

SCHOLARLY REVIEW ESSAY

## Evolving An African Postcolonial Condition: Cultural Property Restitution, Cinematic Independence, Globalized NGO Compassion, and Grappling with an Elite Corruption Complex

Bénédicte Savoy (translated by Susanne Meyer-Abich). *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022. 240 pp. Timeline. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$29.95. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0691234731.

Noah Tsika. *Cinematic Independence: Constructing the Big Screen in Nigeria*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. 291 pp. List of Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$34.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0520386099.

Kevin O'Sullivan. *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 300 pp. List of Abbreviations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$89.99. Cloth. ISBN: 978-1108477307.

Daniel E. Agbiboa. *They Eat Our Sweat: Transport Labor, Corruption, and Everyday Survival in Urban Nigeria*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 288 pp. List of Figures. References. Index. \$105.00. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0198861546.

The empire-building phase of the European powers in Africa, which spanned several centuries, had its climax at the infamous Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, where the colonizers carved up and allocated the African continent among themselves as their respective colonial projects. They would subsequently invade virtually all of the continent based on this arbitrary partitioning—which, among other things, created Africa's colonial condition. Mention must be made of the fact that uncountable numbers of artworks and artefacts were looted by the invaders from various parts of Africa during those invasions and the *de facto* occupations that ensued. These looted treasures were scattered all over Europe and elsewhere in museums and private collections, where they currently remain largely unaccounted for.

The Hitlerian War of 1939–1945 brought home to Europeans a taste of the macabre and grotesque implications of colonial empire-building. This war, along with the persistent anti-colonial movements and liberation struggles on the African continent, would, in conjunction with several other factors, conspire to

force a physical retreat of the European colonial empire from Africa. This gave rise to flag independence for the African colonies. Whether what emerged from this physical retreat of empire is the post-colony or the neo-colony is still a matter of academic debate. However, when it became inevitable that Africa would be entering a historical phase of self-rule, a postcolonial condition began to evolve, even before the actual ceremonial transfer of the symbols of authority to the colonially-created African political elite.

The four books under review here represent important efforts in the reconstruction of the evolution of the African postcolonial condition. They document different dimensions and phases of Africa's postcolonial progression, from the quest for cultural property restitution through the attempt at cinematic independence, to the globalization of NGO "compassion" enterprise, and finally to grappling with an elite corruption complex.

The quest for restitution of Africa's cultural property is described by Bénédicte Savoy in the title of her book, *Africa's Struggle for Its Art: History of a Postcolonial Defeat* (translated into English by Susanne Meyer-Abich), as one of a postcolonial defeat. This is evocative of a metaphor of war, where the outcome is reckoned as either a win or a loss, indicating an Orientalist, Eurocentric perspective. Savoy presents the narrative, based on the work she did in conjunction "with the Senegalese economist and writer Felwine Sarr on behalf of the French president Emmanuel Macron" (1), of the series of efforts made by various individuals and governments from Africa to seek, in one form or the other, partial or symbolic return of the cultural objects "that had been looted from Africa by Europeans."

As cultures are synonymous with civilization and cultural development constitutes a dominant part of the overall discourse among cultural scholars, Savoy's book is useful especially in terms of the light it sheds on the inner workings of the strategies European officials deployed to reinforce colonial power structures. The publication is timely, coming as it does at a period when the hitherto suppressed discussion on the restitution of cultural property has found its way back into the consciousness of the present generation.

A few members of Africa's independence generation had engaged in what was at best sporadic, individual activism, making surprisingly modest requests to European governments, museums, and cultural institutions for restitution, including requesting such symbolic gestures as "loaning" of looted artworks to museums in the countries of their provenance. Individuals including Beninese journalist Paulin Joachim, Ghanaian film director Nii Kwate Owoo, Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko, and the Nigerian scholar, archaeologist, and museum/antiquity activist Ekpo Eyo made sporadic efforts to no avail.

Savoy's metaphor of a war, and hence a postcolonial defeat, is indicative of the Eurocentric mindset. This becomes apparent when attempts made by a few notable individuals in Africa for the return of a few of Africa's spiritually important artworks are juxtaposed against the cold, consistently racist, centrally-coordinated and well-rehearsed pushback from European museums and cultural institutions, some of which use every means available (including the

deliberate spread of false information) to suppress public debates on the subject of restitution.

