198  *A Theory of Assembly: From Museums to Memes*
by Kyle Parry

Reviewed by Ranjodh Singh Dhaliwal

203  *Uncomfortable Television*
by Hunter Hargraves

Reviewed by Jorie Lagerwey

207  *Cinematic Independence: Constructing the Big Screen in Nigeria*
by Noah Tsika

Reviewed by Robin Steedman
Consider a meme, any meme. Chances are you are thinking of at least two distinct forms: one that somehow disturbs the other, producing humor (or anger or perhaps some secret third thing) in the process. Allow me to take a fairly dated meme from 2017 as an example. In a series of images that were circulated all over social media right after then-president Donald Trump announced the United States’ withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, photos from the White House—with Trump and his mostly male entourage all grinning and thumbing up to the camera for a photo-op—were set next to an image of a giant polar ice shelf cracking into two. These two images accompanied the text “cracking open a cold one with the boys,” a “copypasta”—a combination of text that gets circulated in different contexts online—that notes the obsession (and pleasures) of masculine bonding over chilled, canned beers.¹

Together, the three pieces of content—Trump’s photograph, a depiction of polar climate change, and the internet slang about men drinking beer—produce, for someone aware of all three objects independently, a mildly humorous (and morbidly terrifying) expression signifying several things at

once: (1) the unfortunate gender imbalance in Trump’s group of advisers and supporters; (2) the implicit association of this group with participation in homosocial activities; (3) the shared cracking sound made by a beer can being opened and the glacial ice shelves disintegrating; and, finally, (4) the horror that these group of men, as a part of their homosocial bonding and its political preservation, might have just cracked open a different cold one at the global scale, sending us all to our climate doom. Whenever I have taught this meme in my classroom, I have noted to my students that juxtaposition is integral to how and why it works. Memes bring together wildly different objects from different contexts; the copypasta, after all, was not initially created to talk about ice shelves breaking, nor was the Trump photo taken as an indication of homosocial pleasures. By selecting, arranging, and configuring—all functions that form an integral part of Kyle Parry’s theoretical apparatus in *A Theory of Assembly: From Museums to Memes*—memes present a stark distinctive juxtaposition that makes you chuckle. This production of (morbid) humor through unexpected juxtaposition might be understood as part of an even larger phenomenon; think of how puns work or why sitcoms feature the unexpected stomping on the familiar. And though it doesn’t explicitly touch on the question of humor, Parry’s book ably illustrates why the problem of distinct juxtapositions, as I have understood it until now, may explain something more fundamental in contemporary media cultures than just one memetic artifact several years old.

Reading *A Theory of Assembly* offered me a new terminology and made me ask myself if I should, instead of juxtaposition, focus on assembly as the ur-memetic operation in my classes going forward. In his well-written study, Parry quite convincingly makes the case that we need to consider assembly as an expressive strategy that has already been in widespread use across several different media ecologies from art galleries to popular and social media. The book ultimately sets out to intervene in theories of human expression itself, positioning assembly alongside narrative, representation, abstraction, performance, parody, mapping, allegory, database, and visualization as a fundamental aspect of how we communicate. These “expressive strategies” or “cultural forms” comprise the pantheon of things we do. Assembly, Parry argues, “has [in our world today saturated with digital and social media] come to equal narrative, representation, and other dominant cultural forms in its capacity to move audiences and mobilize publics, and just as crucially, to do harm.”

Put simply, an assembly is constituted by almost any set of materials and the positions those materials can occupy, and one assembles by acts of selection and configuration. For Parry, much like the narrative drive, there exists a drive for assembly that hinges on being able to see relationally and

5. Parry, 2.
systemically. This drive does not just animate the creation of assembled forms in media, but is also responsible for people pursuing and participating in social assemblies. He also links these assemblies, albeit all too briefly, to remix cultures and assemblage (agencement in the Deleuzian sense). Assembly, in Parry’s account, does not emerge but is merely recognized; it has already been around us in scholarship and art for quite some time, Parry argues.

