expectation where citizens asserted their claims to citizenship, to a politics of adaptation based on negotiation and survival.

Zimbabwe's cholera outbreak was a man-made disaster. And from a vantage point of a decade later, Chigudu concludes, 'Cholera was not a "tipping point" in the political life of Zimbabwean society, as the epidemic has left its underlying determinants intact' (195). *The Political Life of an Epidemic* draws attention to the importance of politics at every step of an epidemic's trajectory, from the emergence to the spread to the aftermath. Politics limits the potential for social and economic transformation. This is also where Chigudu could have done more. While the book does an excellent job describing the political life of Zimbabwe's cholera outbreak, it did not offer much interpretation and explanation as to why the political actors responded in the ways that they did. I want to know more about the conditions under which political actors respond to the needs of the public, and when they narrowly serve their self-interests. In addition, it is still unclear what would have been necessary for societal transformation to occur.

The Political Life of an Epidemic teaches an important lesson amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic: the current virus will have its own political life. Chigudu teaches us that its trajectory will depend on the political choices of politicians, party activists and bureaucrats, as well as the collective actions of thousands of ordinary people.

JEFFREY W. PALLER
University of San Francisco

Ambivalent: photography and visibility in African history edited by PATRICIA HAYES and GARY MINKLEY
Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019. Pp. 367. $36.95 (pbk).
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Ambivalent is a rich new collection of essays on photography in Africa, contributing to a growing literature on the medium beyond Europe and North America. But its value is not simply cumulative; rather, it represents a specific intervention in the writing of African photographic histories, engaging with the perspectives located and embodied in existing scholarship and canonical photographic theory, and the ways in which the field has been configured. The volume emerges out of a long-standing engagement with visual history at the University of the Western Cape and, subsequently, in collaboration with the University of Fort Hare. The editors are based at these institutions and many of the contributors are former doctoral students or postdoctoral fellows, underpinning a collective endeavour to study photography from the perspective of sub-Saharan Africa. The proximity of authors to the visual material they write about is significant, both theoretically and methodologically, providing new insights and new ways of thinking about the medium, without letting slip the tension between nearness and distance that affects all researchers.

The argument of the volume is twofold. First, in contrast to photographic histories centred on Europe, for which practices on the continent inevitably appear 'derivative' (8), always adapting or seeking to catch up, it is argued that 'the so-called dark continent has its own histories of light' (1) shaping what photography in fact is in Africa, and 'exceed[ing] any European intentionality' (3). Second, and in parallel,

photographic scholarship on the continent needs to find its own voice, to articulate its own perspectives, and theorise the medium in ways that are grounded within African coordinates. As Patricia Hayes pithily states, '[t]he point … is to not always follow Roland Barthes' (310).

Recontextualising the medium in relation to social and cultural practices, orality, ritual and performance, individual chapters challenge the stability and efficacy of photographic genres and categories, juxtapose different temporalities and spatialities, and follow the trajectory of historical images and visual practices into the post-colonial and post-apartheid present. A strength of the collection is the extent to which oral sources, and specifically the voices of photographic subjects as well as ordinary working photographers, are brought to bear on historical and contemporary photographs, which perhaps says something about the way in which the scholarly conversation on the medium has developed in Southern Africa.

Nowhere is the ambivalence of photography, signalled in the title, better caught than in the genre of photographic portraiture, which via the studio portrait has been celebrated as the expression of African agency and modernity, at the same time as it has provided a means of state surveillance and repression in the form of the pass photograph. The latter being possibly the single most cited image type in writing on photography in Southern Africa, it is no surprise to see it accorded two chapters here. Ingrid Masondo explores the legacy of apartheid visual racial categorisation, juxtaposing the instability of the identity portrait with her own photographic practice examining the experience of her contemporary sitters in relation to 'racially coded markers' (90). Gary Minkley, in contrast, returns to the 'intimate photographic event' (110) of the identity photograph sitting, allowing us to hear the voices of its participants. If its frequent scholarly and curatorial citation might at times be thought to re-enact the violence of the image, reporting the views of those depicted reveals a striking multiplicity of experiences and intentions – including, for example, a self-conscious effort to 'show contempt' (114) to all those who would look at the pass photograph – which may or may not be visible in the final photograph.

