

errors such as his assertion that *La noire de* was released in 1960 and was Sembène's "first successful feature film" (377), when in fact it was Sembène's very first feature film and was released in 1966. In another section, the author appears to confuse Sembène's various films when he refers to the presence of "parliamentarians" in *La noire de* or the "cart driver in *Mandabi*" (58–59), characters that do not appear in these films.

Of particular interest to me were chapters 5 and 6, which deal with instructional film practice in Africa during colonial times and the historical context of colonialist African cinema. To date, very little has been written on this topic in English. The author offers lengthy analyses of the instructional films *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*, arguing provocatively that these films belong to a cinematic practice that "should be considered as alternative" to colonialist African cinema because they do not depict Africans as savages, but rather as belonging to developing societies (212).

What is most appealing about this book is its wide range of topics; however, this is also its most frustrating aspect. The author tends to leap from topic to topic, even within chapters, which results in a confusing "sampling" structure. Chapter 2, for example, wanders through the following diverse topics: modernity in African fine arts; the two major schools of African cinema; *négritude*, NEPAD; the need for an "African Renaissance" based on an Africa shaped by and for Africans; and at the end a critical reading of *Mandabi* and *Borom Sàrret*. The difficulty with this breadth of content is that the reader receives only a surface glimpse of such complex issues before being compelled to move on to the next subject.

Despite some serious shortcomings, Shaka's comprehensive analysis of the cinematic institutions in Africa makes a contribution to the field of African film and cultural studies. His discussion of instructional film practice in Africa offers insight into a generally neglected subject and his questioning of existing theoretical constructs opens the door to future debate on the changing landscape of African cinema.

Sheila Petty
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan

Beverly B. Mack. *Muslim Women Sing: Hausa Popular Song*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. African Expressive Cultures. 248 pp. Map. Illustrations. Audio CD. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00. Cloth. \$27.95. Paper.

Beverly Mack has written a book that is a welcome antidote to post-9/11 public discourse that tends to stereotype Muslim society globally as oppressive to women, intellectually insular, and lacking in healthy civic discourse. In this book, which follows three others on the literary lives of Muslim women, Mack seeks to show that "Muslim Hausa women's poetry and song demonstrate that women's status in Northern Nigeria is neither sub-

servient, static, nor stoic" (3). She describes how women's lives in *purdah* (seclusion) behind compound walls in Kano are far from dour. Song and individual creative expression pervade family and community contexts, among both educated and illiterate, young and old. Mack brings out the vitality of Hausa women's performance through literary and sociological analysis of song, interspersed with five biographical profiles of female performers and followed by extensive transcriptions of song lyrics. An audio CD is included (although both the original and a replacement were defective in my copies).

Hausa *waka* (chanted poetry) is rich and includes many subgenres such as work songs, praise songs, royal praise songs, and songs related to jealousy among cowives, most of which are performed by women. Mack points out that in Northern Nigeria women have been free to negotiate artistic and scholarly activities within the Islamic framework by crossing gender lines and age-related social roles. Song is an important way that female audiences learn about current events and history, and it is an arena in which individual women artists display their creativity and opinions. In spite of constraints on their movement, Hausa women are informed about the outside world.

Written in an accessible style, the book clearly reflects Mack's sensitivity and respect for the intellectual energy of Hausa women. At points, however, the analysis of gender is weak. Mack makes her case that talented women in Hausaland have successfully built performance careers in an otherwise restrictive setting and that women-only domestic spheres are dynamic. Nevertheless, the author veers too far toward cultural relativism at times, seeming to apologize for patriarchal restrictions. For example: "Wife seclusion is often reported by scholars to be restrictive and oppressive, but anyone who has lived in Kano knows that it would be a privilege to be freed from doing the marketing, standing in line to pay taxes or electric bills, or negotiating the traffic in a car or on foot" (7); or, because wife seclusion lasts "only" during childbearing years and divorce is frequent, it is "not a lifelong defining experience" (6). Can a researcher credibly make such judgments on behalf of Hausa women? Nonetheless, Mack's effort to dispel misconceptions about the nature of Muslim women's lives—secluded or not—is of value.

The book's structure is a mixed success. The second half of the book consists of transcription of women's song without the benefit of commentary or context. Hausa language specialists may be disappointed that the Hausa is not provided. The interspersed biographic profiles of performers, while interesting in themselves, are not well-integrated into the analytic chapters or clearly connected to the song material in part 2 of the book. Overall the structure is choppy, and part 1 tapers off into a discussion of the role of repetition in song rather than bringing the careful literary analyses of the final chapters to bear on the initial challenge of the opening chapter: the subject of Muslim women's creativity in the modern world and in the context of seclusion.

Nonetheless, *Muslim Women Sing* is a valuable contribution to the literature on African oral discourse, and its focus on the voices of women who die usually invisible to outsiders is particularly welcome.

Clare A. Ignatowski
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania