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Eric Charry, ed. *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. x + 390 pp. Graphs. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Discography. Videography. Webography. Index. \ \$35.00. Paper.

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locations and in conversation with a variety of translocal cultural forms. The most provocative insights found in the essays come into view when researchers adopt theoretical perspectives that are as worldly and adventurous as Nollywood itself. Perhaps the volume's only weakness is that these theoretical nuggets are too few. I wanted more theorizing that was transnational, transdisciplinary, and perhaps a little transgressive to complement the fine-tuned close readings and ethnographies and that, like Nollywood itself, crossed boundaries to sample and remake ideas and concepts in different contexts. To my mind, it is these approaches that hold the most promise for future research. Nollywood studies, which remains grounded in an African studies paradigm, has too rarely engaged with critical or theoretical work in film and media studies and has dialogued too infrequently with research on other global, non-Western film and media industries. Though there are important exceptions, I still maintain that we in Nollywood studies focus our optic too tightly on Africa and talk only to ourselves. We therefore miss opportunities to participate in conversations with scholars who work in other fields or who specialize in other media industries and to invigorate our analyses with new creative energies and conceptual vocabularies. More crucially, we forego chances to share our knowledge broadly and to challenge critical discourses that generalize about world cinema, postcolonial cultural production, or transnational media without accounting for the singularity of Nollywood.

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It has been over a decade since hip hop exploded on the scene in sub-Saharan Africa, revolutionizing national popular cultures and mediascapes in many countries. Given how this phenomenon has preoccupied scholars of African popular music since that time, it is remarkable that an edited volume like *Hip Hop Africa* took so long to appear. Fairly or unfairly, the expectations for this book are sure to be high among certain readers. For the most part, the book delivers, providing a slate of rich historical overviews and insightful sociomusical analyses. But there are also some shortcomings, which I will address in this review.

For better or worse, *Hip Hop Africa* is a lightly curated collection of papers. In lieu of a classical editorial introduction, Eric Charry contributes two bookending chapters, neither of which contains a strong programmatic statement on African hip hop as an area of research. But even without a

proper introductory chapter, *Hip Hop Africa* has a clear driving question, which is perhaps most clearly articulated in the opening sentence of Patricia Tang's chapter on the relationship between hip hop and *griot* traditions in Senegal: "What happens when hip hop, with its indisputable African American roots, returns to Africa?" (79). Appropriately qualified and complicated, this is an excellent question for the first edited volume on African hip hop. But its true value in this volume lies in how it opens up a range of other, arguably more interesting, questions—questions about pathways of musical and cultural influence, the role of global economic and political relations, and the dynamics of "imitation and innovation" (as per Alex Perullo's chapter title).

Charry opens the volume by exploring the roots and routes of African hip hop in a deft "capsule history of African rap." Retracing connections between New York, Paris, and various African cities, this brief chapter is a gem that is sure to find its way onto many global hip hop and African popular music syllabi. Parts 1 and 5 of the book then flesh out Charry's historical sketch. Part 1 presents case studies of the indigenization of rap in Ghana and South Africa, focusing especially on the roles of globalization and diaspora; while part 5 offers chapters on Ghana and Malawi that situate local hip hop-oriented musical genres within broader sociomusical ecologies. Each of the chapters in these sections is worth the price of the book. John Collins's chapter on Ghana in part 5 is especially valuable, given his unparalleled knowledge of the Ghanaian music scene.

Part 2 explores artistic subjectivities, with chapters on rap and reggae/ragga artistry in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Malawi. Part 3, focusing on Mali and Nigeria, then delves into issues of cosmopolitanism and hybridity. Part 4, playfully titled "East Coast," features chapters on hip hop in Kenya and Tanzania. It is not clear why these are the only chapters grouped together by region, but this has the unfortunate effect of making East Africa seem like something of an afterthought in an otherwise West Africa-dominated volume.

Part 6 contains a single chapter, a previously published study of urban drumming in Bamako. Notwithstanding the quality of the chapter, it is an odd addition to the volume. While Charry uses it in his epilogue as a comparative example to elucidate the particular globalism of African hip hop, it is unclear why the chapter needed to be reprinted in the volume. There are many other previously published works that could have greatly enriched this volume, such as Alex Perullo's 2007 "'Here's a Little Something Local': An Early History of Hip Hop in Dar Es Salaam, 1984–1997" (In *Dar Es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, edited by James R. Brennan and Andrew Burton, Mkuki na Nyota, 2007). This chapter, little known by scholars not focused on East Africa, is certainly one of the best historical accounts of African hip hop, and Charry does make some use of it in his "capsule history."

Charry's epilogue pulls together the rest of the chapters through a discussion of "some of the compelling concerns confronting Africans as they participate in [hip hop and other contemporary urban] music

cultures” (285). It tackles a number of themes, many of which fall under the broad rubric of what he terms the “globalization/authenticity nexus.” One theme that is missing, which African studies scholars in particular might expect to be given pride of place in a comparative volume on African hip hop music and culture, is youth. This is unfortunate, as there are insights into urban youth identity and agency in many of the chapters but never any thoroughgoing engagement with the interdisciplinary literature on urban youth in Africa. A more serious lacuna is the lack of any head-on engagement with questions of genre. It is impossible to read *Hip Hop Africa* without being struck by the way that Jamaican-derived ragga has been integral to the introduction and development of hip hop music and culture in so many African countries. The intimate relationship between hip hop and ragga cultures in Africa, and what it has meant for the development of local musical forms, was certainly worthy of some reflection in the epilogue. Moreover, a general discussion of what constitutes “hip hop music” in Africa would seem to have been in order.

Charry’s inattention to questions of genre is a more general problem across both of his own chapters. He constantly uses “hip hop” and “rap” as synonyms when talking about music, clinging to a purist view that may not actually apply in Africa (or anywhere, for that matter). At times, his commitment to this equivalency doesn’t jibe with the evidence he presents. A good example may be found in his discussion of “national rap compilations” in the introductory chapter (16). The Kenyan compilations Charry mentions (which, it bears stating, are not actually “national,” but rather the work of a single Nairobi-based producer) feature plenty of rap but are also well known for having launched the career of the dancehall artist Hardstone. Some may call Hardstone a “rapper”—as, indeed, Jean Kidula does in her contribution to the volume—but there is certainly room for debate over whether his music is “rap.” Meanwhile, the South African compilation Charry mentions centers on the local genre *kwaito*, whose status as “rap,” or even “hip hop,” is far from settled in South Africa, as Charry himself notes in the epilogue (306). One could argue that many of the songs on the albums that Charry refers to as “national rap compilations” constitute “hip hop” but not “rap,” or even that they are neither “hip hop” nor “rap” but something related to the two. My point is not that scholars should decide on the appropriate terminology for discussing hip hop music and culture in Africa, but merely that genre and generic classification are cultural processes worthy of our attention.

Readers with interests in African hip hop and urban youth cultures will find this book indispensable, if also vexing or disappointing in certain respects. While the volume does have some shortcomings, the chapters—including those by the editor—represent major contributions to the literature on hip hop culture in Africa.

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