

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.

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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

arrived in twentieth-century Africa as ready-made forms and were simply filled up with local content to meet a growing demand from literate school leavers. In order for newspapers to be produced at all, somebody had to care enough to embark on a precarious financial endeavour; in order to sustain production, editors had to find novel ways to entice and mobilize potential customers into new reading publics. The introduction therefore establishes the volume's four major themes: networks, circulation and sociability; experiments with genre; publics; and obituary, biography and self-archiving.

Perhaps inevitably, while the introduction identifies broad differences between anglophone and francophone Africa, and between the East and West African colonies of the British empire, the thirteen chapters serve to highlight the diversity of the press in twentieth-century Africa. This establishes a creative tension between the editors' emphasis on networks and circulation, and the insistence of some contributors on local specificities. Leslie James demonstrates how the juxtaposition of political reports from British West Africa, the West Indies and London drew readers into a transatlantic anti-imperial framework (1935–50). David Pratten, on the other hand, notes the prominence of 'creole printmen' along West Africa's Atlantic coastline, and acknowledges their participation in 'communicative circuits of empire' (p. 95, referring to the work of Alan Lester). But ultimately his account of the rise and fall of the *Nigerian Eastern Mail* points to the historically contingent concerns of readers, and exemplifies the 'provinciality of these creole newspapers' (p. 77). Pratten concludes that 'each site within these imperial networks had its own possibilities and conditions of knowledge' (p. 95, referring to Edward Said).

This theme of 'provinciality' is developed by Oluwatoyin Babatunde Oduntan, whose chapter on *Osumare Egba* (1935–37) elaborates on the marginality of Abeokuta's literati, their limited access to Atlantic connections, and the ways in which their claims to advance modernity were entangled within factional struggles. Oduntan argues that newspapers that were 'published in the provinces' were influenced by 'the prestige and effectiveness of those published in the colonial metropolis', but they referenced 'indigenous conversations and cultural productions peculiar to their contexts' (p. 307).

This tension between 'provinciality' and participation in larger circuits provides a useful vantage point from which to explore the language question. It is tempting to assume that ethnic nationalism was represented in and stimulated by local-language newspapers, but a more complex picture is sketched in the chapters by Emma Hunter, Duncan Omanga, Karin Barber and Rebecca Jones. In her chapter on a late colonial Tanzanian newspaper, Hunter mobilizes Michael Warner's argument that publics are constituted through texts, and she sets out how this process works via 'hidden rules' (p. 295) of inclusion and exclusion. Anyone literate in Swahili could become a reader of the newspaper *Komkya*, but particular types of content were explicitly addressed to the WaChagga, thereby excluding others. *Komkya* thus summoned a public that was at once 'bound and unbound, unitary and segmented' (p. 285). While Duncan Omanga's chapter has a more contemporary focus, he too emphasizes the constitutive role of newspapers in multilingual contexts, showing how 'street parliaments' in Eldoret convene to debate – often in the local language – the events and issues covered in Kenya's national dailies.

Barber teases out a contrast between different newspapers in 1920s Lagos. English-language newspapers addressed their small, elite readerships in an impersonal style geared towards an impression of objectivity and impartiality. The Yoruba-language newspapers, envisaging their potential readers as more numerous and diverse, sought to include and entice them through personalized modes of address and creative experiments in epistolary, confessional and fictional genres.

Jones similarly points to the elasticity with which Yoruba-language writers envisaged their readerships. Ultimately, however, her analysis focuses on ‘the exuberant sociability’ (p. 104) of Yoruba travel writers, whose travelogues ‘depict their personal and professional networks spreading across Nigerian space’ (p. 110).

In the final chapters, Hlonipha Mokoena and Stephanie Newell develop these intriguing insights into ‘the specificity of printed subjectivities’ (p. 390). Mokoena explains how the Zulu author and printer Magama Fuze used writing ‘to ensure his posterity’ (p. 377), while Newell explores ‘various forms of printed memorialization’ in colonial West Africa, showing how they ‘helped to produce a person’s life story, and thus actively contributed to the genre of biography’ (p. 414). The numerous images in this chapter reveal the visual impact of memorializing techniques. Similarly, Kelly Askew’s chapter on ‘Everyday poetry’ in Swahili newspapers and that of Olubukola Gbadegesin on Yoruba photoplays are strengthened by the inclusion of images, allowing readers to appreciate the creative, innovative and experimental elements of newspapers.

While it is not possible here to highlight the specific merits of each individual chapter, all are based on intensive engagement with, and sophisticated interpretations of, African newspapers. The volume as a whole will be generative of new empirical and theoretical research, adding an important historical dimension to the explosion of scholarship on contemporary African media.

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Nina Sylvanus, *Patterns in Circulation: cloth, gender, and materiality in West Africa*. Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$90 – 978 0 226 39719 1; pb US\$30 – 978 0 226 39722 1). 2016, 210 pp.

Nina Sylvanus’s excellent multi-layered trans-historical study of Togolese wax-print fabric (or *pagne*) interweaves the role of African women in postcolonial developments, on the one hand, with a timely intervention in the ‘China-in-Africa’ debates on the other. The cloth constitutes women’s moveable wealth and is of social and aesthetic importance to them. Women, who work the value of cloth, are invested in it in multiple ways, having controlled its circulation in West Africa until Togo’s liberalization under structural adjustment programmes. The latter created the opportunity for copied cloths from China to be introduced. As the media in Western countries rages over China’s increasing capital ties with African countries, it is useful to revisit the long history of national marketplaces and capitalist accumulation in Africa in order to retain the African story that is constitutive of agency, as Sylvanus does in *Patterns in Circulation*. In the book, wax-print fabric is neither simply an artefact nor a commodity produced and consumed. What differentiates this book is that, while the content of *pagne* exposes internal relations and contradictions, its form is neither fixed nor stable. For a relatively short book, with an introduction, conclusion and five chapters, it abounds with stories carefully interwoven with theory.

Chapter 1 uses the stories of two women preparing for celebrations – Atsoui, for a wedding celebration, and Belinda, for a baptism – to illustrate how women, regardless of financial means, use *pagne* to construct particular self-images through the choice of pattern and colour as well as through sartorial tastes that include tailoring, accessories and orchestrated gendered bodily techniques. The