Savoy conclusively and correctly contends that every discussion taking place today about returning looted cultural property to Africa previously took place forty years ago. Almost all important movies have already been produced, and almost all demands have been made (139). However, today's activists could only avoid a reinvention of the wheel if lessons had been learned. "Still," as recently as December 2018, the German Federal Republic continued with the strategies of German colonialist officials, denying that they have information about the number of cultural properties in their possession that are candidates for restitution, despite the documented existence of that information in the museums in Germany and other European countries (82, 105).

Waltraud Ulshöfer, of the Green Party in Stuttgart in 1985, delivered what is regarded as the European restitution debate's swan song and message-in-a-bottle via her open letter; Savoy noted that she "could have been a granddaughter to Herman Auer or Hans-Georg Wormit, who positioned themselves so vigorously and successfully against restitution in the 1970s..." (137). A little inference from their age as possible grandfathers to Ulshöfer in 1985 indicates that this posse of German colonialist civil servants, who were the original architects of the now normalized and routinized European response of shameless denial of the existence of information about stolen African cultural property, art, and artefacts, are members of the generation that experienced Germany as a colonial power and white supremacist state during the Hitlerian era.

Coming from the German colonial and Nazi era, it is no surprise that these individuals could adopt such an openly racist position and subterfuge to avoid meaningful and honest engagement with the occasional African person or group that raises the issue of the restitution of cultural property. Between their collective epistemic regime and the one that supported the atrocities of the German colonial project, such as the Maji-Maji genocide in southern Tanzania in which no fewer than 300,000 people were killed by German colonial forces and the Herero and Nama Genocide in Namibia in which over 800,000 people were methodically killed, there seems to be only an unbroken continuum.

The atrocities of the German colonial project in southwest Africa are by no means exclusive to the German state, as virtually every other European colonizer in Africa committed similar if not worse brutalities against the indigenous communities. The devastation of Africa and the African lifeworld by European colonialism is also manifest in the "destruction of cultural, religious and artistic traditions in Africa by colonial administrations" (13). Consequently, the post-independence generation resorts to such instruments at their disposal as poetry and, most significantly, film and cinematic representations to advance their passionate activism regarding the restitution of Africa's looted cultural heritage. "They brought their own films to the screen while great Pan-African film festivals were established and some governments like those in Ghana and above all Nigeria invested in the development of a commercial film industry" (11).

To explore the evolution of the commercial film industry in Nigeria, we turn to Noah Tsika's *Cinematic Independence: Constructing the Big Screen in Nigeria*. Seems

repetitive Tsika takes a refreshingly critical posture that projects a healthy distrust for US capitalism and the neoliberalist tactics it deployed against the indigenous movie industry in Africa, as exemplified by the Nigerian experience.

Before Nigeria's political independence on October 1, 1960, Hollywood had fixed its imperialist gaze on Nigeria as a location that would yield abundantly to the plundering of US capitalism and neocolonialism. So, in the 1950s, just as the US exploited Nigeria's natural resources in the form of extraction of the rare mineral Columbite, of which Nigeria was virtually the world's largest producer, Nigerians were also themselves commodified via the asymmetrical partnership between Hollywood and the Nigerian state television. This collaboration guaranteed a steady supply of Hollywood films with an embedded endless stream of commercials for commodities from the US to a captive Nigerian populace that had the Hobson's choice of watching Hollywood productions that were recycled as television broadcasts. Simultaneously, US government institutions such as the International Corporation Administration (ICA) dispatched "American Business Experts" to advise the Nigerian Ministry of Information while Indiana University in the US set up its "Nigerian Project" preparatory to Nigeria becoming politically independent.

Thus, just as in Savoy's book, Tsika's work exposes an analogous but rapidly evolving postcolonial situation, where Africans were progressively bombarded with a well-orchestrated, colonially-inspired, imperialist scheme to strip them of all forms of national defense against pillage by capital from the United States. The US corporations pretended to be sympathetic to Africans' needs while coldly and brutally exploiting them for profit, even when the rookie political leadership of the period in Nigeria incorrectly perceived foreign capitalists and their agents as partners rather than adversaries.

