studies of workshops in other parts of Africa, styles are often created through the cooperation of several artists who work together and exchange ideas regularly on how a particular type of artwork should look. Whether this is a valid model for Lagoon artists is a question that she does not raise.

Visonà goes on to analyse art in the context of leadership and prestige. Here, she looks at artistic forms as part of expressive culture, in particular at art in the context of age grade ceremonies. The usual distinction of fine and performing arts is abandoned in favour of an integrative analysis. Visonà comes back to her earlier statements about modern concepts and genres that do not fit African arts. Though this debate peaked in the 1980s and 1990s, it is still worth remembering what has been argued – in particular as the art market and its protagonists continue to reproduce Western notions.

The final section of the book is dedicated to 'Lagoon artists in a global context'. Visonà first traces how Lagoon artworks found their way into modernity and how they were appropriated by the artworld as a global institution. She looks at the complexity of the relations that inform the exchange in the artworld. Her main example is Emile Guebehi, who is known for his life-size figures that are both commissioned by private collectors and local age-grade associations. Besides, he has powerful patrons as the former director of the National Museum, and some of his work has been on display in New York. The divergence between interpretations of Guebehi's sculptures is striking: while some see it as a 'hybrid' art that comments on Western notions of male consumption and female seduction, others claim that the sculptures record the history of the Ebrié and illustrate past events (pp. 172–3).

Visonà adopts an art historian's perspective, but the book raises more questions, in particular about the present. Her empirical data mainly stem from the 1980s, which makes it all the more interesting to ask how Lagoon arts look today, after the end of the crisis that has rocked the country since the turn of the new century. Monica Blackmun Visonà has published a book on the arts of the Lagoon people that will stand as a reference, particularly as the conflict has inhibited many art historians from continuing their studies in the country.

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FERNANDO ARENAS, *Lusophone Africa: beyond independence*. Minneapolis MN and London: University of Minnesota Press (pb £14 – 978 0 81666 984 4). 2011, 368 pp.

This book sets out to draw on globalization and post-colonial studies in analysing Lusophone Africa. There is much about these countries that would appear to defeat the purpose of looking at them as a coherent conceptual entity. To begin with, nature has not been fair to all of them. Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe have oil; Cape Verde is a largely dry archipelago with a seemingly industrious population that appears to have made the best of remittances from its migrants and tourism; Mozambique is, as far as natural resources and size are concerned, richer than Guinea-Bissau but poorer than Angola. Moreover, their post-colonial political fortunes are disparate. These different political paths in the aftermath of independence do not seem to suggest any obvious link back to their common colonial past that would help account for the differences. It is against this background that Fernando Arenas's book should be read.

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Drawing from three extremely rich case studies of Cape Verdean music, Lusophone African cinema and Angolan literature, the author seeks to demonstrate the existence of a 'Lusophone transatlantic matrix' consisting of these African countries, Portugal and Brazil. The matrix purportedly documents a particular experience of the global. The book is quite successful in conveying a sense of the uniqueness of this experience. Its emphasis on cultural media and, in particular, on the vibrant scenes of music, cinema and literature are a welcome reminder of the diversity that is constitutive of Africa. The emphasis also corrects a neglect that Portuguese-speaking African countries have suffered from as they jockey for attention in the shadow of their more visible Francophone and Anglophone counterparts. The idea of a 'Lusophone transatlantic matrix' rests on a reading of intellectual attempts in the countries concerned to interpret their fateful historical encounter in ways that justify a commitment to a shared destiny. While Fernando Arenas takes care to draw attention to the role of African countries in shaping the nature of this commitment, he does not appear to deny the fact that Brazil and Portugal have set the intellectual terms of this matrix. There is, therefore, a sense in which whatever African countries can contribute in setting up the matrix seems to have been determined by others beforehand.

This raises a critical issue that is central to the evaluation of the author's claim, according to which the analysis might be informed by globalization and post-colonial perspectives. In the book the global is loosely defined as the interconnected nature of relations among countries in the world. This obtains under the influence of the forces set free by the expansion of capital and its search for the regulation and ordering of societies in ways that secure its reproduction. Whatever the exact nature of the global may be, the author suggests that the process through which it constituted itself over time yielded structural and ideological conditions that would enable newly independent countries to live up to the promise of nationalist politics. The post-colonial, in its turn, is defined as a critical engagement with the history that made the imaginaries underlying nation building in these countries possible. Since, however, the post-independence trajectory of most African countries has been one of crisis, disasters and wars, coupled with the corruption of African political elites and their indifference to the suffering of their fellow-countrymen, Fernando Arenas seems to suggest that post-colonialism as a critical perspective has increasingly come to amount to a strained justification of the failure of African countries to join the rest of the world in enjoying the benefits of a life in freedom and prosperity. There is something appealing about this argument, as it invites readers to engage seriously with Africa on its own terms. But then again, this might be an effect of the underlying definitions of the global and the post-colonial. While the former draws attention to interconnectedness without any particular emphasis on the extent to which such structures, brought about by colonial rule and capitalism, largely determined the range of local responses to them, the latter gives pride of place to the temporal dimension and fails, thereby, to pay adequate attention to the extent to which post-colonial critiques actually seek to engage the structures that made such societies possible, while at the same time inhering in them. In this sense, then, it may not be clear what the exact roles of the global and the post-colonial are in this book, and whether they are absolutely necessary to the otherwise interesting narrative in it. Whatever the answer, it is certainly a welcome contribution to our fund of knowledge about marginal historical experiences in Africa.

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