and 1950s, which sought to rebuff Western ideals in defence of indigenous constructions of girlhood.

While *Making Modern Girls* is an important and timely study of female childhood, my main concern with the narrative is its tendency to portray girls in colonial Lagos in monolithic and homogeneous terms, obscuring their heterogeneity. Indeed, the only clear difference made between girls was in the first chapter when the author states that the book is a history of the girlhood experiences of the non-educated elite in Lagos. Nevertheless, this indiscriminate classification of non-educated girls into one group is problematic because, throughout colonialism, Lagos became an increasingly diverse city as people of various ethnicities moved to the urban capital. An analysis of the traditional elite, their experiences and their position within welfare discourses, for instance, would have given this book more depth. Furthermore, George seems to move unproblematically between a Yoruba girlhood characterized by hawking and those of non-Yoruba descent who nevertheless fell victim to sexual exploitation. While the author, quite subtly, draws the reader's attention to this, this book would have benefited from a robust distinction between Yoruba and non-Yoruba routes to childhood prostitution and the cultural differences that prevented exploitative child fosterage or proxy marriages among the Yoruba while simultaneously protecting non-Yoruba girls from risks associated with hawking. Besides, rather than girlhood as a whole, George's book is about the construction of female childhood delinquency in Lagos. Needless to say, female delinquents would have been a minority. Juxtaposing their histories with those of the majority, who would have experienced non-delinquent or 'normal' childhoods, would have given the already excellent narrative an increased complexity.

These points notwithstanding, *Making Modern Girls* is an innovative and astute study, which makes a significant contribution to social and gender history through its exploration of an often-overlooked aspect of colonial Nigeria.

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ROWLAND ABIODUN, *Yorùbá Art and Language: seeking the African in African art*. Cambridge and New York NY: Cambridge University Press (hb £75 – 978 1 107 04744 0). 2014, 386 pp.

It is possible that with this publication Professor Rowland Abiodun has consolidated a recognizable 'school' of African art history: one that is genuinely African, in terms of its geographic origin certainly, if not necessarily wholly in its approach towards the discipline of art history. This book draws on and furthers a tradition of scholarship that comes from the University of Ifè (now Obafemi Awolowo University). Professor Abiodun follows paths pioneered by Wándé Abimbólá and Babtunde Lawal and other Ifè scholars in a tradition that places emphasis upon – insists upon – the centrality of the Yorùbá language as both a method of meaning and a mode of understanding the formal structure of the Yorùbá work of art and Yorùbá visual culture more generally. In following and enlarging this tradition, others – such as that tradition of studies based on the specific locales or the historical work of what Peel has termed the Yorùbá ethnogenesis – are (perhaps of necessity) ignored. This is not to say that the book makes no reference to the diversity of cultures or histories that constitute the *pays*

yorophone (to borrow a phrase from Professor Obayemi), and the book is remarkable in demonstrating dialectical difference through a supplementary website, but the thrust of the work remains at the level of the Yorùbá as a group.

The book comprises a collection of papers, some of which are extensions and revisions of work presented previously. Although the book as a whole provides a wealth of detail on aspects of Yorùbá visual and material culture – taking in woodcarving, masquerade, cloth and a diverse number of sculptural forms – each individual chapter takes as its starting point a singular and unique aspect of Yorùbá visual culture or animating concept. The chapters are linked through a central organizing theme that drives towards a particular mode of analytical understanding. This is that Yorùbá visual form is a counterpart to Yorùbá verbal form, and specifically that genre of praise poetry known as *Oríkì*. Within this overall analytic, the chapters work towards two conclusive moments. The first, based upon materiality and historicity, is Professor Abiodun's exploration of the sculpture of Ifè; the second is an enlargement of a theme that has preoccupied his writing for a number of years and through several iterations: the relationship between formal invention and creativity, aesthetic understanding and more widely distributed forms of moral character (and of moral philosophy) amongst the Yorùbá.

In part, this drive returns to an older debate in Yorùbá art history, especially that between Hallen and Thompson. Abiodun's contribution, which sets his work apart from the conceptual analysis that Hallen critiqued, is his close outline and profound understanding of Yorùbá moral and aesthetic categories from within. It is this analytic that demonstrates the importance of language in understanding. It is to compliment Professor Abiodun's work that his book as a history of (an) art (or arts) stands comparison to Michael Baxandall's close reading of art and language in fifteenth-century Italy.

What is not quite so clear is how this work necessarily creates a specifically African art history. That task surely lies in the critique of enlightenment ontology that has marked the division of objects and subjects, between persons and things, the division upon which the vast epistemology of Western thought has been built. Yorùbá art and language, with its attention to animated materiality in song and dance, in words, images and things, is perhaps a beginning, the moment that (an) African art history moves from the connoisseurship of contextual meaning towards a more profound understanding of the relationship between objects and persons.

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