By the eve of Nigeria's independence, in a move reminiscent of a predatory feeding frenzy, virtually all major Hollywood film and television program distributors had descended on the country. These distributors were the champions of the United States' brand of empire—at the same time in competition and cooperation with the established British colonizers, who operated, among others, through the state-sponsored British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). They sold to Nigeria US feature films alongside news and public affairs programs. Advertising agencies, notably Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO), were engaged to promote the conducting of business in Nigeria by Hollywood. The BBDO hoped to demonstrate Nigeria's post-independence "progress" and capitalistic connectedness to the United States. These features were depicted via the special documentary film about Nigeria, *Now Nigeria*, in the production and distribution of which the BBDO was heavily invested. Simultaneous appeals to the desirability of a culture of modernity for Nigeria (including men's beer-drinking) and to the constructs integral to the modernization project contemporaneously being executed by the Euro-American academia of the period (such as "mass consumption" and "development") were employed by Hollywood filmmakers and advertising agencies, as well as US businessmen looking to cash in on the captive Nigerian market.

US imperialism, which crystallized in the immediate years of African decolonization, irreverently appropriated anti-colonial and postcolonial knowledge to

maintain and reinforce colonial power structures, neocolonial dynamics, and cultural-emotional violence. For example, the discourse of Aimé Césaire's Negritude was ruthlessly weaponized against Nigeria by Hollywood to facilitate the "penetration" of US capitalism into Nigeria. Black bodies were co-opted to enable Hollywood and US capitalism to "win Nigeria," as demonstrated by the racialized appeals and the hiring of African Americans William Alexander by BBDO and Dr. Maurice Maximilien by Ayerst Laboratories. The role of such Black individuals was to "lubricate many of the deals made in Nigeria." To "win Nigeria," Hollywood also leveraged the active support and diplomatic power of the US State Department and the technical support and social scientific justifications provided by the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations (52–58).

Perhaps the most emblematic depiction of the infiltration of the popular decolonization discourse and its re-appropriation in the interest of the neocolonial US empire could be seen in the making of the movie *The Mark of the Hawk* on the eve of Nigerian political independence. The African American actors Sidney Poitier and Eartha Kitt were featured in the movie, which was shot on location at Enugu, the capital of Nigeria's Eastern Region. The desire of the indigenous government of the Eastern Region to build a local film industry and make Enugu into the "Hollywood of West Africa" had unwittingly opened them up to an audacious confidence trick from a shadowy, hitherto unknown movie maker from Hollywood named Lloyd Young. Prior to coming to Enugu, Young and Associates had no previous experience with feature films, as they had produced none. However, the neocolonial ensemble of Hollywood, UCLA, and the US State Department had deceptively presented Young as both qualified and committed to film development in Enugu. The members of the Eastern Region government in Enugu were too eager to believe in Young, but many accurately perceived him as one more propagandist seeking to normalize capitalism and the ensuing underdevelopment of the African continent's production infrastructures (94).

As brokers of American-style modernization, the makers of *The Mark of the Hawk* shared the goals of one of the characters in the movie, the US clergyman, who had barely escaped from the communist regime in the Peoples Republic of China, where he was imprisoned on accusation of being an agent of US imperialism and white supremacy. On the US clergyman's escape and travel to Africa, he strategically appeals to African anticolonial activists and nationalists to adopt the US cause of capitalism as part of a global effort to curb perceived communist-led agitations against imperialism (72). In a similar vein, the movie was made as an operationalization of the white man's burden and civilizing mission toward the end of the era that saw the remarkable expansion of Christianity in southern Nigeria. It was created with funding from the Eastern Region government during a time when Nigerians were expected to be middle-class, well-off, and "civilized people," in addition to being devout Christians (74).

Many nationalists and Pan-African activists viewed the objective of "becoming moneyed" as a diversion from and distortion of the decolonization movement. For example, in 1944, the Nigerian nationalist A. A. Nwafor Orizu stated that "what really disarmed Nigeria was the Christian missionary." For Orizu, the Christian missionary taught the gospel of turning the other cheek until every

initiative toward repelling an enemy was lost. As such, Orizu saw Christianity and capitalism as two sides of the same imperialist coin, with the former serving to naturalize the latter and obstructing the possibility of meaningful political-economic change. By continually reproducing an imported capitalist ideology, the Nigerian “educated class” was able to “exploit the masses.” Orizu’s critique effectively foreshadowed the roles of those elites in Enugu who, by the 1950s, firmly believed that “Hollywood knew best” and that the Eastern Region was justified in accommodating Young and the other American Filmmaker. They trusted these Americans to help them realize their artistic, cinematic, and commercial goals, despite the existence of the Cinema Corporation of Nigeria and the Eastern Region Film Unit, which were staffed by people with the same qualifications and experience as the Hollywood import, whose colonial white privilege ensured his elevation above the local professionals (74–75). Orizu’s critique is valid today and is implicated on an Africa-wide basis in more diverse forms.