A Theory of Assembly can also be read as a self-reflexive collection and arrangement of an impressive array of objects functioning as the foci of analyses. To note just a few, we find examples from across history, ranging from visual art (Hieronymus Bosch’s The Garden of Earthly Delights, Richard Serra’s Verb List, Louise Bourgeois’s 10 AM Is When You Come to Me), sculpture (Kirsten Justesen’s Omståndigheder, Mark Bradford’s Mithra), to installation art (Guanyu Xu’s Parents’ Bedroom and My Desktop, Postcommodity’s Repellent Fence / Valla Repelente) and print art (Joan Fontcuberta’s Googeograms), and from social media (TikToks, Twitter posts, Instagram pages, archives, online projects, and websites) to comics (Josh Neufeld’s A.D.: New Orleans after the Deluge) and televisual media (Spike Lee’s When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts [HBO, 2006]). Parry’s analyses are incisive and texturally lush, making the book a breeze to read. Even the theoretical passages are presented in an extremely systematic fashion; taxonomies are clearly outlined, tables offered, complex arguments lucidly provided, and examples thoughtfully arranged. Several images, stills, and screenshots of various social media and art appear throughout the monograph to provide ample visual aid for even the most uninitiated of meme and net art scholars.

After laying the theoretical groundwork in the introduction and the first chapter, A Theory of Assembly takes up the role of assembly in the context of art and museum spaces in chapter 2. Here, Parry notes several kinds of aesthetic engagements that a lens of assembly brings into focus: assembly can be integral to an artwork, or can be infused in it; assembly can be used to incorporate, participate in, or distribute art; assembly can thus lead to modes of analogies, reconstitution, and other vectors of artistic possibility. In the third chapter—perhaps the most novel and insightful of them all—Parry masterfully takes assembly as a formative and critical framework for memes and internet discourses. Building on the burgeoning subfield of meme studies, Parry notes how memes, especially ones that involve object-labeling, consist of a form of a form. In other words, the use of memes assumes “that the world is reducible to a set of situations and scenarios.” To understand the practices that animate this use, he offers us the concept of “expressive folksonomy,” indicating the public expression possible through the work

11. Parry, Theory of Assembly, 146.
done when labeling, tagging, and categorizing online. Memes, regardless of whether they are politically abhorrent (plenty of memes are sexist and racist) or socially progressive, bring together hyperdistributed (and sometimes corrosive) media assemblies across scales. Assembly is, for Parry, a fundamental property of the internet era; in fact, when it comes to memes, it is difficult *not* to assemble. Chapter 4 takes up the art and social media produced in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to show how comics, photobooks, paintings, films, exhibitions, memes, and massive online archives all select, compile, arrange, and configure, demonstrating a kind of “generativity,” which refers to the ability of such actions and assemblies to rethink social and racial problems for better and for worse. Assembly, in other words, is today an important creative response to catastrophes, particularly for questions of social and cultural memory. Building on this discussion, in the final chapter, *A Theory of Assembly* considers environmental and social violence at large to ask what responses are needed. In this section, Parry engages with Kimberlé Crenshaw’s work on intersectionality and Rob Nixon’s influential interventions on slow violence. Critiquing Nixon’s call for better narratives and better images as a response to environmental violence, Parry instead emphasizes the need for better assemblies, even re-reading some of Nixon’s own most generative examples as falling into the category of “generative assemblies” and “media assemblies.” Such conceptual reassemblies, where Parry finds some productive potentialities, include countermapping projects and atlases and Mark Bradford’s 2015 installation *Scorched Earth*. In “memetic drip” (the “ambiguous incrementality of social media”), the author finds another possible response to environmental violence through better assemblies. By doing so through assembling materials such as EcoTok, the part of TikTok concerned about the environment, alongside Nap Ministry, a movement advocating taking naps as a liberatory social good, *A Theory of Assembly* occasionally dissolves the gap between the two valences of drip: the slang for looking effortlessly cool and the incremental additions of one drop at a time.

