enfranchisement and textual visibility (p. 266). Newspapers, like the nation state itself, stage political struggles between competing 'masters', whether they be masters of narrative or of politics. (Adebanwi's examples and terms are exclusively male, but he does not discuss masculinity as a form of 'master narrative' or political meaning-making.) The modern Nigerian nation state cannot be understood without this 'media–nation interface' (p. 7).

Press campaigns to realize non-'Nigerian' identities are regarded as wholly negative in the book, exacerbating conflicts such as the Biafran war and fuelling other types of animosity (p. 108). Yet Adebanwi also recognizes that Nigeria comprises a plurality of minorities, including those sub-national, nearly national and proto-nationalist groups that, encouraged by the press, contest and contribute to current 'grand narratives' of Nigerian identity.

Adebanwi explicitly locates his study in hermeneutic theory rather than in more obvious media, communications and postcolonial frameworks such as public sphere theory or Fanon's description of the emergence of national culture in anti-colonial struggles. While this means that his antagonistic models of discourse and politics are not debated in the book, his turn to hermeneutic theory (explained in detail in the second chapter) allows him to meticulously examine the ways in which Nigerian newspapers have mediated national identities over time. The book offers a wealth of historically specific assessments of the ways in which Nigerian public opinion, prejudices, self-understandings, and global and regional identities have been shaped by the press.

Adebanwi reinstates a national – but not in any ordinary sense a nationalist – historiography in his analysis of Nigerian newspaper history. His book continues the outstanding project started by Fred Omu, whose *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880–1937* (1978) remains a vital resource for newspaper historians of the earlier period. *Nation as Grand Narrative* challenges those of us who focus on the ordinary and minor narratives through which West African non-elites and sub-elites signal their social (if not political) emergence in the elite-owned press. Stretching across the full period of Nigerian independence, Adebanwi's book is a timely reminder that, simply because we do not accept nationalist accounts of West African newspapers, we should not ignore the national story in our social histories of the press. With its recuperation of the nation as an entity, and its insistence on the reality of identity politics both as a contested terrain and as the most meaningful narrative for Nigerian press history, this book represents a significant landmark in the new African print cultures scholarship. Adebanwi calls us back to the most successful – if the most hotly contested – storyline in Nigerian history and shows that 'Nigeria' is perhaps one of the grandest and oldest 'narratives' on the continent, creatively produced through power struggles and relations of domination and subordination, and critically mediated by a century and a half of newspaper production.

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Mattia Fumanti, *The Politics of Distinction: African elites from colonialism to liberation in a Namibian frontier town*. Canon Pyon, UK: Sean Kingston Publishing (hb £65 – 978 1 907774 46 1). 2016, ix + 311 pp.

In *The Politics of Distinction*, Mattia Fumanti analyses the moral agency of elites. Taking the case of Rundu, a town on the border between Namibia and Angola,

Fumanti argues that the members of both the current political elite and the aspiring younger elite are engaged in an ongoing negotiation of civility and distinction in public life. Both elites can be defined by their concern over professional, personal and communal ethics, and this subjective – moral and emotional – dimension is precisely what the book focuses on. By concentrating on the ethics of distinction, Fumanti offers a powerful antidote to the rather common Afropessimist approaches that depict African states as failing and kleptocratic bureaucracies and that reduce African political life to clientelism and patronage.

The Politics of Distinction is divided into two main parts. The first part, on the educational or liberation elite, opens with a chapter on the social history of Rundu. It starts from the observation that anthropology has long neglected the study of small- and middle-range towns as crucial nodes between the state and its (rural) hinterland. It also documents how education, even when under apartheid's infamous Bantu education system, became an avenue for upward social mobility. (Here, Fumanti, though not explicitly, touches upon the work of Gregor Dobler on elite formation under indirect rule and apartheid in Ovamboland (*Traders and Trade in Colonial Ovamboland, 1925–1990: elite formation and the politics of consumption under indirect rule and apartheid*, 2014) – the two works are very complementary.) Having set the scene, Fumanti then analyses the rise of the liberation elite, for whom education represents not just a means or strategy but also implies strong moral and emotional values. Backed by the Ministry of Education, its members invested heavily in Rundu's associational life that expanded accordingly into a rich and diversified public space understood as both the space of officialdom and 'the performative spaces of everyday sociality' (p. 5) in the market, in the street, or during events and rituals such as church gatherings or sports events. Through life histories and an engaging ethnography, the author demonstrates that before independence in 1990 – and especially after it – the educational elite built on existing notions of leadership and authority as vested in a morality of accomplishment and achievement. Fumanti shows how its members straddle their various official and public positions to mobilize people and resources in order to augment their reputation. Thus, Fumanti opposes himself against, first, the common myth that authority in Africa is given and self-evident and that it depends solely on kinship, age or gender. Second, he demonstrates that the Rundu educational elite is motivated by moral concerns relating to civility, merit and officialdom; and third, he shows that the Namibian state was heavily involved in the creation of Rundu's civil society and associational life, thus debunking the idea that state and civil society in Africa are weak and incompatible.

