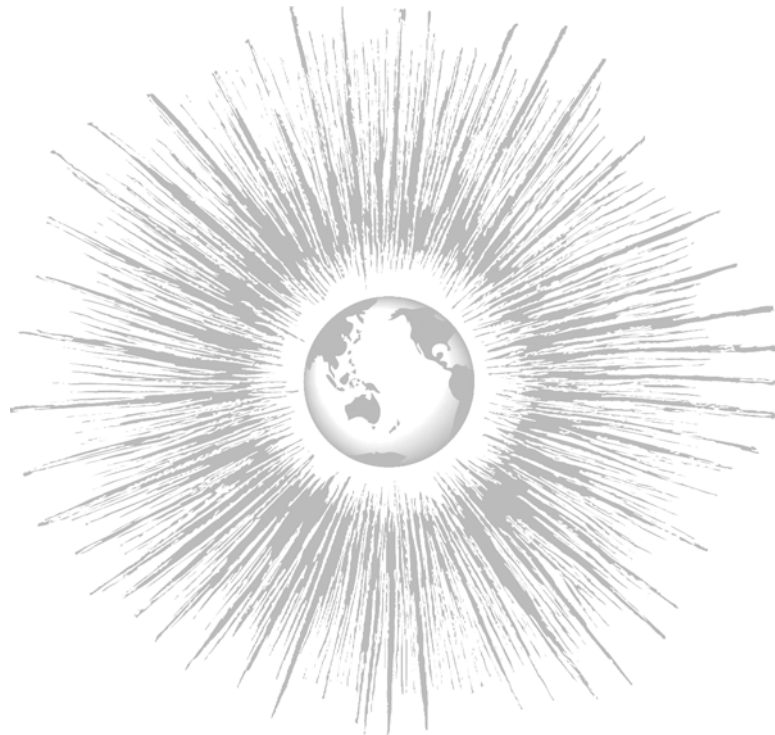


## BOOK REVIEW

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William G. Martin (Editor), Michael O. West (Editor), *Out of One, Many Africas: Reconstructing the Study and Meaning of Africa*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 240 pp., ISBN: 0252067800 (paper); ISBN: 0252024710 (cloth). <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/f99/martin.html>

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*Out of One, Many Africas*, edited by William G. Martin and Michael O. West, lays out the current historical juncture in the study of Africa as an academic discipline. The volume provides broad coverage of the historic development of African studies. It presents the context of scholarly work connected with the most peripheralized region of the world: lack of resources precluding indigenous self-expression, struggles over definitions of insider and outsider, and over control of research funding agendas. Martin and West begin by introducing the contemporary scholarly factions, several representatives of which they brought together as participants in a 1994 annual symposium at the University of Illinois. The goal then and for this volume remains the same: to advance a dialogue that will help refocus African Studies.

Part I of the volume comprises two selections on the origins of the Africanist establishment apart from and in conflict with the Pan-African/Africanity tradition; which is also described. The Africanist establishment was comprised of a large contingent of British and French colonial administrators, anthropologists, and journalists who first began to conceive of Africans as having a society and history with the ending of colonialism. When the U.S. emerged post-WWII as hegemonic, it tapped these scholars to create its own version of African Studies as a form of area studies. These programs of African Studies resisted being subsumed under existing departments and insisted on separation of African people's movements on the continent from those around the diaspora, which became the axial point of their clash with African American approaches.

Elliot Skinner describes the development of black scholars throughout the American, Caribbean and European-based diaspora, and Africa. They challenged racist paradigms purporting African or black inferiority on multiple dimensions, and sought to “vindicate” the race. Skinner distinguishes this Africanity scholarly tradition, which comprises the collection of scholarly theory and analysis reflecting the unitary nature of the African cultural tradition among various outposts of African world, from an Afrocentrist approach, which is concerned with rehabilitating and reorienting the self-conception of African-heritage people.