If studies of textual and visual culture tend to rely on the frameworks of narrative and representation, *A Theory of Assembly* convincingly suggests that media studies is the proper field for exploring assembly as a cultural form. In this regard, *A Theory of Assembly* is certainly ambitious; it jostles with established notions of disciplinary knowledge. Given this scope, I certainly wouldn’t have minded a greater, more extensive engagement with the origins, specificities, and types of assemblies. While the book is theoretically sophisticated, its implicit presentism leaves the reader searching for a more

12. Parry, 146, 158, 173.
13. Parry, 181.
16. Parry, 240–255. Among other media being critically read here are, interestingly enough, Timothy Morton’s tweets to Rob Nixon, which made me look at my own social media shitposts in fear.
17. Missing from Parry’s account, for example, are assembly languages and computer assemblers, systems that, among other things, mediate between the human-oriented symbols and machinic operations all around us today.
comprehensive historicization and spatialization of assembly. An exploration of how, when, where, and why assembly came to be might, for example, need to contend more seriously with existing concepts such as collage, montage, found art, or remix. Surely Hieronymus Bosch in the fifteenth century would not have considered himself an assembler. How might one then understand assembly’s historical and geographical contexts and evolutions? Why has assembly—the ur-operation of economic production in America in the twentieth century, à la assembly lines—emerged in the twenty-first as a form of media production and critique?\(^\text{18}\) Has the relationship between political assembly—be it communal, institutional, or architectural—and creative or artistic assembly changed over time and space? Perhaps, in the end, the book raises more questions than it sometimes answers. But perhaps, also, these questions are to the book’s credit, pointing to the need for more work on the topic.

Despite its limitations, *A Theory of Assembly* expertly demonstrates what media theory at a scale might look like *as a discipline*; the book assures us that there are still creative and popular media operations that need accounting for. *A Theory of Assembly* is a vital intervention, then, and I remain especially convinced of the fact that it has offered us one of the most powerful, though perhaps not the first, theoretical vocabularies for understanding memetic operations on the internet. But more than just noting how some media-materials, such as memes, are assemblies, *A Theory of Assembly* also suggests how assemblies might themselves be memetic, insofar as they go viral, exceeding their origins and moving into other mediums. This is precisely why my class sessions on memes are about to find a new verve starting this semester. Parry, through his theory of assembly, presents a vocabulary that my students and I can utilize to generate more precise understandings of viral and other pervasive and yet-to-be-outlined cultural and creative experiences, whether they are arrayed in museums or in low-effort memes.

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\(^{18}\) For more on the burgeoning discussions in media studies of logistical assemblies, see Matthew Hockenberry, Nicole Starosielski, and Susan Zieger, eds., *Assembly Codes: The Logistics of Media* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).
Reviewed by Jorie Lagerwey

Uncomfortable Television

by Hunter Hargraves.
Duke University Press.
2023. 264 pages.
$99.95 hardcover; $26.95 paper; also available in e-book.

Uncomfortable Television analyzes post-millennial US television through the lens of discomfort and the affects associated with taking pleasure in shows whose protagonists are unlikeable, criminal, gross, abject, narcissistic, or otherwise generally unpleasant. Hunter Hargraves’s core argument is that post-millennial television “began to normalize discomfort during this time as a strategy of governmentality.”¹ Twentieth-century television, he argues, was designed to comfort, to instruct postwar American audiences on family structures and suburban living. Twenty-first century television dramatically shifted that affective address toward negative affects that Hargraves covers chapter by chapter: irritation, addiction, perversion, and White guilt.² Training viewers to take pleasure in these “ugly feelings,” to borrow Sianne Ngai’s phrase, television enacts its governmentality, its role as a structure of cultural control, and accustoms audiences to enjoying feeling bad.³ This perversion of pleasure, Hargraves argues, is essential to surviving as a citizen in what is alternately titled late capitalism or neoliberal capitalism. This reimagining of the so-called affective theoretical turn in the humanities generally offers an interesting perspective on television studies as a field, an area of media studies Hargraves calls on to be more self-critical.

