African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics. By Manthia Diawara. New York: Prestel, 2010. 319 pp.

Cinema in a Democratic South Africa: The Race for Representation. By Lucia Saks. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010. 256 pp.

In this essay I review two new academic books that examine cinema in Africa. The first, *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics*, is Manthia Diawara's latest contribution to the field of cinema studies, African Diaspora studies, and cultural studies. The second book, *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa: The Race for Representation*, by Lucia Saks, is another contribution to the study of cinema in South Africa after the demise of apartheid and the rise of democracy. Given South Africa's history of racial segregation and politics, South African cinema has largely been viewed as outside the category of African cinema. Further complicating this, African cinema has historically privileged West African, mainly Francophone, cinema, which is highly subsidized by the French government. In this review, I juxtapose these two books, which approach the study of cinema from different perspectives. Diawara's book is important because it shifts the focus from nationalism, nation building, and cultural identity and instead targets the body of African films, which he argues is re-defining African cinema through the use of "new forms of aesthetics and politics." Saks's book uses cinema in South Africa as a way of understanding the shifts that have occurred since 1994, emphasizing the manner in which cinema and representation is integral to national, cultural, and nation-state identity formation.

Diawara's work can be categorized very loosely as a travelogue and part autobiography. The book comprises three sections. Section one is mainly theoretical, examining African cinema and arguing that contemporary African cinema represents a "new wave"—the New African Cinema Wave—of filmmaking on the continent. The next section is a series of interviews/talks by prominent African filmmakers and intellectuals. The book closes with a number of filmographies and director biographies, emphasizing the importance of film and filmmaking on the African continent. This book, like Diawara's *In Search of Africa* (2000), can be read as ethnographic. The book takes the reader on a journey through Africa (Ouagadougou) and Berlin, positioning the voice of the author and the author's encounters in these different spaces as a context in which to understand the complexities of filmmaking and film viewing on the African continent.

Diawara's analysis begins with the grandfather of African cinema, Ousmane Sembene. He argues that Sembene is important to any discussion or analysis of African cinema because he was the filmmaker in Africa who gave a voice to the African image by challenging the belief that Africa was "faceless and voiceless in Western and anthropological films" (24). He also argues that through aesthetics and language, Sembene's cinema challenged and subverted European notions of African cinema. Through his films Sembene challenged the political and cultural institutions in Senegal, and in an indirect manner he critiqued French neo-colonial relations with Senegal. Although Sembene's films were local in nature, he dealt with global issues through local specificities.

Emphasizing the manner in which Sembene's filmmaking practice, through aesthetics and content, challenged the Western (European and American) ideas of cinema and examining the manner in which African filmmakers have been active in creating a new film language that speaks to the specificities of filmmaking on the continent, Diawara argues that contemporary African filmmakers are at the forefront of creating this change in African cinema. He contends

that contemporary African films should be categorized as The New African Cinema Wave. This is an important political move because it positions the New African Cinema Wave as a "movement," resonating with the French New Wave, Italian neorealism, and other film movements in Europe. In chapter 2, Diawara transports the reader to Berlin, where he was asked to curate a series of African films. As the curator, Diawara was forced to consider his choice of films in terms of "the value and specificity of African cinema in both contemporary and aesthetic terms" (73). He is invested in highlighting the manner in which Africans are taking control of their own aesthetics and vision of their world through film. Diawara argues that the newer generations of African filmmakers, those that came after Sembene, are not invested in Sembene's oppositional film language (although he emphasizes the influence that Sembene has had on these filmmakers). He suggests that their filmmaking styles and aesthetics have more continuity with European and American films. He categorizes this new wave into three sections, The Arte Wave, The Independent Spirit and the pursuit of a Pan-African cinema, and the New Popular African Cinema. This book carefully offers analyses of films and filmmakers that fall within these categories. Importantly, this book offers an analysis of Nollywood cinema, approaching it from a "narratological" perspective. Diawara argues that Nollywood is important to African culture and life and provides stories of "mobility" (179). He suggests that a "claim can therefore be made for Nollywood as [a] repository of a new social imaginary in Africa, a new purveyor of habitus—linguistic, body language, and dress style—and a mirror of our fantasies of escape from economic and social problems" (17).

It is important to note that Diawara's new book offers an analysis of a few films from South Africa. Lucia Saks's work, *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa: The Race for Representation*, takes a different approach to film and film culture in South Africa. This book is mainly concerned with national identity and is interested in positioning cinema as an important tool in the construction of national identity in newly formed nation-states. The book offers an analysis of the ways in which certain events that have come to define the South African nation in the post-apartheid context have been represented through cinema in South African. This book is interested in understanding the changes that film policy, education, exhibition markets, and festivals have enabled in creating a new type of cinema, one that marks a shift in the manner in which South African cinema was used as a propaganda tool during apartheid and marked/stereotyped certain types of bodies in certain ways.

This study is about the ways in which South African films "attached itself to the nation and thought of itself in national terms" (83). In so doing, the author positions South African cinema post-1994 as "national cinema" and thus insists that there must be a national imperative to cinema in Africa. Saks analyzes films that can be categorized very loosely as the Truth and Reconciliation genre, a period that has come to define post-apartheid democracy through forgiveness and reconciliation. She also examines films that deal with HIV/AIDS, another area of national interests in South Africa.

This is just one of many books on cinema in South Africa that have been published in the past ten years. The frustration is that all these books have the same political investment, analyzing South African cinema as a national cinema, offering very little that is new or refreshing. This study and future studies on South African cinema can benefit considerably by viewing South African cinema through an approach that brings together aesthetics and content (similar to Diawara's methodology) rather than tagging cinema onto the nation and the national. South African cinema, like African cinema, is transnational in nature (co-production deals, filmmakers trained abroad), and future research can benefit from such an approach.

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