Young would leave Enugu and the Eastern Region government shortly after exploiting them to accomplish his goals, including becoming a seasoned film director, while Enugu’s hopes of developing a local film industry led by individuals like Young would be in ruins. This was even as Young’s film was made possible by the generous grants, subsidies, and tax breaks provided by the Eastern Region government.

Enugu would, however, once again become important in the history of Nigeria’s quest for cinematic independence, even if by default. By the beginning of the 1980s, the Nigerian government’s protectionist strategy to curb the unabated pillage and profiteering by Hollywood would have Hollywood up in arms, led by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). With the support of the US State Department, MPAA and the rest of Hollywood orchestrated a boycott of cinematic trade with Nigeria (109–10). With Enugu at the center of the indigenous revolution that saw Nigeria producing several thousands of direct-to-video films annually, and ultimately becoming the second largest movie-producing nation in the world by volume and the third most profitable, this punitive sanction by MPAA and Hollywood supported by the State Department, would create the impetus for the establishment of Nigeria’s domestic movie industry, Nollywood.

Hollywood not only boycotted Nigeria, it also, in concert with the United States Department of State and Commerce, peddled a corruption discourse against Nigeria. The narrative of corruption served to legitimize a particular alienation from Nigeria. Tsika followed Steven Pierce to hold that “corruption” is best understood as a rhetorical device and disciplinary tactic rather than as a particular material act. An ideological portrayal of the non-corrupt state as a European state was normalized by “treating it as designating something coherent and real, which states might be plagued by or not.” The MPAA sought to portray Hollywood practices, which had long been characterized by “oppressive, self-interested, accumulative, illegal actions,” as not only honorable but also as the typical method of conducting business on the international scene, thereby portraying Nigeria as “corrupt.” That term’s application to Nigeria, given its connotation with regional forms of exchange, further obscured Hollywood’s

dubious global practices in the context of film distribution and exhibition. This labelling strategy sought to contrast the supposed goodness of Hollywood just because of its global reach with Nigeria's localized and falsely perceived dubious status, which then made Nigeria's efforts to secure more equitable trade conditions for its economy appear inevitably dishonest and self-serving (112–13).

The MPAA returned to Nigeria following its return to civilian rule in 1999, after Nigeria had survived the devastating structural adjustment program of the Bretton Woods institutions, by which period Nollywood had developed to fill the gap created by the MPAA's withdrawal in 1981. By 2004, Nigeria seemed to have recovered some of its economic fortunes and indigenous cinematic exhibition, entrepreneurs began to acquire the new multiplex screens, and big-budget Nigerian movies (so-called New Nollywood), which were made compatible for screening on the multiplex screens, also started to be produced. However, even the makers of big-budget Nigerian movies, who sought to have their movies screened in British and European multiplex chains, have had to put up with the marginalization and ghettoization of their movies (125–32).

With the beginning of the multiplex era of New Nollywood, in a kind of re-enactment of old strategies that hearkened to the *Mark of the Hawk* affair, Bretton Woods institutions also joined in the scramble for Nollywood's profits. Consequently, the convenient ghettoization narrative has been weaponized by the World Bank against Nollywood, as the World Bank seeks to employ the power of the US dollar to coerce Nollywood into being subsumed into the so-called world economy—a euphemism for everything that serves US economic and imperialist interests.

Presaging the foregoing scenario, R. S. May argued on the eve of the Nigeria-Biafra War that “given the maintenance of liberal economic policies, political stability and unity, Nigeria should continue to benefit greatly from the presence of international companies.” However, Tsika accurately observes that the War's disruption of “political stability and unity” was not the only factor that kept these enormous, supposed advantages from occurring; as the making of *The Mark of the Hawk* and indeed the eventual emergence of the Nollywood industry following Hollywood's punitive withdrawal attest, it was mostly the very “presence of [these] international companies” that were deemed to be highly capable of somehow fostering wealth and growth in the local community that kept the supposed advantages from occurring (96).

Incidentally, the Nigeria-Biafra War was also the scene of the evolution of another postcolonial modality of the Euro-American world's engagement with people in former colonies undergoing catastrophic experiences—an engagement mediated through the activities of another variety of international companies, the “compassionate” NGOs. It is to this scene that this review turns next by exploring Kevin O'Sullivan's book, *The NGO Moment: The Globalisation of Compassion from Biafra to Live Aid*.

