pan-Africanist partnerships with women of the historic African diaspora to overcome various challenges.

While the themes of gender stereotypes, women's roles in political and social movements, and contemporary challenges are the book's three strongest thematic strengths, there are many others, including women's economic roles. Important to note in this regard is Chapter Nine where co-editor Claire Robertson discusses enslaved women's economic and social contributions to various African societies. She points out that the majority of enslaved people in Africa were women, particularly because of the economic and social services that they provided as well as the view that they were more assimilable. Robertson connects new forms of slavery — as seen in women's trafficking and factory labor — and the contemporary challenges that they pose for women's rights to the shortcomings of the world capitalist economy.

The variety of themes that this volume addresses and the accessible language in which the chapters are written makes it an excellent course material for undergraduate and graduate classes and an invaluable reference for people interested in grasping an overview of scholarship on African women.

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Film, Leisure, and Urban Life in West Africa

Tropical Dream Palaces: Cinema in Colonial West Africa

By Odile Goerg. London: Hurst Publishers, 2020. Pp. 201. £45.00 hardcover, (ISBN: 9781787382053).

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Keywords: West Africa; culture; popular culture; urban; modernity

Like the Hollywood movies that captivated audiences in West Africa from the 1930s to the 1970s, Odile Goerg's *Tropical Dream Palaces* transports readers to other times and places: the vibrant worlds of cinema in West Africa's cities, provincial towns, and countryside. An eminent historian of French colonialism, Goerg integrates the diverse stories of cinema across the region, masterfully drawing together her research in archives in Britain, France, and Francophone West Africa with a fragmentary secondary literature in a theoretically-informed narrative. She covers more than five decades of cinema history across a broadly defined region stretching from St. Louis to Kinshasa, while focusing especially on major urban centers where the first film shows took place and which developed the most extensive cinema cultures.

In *Tropical Dream Palaces* (a translation and enlargement of her 2015 book *Fantômas sous les tropiques: Aller au cinema en Afrique coloniale*), Goerg directs her attention to the development of commercial cinema as a major cultural phenomenon in West Africa, as it was in much of the rest of the world at midcentury.[1] Goerg's own deft comparisons among diverse West African filmgoing practices make effective use of the larger body of research on cinema history in

[1]O. Goerg, *Fantômas sous les tropiques: Aller au cinéma en Afrique coloniale* (Paris, 2015).

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Southern and Central Africa. But she breaks new ground by going beyond the scholarship, including my own, that has concentrated too much on colonial ideas about African film reception that drove the production of didactic films and censorship of commercial movies. She carefully exposes the diverse experiences of moviegoing, differentiating by viewers' age and gender, as well as considering other factors: whether the cinemas were high end or working class, for example; whether they were in French or British Africa, or were in major cities or provincial towns; and whether they were permanent fixtures in the urban environment or mobile.

Together with Laura Fair's innovative work on cinema in Tanzania, *Tropical Dream Palaces* represents an important shift in African media history toward the 'new cinema history', an approach that decenters the film text, focuses on the entire audience experience, and embeds the study of cinema in social and economic history.[2] Thus, Goerg examines the histories of pioneer cinema entrepreneurs like the Ghanaian businessman and publisher Alfred Ocansey during the 1930s as well as the roles of the European and American companies that ruled global film distribution through most of the era. The earliest film shows were ad hoc affairs staged at hotels or similar venues, but by the 1920s purpose-built cinemas, initially almost all open-air, became increasingly notable markers in the urban landscape. Quoting the Guinean writer Tierno Monénembo, Goerg reminds us that 'a town wasn't a proper town unless it had a cinema' (195). Theater owners made every effort to stress the urban presence of cinemas both in the elaborate facades that evoked European theaters and in the romantic names that they chose — the Rex, the Rialto, and Accra's Palladium, a venue that for years was a landmark in the central business district and the site of many political meetings and events.