In a similar vein, Vilho Shigwedha's chapter on the massacre at Cassinga in southern Angola, the location of camps run by the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), in May 1978 unsettles the genre of the atrocity photograph. Through interviews with photographers and those who were present at the site of the massacre, Shigwedha, himself a veteran of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, shows how, when set against the accounts and experiences of those on the ground, the supposedly 'iconic' image fails, revealing as it does so a blind spot of extant photographic histories. Regardless of any international humanitarian impact the image may have had, as one interviewee put it, 'there is nothing here' (170); not only does the 'staged testimony' of the photograph fail to register 'the victims' natural and uninterrupted memory of the massacre', but also the inherent instability of the image threatens to bring it into question (168). The visualisation of political violence is also the focus of George Emeka Agbo's chapter on Boko Haram in Nigeria, though here it is social media discourses rather than oral narratives that mediate understandings of the image, bringing its authority into question, subjecting it to popular criticism and even ridicule, at the same time as it gives the medium a performative, perhaps even 'magical', force, including the ability, as Agbo puts it, 'to proclaim mayhem in advance and then actualize it' (267).

Patricia Hayes and Napandulwe Shiweda turn to the legacy of 'colonial' or 'ethnographic' photographs. The former reflects on the ways in which these 'empty photographs' (56) might be made to reveal more than is apparent in the image, for example through attention to oral tradition – 'sonic photograph[s] of the past' (73) – in spite of the vehement refusal of such imagery by younger generations of South Africans for their 'historical disrespect for the black body' (61). The latter compares photographs made by Alfred Duggan-Cronin and native commissioner, C.H.L. 'Cocky' Hahn in Omhedi, Northern Nambia, 'complicat[ing] notions of colonial photography' (182) by attending to her interlocutors' affective responses to the photographs and the role they play in contemporary heritage practices.

Other chapters present studies of an 'anxious photographic visuality' (52) in imperial texts on Central Africa (Isabelle de Rezende); the photographic practices of the Chinese community in Mozambique from the 1960s through to independence (Drew Thompson); the relationship between cloth, digital photography and surface aesthetics in Nigeria (Okechukwu Nwafor), which includes a fascinating insight into the way in which digital photography with its potential for the 'constant intervention of the photographed' (242) can reconfigure the relationship between photographer and client; a comparison between Joseph Denfield's recirculation of historical photographs and Daniel Morolong's urban documentation, coinciding in 1960s East London (Phindi Mnyaka); and, finally, the visuality of Mami Wata cults in Benin (Jung Ran Forte).

If it is not easy to escape the 'troubling' dominance of the 'ethnographic' as sub-Saharan Africa's photographic inheritance – a situation that 'poses great challenges and disincentives to young people in the continent engaging in their own history of photography' (308) – it is at least possible to resituate the medium within new constellations, revealing new ways of thinking and writing the history of photography in Africa. Bringing together a collection of essays written with an openness to multiple connections, 'loosen[ing] the constraints' (305) imposed by paying too much respect to writing on photography from elsewhere, this volume makes a valuable contribution.

DARREN NEWBURY
University of Brighton

South Sudan's Injustice System: law and activism on the frontline by RACHEL IBRECK London: Zed Books, 2019. Pp. 301. $25 (pbk).
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This book is about courageous people working for fairness, rights and civil order in South Sudan in a context of everyday extreme violence, fear and authoritarianism since 2013. Focused specifically on activists working within court and police systems in South Sudan's towns and displaced camps, it documents their struggles for what Ibreck calls 'law from below'. Drawing from observations, documentation, interviews and meetings over 2014–2019, and a year of town court observations conducted by these South Sudanese legal activists over 2015–16, Ibreck uses a framework of theory on public authority and legal pluralism to outline the heart of the book, which details the practical everyday work of these legal activists.