2. I capitalize White to call attention to it as a racialized category rather than a norm against which others are distinguished with capital letters. I follow other Whiteness scholars and the Washington Post style guide in this choice.
The two terms *late capitalism* and *neoliberal capitalism* form an essential backbone of the book’s arguments, and it is sometimes assumed that there is a preexisting shared idea of what those words mean. That gloss, however, potentially reinforces the point itself: that “systems of economic precarity and cultural instability”—to which it would be safe, I think, to add ecological crisis, a pandemic, and broad antagonism toward difference in the forms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, and class—*feel* (to borrow the book’s focus on affect) so widely shared as to not require detailed enumeration or intense interrogation. This shared structure of feeling goes hand in hand with Hargraves’s acknowledgment of the inevitable messiness of periodization. To address that messiness in relation to his text selections, Hargraves usefully traces the several previous eras labeled television *golden ages* before settling into his analysis of early twenty-first-century “peak TV.” The uncomfortable TV in the book’s title, then, begins just at the turn of the millennium, growing from the much-celebrated antiheroes who emerged starting with Tony Soprano in 1999 (*The Sopranos*, HBO, 1999–2007) and proliferating in the first two decades of the twenty-first century with *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–2013), *Sons of Anarchy* (FX, 2008–2014), *Oz* (HBO, 1997–2003; obviously before Tony Soprano, but without *Soprano’s* cultural pervasiveness at the time), and *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–2008). Expanding beyond the “difficult men” discussed in work by Brett Martin and Amanda Lotz, Hargraves includes the irritating women on *Girls* (HBO, 2012–2017), addicted women (in the specific episode used as a case study) and men on the reality addiction drama *Intervention* (A&E, 2005–), and queer remix culture as seen on YouTube, particularly *Jiz* (2009–2016), a queer remix of *Jem and the Holograms* (syndicated, 1985–1988) obsessed with (satirical) gross and graphic encouragement of abortion.

*Uncomfortable Television* is organized into five chapters, with each tackling a particular uncomfortable affect: irritation, addiction (both the pleasures of watching addicted people and the pleasure of addiction to television itself), perversion (specifically of uncritical nostalgia), and White guilt. A concluding chapter then grapples with the misrecognition of viewing discomfort for political action in what Hargraves describes as “woke TV.” The initial chapters do much of the theoretical heavy lifting, situating the book in the trajectories of affect studies and the history of television studies as a field. The methodological push toward affect studies usefully recalls that emotions, pleasure, and viewers have been at the center of much feminist television studies since the field’s inception, albeit not necessarily under the moniker or with the vocabulary of affect studies as its own field of research.

Chapter 1 grounds its intervention within the now-prominent trend of affect studies within television studies. Moving specifically to irritation


as a feeling experienced while viewing annoying characters, Hargraves asks readers to “embrace irritation as representation.” The theoretical underpinning of the chapter covers affect versus emotion, the venerable TV studies stalwart Raymond Williams and his flow, as well as the politics of representation. Landing on Girls as its key case study, the chapter recounts the self-obsession of all the characters and their ultimate dislike even of one another, as reflected in two scene analyses of one of the four main girls, Shoshanna, finally offering unfiltered and deeply unflattering analyses of her so-called friends’ personalities. This “turning in on itself” of televisual representation—that is, Shoshanna in these moments is all of us irritated spectators—Hargraves argues, can also produce solidarity. Exposing the falsity of this friendship circle in Girls, then, disrupts easy identification with the characters and calls attention to “the way late capitalism shapes future generations.”

Chapter 2 tackles the “addicted spectator,” addressing both the viewer binging serial TV and using reality TV addiction drama Intervention as its core text for analysis. The key argument here is that “scholars of television and popular culture take seriously the notion that television can function as a drug, . . . [T]elevision’s drug-like properties have become a critical mechanism of late capitalism’s constant pathologizing of cultural affect.” The “narcoanalysis” offered throughout the chapter encourages critical evaluation of cultural discourses of spectatorship. The characterization of binge-watching as a quality TV practice perhaps leaves out the pre-streaming history of marathoning, or the distinctions made by critics and awarding bodies between shows to be consumed in one gulp of (degraded) pleasure and those quality dramas to be watched and re-watched with careful attention. The latter benefit from post-market technologies such as DVD and their accompanying commentary tracks, making them binge-worthy and “valoriz[ing] them as so-called good objects worthy of consumption” in Hargraves’s formulation. Nonetheless, the chapter offers an interesting relationship between addiction, whether to drugs or to television, and addiction’s relationship to free market capitalism taken to its inevitable conclusion.

