(some of them in colour) of fistula sufferers taken by the author. While they enliven the book, they also give it the kind of *National Geographic* flavour that has been rightly criticized for orientalizing difference. It is indeed curious that Heller displays so many photographs of fistula sufferers after noting that local actors who disregard the layers of secrecy maintained by fistula sufferers end up shattering their fragile sense of worth. These slight criticisms do not diminish Heller's significant contribution to the scholarship on women in Niger. *Fistula Politics* is written in clear, accessible language. I expect it will be widely read not only by medical anthropologists and gender and sexuality studies specialists but also by the very actors who intervene in preventing and repairing fistula.

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doi: 10.1017/S0001972021000784

Adeline Masquelier, *Fada: boredom and belonging in Niger.* Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press (hb US$90 – 978 0226 62420 4; pb US$30 – 978 0 226 62434 1). 2019, 251 pp.

Groups of young men sitting and socializing in the streets of urban West Africa are not wasting time, lazily idling or reproducing criminality, despite what their elders and the demographic 'youth bulge' studies might claim. They are experimenting with societal norms and values and aspiring to a better future. This is the key insight of Adeline Masquelier's compelling study of *fadas* – tea-drinking social circles of young men on the streets of Dogondoutchi and Niamey in Niger. For many elders, *fadas* are spaces of idleness, thus signalling not only economic but also moral deficiency. For many young men, *fadas* offer opportunities to negotiate or contest religious norms, suggesting not only social but also moral experiments. The book thus usefully demonstrates how generational tensions (between youth and elders) in West Africa are highly moralized. It is a part of a growing scholarship that refuses to reduce young men to either victims (of, for example, neoliberal economic policies) or a volatile population (thugs and rebels who reproduce urban insecurity). Rather, Masquelier sees them as 'striving subjects who experiment, aspire, make mistakes, and exercise practical judgement' (p. 6), a strong argument that contrasts sharply with social scientific approaches to a 'crisis' of youth in Africa, the United Nations' ranking of Niger as the world's poorest country, and West African elders' condemnation of unemployed young men as useless and lazy.

After the introduction that frames *fadas* as 'moral laboratories',[1] spaces that encourage experimentation and questioning of societal norms and values, the ethnographic chapters are organized around interesting tensions and apparent contradictions. Chapter 1 shows how large numbers of marginalized young men

[1] See C. Mattingly (2014) *Moral Laboratories: family peril and the struggle for a good life.* Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

are conditioned to waiting and boredom, while also using tea time as a meaningful routine activity. Chapter 2 explores place making through wall murals, demonstrating how *fadas* make claims to public space, while simultaneously offering private spaces of secrecy and intimacy. Already with the first two chapters it is clear that the author explores *fadas* as places that defy binaries, such as those between idleness and productivity, and between public and private actions.

In a crucial addition, Chapter 3 focuses on women who shape *fadas* while being out of sight: through their 'absent presence' (invisible labour and night-time activities) women are central for the constitution of masculine sociality and young men's sense of masculinity. In Chapter 4 the attention to morality becomes most explicit through exploring tensions between Islam and hip-hop, both morally charged and seemingly opposed ideological frameworks that young men experiment with. Here, Islam is most usefully analysed through the prism of ambivalence and ambiguity: not as an indisputable moral directive, but as a collection of norms and values that young men negotiate or contest.

Chapter 5 explores bodybuilding, nutrition and security work to tease out tensions between performing scivic duties of keeping neighbourhoods safe and posturing through an imagery of violence and criminality. Chapter 6 explores intergenerational struggles through a focus on young men's modes of dress. Here, we read about the subversive potential of clothing, although the analysis suggests that when the young men publicly show their undergarments they are subverting social norms, and when they wear decent clothes they are subverting 'temporalities of aging' (p. 182), making this reader wonder whether the author sees subversion in every garment on young bodies. However, this impression of romanticized subversion disappears in Chapter 7, in which young men's entrepreneurial and pragmatic (rather than ideological) approach to politics ('political hustling', p. 206) is interpreted as agency through dependence. The chapter amounts to a convincing critique of analysts' romanticization of youthful adversarial agency.

Wide engagement with theory is impressive throughout all the chapters, but most interesting is *fada* itself as an ethnographic subject and theoretical concept, one that complicates binaries of idleness/productivity, public/private, subversion/subjection, victimhood/agency and presence/absence. *Fada* may just be a theory that condenses many interesting anthropological insights, such as that women are central (rather than peripheral) to the construction of masculinity; that moral ambiguity (rather than prescription) is central to religiosity; and that morality may provide an ideological framework that allows for a view that disenfranchisement is self-inflicted rather than a consequence of structural inequalities.

After a strong introduction and seven ground-breaking chapters, the book ends with a conclusion that is somewhat disappointing, not so much because of its brevity but because it presents fairly developed anthropological ideas as novel findings, such as waiting as a form of action[2] and stasis as an integral part of mobility.[3] One conspicuous omission from the book is a serious discussion of the author's positionality during fieldwork. There are only passing and scant mentions of how gender, class,

[2] See, for example, G. Hage (ed.) (2009) *Waiting*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

[3] See, for example, P. Gaibazzi (2015) *Bush Bound: young men and rural permanence in migrant West Africa*. New York NY: Berghahn Books.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972021000796 Published online by Cambridge University Press

age or nationality factored into relationships with interlocutors, and hence power relations and analyses. Despite this shortcoming, this is a path-breaking book that addresses longstanding topics in African studies, urban studies and anthropology – namely, gender, generation, religion and popular culture – in novel and exciting ways, simultaneously theoretically rich and accessibly written.

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doi: 10.1017/S0001972021000796