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The Aborigines themselves never wielded the camera, or commissioned photographers, but Lydon wants to see the photographs as 'a process of exchange between black and white' (p. xiii), albeit an unequal one. Certainly, they could declare what they would not do for the camera – or, as in a number of instances, demand so much money for sitting that would-be photographers gave up in exasperation. They were also politically savvy enough to know what the impact of particular kinds of image would be on the settlers, and make themselves available accordingly. However, Lydon's attempts to argue a thoroughgoing visual resistance seem a little strained.

In the late twentieth century, Aboriginal people might be said to have reappropriated the photographs. Having mouldered in museums for decades, they acquired a new significance in identity politics as evidence of the indigenous descent of Aborigines who, through racial admixture, no longer 'looked the part'.

JEREMY BECKETT *University of Sydney*

NYAMNJOH, FRANCIS B. *Africa's media: democracy and the politics of belonging*. 308 pp., bibliogr. Pretoria: UNISA Press (Zed Books), 2005. $85.00 (cloth), $29.95 (paper)

This book deals with the two – literary and political – dimensions of 'representation': journalism, the public and private press, as well as 'new' and so-called 'small' media (cartoons, rumour, etc.), on the one hand, and democracy, elections, and majority rule, on the other hand. In addition, Nyamnjoh is interested in how autochthony, the presently ubiquitous 'obsession with belonging', and identity politics affect these two dimensions of public representation in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular. Finally, and not unlike other recent reflections on the public sphere, this book contributes to the debate on citizenship, postcoloniality, and recognition.

To that end, Nyamnjoh brings together his earlier work on mass media and multi-party politics, particularly in Cameroon, with his more recent work on the politics of belonging, citizenship, and the problematic of exclusion and xenophobia in and outside Cameroon (e.g. in Botswana and South Africa). The result is a very rich and accessible book which contains important bits of Cameroonian political history and adequately situates these within broader historical and geographical (African and global) spheres. With such a wealth of material, this book seeks to address a central quandary underlying three cognate phenomena that constitute the African post-Cold War public sphere: (a) a heavily partisan press; (b) a liberal democracy that is firmly guided by particularistic interests of a clientilist or ethnic nature; and (c) projects of identity politics in which collective rights outweigh individual rights. Rather than perceiving these phenomena as provisional or local deficiencies or anomalies, Nyamnjoh claims that they are triggered by a set of underlying 'African notions of personhood and agency' (p. 20). This leads the author to assert that liberal democracy – with its focus on individuals as 'citizens' and 'autonomous and disembedded units' (p. 237) – is based on a narrow, parochial, and Western perspective which does not sit comfortably with 'Africa's sociality, negotiability, conviviality and dynamic sense of community' (p. 21). The challenge for African power elites, politicians, and journalists, according to the author, is to domesticate liberal democracy by broadening its definition – 'one that allows for ethnic cultural citizenship as well as civic citizenship and for the straddling of both' (p. 250).

These guiding ideas are presented mainly in the opening and closing sections (introduction and chap. 8) of the book. In the middle part of the book several of these ideas also pop up and are reformulated here and there rather than being worked through systematically.

Chapter 1 is definitely the most robust and contains a broad overview of actually existing democracy and media practices and structures in Africa both before and after the continent's second liberation struggles of the early 1990s. In the following chapters (3-7) this exercise is repeated in detail for Cameroon. After having restated the above-mentioned critique of 'ethnocentric' liberal democracy and the problematic of ethnic citizenship in contemporary Cameroon (chap. 8), Nyamnjoh returns to the issue of private and public media in the final chapter. Here he confirms what can be felt throughout the book, namely that he does not wish to use the 'cultural' argument concerning 'African notions of personhood and agency' in order to absolve African and Cameroonian journalists and politicians from taking their responsibility in working towards more independent and professional media.

