Book Review

Stucki, Andreas. *Violence and Gender in African's Iberian Colonies: Feminizing the Portuguese and Spanish Empire, 1950s-1970s.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

In the volatile and waning decades of Portuguese and Spanish colonialism in Africa, Andreas Stucki's *Violence and Gender in Africa's Iberian Colonies: Feminizing the Portuguese and Spanish Empire, 1950s-1970s* uncovers how women as paradigms and material bodies were strategically weaponized against the insurgent struggle for African independence to ensure Afro-Iberian cultural ties. Stucki, a lecturer and associate researcher at the University of Bern, Switzerland, who specializes in Iberian and Caribbean history, delivers a much-welcome addition to a growing field of decolonial thought and feminist critique of Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking histories and cultures. *Violence and Gender in Africa's Iberian Colonies* offers an enlightening retelling of a history often remembered in its most brutal and exuberant forms—the fight for independence and self-determination in Africa, the regimes of Franco and Salazar, and the bloody and prolonged wars fought by the Portuguese fascist state to retain their colonial territories at all costs.

Focusing on Angola and Mozambique in the Portuguese case and the smaller holdings of Western Sahara and Equatorial Guinea for the Spanish, Stucki unearths an archive of first-person accounts, planning strategies, medical records, and forgotten voices and stories of Portuguese, Spanish, and African women and organizations. Though they operated on vastly different scales of territory, people, and relationships between colonizer and colony, Stucki shows how the Iberian powers made women and domesticity a fulcrum in retaining political, physical, and cultural dominance over their colonial possessions. Empire in this form becomes femininity, Portuguese and Spanish social mores and etiquette, language instruction, and promises of modernity. Noting previous work on Portuguese and Spanish colonial expansion by Anna Klobucka, Hilary Owen, and Susan Martin-Márquez that shows how gender and sexuality have been

deployed in and as empire, Stucki shines a critical light on the "decisive period from the 1950s to the 1970s" to reveal how "women's advancement and colonial domination in Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking Africa during the process of decolonization" were aligned (3).

From his research, Stucki gathers a litany of words and phrases in the opening chapters that were used, for example, in Portuguese plans for subversive warfare. He brings together a lexicon that lays bare the Portuguese Estado Novo's sexist and racist motives as they trained their strategy on a woman's decisive influence "'for our future . . . [as she] molds her children's character and personality'" (67). They also enlisted their own women's organizations to "guide and instruct 'native girls and women'" (68)—to prepare them "'for their future role as spouses,'" help them "'adopt the norms of hygiene,'" and stimulate "'the desire to learn how to live'" (70). High-ranking Portuguese military men's wives would head up "*centros femininos*" where they would educate "'simple minds' like 'angels' . . . and 'conquer the population'" (70). As Stucki surmises, the Portuguese strategy relied on a cynical sleight of hand: "If one could get African women to cooperate, control over tomorrow's society was secured" (67). As with Spain in Western Sahara, the plan was to win over "hearts and minds" through oppression masked as development, the quality and content of which also belied its intended purpose of prolonging subservience and silencing detractors (72).

Each of Stucki's chapters provides new accounts and voices that bring the reader to a specific place and time amid the uncertain circumstances of unsettling histories. This book could easily be two or three, offering the reader more time and detail to consider archival truths and their implications. These include the ways that Luso- and Hispanotropicalism, deployed by the Iberian empires in different measures, peddled miscegenation and benevolent colonialism in murky waters that encompassed both sexual violence and the smiling faces of children in mixed-race schools (137-38); how the sexual economies established, protected, and exploited on the ground were aligned with the wholesale rape and abuse of women by the colonizers; and the ways women freedom fighters recognized the two-pronged alignment and separate deployment of colonialism and male domination over their lives. Accounts of women trying to negotiate colonial contradictions reveal the pernicious oppressions that forced them into bargains Stucki describes as part of an "endeavor of fostering a subordinate, cooperative African female elite" not just for the empire, but to impose some

continuity of Afro-Iberian ties and cultural coloniality as these states transitioned to self-rule (196).

Stucki also offers ways forward to elaborate on his findings. His emphasis on Iberian patriarchal domesticity as a model for African peoples is a beginning for holding Portugal accountable for how the empire interrupted, disassembled, and stamped out African gender modes and variances, formations of kinship, and sexual practices we now consider queer. The consequences reside not only in the body-theft of the transatlantic slave trade, to borrow a term from Hortense Spillers, but continue well into the second half of the twentieth century—thefts and disruptions that have been the foundation for Freyrean and Salazarian paradigms of proper Luso-Brazilian gender, family, and nation. Similarly, in the closing chapter, Stucki shows how "women's roles for the envisaged revolutionary post-independence societies were, ironically, very similar to the imperial power's blueprints" (257). Though he points out that these African women's groups had an increasingly larger global network to turn to, many black, trans, and queer scholars have tirelessly attested to the failure of that feminist network and the continuing need for a formation of feminism unmoored from Western archetypes and colonialism.

In the epilogue, Stucki tells us of regime change and institutional exits and questions Portuguese and Spanish discourses of cultural continuity and commonality. Yet, we may also ask about postcolonial formations and bargains fashioned around sex and race which continue to unravel only to recoil again. Consider the election to the Portuguese Parliament of the first black Portuguese woman of African descent, Joacine Katar Moreira, which has been met with virulent racism. Consider the countless African migrants left to drown in Spanish seas. These are only the most recent iterations of the enduring ghosts of racist, sexist, and misogynist empires ever returning.

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