

countries are being run as businesses and are busily forging commercial links with mass media corporations, why shouldn't humanities departments be helping the entertainment industries to reproduce their markets by turning out highly-trained consumers, skilled in watching endless repeats of Seinfeld and still finding new meanings in them?). But Lane's book is for the would-be producer, rather than fan or consumer, of pornography, and for this reader at least, there is nothing titillating about its contents. Those seeking an amateur-effect in their reading-experience, however, could do worse than buy *Obscene Profits*. A cut-and-paste job, the book is a true child of the Internet. Its ratio of noise to information is around 1:4; download time is frustratingly long (Lane's prose neither flows nor streams); and annoying 'banners', or sub-subheadings, clutter up its pages in a desperate bid to keep the reader's attention. Its numbing repetitiveness and slipshod writing suggest that the publishers have eschewed all editorial 'interference', doing nothing to spoil the immediacy of Lane's amateur compositional process.

African Unity

Reawakening Commitment, Obligations and Responsibilities to Unity in Africa: African Union and a Pan African Parliament

by Manelisi Genge, Francis Kornegay & Stephen Rule

Pretoria: African Institute of South Africa, 2000, 44pp.

ISBN: 0798301406

Elizabeth Thompson

English Department

University of Zululand (Umlazi Campus)

This collection of three essays addresses urgent events on the African landscape and reawakens inspirational ideals for civil society. The papers open up pertinent debates about authority / subjugation, democracy / tyranny, autonomy / dominance at a time when fragile economies in Africa make self-determination and self-sufficiency somewhat problematic. Certainly, the discourses provoked by the large issue of greater African unity have been to some extent submerged since 1994, as the world stood in awe of an unexpected phenomenon—the miracle of the demise of apartheid. But the post-liberation euphoria, both locally and internationally, led to a silencing of

important contemporaneous debates about fundamental realities that demand redress. Accordingly, the great jamboree of victory after the struggle for freedom invoked a kind of malaise in Africa.

African Union and a Pan African Parliament is thus a noteworthy contribution to the field of African research. The authors are clearly alert to the need for user-friendly resources in multidisciplinary teaching programmes currently on offer at universities; the book is enlightening for the non-specialist reader outside the domain of Political Studies as it does not rely on the reader's familiarity with discipline-specific jargon. The book also offers solid background reading for academic courses which seek to introduce students to the broad themes of African political tensions in the 21st century. More generally, the essays may act as a route for international policy-makers attempting to make meaningful entry into Africa affairs. Sources and information are extensively researched and well tabulated.

Manelisi Genge's opening essay maps out succinctly a history of the Organisation of African Unity during the period of liberation, and indicates how the OAU conferred order and structure to movements for justice and freedom. Some interesting questions arise: did the OAU precipitate the new era of post-colonialism? Or was the organisation merely a weak association, compromised and caught in a twilight zone between power blocs, offering inconsequential political unity? The inherent weaknesses of the tentative nature of the OAU are delineated: a failure to end civil wars and military conflicts. Nevertheless, new possibilities and some crucial action necessary for the formations of new structures are indicated, namely the transcendence of existing institutional frameworks and utilisation of the strengths offered by the OAU.

Whatever the flaws of the OAU, the necessity for an African democratic forum to facilitate the expression of the will of all African people is upheld in all three essays as being of the utmost urgency. Power playing by the new élite, the failure to heed the voices and needs of ordinary people, as well as the non-engagement with NGOs, civil society and academics, are all issues which governments in Africa need to address. Likewise, the OAU has often been opportunistic and operated from within the ambit of influential hierarchies. Nevertheless, the primary mission of the OAU, the liberation of the continent from colonial rule, has been discharged credibly but the economic mandate has failed abysmally. Consequently, South Africa's intervention as an active role player is probably essential for the arbitration of new structures. However, these notions raise serious nationalist concerns. The hosting of the organs of the body of the OAU requires resources, responsibilities and international obligations. Francis Kornegay contends that most of Africa is still grappling with variations of national Pan-Africanism. But partisanship, in fact, predominates in Africa and ruling cliques exploit power in the name of national expression.

Africa's marginal role on the international stage and jealous guarding of national sovereignties immobilises and disempowers the continent. Self-interest appears predominant in the ethos of Africa rather than any genuine African patriotism. Nonetheless, the potential implications remain: Africa looms as a demographic giant alongside China and India, with a composite population constituting the largest concentration of humanity. Her presence cannot be ignored by the superpowers.

Importantly, an underlying theme informing the three essays is a critical call for the recognition of diversity and civic supervision of the constituencies and identities of the complex heterogeneity of African societies. At the heart of the continent is the predicament of many hostile private animosities. For all of these reasons, Federation has been at an impasse. Yet paradoxically, federalism may serve as a foundation and may not necessarily evolve as the route to balkanisation.

Stephen Rule notes Gaddafi's 1999 call for the formation of a parliament for Africa. His paper explores two possible options for the composition of a Pan African parliament: firstly, a demographic state based structure, and secondly, an economic-demographic state based structure. The first option might seem to be most democratic, but demography as the determining criterion would produce unevenness. Consider the example of Nigeria: one in every six adults in Africa is Nigerian. With its population of 77 million it would automatically be granted an advantageous position and would prevail as one of the most powerful interest blocs in all spheres of African political life. With 53 autonomous states in Africa, smaller states are unlikely to accept any deficit of representation. The dilemma would almost certainly escalate hostility, especially in countries that have eschewed democratic election. If the ultimate aim is unity so as to enhance the economic health of the continent then the unconventional approach of a parliament that factors in the economic status should invite support. To this end, Rule constructs a second formula for consideration, which proposes the reduction of regional hegemonies.

Kornegay's concluding essay also stresses Africa's need for centralised forums. This he evokes in his epigrammatic configuration of the 'calabash', a symbolic trajectory for transcendence of difference. In pooling ideas, resources and making joint projections for the future, many apparently irreconcilable differences may diffuse, or possibly some of the painful problems and vicissitudes facing Africa may be shared collectively. Finally, the mixing and mingling of contingencies could be inherently sustaining and as the ancient receptacle of the calabash appropriately implies, there may be a life-giving reservoir and provider of sustenance, which Africa can utilise—for the greater good of all.