O'Sullivan highlights three hypotheses that underpin his work on the nature of popular compassion and what it can demonstrate about late-twentieth-century globalization; his premise is that the history of non-governmental aid can be understood as moments of acceleration. O'Sullivan uses the identified

s spurts of activity that served, among other things, to revitalize the NGO sector as the basis for organizing his book into four sections.

As the title implies, O'Sullivan's book begins with Biafra, where a major pogrom and progressive ethnic cleansing campaign against the Biafrans took place against the backdrop of a genocidal war that would give birth to a number of new Euro-American NGOs while being instrumentalized to revive others. NGOs such as Concern in Ireland, Canairelief in Canada, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in France are but a few examples of the new NGOs that were engendered by the crisis in Biafra. Concurrently, already established non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid, and Oxfam-Canada experienced significant revitalization due to the heightened awareness and revenue that Biafra attracted.

War was declared on the state of Biafra by the military regime led by Gen. Yakubu Gowon in Lagos, at that time the capital of Nigeria. During the course of the hostilities, Britain's Harold Wilson-led government chose to starve millions of Biafran children to death in return for continued extraction of oil resources. O'Sullivan's shabby discussion of the historical background of the Nigeria-Biafra war and the colonialist narratives he pushes are likely influenced by his possible unfamiliarity with the nuanced history of the war. This, no doubt, can be traced to British propaganda, produced, in the main, with the blessing and involvement of the British government in Westminster, to obfuscate the real issues. O'Sullivan propagates similar colonialist victim-blaming narratives against the Biafrans, preferring such colonialist prejudicial terms for them as "separatists" (17, 31), "rebels", "Igbo-dominated" (19), and secessionists (27). He casts the Igbo as aggressors who somehow attracted "reprisals" (19), which is what O'Sullivan seemed to think of the cold, calculated, and British-supported genocidal mass murders of Biafran civilians, including vulnerable women and children in Nigeria's Northern Region and other parts of Nigeria. This violence went unchecked for over a year before the eventual outbreak of the shooting war, following the Gowon regime's renegeing on the Aburi Accord. The preceding pogrom and the genocidal war it engendered had killed people in proportions that had only hitherto been witnessed in the Holocaust two decades earlier. The worst hit were children and women, who starved to death by the hundreds and thousands daily because of the sea and land blockade of Biafra by Nigeria and its allies, if they were not killed by the bombs first. Nigerian warplanes, abundantly supplied by Russia and flown by Arab pilots, managed to avoid Biafran military targets, only to constantly bomb civilian residential areas, refugee camps, schools, hospitals, markets, and churches.

It is a sad irony that barely a couple of decades after the Jewish Holocaust the Euro-American world, faced with another genocide only this time in the so-called Third World, chose to play ostrich by using the NGOs. Despite the graphic example of the Holocaust, Europe and America were not inclined to intervene to bring an end to the degeneration of humanity and possible extinction of Biafrans. Instead, Euro-America created a mechanism that somehow encouraged the ascendancy of NGOs in the so-called Third World.

It is also a further validation of Nwafor Orizu's critique, quoted in Tsika's *Cinematic Independence*, that to somehow create the NGO ascendancy, the other



side of the imperialist coin, the missionary agencies, had to be put in play. The important thing about the involvement of Britain, Canada, and Ireland in the NGO movement is that their experiences were remarkably similar. Similar linkages were constructed throughout each of these nations, and consequently the rest of the supposed western world, as a result of missionary, colonial, and international organization activities. With an abundance of imperialist religious penetration already accomplished, the missionary-driven NGOs elevated “compassionate” aid distribution to a money-spinning public spectacle (17, 23–33, 156–74). This was incidentally achieved employing narratives that were paternalistic, racist, and evocative of the “Whiteman’s burden” (23–24).

The pattern that developed in Biafra, complete with the trademark disaster-porn images of starving, helplessly impoverished people, became routinized, consolidated, and expanded, depending on the specific formerly colonized milieus that the now globalized NGOs wanted to focus on. Thus, whether it was in the context of conflict in East Pakistan that led to self-determination for the nation of Bangladesh in 1971, in Cambodia against the backdrop of the collapse of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, in Central America in the context of the crisis in El Salvador in the late 1970s and early 1980s, or the Horn of Africa via “Live Aid” in the mid-80s, NGOs were progressively normalized as an effective modality of Euro-American intervention in the former colonies. Meanwhile, their peripheral goods were discursively employed to simultaneously obfuscate the real condition of the emergent US-driven imperialist global order and to divert public attention from their coloniality.