The book mainly hinges on thick descriptions and multi-level analyses of Africa's media and does not introduce a new Afro-sensitive analysis of liberal and democratic public spheres. In sum, the book is at its strongest where it describes

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and analyses the workings of political and civil society, and the political economy of media in Africa and Cameroon.

As a result, the reader gets a very good grasp on the Cameroonian mediascape, its actors and dynamics, its continuities and changes since colonial times, as well as on colonial governance, the postcolonial figure of the citizen-subject, and – to quote Chatterjee – 'the politics of the governed' in Africa. This rich and well-informed description, this clever and streetwise analysis, will undoubtedly not only enable but also empower and stimulate the emerging interests in the problematic of public 'representation' in both its political and literary sense, in Africa and far beyond.

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POLLOCK, MICA. *Colormute: race talk dilemmas in an American school.* xi, 266 pp., bibliogr. Oxford, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004. £19.95 (cloth)

The title *Colormute* refers to the discursive phenomenon of 'active *resistance to describing* people as racial' (p. 44), a phenomenon informed by the basic contradiction: race cannot be nailed down to any single biological entity yet race as a social fact is an inescapably salient classification for a huge portion of the US population. Pollock did her ethnography in the mid-1990s at 'Columbus' High School in a pseudonymous 'California City' school district. She examines patterns of racial description used by students talking about themselves and each other, and teachers talking about students' behaviour and patterns of academic accomplishment or lack thereof. Colormuteness suffuses the school's discursive practices as it suffuses US social and organizational practices more generally, particularly in situations involving some form of 'diversity' accounting. The dilemma at the heart of the book is the same dilemma at the heart of US society: practically no available form of public discourse about racial topics or issues actually engages with what race is. The school's six 'race' labels – black, Latino, Filipino, Samoan, Chinese, and white – conflate race, ethnicity, nationality, and culture. Students presuppose the social facticity of these categories; their concern is with equality (hence the sometimes student claim 'we're all the same'). Teachers and administrators alternate among using race labels, contesting them, or suppressing them to avoid 'racist' reference.

Driving these concerns is the *non*-realization of these groups as manifestations of racial dynamics, starting with the production of whiteness. Pollock structures the book into chapters covering the following themes (and chapter titles): 'We don't belong to simple race groups but we do'; 'Race doesn't matter but it does'; 'The deraced words we use when discussing plans for racial equality can actually keep us from discussing ways to make opportunities racially equal'; 'The more complex inequality seems to get, the more simplistic inequality analysis seems to become'; 'The questions we ask most about race are the very questions we most suppress'; 'Although talking in racial terms can make race matter, not talking in racial terms can making race matter too'. She concludes with practical suggestions for engaging productively in talk about race, in the form of tips for managing each of these dilemmas.

Most crucial is the teachers' and administrators' talk on which educational policy and politics hinge, illustrated by the school's history. In 1982, a federal judge issued a consent decree, a district-wide school desegregation plan distributing racial/ethnic populations of students as evenly as possible in order to, in its words, 'achieve academic excellence throughout the system' (p. 80), and ultimately eliminate race/ethnic identifiability. However, implementing such a course of action depends on identifying and enumerating the racial/ethnic identity of each student, and tracking the progress of each race/ethnic group towards 'excellence'. In the 1990s, district supervisors evaluated the plan's effectiveness and concluded that black and Latino students remained low achievers. As a result, a series of reconstitutions took place in selected low-performing schools, in which the current teaching staff were released and a new principal and staff hired. Columbus was reconstituted in 1996, although it had for some years instituted programmes designed to help 'all' students, particularly those 'at-risk'. But it had not specifically targeted black and Latino students, nor had it been made clear that it was supposed to. The central contradiction of race references is, when specifics of racial identity matter most, people are least likely to be able to talk about it. The rhetorical strategy for not talking about race is to refer to the needs of 'all' students. 'All' is ambiguous, at times invoking the equality of 'all' races, at times eliding any recognition of race. Treating 'all' six 'race' categories as 'the same' erases the historical production of inequality. Not referring

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