

the head of ZANU-PF and eventually being forced to resign the presidency. They also offer insight into the turmoil within the party and government as it worked to establish itself without Mugabe.

There are some shortcomings to the text, but this is to be expected from a book that promises to be a 'short' history. At times, coverage of certain topics feels rushed and/or superficial. In addition to the above-mentioned critique about the light coverage of the Fifth Brigade, another point worth exploring was how Mugabe's marriages affected how Zimbabweans viewed him. While both Sally and Grace Mugabe were given some discussion, it was more about how they fit in (or did not, as the case may be) with his staff and party management. Zimbabweans themselves reacted strongly to both women, adoring Sally and being critical of Grace, and this influenced the way many Zimbabweans thought of their president at different points in his tenure. Finally, there could have been more discussion detailing the crisis in the 2000s. The authors do discuss the challenges during that period, but the combination of astronomical inflation, increasing food insecurity, and tens of thousands of Zimbabweans fleeing to neighbouring states was Mugabe's own doing and created a country truly on the brink. That said, Onslow and Plaut do an admirable job covering a lot of information with clarity and brevity, which will work well especially for a more general readership.

By the end of his turbulent life, it is impossible to think that history will be generous to this man, turning a blind eye to his many wrongdoings. Onslow and Plaut's careful treatment of Mugabe as a complex figure offers a balanced consideration of an African leader who remains a lauded freedom fighter by some and a despised dictator to others. The contributions and horrors of Mugabe's leadership will be long debated, and Onslow and Plaut's text reflects why it will be a difficult debate to be conclusively won. They do not sugarcoat this divisive leader, but they also avoid the trap of vilifying him. Mugabe was not a one-dimensional man or leader; this small book emphasises that point and offers its readers much to contemplate as they weigh Mugabe's rights and wrongs. It is an important book that is needed now, as Mugabe's death has reinvigorated discourse about what his legacy will be in Zimbabwe, in Africa, and in the world.

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Politicizing Sex in Contemporary Africa: homophobia in Malawi by ASHLEY CURRIER
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In 2010, the Malawian government prosecuted Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Steven Monjeza for contravening the colonial-era anti-sodomy law. The arrest and subsequent trial attracted international attention and marked the beginning of an intensified period of persecution of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the country. The incident appeared similar to anti-gay persecution in Uganda, Nigeria, Liberia and Senegal at around the same time. As such, popular media, and even some academic accounts, relied on racist and essentialist notions of African sexuality to claim these instances as part of pervasive cultural homophobia on the continent. Ashley Currier, in her engaging and persuasive book,

Politicizing Sex in Contemporary Africa: homophobia in Malawi, provides an alternative understanding of the trial, its historical antecedents, and its consequences.

Based on interviews with activists and LGBT people, and analysis of decades of Malawian newspaper articles, Currier asks us to view what happened to Chimbalanga and Monjeza through the lens of 'politicized homophobia'. This, according to Currier, 'is a strategy used by African political elites interested in consolidating their moral and political authority' (p. 1). LGBT persecution such as that in Malawi is not the result of animosity embedded in 'culture' or 'tradition', but reflects the calculus of elites who employ a specific strategy to achieve their desired political ends. Currier does not fall into the trap of simply demonising African politicians, a move that can perpetuate notions of African homophobia (as Neville Wallace Hoad argued in *African Intimacies*, University of Minnesota Press). Rather, she explains the incentives facing elites for engaging in the practice, distinguishing between reactive, proactive and preemptive politicised homophobia, and clarifies the conditions under which political elites choose each version of the strategy. Elites draw from recurrent and resonant discourses that form the 'architecture' of politicised homophobia. Currier discusses several of these, including the potent notion that 'homosexuality is un-African'. Her framework is expansive, but provides scholars ample opportunity to pick up elements they find useful for understanding other contexts.