Chapter 3 analyzes queer remix culture, arguing that work like the reformulation of toy-driven girl rock cartoon Jem and the Holograms into a satirical pro-abortion YouTube video series Jiz by video artist Sienna D’Enema perverts viewer nostalgia for the original program in productive and interesting ways. What makes Jiz “so dangerously offensive is less its provocative slurs and more the violence enacted on nostalgia,” Hargraves argues. In the post-millennial cultural moment overburdened with nostalgic TV and popular culture, this takes a refreshing new approach to understanding nostalgia media.

Chapter 4 is titled “The Spectator Plagued by White Guilt: On the Appropriative Intermediality of Quality TV.” Appropriative intermediality is an

effective term that gets at the transference of cultural value in media industries dominated by content creation and transmedia adaptations rather than the single program as a unit of creation. Hargraves defines appropriative intermediality as “when one media form or discipline appropriates an art object belonging to a different media form through an active disavowal of that art object’s media specificity.” I take this to mean that The Wire, this chapter’s key text, so often described as novelistic, borrowed the cultural legitimacy of literature to be set up as something other than mere television and therefore worthy of elite audiences’ time. The White guilt portion of the title refers to “the discourse of The Wire . . . making audiences too comfortable with institutional Whiteness, shrouded by the veneer of golden, novelistic antiheroism.” It is not always clear where the guilt of the title comes into play; however, the argument is distinct and well supported that White people who publicly admire The Wire use it as a way to demonstrate their racial credibility or even anti-racism and therefore to alleviate the need for any social justice-oriented action.

The final chapter acts as both analysis and conclusion, arguing that “toward the later part of the 2010s, television and its audiences began to become aware of the debilitating effects of televisual discomfort: in short, that TV became woke.” Up to this point, the book has argued that uncomfortable television in the post-millennium or very early twenty-first century acculturated viewers to discomfort and educated those consumers to understand displeasure as pleasure. The final chapter moves more firmly into the next decade arguing that US cultural crises had become so hypervisible they simply could not be ignored. Woke TV is politically engaged television that, according to Hargraves, is misrecognized as political action.

Despite its clear and insightful textual analyses, Uncomfortable Television sometimes assumes a reader already immersed in the debates at hand. Similarly, an understanding of the precise definitions and implications of certain essential terms such as late or neoliberal capitalism is assumed, which risks supporting a popular cultural trend toward nebulous and therefore overwhelming crisis and despair. Ultimately though, perhaps that is the goal of a book ensconced in discomfort: to encourage readers to recognize the pleasure they take in viewing relations of displeasure. If television, as we television scholars take so much personal and professional value in asserting, is a powerful cultural tool of governmentality, then uncomfortable television may be training viewers in the distance, superiority, and potential apathy apparently required for the comfortable to survive in the crisis-laden twenty-first century.

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15. Hargraves, 164.
In his richly detailed and insightful new book *Cinematic Independence: Constructing the Big Screen in Nigeria*, Noah Tsika charts the history of theatrical film in Nigeria. Taking a *longue-durée* approach to cinema history in Nigeria, focusing on industry dynamics from the late colonial period to the present day, Tsika offers a searing critique of the relationship between Hollywood and Nigeria. Through an intense focus on empirical and historical detail, he unveils the dramatic power asymmetries at the heart of this relationship.

