

BOOK REVIEW

David Boucher and Ayesha Omar, editors. *Decolonisation: Revolution & Evolution*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2023. viii + 272 pp. Acronyms. Contributors. Index. \$30.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781776148448.

David Boucher and Ayesha Omar support an interdisciplinary approach to decolonization studies. The editors, drawing substantially from key Africanists such as Mahmood Mamdani, Franz Fanon, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Amilcar Cabral, advocate fresh and critical perspectives on the connections between European liberalism and colonization. Anti-colonial struggles among Asians constitute part of the broader framework of analysis, but all ten chapters delve into the experiences of African peoples before and beyond May 10, 1994 when political power shifted to the black majority in South Africa (70).

Despite their history, philosophy, law, literature, and practical life backgrounds, the contributors share the imperative for a broadened understanding of the embattled concept of decoloniality. Decolonization was basically aimed at overthrowing imperialism, and the book presents it as a continuous process in Africa and, indeed, across the world. This dimension bears from the authors' primary attempt "to explain how colonialism, like an insidious virus, mutates into more virulent forms to ensure its survival [in the present]" (15). Hence, Ndumiso Dladla adopts the Hobbesian "promise of obedience" to explain that the West invented *Blackness* via conquest, oppression, and control of the African space. Dladla concludes that this Western invention and associated racial implications for South Africa ensured the systematic undermining of the people's lifetime, free time, and age as crucial components of horology.

Michael Elliot argues that Western critical thought about progress is implicated not only for its justification of colonial evils against several societies but also for benefiting from the sufferings of the colonized peoples. Nevertheless, that form of criticality can meaningfully contribute to understanding contemporary contexts of human struggle. Elements of political manipulation underscored colonial subjugation, and according to Paul Patton in his discourse of Phillip Petit's neo-republican theory, "a government that is subject to the democratic will of the people will be legitimate" (168). Therefore, the hypocrisy of colonial rationality made decolonization a necessity as European colonial governments practically embodied the injustices and thoughtlessness denounced by the likes of John Rawls, Immanuel Kant, and John Locke.

It suffices from the editors' position that although decolonization was historically associated with the process of political independence of former colonies, the concept reverberates in all forms of social oppression. Steven Friedman advocates "a kind of decolonization that expands rather than narrows boundaries" (208). The author illustrates that the "Rhodes Must Fall" protests, which sparked off at the University of Cape Town in the spring of 2015, symbolized the real and imagined academic liberation that would spread to other universities in Southern Africa.

The grasp of the anti-colonial scholarship campaign is deepened through Sule Emmanuel Egya's critique of European globalizing influence on the reception, aesthetics, and ideological positionality of African literature (211). Through their "anti-enlightenment, anti-intellectual, and anti-artistic activities," the immediate postcolonial leaders of African countries contributed to the decline of the indigenous literary perspective (213). In most cases, military and civilian despotism opposed the strong tradition of protest literature as pioneered by "Athol Fugard, Dennis Brutus, and Nadine Gordimer from South Africa; Mongo Beti from Cameroon; Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka J.P. Clark from Nigeria; Leopold Sedar Senghor and David Diop from Senegal; Ngugi wa Thiongo from Kenya; Okot p'Bitek from Uganda; Naguib Mahfouz and Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt" (213). Egya submits that literary imagination, if considerably decolonized, could redeem Africa from the holistically domineering influence of the Western world.

To be sure, *pedagogical disobedience* is, for Amber Murrey, a reliable way forward for the unfinished business of decolonization in Africa. The decolonial political geographer advocates the practical scholarship that lends credence to "the perpetual simultaneity of violence and misappropriation within the colonial matrix of power" (231). This disobedience could be achieved through the creation of a critical decolonial curriculum. This type would encourage open-mindedness and challenge students to unlearn Eurocentric doctrines that impede African progress as well as the continent's generic war against renewed psychological imperialism.

Christopher Allsobrook and Camilla Boisen maintain that "the proto-nationalism evident in the Kat River Rebellion [185] in the eastern Cape Colony] was [arguably] not a rejection of colonial ideology but an assertion of colonial rights of equal citizenship" (93). Applying Franz Fanon's psychological impact of subjugation in Algeria, David Boucher condemns colonialism as a most extreme form of identity destruction, mainly because that system of inter-group relations was replete with the imposition of social acceptability models antithetical to indigenous history, self-worth, language, and cultural heritage. One consequence has been the proliferation of *fake life* in postcolonial African communities.

The collection embodies too much of Southern Africa, giving the work a considerably narrow outlook. Beyond the almost rationalized framework of violence, the convergence of constitutional nationalism and developments in the aftermath of World War II created the imperative for a less, if not wholly nonviolent liberation of nonsettler colonies such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Guinea-Conakry. Nonetheless, the contributions are well argued, and Ian S. Spears clarifies the overall nature of European colonization of African nations (except

Ethiopia and Liberia). New Imperialism was extremely brief, yet its multifaceted legacies have continued to inspire debates over the vicissitude of African modernity in the age of rapid globalization.

Kingsley Ezeuwa
Marquette University, Milwaukee, USA
Kingsley.ezeuwa@marquette.edu

doi:[10.1017/asr.2024.58](https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2024.58)