

does not provide a precise timeframe for his analysis or for his use of the term ‘youth’ in relation to Nigerian popular culture production and consumption. As a result, what emerges is a relatively static picture of Nollywood that does not provide analytical insight into the conflicts between different generations of Nigerian producers and directors, or into the varying significance of Nollywood films for different generations of African audiences.

If most analysts of the Nollywood phenomenon would agree that the industry has been created by the entrepreneurial sagacity of youths in their attempt to survive the dire conditions of post-structural adjustment in Nigeria, many would equally want to know what happened to those young people and to their capacity for expressing the dreams, fears and desires of different generations of Nigerians as they grew out of their ‘youth’. Today, many young Nigerian filmmakers perceive the industry’s pioneers as people who (often unsuccessfully) use their power to keep newcomers out of the industry. The ‘older’ generation, for its part, see the ‘youths’ as usurpers attempting to push them out of the business. To make sense of these dynamics and the ongoing power struggle, in the best tradition of Nollywood, Ugor’s analysis would need a ‘Part Two’.

Alessandro Jedlowski

University of Liège

alessandro.jedlowski@gmail.com

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Richard Fardon and Sènga la Rouge, *Learning from the Curse: Sembène’s Xala*. London: Hurst (hb £17.99 – 978 1 8490 4695 4). 2017, 133 pp.

Ousmane Sembène, the so-called ‘father of African cinema’, was suspicious of ethnography. He famously told Jean Rouch in 1965: ‘What I hold against you and the Africanists is that you look at us as if we were insects.’ Richard Fardon has written a new book on this artist’s classic film and novella *Xala* (1973–74), sharing with the public his long experience of teaching the film as an anthropologist (and an admitted non-specialist). That is to say, Fardon reads Sembène’s ‘socially aware fictions’ as ethnographic accounts (p. 17). As though mindful of the danger of falling into an ‘insect-gazing’ style, the book is written in a fresh, personal tone, and accompanied by sumptuous red and black drawings by Sènga la Rouge. It seeks to be a fun, experimental homage to an important monument of Senegalese and African cultural production.

Divided into ten chapters plus a list of characters, this book essentially consists of a comparative close reading of the novella and film versions of *Xala*. Its opening and closing mirror the narrative’s beginning and ending sequences. A final ‘last word’ situates *Xala* in relation to certain other moments of Sembène’s oeuvre. The primary difference between the two versions, according to Fardon, is that the novella is more concerned with private relationships, while the film emphasizes the symbolism of these family relations at the level of state politics and economy (pp. 39–40). Recurring themes include reproduction (both sexual and economic), commodification of people and things, and the moral challenge posed by symbolic pollution. Fardon’s anthropological emphasis privileges themes such as ‘kinship’ and ‘kleptocracy’, classic issues in the social sciences, at the occasional risk of obscuring the artistic dimensions of Sembène’s work. Nevertheless, the analysis is generally compelling. The reader can only be grateful for Fardon’s discussion of what he calls the ‘neo-colonial haircut’ (pp. 30–2) and his zooming in on the use of a face-down Yoruba mask in the film (pp. 84–5).

The fresh and experimental quality of this book, however, does have its drawbacks. The prose is pithy and the drawings beautiful, yet Fardon seems at a loss to explain why this creative push is necessary for a study that is ultimately scholarly and analytical in content, rather than a work of art in its own right. As a result of this claim to creative licence, Fardon enjoys a degree of relative freedom from citation that seems, at times, unwarranted. Although several insights in this book appear to be original, many of its unattributed claims have been covered by previous scholarship. That fact deserves recognition. For example, the lengthy discussion of pollution and waste (pp. 105–18) seems strongly indebted to Kenneth Harrow's landmark study *Trash: African cinema from below* (Indiana University Press, 2013), whose very title is inspired by the 'déchets humains' in *Xala* on which Fardon is commenting in these pages. In another instance, Fardon introduces a quote with the phrase 'In the words of a Senegalese scholar' but gives no indication of who it is, or where the quote is drawn from (p. 75). The diligent reader must check, on our own initiative, the unnumbered 'notes' at the end of the book to discover that 'a Senegalese scholar' is in fact Ibrahima Sow.

Even as we applaud the creative presentation and nimble style that come with minimizing academic tedium, these omissions are problematic. One might wonder whether, in its enthusiastic attempt to make an academic essay have broad appeal, this experimental format has been a bit hasty in its manner of dealing (or not) with secondary sources – especially in literary and cinema studies.

A side note: the book's proofreading leaves something to be desired. The text repeatedly uses the word 'peninsular' as a noun equivalent to 'peninsula' (see, for example, p. 91, 111). The word Marxist is capitalized inconsistently (see pp. 39, 73–4, 86). The chapter on 'soundscapes' ends without a full point at the end of its last sentence (p. 103).

Despite these objections, *Learning from the Curse* is a worthwhile read for anyone who wishes to benefit from Fardon's significant experience as an attentive reader, viewer and teacher of *Xala*. In particular, it will serve as a helpful tool for instructors who wish to teach the two versions of the story together, or who wish to assign their students creative projects based on Sembène's work.

Jonathon Repinecz
George Mason University
jrepinec@gmu.edu
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Derek R. Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newell, *African Print Cultures: newspapers and their publics in the twentieth century*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press (hb US\$95 – 978 0 472 07317 7; pb US\$34.95 – 978 0 472 05317 9). 2016, 460 pp.

For Emma Hunter and Derek Peterson, the purpose of this volume is to claim 'African newspapers as subjects of historical study' (p. 1) and go beyond conventional treatments of newspapers as banks of empirical data on people, places and events, and as barometers of public opinion. Instead, the volume reflects intensively and comparatively on the emergence of regional newsprint cultures. It outlines the dynamic relationship between the material conditions in which newspapers were produced and disseminated, and the ways in which contents were created, selected, excerpted or juxtaposed on the printed page. Attention to these dynamics will challenge any lingering assumption that newspapers