Across six roughly chronological chapters, Goerg carefully traces the slow expansion of cinema, the development of state controls, and finally the emergence of urban cinema cultures as the numbers of theaters rapidly expanded after sound technology was introduced in the 1930s and especially after 1945. By the late 1950s millions of tickets were being sold annually and levels of attendance in urban areas in some parts of the region matched those in Western Europe. Cinema was everywhere, spilling out of theaters into vernacular popular culture, including styles of dress and speech and market literature. Yet as Goerg notes, the sources for cinema history are in many respects richer for the earlier period when film shows remained something of a novelty, complicating the task of reconstructing the meanings of cinema for individuals and communities. In a fascinating chapter on mobile cinema, Goerg shows how awareness of films reached into the countryside, notably in French West Africa through the efforts of independent entrepreneurs who spent months and sometimes years on the road.

Goerg rightly dismisses the notion of an 'African audience', stressing the diversity of audiences' backgrounds and tastes. American westerns ruled many screens, especially those that catered to working class viewers, but in the towns where there were multiple cinemas, theaters catered to a variety of interests: action movies, romances, musicals, and dramas. The archival record drives cinema history in the direction of censorship, and Goerg perhaps devotes too much space to colonial anxieties about the effects of film and the development of censorship apparatus — which was often supported by local elites concerned about impressionable youth. By the late 1930s, however, film censorship in West Africa reflected metropolitan practices, and audiences in Accra or Dakar generally saw much the same movies as did their counterparts in London or Paris — albeit a year or more later.

In her introduction Goerg invites readers to 'follow the spectators beneath the stars or into the dark movies theatres for an episode of *Tarzan* or *The Lone Ranger*' (260), and to a remarkable extent she succeeds in drawing us into those worlds. In pulling together the fragments of evidence of audience response, including a number of oral interviews, Goerg stresses how 'cinema served as

[2] L. Fair, *Reel Pleasures: Cinema Audiences and Entrepreneurs in Twentieth-Century Urban Tanzania* (Athens, OH, 2018).

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an interface with a new world, a "toolbox" that staged certain forms of modernity' (823), following the work of Brian Larkin and others.[3] Yet even as Goerg documents the rapid expansion and diversification of cinema in the 1950s, we are left uncertain as to how this cultural phenomenon shaped and was shaped by the dramatic social, economic, and political changes experienced by West Africans during this period — including the rise of nationalism. Given the broad sweep of this study and the fragmentary evidence available to reconstruct cinema experience, this is perhaps inevitable. More detailed local studies may succeed in illuminating more fully the many meanings of cinema for the millions of West Africans entranced by the movies. For now, *Tropical Dream Palaces* will remain a landmark in historical studies of cinema and the social and cultural worlds of colonial Africa, and future scholars will owe a very large debt to Odile Goerg.

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Congo, the Cold War, and the United Nations

Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations, and the Decolonisation of Africa

By Henning Melber. London: Hurst Publishers, 2019. Pp. 184. £30.00, hardcover (ISBN: 9781787380042).

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Keywords: Democratic Republic of the Congo; decolonization; United Nations; Cold War; international relations

The year of 1961 remains one of Africa's most difficult periods, punctuated by the deaths of Patrice Lumumba in January and Dag Hammarskjöld in September. Both died under shadowy circumstances that have been reinvestigated in the decades since their mutual passing. Both represented specific possibilities about the future of the Congo and the African continent more generally. The myth of Lumumba has continued to grow after his assassination; he has become a symbol of postcolonial pan-Africanism cut short by Cold War rivalries. In contrast, the celebrity of Hammarskjöld has receded, with his presence in public memory divided between a reputation for being a skilled and committed diplomat versus the image of an insensitive bureaucrat who failed to assist Lumumba, even aiding his enemies. Henning Melber sets out to reverse this decline by separating fact from fiction and moral principle from political expediency.

Melber is the former director of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Uppsala, Sweden. His study is a brisk one, covering Hammarskjöld's life in eight chapters totaling less than 130 pages, excluding notes, bibliography, and index. It is a book well suited for teaching. A key challenge is not only restoring the dimensions and meaning of Hammarskjöld's role as the second Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), but also faithfully capturing the atmosphere of the time. Hammarskjöld ascended to this high-profile position in 1953 at the age of 47. His temperament, consisting of a mix of experience balanced by steadfast moral principle, matched the

[3]See B. Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham, NC, 2008).

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