

Foreword

One should be thankful to Julia Gallagher for this project on *Image and Africa*. The title is a programme on the creation, negotiation, and subversion of images. The introduction dwells on the complexity and politics of image, collectively known in the profession as ‘imagology’, a strange concept that refers to the technique and aims of representation. What is an image? It brings to mind the concept of representation. Should one consult everyday dictionaries, to represent is to picture, to portray, and to delimit by rendering an image. But, in actuality, the representation is a symbol of something else. It stages something, and describes, in words and symbols, a projection, deliberately created. The questions that recur throughout the book are: how has it been created, and by whom?

This book presents a critique of a more traditional approach, represented for example by my own book, *The Invention of Africa* (1988). Its key argument is about the significance of ‘the outside world and African images’ and the idea of images as spaces of motivation in dialogues. It does this, first, by presenting, across its contributions, a critical ethnography of the processes that produce images, from within news offices to state houses, from party headquarters to artists’ studios. In doing this it provides an analysis of representations motivated by local policies and their structural references, and the complexity of the African presence in the world, revealing how images of Africa are inscribed internationally.

The contributions themselves come from a remarkable variety of disciplines, and the international dimension of the project can be seen from the list of contributors. One could regroup them into three sections. There are, after the introduction theorising the very concept of image by Dr Gallagher, contributions that dwell on the process of imaging. These conceptual contributions include a chapter by George Ogola on what it would mean to construct an image of the continent of Africa; one by Mel Bunce about the struggles between African and foreign journalists over the representation of images of Africa, which qualifies itself

as a new way of storytelling – in actuality, narratives; and a chapter by Jonathan Fisher on the political management of images for the benefit of foreign donors.

The second tranche concentrates on case studies. They include Emmanuel Fanta's work on Ethiopia's images, then Clare Paine's chapter on Acholi in Uganda, Anne Schumann's on Ivoirian electoral politics, and Georgina Holmes' on the eastern DRC. These contributions themselves bring together success and failure stories, addressing the competitive interests of international donors and investors, as well as the internal contradictions that together give birth to a plethora of images on a wide canvas, externalising political contest to address and shape the perceptions of outsiders, from donors to diasporas.

A third group discusses projects that reflect themselves in the editor's theorising Introduction, and include Wanja Kimani's 'Re-imagining Ethiopia', and then, Lizzy Attree on representations of the body in South African literature, fiction, and films. It is thus at the level of individual artists and authors that we are returned to larger questions about agency and relationships.

Throughout, one notices the strong originality of the argument. It resides in the attention paid to representations by African administrations and African actors, including political parties, militia groups and individual artists and authors. A number of case studies (Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire) dwell on the specific management of representations and the procedures for selling them to international donors. One should also note the importance accorded to the dialectic between types of African political authority (traditional and modern) and the politics of integration in the wider world.

Indeed, one reads these contributions from a background. It relates three main spaces. The fundamental space, which is dominant and at the same time very discreet, concerns the interrelation between processes of production and the social relations that explain the representations. A second space is political. It is present in descriptions, and one can see the correlations between the organisation of production within societies, and its impact on social relations. And, finally the book itself comes to represent in actuality a third space, by establishing the correlations between an intellectual background and concrete disciplinary practices.

The model is known. It can be linked to an intellectual Marxian tradition. The book actualises in effect such a capacity through figures, judgements, registrations, and the visibility of effects, according to the tension between what is true versus its negation, what is good versus what is bad, and what is a beautiful image versus a negative one.

A careful reading of the complementarity of angles and chapters made me go back to Michel Foucault's idea of uncovering a specificity in terms of an archaeology of knowledge. This is an unexpected key to a way of facing the project. You ask yourself how different elements and entries are organised in this analysis, from the existent chapters and their groupings. Then you look at variations and ways of applying rules from different disciplines. One does that through concepts and viewpoints about the origin and manipulation and evolution of images, thus, facing the complexity of subordination reflexes.

These are points of entry that lead one to understand the complexity and the diversity of this contribution and its powerful originality in presenting today's images of Africa.

Gallagher's project from London reflects, in my mind, that of Dietrich and Marlene Rall about images of Mexico in Germany, *Mira que si nos miran: imágenes de México en la literatura de lengua alemana del siglo XX* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2003). Three main thematics impose themselves. One, representations from voyage diaries; two, images of Chiapas in German and Mexican narratives; and three, alterity and interculturality, including perceptions of Germans in Mexico. The two books meet and testify to what is our present day world, intercultural, and acknowledging and transcending preconceptions, frontiers, thanks to images.

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