Key to this critical endeavor is keeping Nigeria at the center of the analysis instead of relegating it to the margins of film history, and more specifically Hollywood history. Nollywood is too often read as a site of alterity—whether lambasting its supposedly bad films or breathlessly speaking about its enormous growth—Nigeria is read as different, as an exotic Other. Yet “Nigeria has never been beyond Hollywood’s global consciousness,” whether it was Disney’s consciousness when the company sent a team of Imagineers to the country in 1979, or as a place of cutting-edge technological development.

with the development of Cinestar International’s innovative multilingual projection system Multitrax.\textsuperscript{2} 

Tsika makes clear that the striking features of Old Nollywood, its “legendary productivity, its awesome annual output of ‘bad’ straight-to-video films,” is not so different from the contemporary “deluge” of Netflix originals.\textsuperscript{3} And “Nigeria’s transmogrified infrastructures”—its cinemas becoming houses of worship or stores—“are not isolated examples, utterly eccentric in their Africanity”; indeed, this conversion has taken place many times in the United States, including in key centers of American cinema such as New York and Los Angeles, as Tsika shows.\textsuperscript{4} These two examples—two of many in the book—show how Nigerian cinema is not so different from that found in the United States and that scholars looking to understand the future of filmmaking would do well to turn to Nigeria.

Hollywood—whether studios or associated technologies such as Cinerama—has had an enduring interest in Nigeria, as chapter 1 shows. The case of Cinerama is a prescient example of the kind of interest Hollywood studios and movie technology companies had in Nigeria: this corporation, which erected temporary theaters in Nigeria to display its widescreen technology, “expected to be so welcomed in Nigeria as to be able to construct permanent facilities on the government’s dime.”\textsuperscript{5} Cinerama, like many other cases in the book, wanted to benefit from Nigeria, and particularly its vast population of potential consumers, but did little to make that relationship reciprocally beneficial. As Tsika repeatedly shows, Nigeria’s possibility as a consumer market (of movies and what could be advertised in them and sold in theaters around them) was the irresistible lure bringing Hollywood and related American corporations to Nigeria—much as they would like to dress that up in discourses of developing Nigeria, satisfying its “movie hungry” audiences, or being part of a “Rising Africa.”\textsuperscript{6} Rather, as many examples across the book show, they “sought to couch exploitation as camaraderie”—as when Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), stated, “Two needs must be filled in Nigeria if there is to be a massive and loyal following for U.S. product. . . . The first is more better-quality American films, and the second is more and better theatres. The U.S. industry can, and should, be doing something about both.”\textsuperscript{7} Building theaters, and stocking them with American films, was envisaged as something that would directly benefit Hollywood companies and American interests. That Nigerians would want this was simply assumed, and more audaciously, it was assumed that the Nigerian government would both want and pay for this construction.

Chapter 2 takes a detour from the stated aim of the book to explore theatrical exhibition, focusing instead on the production of The Mark of

\textsuperscript{2} Noah Tsika, \textit{Cinematic Independence: Constructing the Big Screen in Nigeria} (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 181.
\textsuperscript{3} Tsika, 182.
\textsuperscript{4} Tsika, 23.
\textsuperscript{5} Tsika, 34.
\textsuperscript{6} Tsika, 42, 45.
\textsuperscript{7} Tsika, 45, 46.
the Hawk (Michael Audley, 1957) and the film text itself. Nonetheless, it’s a
telling case for the kind of imaginary Hollywood has long had for Nigeria.
These imaginaries shape the political economy of film exhibition. The chap-
ter uses the film, produced by Lloyd Young and Associates in Enugu, to offer
fascinating insights into the relationship between Hollywood and Nigeria.
The Eastern Region was keenly interested in developing its film industry and
building associations with Hollywood. In part, this was a political strategy
to create “an impression of connectedness to the wider world” and thus
increased status in Nigeria, in a context where regions competed with one
another. Yet the dominant story of the chapter is one of Hollywood, via the
figure of Lloyd Young, walking away with the lion’s share of the benefits that
the relationship created. While The Mark of the Hawk certainly benefitted
Lloyd Young reputationally (the film received glowing praise from both Dr.
Martin Luther King and US president Dwight D. Eisenhower, for example)
and financially, it did neither for Enugu. “‘Developing’ Nigeria has long been
an idée fixe of Hollywood, however one chooses to define the industry,” but
that development is in service of capitalist markets for American products, as
Tsika explains in vivid detail.

