

Performers must respond to the artistic demands of these institutions, a point that raises concerns over creative agency and posits the unsettling issue of choreographic standardization. Neveu Kringelbach does not shy away from this problem when interviewing a dance officer, but one wishes that she had explored this issue further (pp. 157–8).

This book is excellent because the author destroys the enduring belief that dance is innate to Africans. Generous space is given to learning processes, questions of transmission, and performers' reflective practice. She does a better job than anyone I have read so far when writing about the meanings of being seen as an African and the meanings of being whoever one decides to be. Historians of dance will draw on innovative themes of inquiry in their field. Anthropologists will marvel at the dense ethnographic detail. This grounded ethnography indeed invites a careful reading. In other words, one does not leaf through this book, but must really *read* it.

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EBENEZER OBADARE and WENDY WILLEMS, editors, *Civic Agency in Africa: arts of resistance in the 21st century*. Woodbridge: James Currey (hb £45 – 978 1 84701 086 5). 2014, 236 pp.

Civic Agency in Africa: arts of resistance in the 21st century is a collection of essays that makes innovative interventions in the debates around how we think about the agency and resilience of ordinary people. The collection includes a foreword by the late Patrick Chabal – probably one of the last pieces he wrote.

The editors set out to challenge and complicate some of the ways in which academics, governments and NGOs think about agency, resistance and co-optation in the context of Africa. In their introduction, they write about the genesis of the project: Ebenezer Obadare's interest in political jokes in Nigeria led him to reflect on the ways in which ordinary Nigerians 'engage, deconstruct and wrestle with' the state. Humour, they write, is 'an integral part of an array of stratagems ... to recuperate dignity and selfhood amid the humiliations and savageries of everyday postcolonial life' (p. ixix). The most exciting contribution of this collection lies in the fact that the various authors engage with ways of theorizing ordinariness and agency, without always assuming that African individuals are victims.

Instead, in the chapters collected here, we read about ordinary people singing, selling goods, gossiping, sending SMS text messages, scamming, dancing and, most significantly, laughing. The collection is not a seamless whole, and the editors do not pretend that a coherent argument will emerge through the papers collected together. Instead, the multiple approaches, regions and disciplines map emergent ways of thinking about ordinariness, agency and resistance. The collection documents and analyses resistance and agency as cultural practices, drawing on the work of Achille Mbembe in *On the Postcolony*, James Scott's books *Weapons of the Weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: hidden transcripts*, as well as Patrick Chabal's work, in particular his *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling*. The argument is made unevenly and diversely, as one would hope for a field of inquiry that does not wish to establish a new dogma.

The editors have divided the papers into four sections. Part I deals with 'Postcolonial state formation and parallel infrastructures'. It includes a chapter by Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatssheni on global technologies of domination, offering a very useful and incisive overview of the subaltern question, and another by Bettina von Lieres on citizen action 'from below', in which the author compares Angola and South Africa as case studies. Part II is called 'Embodied modes of resistance and the postcolonial state' and includes a chapter on how market and informal traders are re-making Nairobi, written by Ilda Lindell and Markus Ihalainen. The next chapter, by Basile Ndjio, is on 'hustlers' or 419-style entrepreneurs in Cameroon (the number '419' coming from the section of the Nigerian penal code dealing with fraud), followed by Susan Thomson's on everyday forms of resistance to the narrative of national unity in present-day Rwanda.

Part III, on 'Popular culture as discursive forms of resistance', includes a chapter on political commentary in South Africa, in which Innocentia J. Mhlambi pays attention to strategies of resistance and co-optation by formal and informal political commentators. Another, by Grace Musila, deals with racialized humour and the ways in which humour can, even temporarily, make taboo topics visible. The last chapter in this section is by Jendele Hungbo on the politics of Fela Kuti's music and his political activism. The final section is called 'Publics as everyday sites of resistance', and includes a chapter by Dorothea Schulz on local radio stations in Mali and their creation of affective communities, and a chapter on the heterogeneous audience reactions to political cartoons in South Africa by Daniel Hammett.

Through the essays in this loosely curated collection, there emerges a strong sense of new directions in African studies. The collection seems to favour certain regions (west and south), possibly as a result of the editors' local networks. The index includes the sort of entries one would expect from a book with such a title: 'accountability', 'colonialism', 'rebellion/insurgency'. But we also find as many indexed references to 'humour', 'laughter' and 'music', and the editors let us know that their collaborative work had a soundtrack – John Coltrane and Miles Davis. It is these references to the lived reality of the scholars writing this book, and the ordinariness of collaboration and friendship, that make reading this book an unusually enjoyable experience. The book's development over the period that saw the brief flowering of the Arab Spring gives it a particular date stamp. This does not mean that its conclusions are questionable; the qualified success of the acts of resistance associated with the Arab Spring is part of what this collection would want to theorize.

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FIROZE MANJI and BILL FLETCHER JR, editors, *Claim No Easy Victories: the legacy of Amilcar Cabral*. Dakar: CODESRIA and DARAJA Press (pb \$25 – 978 2 86978 555 7). 2013, 490 pp.

The assassination of Amilcar Cabral in Conakry in January 1973 was a tragedy on multiple levels, and its repercussions are still being felt today. For fifteen years Cabral had spearheaded the remarkable liberation movement in his native Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, a movement that, by the time of his death, saw the Portuguese dictatorship on the verge of defeat. During this time he had also