The second part shifts attention to the youth elite. Again by means of a number of portraits, Fumanti introduces the unease of the younger elite towards the educational elite. Basing themselves on local concepts of leadership inherited from the generation of their grandparents, members of the youth elite hold the educational elite accountable for the Namibian government's failure to deliver on the promises made, and for blocking the younger generation's climb to the top. Fumanti, however, uses the metaphor of the reverse palindrome to underline that this emphasis on civility, respect and achievement also leaves room for irony, playfulness and creativity, as evidenced in the author's colourful account of the Shinyewile Club in which he was involved. Fumanti argues that received dichotomies such as hegemony and counter-hegemony, resistance and accommodation, or rural and urban simply do not suffice to understand the moral and political landscape in, for instance, Rundu: his participants continuously straddle the divide between state and civil society, irony and *sérieux*. They navigate a public space that is not confined to the town but that also includes the village precisely because it is, first and foremost, a moral space.

Fumanti's ethnography is at its strongest in the second part – his accounts of the Shinyewile mocking the officialese of public performance are both hilarious and compelling – and throughout the book he never ceases to reflect on his own positionality. On a more critical note, in my opinion, *The Politics of Distinction* could have profited from a more elaborate theorizing of central notions such as Pareto's *sentimento* or of the subjunctive mood that characterizes the activities of both elites, as I take these aspirations and hopes (and disappointments and frustrations) to be the most promising avenue for contemporary research on elites and politics in Africa in general. *The Politics of Distinction* is nevertheless an indispensable contribution to the political anthropology of Southern Africa; it belongs on the bookshelf of anyone even slightly interested in the relationship between state and civil society.

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Kathryn A. Rhine, *The Unseen Things: women, secrecy, and HIV in Northern Nigeria*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (hb US$80 – 978 0 253 02131 1; pb US$30 – 978 0 253 02143 4). 2016, 218 pp.

In this compact monograph, Kathryn Rhine explores the emotional, ethical and material dimensions of HIV-positive women's relationships with men in Northern Nigeria. Based on her lengthy acquaintance with HIV-positive women from Kano to Jos, Rhine emphasizes the performance of health that women must undertake to protect themselves and their children. Women counter the perception that to be dirty and unkempt is to be immoral and contagious by attending closely to their bodily appearance – their dress, hair, make-up, cleanliness and even their speech. In order to remain well they must project well-being.

Rhine established contacts in the context of support groups and sustained those relationships sometimes over many years, following the women's health, relationships and aspirations. She quickly discovered that the confessional ethos that dominates American philanthropic thinking runs counter to a central Hausa concern for restraint and discretion. Women did not attend such groups to be transformed by unburdening themselves of their secrets; they came in search of an HIV-positive husband. Self-*disclosure* entails the disclosure of the HIV status of others. By contrast self-*care* for women in Nigeria requires securing those relations (particularly in marriage) necessary to remain healthy. Silence is central to self-care.

Sustaining such relationships requires women to enter into a patriarchal bargain; they will remain silent about their male partners' HIV status, extramarital relations, physical abuse, and failure to provide for the family. In exchange, or so women hope, men will continue to support them, remain silent about their HIV status, and safeguard their reputations as respectable wives. However, women 'give far more than they receive in sometimes futile attempts to safeguard their reputations' (p. 57). Women keep secrets and provide care to others in the hope of being cared for themselves. A woman's knowledge of her partner's HIV status may give her some power; nevertheless, he may withhold money for medical care, refuse to pay for the naming ceremony of a newborn, or even divorce her to deflect attention away from his own HIV status (pp. 68–71). By divorcing a wife or refusing to recognize a child, a man implies that she has been promiscuous and that therefore any illness in the household has been caused by her. A woman who protests proves herself to be an uncompliant and disrespectful wife.