

such as *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (dir. Stanley Kramer, 1967), *Jungle Fever* (dir. Spike Lee, 1991), *Mississippi Masala* (dir. Mira Nair, 1991), and the documentary *The Loving Story* (dir. Nancy Buirski, 2011), about Richard and Mildred Loving, whose Supreme Court ruling in 1967 put an end to antimiscegenation laws. However, few films have focused on how the offspring of such relationships are integrated in U.S. society. Though Drammeh's documentary does not try to fill that void on its own, it does give an insight into what many have called "the changing face" of America.

However, Drammeh's work unfortunately does not tackle its subject matter in the most effective manner. The film resembles more a student project on this assigned theme, rather than a documentary targeted at a broad audience. As a filmmaker, she chooses to intertwine extensive personal interviews with poems and songs by the participants, on the one hand, and with a few contributions by scholars, on the other. By doing so, she makes her movie slightly too personal and informal, which eventually diminishes its universal resonance. Simply put, it is doubtful that this film will be able to garner the attention of people who are not already very curious about the topic, who are familiar with it, or who can relate to it personally. Nevertheless, this was obviously Drammeh's intention. The official website of the movie (www.anomalythefilm.com) promotes her documentary as "suited for educational discussions on identity, multiculturalism & diversity," which explains why the distributor, Third World Newsreel, decided to make it available exclusively to educational institutions. Certainly, in an academic setting, Drammeh's work will contribute to the conversation about multiracial identity and the limitations of the race categories in America. It seems like the perfect tool for a class in mixed-race studies.

Manouchka Kelly Labouba
 University of Southern California
 Los Angeles, California
labouba@usc.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2014.135

Suzette Heald, director. *Law and War in Rural Kenya*. 2010. 64 minutes. English and Kuria, with English subtitles. United Kingdom. The Royal Anthropological Institute. \$95.00.

Directed by the anthropologist Suzette Heald, *Law and War in Rural Kenya* (2010) examines the rise and fall of a vigilante group that emerged in south-west Kenya in 1998 with the aim of curbing violent cattle raids. A research officer in the Crisis States program at the London School of Economics and the author of two books on masculinity and violence in Ugandan society, Heald studies the relationships among gender norms, land and livestock shortages, and civil violence as a response to the political instabilities of contemporary East Africa. Part of her broader work on vigilantism, *Law and War in Rural Kenya* is a 64-minute documentary that combines a variety of formal devices, including

interviews, an explanatory voice-over narration, and an unobtrusive, observational shooting style that affords numerous glimpses into the community policing initiatives that, beginning in 1998, attempted to address both cattle raiding and the perceived failures of the Kenyan state.

Distanced from, say, Jean Rouch's emotionally immersive, performative approach to ethnographic documentary filmmaking, while still appearing to reflect Rouch's influential commitment to "shared anthropology," Heald deemphasizes her authorial presence in *Law and War in Rural Kenya*, embracing the contributions of a range of African participants, especially the young translator who at one point occupies Heald's frame, taking the place of the director. At no point do we see Heald's face or hear her speaking voice; the film's narrator, the Ugandan-born journalist Paul Bakibinga, is Heald's audible stand-in—a reversal, perhaps, of more familiar, Rouchian forms of ventriloquism. The film unfolds in long takes and features a minimum of graphic superimpositions, further underscoring Heald's observational approach to her subject.