In Part II, Martin and West recount the story of the clash of these forces within the framework of the African Studies Association (ASA), formed in 1958. Prior to the 1950s, white scholars who sought a collegial environment operated within the institutional framework of African American college departments and journals, however, once the Africanist enterprise got underway, the white scholars tended to jettison their erstwhile companions, and monopolized the new bountiful stream of funding for research. The Black Power movement brought to the table a new force of black college students and young graduates with demands for inclusion. The editors chronicle how they were eventually defeated in a series of maneuvers of the African Studies Association, in the role of chief professional gate-keeping organization. Martin and West point out that while the Black Power movement became history, the Afrocentric, Africanity, and African cultural focus of diaspora studies instead took on popular life and continues to grow in vibrancy. This they illustrate by reference to the Africa-centered symbolic universe of the reggae, hip hop, and rap music traditions; the discourse on culture, identity and destiny throughout the black diaspora; and organizational development of Pan-African politics and business. They write:

Significantly, Africanists have mostly watched the Afrocentrist-Eurocentrist debate from the sidelines, both on and off campus.... However, increasing numbers of students—now predominantly black but also white, Latino/a, and Asian—are insisting on African materials that speak to Africa’s historical and contemporary relationships with Europe and North America. Such demands offer significant opportunities for the expansion of African courses, curricula, and faculty. Nonetheless, committed as they are to the separation of the African diaspora and touchy about the predominantly white character of their enterprise, especially at the highest levels, African-

ists have utterly failed to understand these concerns, let alone address them. (p. 10).

Another dimension is the class struggle among scholars of Africa over the political orientation of African studies. Horace Campbell describes the U.S. intelligence agencies funding of scholarly work on Africa as part of a “low-intensity warfare” program to prevent the emergence of anti-capitalist African politics, while African universities withered under the repressive neocolonial regimes this ideological campaign supported. While many Africanists focus on Africa as a developmental failure due to local praetorianism and parasitic despotism, Campbell suggests these crises are rooted in conditions created by colonialism and fostered by this support from the West.

A final dimension is the emergence of independent research initiatives in Africa seeking to rely on discovery of indigenous paradigms for knowledge and rejecting subordination to experts located abroad. Zenebeworke Tadesse and Micere Githae Mugo describe how African scholars have achieved some stability through organizing independent research centers, such as CODE-SERIA (Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa), SARIPS (Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies), and AAWORD (Association of African Women for Research and Development). Further, African theorists have begun elaborating new paradigms for universal knowledge, moving beyond a focus on explaining traditional African thought.

Part III presents four examples of new paradigmatic directions coming from the vibrant African diaspora scholarly world. Jacques Depelchin critiques explanations of the emergence of the world-system which fail to focus on the cost to African people of the system at all points of its existence. C. Tsehloane Keto reflects on the importance of allowing African scholars the space to develop forms of knowledge without being constricted to produce knowledge couched in terms of universalism. The political economy of civil society and ethnicity theorized by Mahmood Mamdani provides an example of new paradigms that seek to account for the modern dilemmas facing African societies in theoretical frameworks that allow identification of major actors and institutional structures which aid and frustrate social change.

Above all the question being raised by this collection is “African studies for whom?” The rejection of the “Black Atlantic” movement is seen

by Martin and West as likely to lead ultimately to the demise of African Studies through Africanists' refusal to embrace the constituency as they exist. This crisis is also connected to the demise of neocolonial connections between government, private funding sources, and academic programs. So this may be the good to come of this juncture. The bad is clearly the defunding of research and increasing difficulty in providing training and development of Africa-focused faculty and researchers.

The result is the omission of the African experience from much of world-systems and other analyses whose intent is global, for lack of information. Until the new development which this collection foreshadows takes hold, theorizing about world inequality, development, and contradictions of capitalism ends up in a triage mode, where the most extreme cases are simply omitted. So the beauty may be found in the emerging continental African self-expression, as a tender shoot among the forests of social science paradigms weathering the storm of changing educational conceptions. Finally, we may look to this kernel of empowerment in Africa to broaden and emerge and raise a base under our life preserver efforts in the diaspora to provide knowledge of Africa and Africans. Perhaps our most important mission will be to make available opportunities for African students and researchers, to include their research and theory in journals we control, and to support African journals.