Johann Gottfried Herder's enthusiasm for Ukraine came from, why the author devotes so little space to the transatlantic emigration of Ukrainians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or what it meant in practice for Ukraine to become a communist showcase project for the so-called Third World. The annotated bibliography is a treasure trove of further reading on these and other topics.

Hrytsak's intellectually, politically, and stylistically stimulating book was a huge success in Ukraine. It has since been translated into Italian, Polish, and English, and from English into German. Further translations are in preparation. It remains a mystery why the Beck publishing house has done the book a double disservice. The global dimension of Hrytsak's history of Ukraine is mentioned in one sentence of the blurb, but on the cover, dominated by the Ukrainian national colors of blue and yellow, there is no hint of its central importance in the book. Even less fortunate is the German title *Ukraine. Biographie einer bedrängten Nation* (literally: Ukraine: Biography of a Beleaguered Nation) because the martyrological alliteration stands in striking contrast to Hrytsak's global perspective on Ukrainian history. Moreover, a biography is determined not only by birth, but also by death. Using the word "biography" to describe the history of a nation in a struggle for survival is therefore misleading at best. It remains to be hoped that Hrytsak's book will find as many readers as it deserves, despite the unfavorable marketing.

Notes

[1] All quotations and references come from the English edition of the book: Yaroslav Hrytsak, Ukraine: *The Forging of a Nation*, trans. Dominique Hoffman (Sphere, 2023).

[2] Graham T. Allison and Niall Ferguson, "Applied History Manifesto," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, October 2016. Hrytsak referred to the "Applied History Manifesto," among other things, at a book launch organized on October 21 as part of the "Lunch Talks with Lviv," a joint series of events co-curated by Bielefeld University and the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

Kenneth Harrow, *African Cinema in a Global Age* (Routledge, 2024), 291 pp.

Reviewed by
Addamms Songe Mututa,
Johannesburg

What is African cinema? This question many scholars and practitioners have been wrestling with as far back as the 1960s when breakaway movements such as Fernando Solanas and Octavia Gentino's Third Cinema sought to disengage from the infrastructure of global cinema aesthetics. This movement prioritized ideological detachment alongside the aesthetics of non-conformity to the then cinemas of the first and second worlds, which were deemed pro-colonial at a time when anti-colonial struggles were peaking. The quest for Third Cinema as an autonomous cinema infrastructure was also the larger inspiration to contribute to the decolonization efforts that were underway in many parts of the developing world, including Africa. The underlying proposition was that the camera should be used as a fighting tool against colonial powers.

But as we consider this history and its achievements in posturing an alternative to global cinematic hubs, we also look at a history of questions rather than answers. The most pressing is whether *Third Cinema*—particularly African cinema—means today the same way it did back then. Tangential to this question is also the rise of alternative voices in this field of scholarship and, with them, new paradigms of such alternative cinemas. In contemporary scholarship, the distinguished scholar Kenneth Harrow is to African cinema what Fernando Solanas and Octavia Gentino were to the Third Cinema movement. We can even say that Harrow toppled some of the ideas of Third Cinema and revised them to ready them for a new way of thinking about and theorizing about African cinema in particular, not necessarily qualitatively but intellectually. In his elaborate scholarship on African cinema,[1] Harrow has been at the forefront of new theoretical enquiries that touch on postcolonial and feminism, postcolonial metaphors, and theories of African cinema as a cultural product. He dedicated his life to popularizing an African-based episteme that not only originates from his academic excellence but also extends to the arena of global intellectual hierarchies.

In the book reviewed here, Kenneth Harrow takes a historical perspective to theorize on the changing options of African cinema from the 1980s to date, ending with the current age of globalization. This temporal argumentation is advanced through a critique of various films drawn from across Africa, some by globally popular African film icons and others by local hotshots. Therefore, I will review the book from the perspective of temporality (ideas spawned from their specific historical moments) and then comment on the overarching theoretical propositions that make Harrow's book a rare masterpiece theorizing on African cinema.

In the introduction, Harrow comments on a 1992 African film and its director thus: "He breaks the mold of politically committed African cinema that often sought to validate African culture […] inaugurated the shift toward a successful commercial turn in African cinema, and with its appeal in the use of the esoteric it radically rewrote modes of African filmmaking" (p. 1).