Law and War in Rural Kenya opens in a pastoral mode, with a series of bucolic images: cows graze, children wander, and women work the sun-drenched fields of Kenya's Bukira East. Eventually a middle-aged man emerges into the light of late afternoon, a small child in his arms. Describing "the old days" in a steady, nostalgic voice that seems suited to the sylvan images, the man makes the seemingly paradoxical claim that cattle raiding was once a deeply ethical practice, in keeping with traditions that militated against the use of force in human interactions. "In the past, stealing was done quietly," he says, explaining that no cattle thief would have dared frighten a child or desecrate a homestead. These socially enforced conditions changed, however, when guns became widely available in the late 1990s—the products of newly liberalized forms of transnational trade that brought the scraps of global capitalism to Kenya. Emboldened as much by their suddenly plentiful weapons as by the numerous shortcomings of the Kenyan state, cattle raiders began to commit violent acts in the name not only of their ungulate quarry, but also of a deep-seated cynicism regarding the role of the Kenyan government in promoting ethnic prejudice, particularly during the early 1980s, which witnessed the state-sanctioned Garissa and Wagalla massacres of ethnic Somalis.

Several of Heald's documentary subjects describe the atrocities carried out in the name of "modern" (i.e., weapons-assisted) cattle raiding; most of them agree that in the absence of effective state intervention—and, moreover, in the absence of ethical models of state governance—vigilantism offered the only means of redressing what had become an intolerable state of affairs in rural Kenya, particularly Kuria. In 1998 a new, distinctly transnational mode of vigilantism emerged in this area, fusing many of the objectives of *sungusungu* groups—part of a Tanzanian justice organization first established in 1981—and those of the *iritongo*, a Kenyan social assembly. Embracing the latter term as a means of normalizing vigilantism as a Kenyan social practice, several men formed a committee designed to combat cattle raiding—allegedly a once heroic practice that had long since been sullied

by the breaking of taboos, including the destruction of property and the killing of cattle owners. Regrettably, *Law and War in Rural Kenya* does not problematize oft-stated claims about the “old style” of cattle raiding. Along with their obviously nostalgic underpinnings, such claims tend to lean rather heavily upon certain normative notions of masculinity— notions that the film questions elsewhere, as when confronting the shortcomings of the *iritongo* leaders who, despite compelling evidence to the contrary, believe that the phrase “male failure” represents a contradiction in terms.

Law and War in Rural Kenya suggests that, much as the indiscriminate violence of cattle raiding formed a badge of masculinity amidst the influx of guns and the associated disorders of globalization, the violence of vigilantism eventually served as a guarantor of masculine status in Kenyan society—and thus as an end unto itself. While some of Heald’s subjects argue that greed and corruption led to the diminishing authority of vigilante leaders by 2008, tempting them to become simple extortionists rather than “community defenders,” others maintain that the lure of violence itself was the dominant factor in the steep decline of what had once represented an impregnable source of security. In both of these readings, the ostensible purpose of vigilantism—to protect civil society in the absence of adequate, state-administered governance—quickly became subordinate to the mere semblance of order, constructed in an increasing number of cases through false accusations, random acts of violence, and sheer authoritarianism.

Law and War in Rural Kenya features the reunion of five of the original members of the 1998 vigilante committee, who convene in 2008 to discuss the committee’s groundbreaking aspects, which for them include the eschewal of kinship in the selection of leaders and in the meting out of justice. “We would arrest and beat all who had stolen,” recalls one man, while another describes torturing thieves until they relinquished their guns. These “heavy punishments,” as one man proudly calls them, may have succeeded in ensuring that criminals “fell in line,” but they themselves became tantamount to criminal activities, according to several of the film’s other subjects, including those who debate the ethics of both punitive and precipitate forms of violence.

Despite its relatively short running time, *Law and War in Rural Kenya* manages to gesture toward the extraordinary complexity of its subject, including its transnational dimensions (as when several interviewees claim Israeli policy as a source of inspiration, presumably on the basis of the Mossad’s counterterrorism measures). From the simultaneous fortification and porousness of African borders to the revival of tribalism, *Law and War in Rural Kenya* addresses several topics of lasting significance to African cinema, at the same time that it explores the hyper specific conflicts between Kenyan national law and what the Kuria East district commissioner dismisses as “traditional ways.”

Noah Tsika

Queens College, City University of New York
Queens, New York

Noah.Tsika@qc.cuny.edu

doi:10.1017/asr.2014.137