However, systemic corruption and racism were part of the less-discussed aspects of the culture of the “compassionate” NGOs, which were fully visible in their operations in Biafra. For example, apart from the voiced racist attitudes of the white staff toward their African colleagues, four Nigerian employees of the NGO “Save the Children” who worked on the Biafran aid mission in 1968 were paid with food instead of cash. Earlier in the same year, a group of volunteers affiliated with “Save the Children” were deported due to allegations of wrongdoing, including sexual offenses while working on the Biafra aid project (30).

Only as recently as 2018 would the Euro-American NGO sector begin to face public scrutiny over its years of deep-rooted corruption, racism, and sexual offenses perpetrated against the recipient populations. During the peak of the Oxfam sex scandal that also affected the rest of the NGO sector, the Euro-American world began to wake up to the corruption that had always pervaded the operations of the NGOs (175–76).

Corruption has been integral to the colonial empire project. Colonialism and neocolonialism created and nurtured the conditions in the colonies for state and non-state actors to interact with and influence one another in ways that produced a complex of corruption. To explore the question of corruption in postcolonial contexts, this reviewer turns to *They Eat Our Sweat: Transport Labor, Corruption, and Everyday Survival in Urban Nigeria* by Daniel A. Agbibo.

Agbibo examines labor and the moral economy in the informal road transport labor sector of Nigeria’s megacity of Lagos in order to examine the relationship between mobility, corruption, and survival. Agbibo studied the ways in which state and non-state forms of authority and order interact with and

influence one another. The methodology of his research included a two-month ethnographic experience as an assistant commercial minibus (*danfo*) operator, plying a regular route between two local government areas in the larger Lagos State.

Agbibo concludes that corruption is a state-society mutuality enacted through a network of state and nonstate actors operating on a clientelist basis to produce a trickle-up economy. Corruption in this sense represents a sort of group effort and a social trap, since employees in the unorganized transportation industry are held hostage by the mutuality of the state and unions.


Agbibo's overemphasis on the mutuality of corruption and the ahistorical nature of his analysis constitute fundamental defects. The thesis of mutuality of corruption in an African postcolonial city reeks of victim-blaming. The #EndSARS Movement, which happened simultaneously with Agbibo's fieldwork, ironically is mentioned only in passing (194). Nevertheless, that movement belies Agbibo's inexorable mutuality argument, as the participants, especially the youth who also constitute the preponderance of *Danfo*, *Okada*, and *Keke NAPEP* drivers, proactively rallied to disrupt and attempt to end the cycle of police brutality, extortion, and corruption and the absence of democratic governance before they were brutally massacred by the Nigerian and Lagos state governments at the Lekki Toll Gate on October 20, 2020.

The modalities of governance and everyday life that include police violence and extortion were firmly established during the colonial era in Nigeria. These modalities have only been exacerbated under Nigeria's indigenous rulers in the postcolonial era. Works by other scholars have shown that the brutish, extortionate violence associated with the police, state agents, and urban life presently was colonially created, as the under-resourced nature of the European colonial projects in Africa engendered extortionate violence and policing.

Agbibo's exploration of indigenous languages in Nigeria fails to yield any local term that translates as "corruption"; this should have led to a deeper and more critical questioning of the usual misapplication of European colonial translations to certain aspects of African cultural usages. Nevertheless, he goes ahead with the narratives of colonial anthropologists in several regions of Nigeria which tend to pathologize certain aspects of African cultural usages, even when they fail to find words in the local languages that are epistemic equivalents to those of the colonizers (25–26).

The assumed timelessness of the evolving African postcolonial condition found in the books under review here is among the features which set Tsika's work apart from the rest of the texts. Tsika's work, even though it was dedicated to explicating film exhibition in Nigeria, did not treat the phenomenon of Nollywood and its repertoire as something that is somehow timeless and disconnected from its colonial antecedents. This is why subsequent works about the African postcolonial condition must be undertaken by scholars who appreciate the need for a new paradigm involving the variety of redefinitions that are required for analyzing African experiences under the colonial and neocolonial empires. The world must be given accurate and nuanced accounts of Africa's experience under empire and the ramifications of postcoloniality that progressively result from it. Some of the books under review here chart viable and

interesting pathways to that effect. This reviewer recommends them as a starting point for scholars and researchers who work in the realm of the subject matter of interest.

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