Currier's theoretical framework has obvious potential applications elsewhere. For example, it could be applied to the US or Brazilian cases to demonstrate the ways in which homophobia is deployed as part of the sexual politics of populism. Leaders such as Donald Trump or Jair Bolsonaro have mobilised many elements of the homophobic discourses Currier details. At times, their choice to do so appears incoherent. For example, the Trump administration argued against protecting LGBT employees from discrimination yet launched a global campaign to decriminalise homosexuality. Politicised homophobia is a 'scavenger strategy', however, whose political value 'emerges not from its coherence but rather through its ad hoc quality' (p. 13). It can be activated as part of a larger political programme, or piggy-back on the use of other forms of repression (against immigrants, Muslims, or women of colour) when politically expedient.

In this vein, Currier's framework is especially useful for the study of democratisation. With politicised homophobia, she gives scholars a refined tool for understanding how sexualised state repression sows divisions amongst social movement organisations. Fears of becoming targets of politicised homophobia can cause some feminist or human rights organisations to shun LGBT groups, splintering pro-democracy movements. Currier also helps to clarify the limits of foreign aid on democratisation efforts. While African LGBT organisations are often starved for resources to do their important service and advocacy work, LGBT organisations' international ties with funders can lend credence to homophobic discourses and weaken civil society's ability to demand rights or hold leaders accountable.

One criticism of this work could be that it adds another concept to the literature on social and political homophobia. However, Currier's modifier 'politicized' is well justified as emphasising the agency and contingency involved in the propagation of homophobia – homophobia must be 'activated'. This connects to Currier's ethical commitment to eliminating homophobia. 'Part of the impetus for this project', she writes, 'stemmed from my belief that if politicized homophobia has a beginning, then it also can and should have an end' (p. 257). Working towards this end, her

analysis dissects politicised homophobia's operation and its effects on sexual minorities and civil society organisations, and highlights resistance strategies undertaken by LGBT Malawians. Her work can thus inspire other scholars to engage in ethical and engaged research that offers analysis of and solutions to real-world problems.

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Modernist Art in Ethiopia by ELIZABETH W. GIORGIS

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With *Modernist Art in Ethiopia*, Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis writes a powerful indictment of Ethiopian exceptionalism, a narrative that has for over a century positioned Ethiopia outside of African cultures and histories. Ethiopian exceptionalism, the author argues, has shaped and continues to shape scholarly approaches to the art of the Christian Ethiopia. Stylistic and aesthetic innovations are attributed to the fortuitous presence in Ethiopia of European artists, while the links between the Ethiopian Christian tradition and Islamic and African art have been regularly ignored. Ethiopian intellectuals themselves contributed to this conception. 'Orientalism', Giorgis reminds us, 'is a joint project between those who produce and those who replicate' (p. 19). Ethiopian art cannot be understood outside this politics of representation, and here the book makes an important methodological argument. Against the established formalistic way of looking at Ethiopian artworks, Giorgis looks at visual arts and artists in the broader context of intellectual history. Hence, her five chapters contain rich analyses of novels, poetry, newspapers and advertising, as well as an account of the relationship between artists, writers and cultural institutions.

In tackling 20th century Ethiopian intellectual history, the book is structured around one core argument. Even at the height of Ethiopian modernism in the 1960s, Ethiopian intellectuals neglected to engage with the epistemic power relations of a world dominated by European colonialism and its aftermaths. European colonial institutions promoted globally certain types of knowledge branded as 'European', and delegitimised types of knowledge branded as 'other'. Despite being themselves marginalised by Western racist and Eurocentric discourse, many Ethiopian intellectuals embraced those same ideologies and aesthetics of modernity. Ethiopia was not colonised, yet its nationhood and nationalism were shaped by colonialism, starting from the 1896 victory at Adwa against the Italians. And yet, the colonial character of modernity has been ignored by Ethiopian artists and intellectuals precisely 'under the pretext that Ethiopia has never been colonized' (p. 296). As a consequence of this, Giorgis shows, many Ethiopians did not identify with blackness and anticolonial struggles, and Ethiopian artists 'failed to challenge the prejudices of the European modern ... that refused to admit into its history the range of cultural practices that emanated from the non-West' (p. 129).

From this point of view, the book takes a nuanced stance in what has been a heated dispute in Ethiopian intellectual history: the 'alienation debate'. In parallel with a return of decolonial theory in academia and calls to 'decolonise' knowledge, recent scholarship on Ethiopia has either stressed the intellectual agency of