In prioritizing to speak about the changing approaches to African filmmaking, Harrow highlights a new meaning of African cinema that detaches from the activist, revolutionary, and often political discourse that characterized the 1970s and 1980s filmmaking by African big names such as Abderrahmane Sissako, who has shown strong allegiance to the pro-revolutionary aesthetic as recently as the early 2000s,[2] or the cultural realist commentary characteristic of Ousmane Sembène's cinema. Harrow's emphasis on this shift is thus timely in inaugurating a new temporal-based paradigm that foremost emphasizes the commercial context of the new African filmmaking and the global connections that characterize its practice locally and abroad. His question—"What kinds of films did Africans or their European collaborators create in these 30 years since that turning point of the long 1990s?" (p. 2)—preempt, in his words, "what African cinema became in this digital age […] dominated by neoliberal capitalism and globalization—the period I am identifying as the 'global age'" (p. 2–3). The idea of the global age in this book is thus tied to the quest for new

practices of African filmmaking and, with these, also new meanings of these cinemas. In part one, Harrow starts with the global-leaning carryovers from the 1980s, such as the structural adjustment programs and their role in the reorganization of African film industries from postcolonial politics to mass audience appeal, transnationalism, and commodification of cinema as African cinema narratives quickly changed to adapt to this new reality. Harrow reads the 1990s inauguration of Nollywood in this manner: African film narratives became commercially viable, spawning local demands and creating new markets. The aesthetic also shifted towards cultural verisimilitude: the authentic representation of local popular cultures. Finally, Harrow also comments on the rise of auteur cinema, which emphasizes the idealization of experiences. This part offers extensive film criticisms alongside the author's expansive theoretical argumentation, which perceives Africa's cinema history as ideas of practice and style.

Part two discusses the representation of modernity in two Nigerian films, starting with the political conflicts of the 1960s and 1990s and its economic spoils. This section straddles historical, autobiographical writings from the 1980s to the 2000s, drawing from different African contexts to frame various understandings of modernity. Modernity is juxtaposed with the colonial overhaul of local cultures but is also thought of as agentic to new identities of alienation. Harrow says: "I want to explore a reading in which the conjuncture of 'modern' and 'traditional' is to be set against the material base, the capitalist formations of the times" (p. 91). Harrow correlates Nigeria's shift from agriculture to an oil-based economy with the changing narrative focus of Nigerian cinema of this period if only to dramatize "modernist epistemologies" (p. 93) to the audiences. The chaotic modernity that ensued became a narrative resource. Noteworthy, Harrow reorients the idea of modernity from the colonial/postcolonial frame towards "capitalist mystification" (p. 96)—specifying "materiality […] associated with an economic order and embodied in biopolitics" (p. 97). Modernity is thus not anti-African but about adjustments in practices of Africanity to account for modern interferences to traditions.

The aftermath, as Harrow sees it, can be summed up in material cultures here in our locality and also, including the connections they produced in trans-global routes (I can think of the transatlantic trading routes remembered through mineral extraction and slave trade and the contemporary digital pathways that define the global consumption of cinema). The lingering ideas of connections and loss inherent in these pathways are equivocally ideas of Africa as a here and there. The overriding concept in this subsection is the continuum of modernity in Africa and abroad, through which Harrow offers appreciable film criticism demonstrating his method and thinking of the dispersed frontiers of Africa's modernity.

In the last part, Harrow discusses Pheng Cheah's normativity and teleological time. The main idea is that time returns "to an end already implicit in the beginning" (p. 200). Teleological time is "the time of incarnation in which national ends are actualized in the empirical world" (p. 200), meaning it is about the time of the rebirth of national quests, while normativity is about the "force of normalization,

the choice of actions over time, that affirm human ends" (p. 200). Harrow continues: "But the context for that affirmation is the world created by the construction of an understanding of reality along lines that sustain the distribution of power, the validation of knowledge that normalizes existing power" (p. 200). Thus, the age of globalism that Harrow alludes to is about understanding how the time when we are inserted into the context of normativity becomes uncertain and entangled with the demands of existence and even capitulation. The idea of succession towards death, which Harrow discusses here, draws from the cinematic conceptualization of the teleological and normative times. It is based on a film critique and the syntagmatic connection between the character's existence and progression towards death. The caption of the protagonist's image—"Satché, waiting to anticipate death, or the end of the film" (p. 209)—frames his isolation in the film as a matter of coinstantaneous temporality, where he is alive in a community and where he is marked for imminent death. The idea that the film world advances as a block to which the protagonist is entangled in constant encounters with others curates a usable sign of how we end up inserted into (for our case) modernity and progress with a specific version of it throughout our designated lifespans, to eventually disappear and make way for its next block of performers.

