

exactly, was she able to “see” all of these links? Baum raises an excellent question regarding the particular biographical features of Alinesitoué’s life and the very curious fact of her analytical insights and religious authority, but I would have appreciated a more elaborated view of Baum’s own understanding of this conundrum.

Likewise, Baum delves into an intriguing inquiry into the transformation from a male to a female prophetic tradition. He locates the seeds of this shift in the twin crises of colonialism and drought, and the perceived inability of older spirits and male religious leadership to deal effectively with these pressures. More specifically, colonialism intensified gender division in favor of male power, but paradoxically weakened male authority because of the empirical incapacity of men to combat colonial strictures. This, Baum contends, had the unintended consequence of opening up receptivity to women’s religious authority. These are valuable insights, but it seems problematic to locate the emergence of female religious leadership so fully in the failure of men. Even more, such circumstances might have led to very different outcomes (as they did elsewhere in Africa). A more robust explanation for why these factors prompted this particular kind of response would have added even more depth to our understanding of both the exceptionalism of the Diola and the broader dynamics of gender politics.

These minor quibbles should not detract from what is, overall, a masterful and meticulous study of religious history. *West Africa’s Women of God* makes evident Baum’s multifaceted capacities as an insightful ethnographer of an often-misrepresented people, a historian committed to carefully challenging specious assumptions about rural African societies, and a creative scholar of religion dedicated to elevating our collective understanding of African religious traditions.

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LANGUAGES, LITERATURE, CINEMA, AND ARTS

Jade L. Miller. *Nollywood Central*. London: British Film Institute, 2016. vii + 175 pp. Figures and Illustrations. Acknowledgments. Bibliography. Index. \$32.00. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-84457-691-3.

Within the landscape of the fast-growing body of scholarship on Nollywood, Jade Miller’s *Nollywood Central* is a valuable and timely contribution. It is valuable because, as probably the first monograph dedicated (almost) entirely to the analysis of the political economy of the Nigerian video film industry, it offers a wide range of precise information on the industry’s

modes of operation (on the economy of video film production and distribution, the industry's guilds and their interaction with state agencies, the political economy of online film distribution, etc.), which can help Nollywood scholars navigate the complexity of the industry's organization when researching other aspects of the Nollywood phenomenon. It is timely because it provides a concise and well-informed introduction to the industry's history and economy which, at a moment when Nollywood has started attracting much scholarly interest even beyond the restricted circle of African studies specialists, can easily be adopted as part of the syllabus of general courses in media studies, creative industry studies, and film studies.

The book is divided into five chapters which focus on different aspects of the industry: history (chapter 1), production and distribution (chapter 2), style, format, and audiences (chapter 3), government policies and guilds (chapter 4), and global circuits of distribution (chapter 5). The five chapters contain information that readers who have knowledge of the industry might already be familiar with. But everything is presented in a fresh, clear, and detailed way, and Miller's analysis inspires new perspectives on the existing scholarship on Nollywood. In chapter 2, for instance, she extends the focus of her analysis beyond the well-known protagonists involved in the films' production and distribution (the producers/directors, actors, and marketers/distributors) to consider other professionals who do the bulk of the work (make-up artists, editors, cinematographers, etc.) and on key infrastructure such as the replicating plants—sites which are as relevant for the economy of video films' circulation as the much better known electronic markets of Idumota and Alaba, in Lagos State. In chapter 4 the analysis of the history and modes of operation of state agencies connected to the industry such as the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB), the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), and the Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) is complemented by a careful discussion of the industry's guilds. These guilds, which Miller analyzes as "contract substitutes" and "alternative distribution systems," constitute the backbone of the industry's internal organization. Finally, chapter 5 offers what is probably the most original contribution of the book, the analysis of Nollywood's interactions with global media corporations, particularly the online distribution company iROKOTv and the challenges it encountered in moving its headquarters from Manhattan and London to Lagos.

Throughout the book a particularly important theme is the concept of informality, which Miller defines as a mode of operation characterized by "lack of externally verified documentation and lack of reliance on external infrastructure . . ." (32). Miller sees the the informal modes of operation that characterize Nollywood not as limits to the industry's economic efficiency and sustainability, but rather as a strategy that the industry's key stakeholders adopt in order to maintain control over the economy of the industry. Miller emphasizes that

the marketers, both beneficiaries and architects of this system, are fully aware of the ways in which these business practices reserve power for themselves and limit opportunities for outsiders. In this way, informality in distribution is less a “challenge” for a burgeoning industry, as it is often described in development assessments, but, rather, a conscious and active strategy by networks of small-scale savvy entrepreneurs to discourage competition from better-capitalized challengers. (52)

Some Nollywood scholars might not agree fully with this point, but it clearly opens up the space for a fruitful debate on the interactions between global capitalism and the so-called “informal” economies of non-Western industries like Nollywood.

The Nigerian video film industry is an extremely fast-changing phenomenon, and it is hard to keep track of its recurrent transformations. If there is one limit to Miller’s book, then, it is probably its (almost inevitable) omission of a number of aspects that are becoming central in Nollywood’s economy. Miller bases her analysis on fieldwork research conducted mainly around 2009–2010. This work, therefore, preceded the emergence of some key transformations in the industry’s economy such as the emergence of the French media corporation Canal+ as a key distributor of Nollywood contents in Francophone Africa and the creation of several new television channels focused on Nollywood provoked by the digital television transition (DTT)—including those deriving from the deal signed between the Nigerian Television Authority and the Chinese media company StarTimes. As a result, Miller focuses her analysis almost exclusively on the production and “physical distribution of hard copies of Nollywood titles in open-air marketplaces,” which, she says, is considered as “the core of Nollywood [and] the basis for its sustainability” (31). But the reader is left to wonder how Miller’s analysis would look if an in-depth analysis of the ongoing televisual turn in Nollywood’s economy had been included in the book. Will the marketers and the physical distribution of hard copies of Nollywood videos remain central in Nollywood’s economy in the years to come? Miller’s book answers positively to this question, but there is certainly much room for debate.

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Kofi Agawu. *The African Imagination in Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 372 pp. Photographs. Discography. Videography. Bibliography. Index. \$27.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-0-19-026321-8.

Kofi Agawu’s recent work is a tantalizing tour de force that surveys the depth and breadth of African music and African music scholarship, arranged