Chapter 3 is expansive in its coverage of Hollywood’s relationship
with Nigerian exhibition spaces (e.g., the Second World Black and African
Festival of Arts and Culture, more commonly known as FESTAC) as well as
Nollywood’s relationship with cinemas outside Nigeria. Hollywood has and
continues to exert tremendous disciplining power on Nigerian screens, as
with the MPAA export ban that began in 1981 and lasted until the return to
civilian rule in 1999. Cinemas died in this period, but as we all know, movies
did not: this is the period, of course, when Nollywood emerged. Tsika shows
how intertwined theatrical distribution in Nigeria is with Hollywood—for
example, he shows how FilmHouse “became the largest theater chain in
Nigeria by partnering with Fox and the IMAX Corporation”—but also how
this relationship is fundamentally asymmetrical and to the immense ben-
efit of Hollywood and American corporations. Tsika demonstrates how
Hollywood, whether through banning film exports or partnering with cin-
ema chains, exerts massive power in determining what will be projected on
the screens of Nigeria’s cinemas.

The book is at its most rhetorically powerful when explaining the
emergence of multiplex cinema in Nigeria post-2004 in chapter 4. As Tsika
argues, these multiplexes are emphatically not for most Nigerians because of
their prices, gatekeeping measures, security arrangements, and locations in
upscale areas, but rather for an affluent minority. In this way, they stand in
stark contrast to Old Nollywood’s audiences and production and distribution
strategies. Tsika is particularly scathing in his critique of FilmHouse, a verti-
cally integrated enterprise, producing and exhibiting its own movies. Unsur-
prisingly, they favor their own films to the direct detriment of unaffiliated
filmmakers. FilmHouse, but also the other multiplexes, are tightly connected

8. Tsika, 88.
to Hollywood studios and corporations such as IMAX, Coke, and Pepsi. The multiplexes must treat Hollywood movies preferentially, but perhaps more importantly, corporate interests are shaping the content of Nigerian movies, as Tsika illustrates through a close reading of *Couple of Days* (Tolu “Lord Tanner” Awobiyi, 2016) and its “promotional aesthetic.” Strikingly, in one scene the characters watch a movie at a FilmHouse location, but beyond mere product placement, the scene was designed to be excerpted as an ad for FilmHouse and its concession stands. At the same time, New Nollywood as an artistic practice can exist because of Nigerian multiplexes, as Tsika himself acknowledges. It is not a practice free of commercial relationships, but then no filmmaking practice is, and the fact that multiplexes could lead to the creation of this new and distinctly Nigerian artform is important, no matter how imbricated this artform is with corporate interests.

Cinemas are spaces of contestation where various interests clash and harmonize: they do not have simple effects in a media landscape. While pointing out the immense power differential between various players in this landscape—as Tsika does—is essential to avoiding an overly celebratory discourse of the rebirth of theatrical film in Nigeria, it is equally important to examine the ways in which various Nigerian players work with and contest multiplexes and the new business relationships they bring into being. Along these lines, I wish Tsika had given more space to unfolding how Nigerian filmmakers challenge, subvert, or rework the new systems that multiplexes have introduced into the Nigerian cinematic landscape and how they attempt to turn them to their own advantage. The history of Nollywood shows nothing if not that in the face of impossibility, new filmmaking practices emerge. Thus, I would have liked to have read more about how Nigerian filmmakers navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by multiplexes because their work also shapes Nigeria’s cinematic landscape, just as it is shaped by Hollywood behemoths.

In conclusion, the book carefully charts Nigeria’s cinema history and, in so doing, lays the foundation needed to understand the multiplex in present-day Nigerian cinema with all its multiple power configurations. This kind of historically detailed scholarship is vital—especially in a time of proliferating platforms and screen media forms and the discourses of newness that they inevitably generate. While in Nigeria multiplexes are new, the political economy of exploitation and power asymmetry underpinning them is a tale as old as Hollywood itself, and this is what Tsika most powerfully demonstrates in *Cinematic Independence*.

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11. Tsika, 175.