Harrow's subsequent shift towards the idea of witches launches his critique of the mystic as part of Africa's globalism. I think of this direction through a question: is globalism preselected to annihilate its subjects through cyclic metalogues that procure causality as a sifting force to reorganize societies? The question of witch-hunting, which Harrow discusses through the films in this chapter, is not peculiar to the context of the film but has a realist bearing as it intercepts endemic practices in many African societies. The fatalistic endings of these exploits, based on the belief in the mystical rather than the scientific, would have us ask if Africa's modernity has moved an inch towards logic-based existence or remains subservient to primal traditions. This is also a question of the chaos of modernity and tradition. Harrow leaves this question to the readers but offers in-depth critiques of the witch films as an exposé. The idea of the imminent senseless death associated with the witches' carnival preempts us to rethink, just as Harrow does, its valence as a sacred communique that remains hidden in our global society.

In the concluding chapter, Harrow uses a face-to-face perspective to discuss how cinema frames encounters. He proposes special relativity and quantum mechanics as viable cross-disciplinary theories for this task: "From the former we have the notion that any measurements of time and space must be considered in relative terms, that is, that no 'event'—no physical entity—exists in a location in time and space by itself" and from the latter, "that the elements of force and matter in the universe are always in interaction with each other" (p. 257). The uncertainty of such interactivity and encounters is the basis for Harrow's critique of Manthia Diawara's film in this last chapter. He focuses on the idea of migration, race proximities, and journeys. In a contemporary world currently so engrossed in journeys and interactions, face-to-face experiences prompt us to realize ourselves through others and to under-

stand the world more through near and distant encounters. Globalism, in this context, designates an evolving mirror where we can view the changing world, ourselves in it, without necessarily having the power to intervene in the occasion.

Through his many works that precede this book, Harrow has achieved the less-acknowledged breakthrough of representing African intellectual efforts globally, where current debates have demonstrated great concern with Global North and Global South intellectual relations. Coming from the Global North, but being a true Global South scholar, Harrow has demolished the wall of global intellectual prejudice, which the world's top scholars are silent about regarding the continent's intellectual projects or in which they adopt a purely 'outsider' position that demeans Africa as a geographical, cultural, and intellectual space. He has also pinpointed global issues such as migration and retrogressive cultures and made reasoned critiques of such cultures in the context of Africa's contemporariness. In modern times, such matters trigger massive responses from decolonization rhetoric; it is thus not a trivial matter that Harrow thrusts these to the forefront of this novel temporal-based theory of African cinema. I highly recommend this book. It offers an unmatched blend of theory and method, history and culture, past and present, Africa and the world, peoples and infrastructures, places and movements—all parameters that are useful in current global scholarship across diverse disciplines.

Notes

[1] Some of his other notable books in the field of African cinema include Trash: *African Cinema from Below* (Indiana University Press, 2013), *Rethinking African Cultural Production* (Indiana University Press, 2015), *A Companion to African Cinema* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), *Space and Time in African Cinema and Cine-scapes* (Routledge, 2022), and now *African Cinema in a Global Age* (Michigan State University Press, 2024).

[2] His film *Bamako* (2002) embraces a pro-revolutionary aesthetic against globalist colonial institutions, specifically the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Tom Gardner, *The Abiy Project: God, Power and War in the New Ethiopia* (Hurst & Company, 2024), 423 pp.

Reviewed by
Ulf Engel, Leipzig

The *Abiy Project* is a journalistic account of Ethiopia's turbulent development between 2017 and 2023. After the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in August 2012, the country began to disintegrate. His successor, Hailemariam Desalegn, was unable to contain the protests and unrest, particularly in the Oromia region around the capital of Addis Ababa. After several states of emergency failed to achieve their goal, Hailemariam resigned in February 2018. Following weeks of negotiations between the four partners in the ruling coalition government, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a little-known Oromo party leader was appointed prime minister in April 2018: Abiy Ahmed. He immediately introduced impressive reforms, including the release of political prisoners, the appointment of opposition politicians to important posts, the