

intervention, is an ideal field for investigation. Even though stock numbers have declined somewhat and urbanization has grown, livestock-keeping is still central to local communities, both rural and peri-urban, as a good investment and a marker of status and identity, if no longer primarily as a means of subsistence. However, as opportunities for African smallholder pastoralism have expanded with land reform, the role of the state in providing veterinary assistance and maintaining disease control has diminished, leaving livestock owners to their own devices. This has perhaps contributed to the high levels of uncertainty, skepticism, and pragmatic experimentation that the authors observed. They argue that current veterinary knowledge and practice are both fragmented and pluralistic, and they point out that there is considerable variation in ideas and practice within as well as among communities. Moreover, local knowledge is both locally situated and globally influenced, much like the communities themselves. For these reasons, the authors avoid the simple dichotomy between “indigenous” and “scientific” systems implied by the use of terms like *ethnoveterinary*. In their view, there is no longer a bounded and coherent body of “traditional” veterinary knowledge transmitted from generation to generation in South Africa, against which biomedicine is apparently failing to make headway. The notion of “local knowledge” better captures the plural, hybrid, and shifting reality in which individual livestock owners make their own diagnostic and curative decisions.

African Local Knowledge is an important book. Its wider arguments are engaging and should encourage a rethinking of older, binary oppositions between “science” and “tradition” in other regions of African pastoral production where patterns of grazing management have also changed and where these ideas now seem equally outdated. Just as the influence of earlier environmental and veterinary ideas generated in South Africa and discussed by Beinart in earlier work gradually spread northward during the colonial period, so these new postcolonial appraisals may have a similar impact on development thinking and practice.

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LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND THE ARTS

Adeshina Afolayan, ed. *Auteuring Nollywood: Critical Perspectives on The Figurine*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 2014. 457 pp. No price reported.

This is the first comprehensive book to focus on a single Nigerian film, *The Figurine* (2009), and its filmmaker, Kunle Afolayan. The book, which reflects broadly on the creative film industry known as Nollywood, sees this

film as neo- or post-Nollywood, analyzes in broad strokes the entire Nigerian film industry, and by way of oral interviews provides a useful text about the actors in *The Figurine*. The critical entry point for the weaving of data and analysis is the concept of the *auteur*, that is, a director who exerts such great artistic control and personal attributes that he deserves to be called an author.

This exhaustive volume situates itself against the background of the evolution of cinema in Africa, framing its critical questions around a commitment to seeing *The Figurine*—the film and its producer—as unique. Thus there is an elaborate discussion of Nollywood, most notably in the six chapters in part 2, “Nollywood and Beyond,” which explain the emergence of this successful film industry and analyze its characteristics and cultures.

As to the definitive essence of Nollywood that serves as the preface to *The Figurine*, one aspect stands out: the critical characterization of Nollywood productions as low quality, that is, “straight-to-video films; films with low production value” (356). Thus the core of this book sees *The Figurine* as “revolutionary,” describing the film as “neo-Nollywood.” The entire first part, “Araromire in Nollywood,” eulogizes *The Figurine* for its mysterious, complex characters and the dialogue it establishes between an older animist order and the modernist present, as well as between morality and modernity. In part 3, “The Interviews,” voices of the filmmaker, the scriptwriter, the director of operation, actors, and actresses all complement those of scholars, to provide primary sources on the Nigerian film industry and its productions.

The Figurine is a suspense thriller about three life-long friends, Femi, Mona, and Sola, who served together in the National Youth Service Corps. Femi and Sola come across a mysterious sculpture that must not be removed from the forest or touched because it holds the mystical tale of the village of Araromire. Any person who touches it will first experience tremendous success for seven years, and thereafter seven years of bad luck. Sola touches the sculpture, marries Mona, and enjoys seven years of prosperity. Meanwhile, Femi secretly nurses romantic feelings for Mona. But the film ends tragically for all three.

The book contains insightful chapters that examine the acting, plot structure, sound track, and music. In the film the sculpture and the folktale reiterate issues of mythology and tradition, but the characters, their status, and their wealth draw on tropes of modernity. Everyday life is depicted powerfully, with episodes exploring faith and myth, life and death, tradition and contemporary life.

Having garnered national and international attention, *The Figurine* is seen as a turning point in the Nigerian film industry, with cinematography, acting, and production more impressive than in most Nollywood films. The book’s claim is justified, as the film is impressive in terms of its production values and compelling story which admirably captures cultures and moves beyond customary two-dimensional characters. Furthermore, a large budget allowed for high-end cinematography, which is not the usual hallmark of Nollywood films.

There are two ways to read *Auteuring Nollywood*. On one hand, it presents an objective representation of Nollywood, updating our knowledge. On the other hand, through its examination of *The Figurine* it presents an implicit critique of Nollywood and asks what the future may hold. It is unclear if many more auteurs will be produced, if Afolayan himself will build on his credentials, and if bigger budgets will be available to make similarly artful films. The afterword by Onookome Okome offers both a positive outlook and cautionary words.

Meanwhile, the accolades that the film has garnered deserve to be repeated as well for this book—for its fine essays, its first-rate introduction, and the quality of the production. Its carefully researched essays make a major contribution to our understanding of Nollywood. *Auteuring Nollywood* deserves a wide audience among scholars of film and cultural studies, philosophy, and anthropology. It provides a clear-eyed overview of Nigerian filmmaking and stands as the most complete study of an industry that will remain arguably one of Nigeria's most notable achievements, next to the petroleum industry itself.

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(*Editors' Note:* See the accompanying film review of *The Figurine*.)

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHY

Lisa Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds. *Biography and the Black Atlantic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. xiv + 370 pp. Map. Notes. Bibliography. List of Contributors. Index. \$55.00. Cloth.

Scholars and students of the Black Atlantic, as well as those interested in biography, will be richly rewarded by reading this volume. The essays are uniformly excellent; the introduction and conclusions are superb. In their opening remarks, the editors grapple with the fact that most popular biographies focus on famous individuals. Such a focus can reveal much about the worlds in which the well known lived and how they were able to achieve success, but this approach leaves out the many millions who were swept into the Atlantic world of slavery. Very few were famous. In fact, the experiences and actions of these lesser known individuals, until recently, could only be gleaned in the aggregate, captured in statistical data found in the “Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database” (www.slavevoyages.org). But the editors and the contributors to this volume argue convincingly that biographies of lesser known individuals are important, for they can “move readers’ emotions” by illustrating that ordinary persons not only suffered enslavement, but had full personalities that led them to make