

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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doi:10.1017/asr.2016.110

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

according to individual chapters that focus on what he calls the “canonical topics”: “Music and/in Society,” “Musical Instruments,” “Language and/in Society,” “The Rhythmic Imagination,” “The Melodic Imagination,” “The Formal Imagination,” “Harmony, or Simultaneous Doing,” and “Appropriating African Music.” Though the majority of the more in-depth case studies feature music cultures from Ghana (where Agawu was born), he admirably does much to avoid the typical academic focus on West Africa. Discussions and examples are provided that cover the entirety of sub-Saharan Africa, including Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa. Agawu also provides a reference list of one hundred compact disc recordings that can serve as an accompaniment to the text and “offer opportunities to explore different ways in which the African imagination has been exercised musically” (13). A few items that are not readily available online can be purchased through a companion website. The detailed and informative footnotes in the book are also a delight to read.

In the introduction Agawu asks, “Does African music have a specifiable essence?” (15). He answers in the affirmative and settles on the concept of “groove,” although, as he has argued elsewhere, he points out that the notion of “difference” in African music historiography is problematic. In chapter 1, “Music and/in Society,” Agawu tackles the ubiquitous claim that “there is no word for music in African culture” and discusses music in relation to the human life cycle. The chapter titled “Musical Instruments” provides an overview of European accounts of encounters with African music and instruments and includes a critique of the standard ethnomusicological instrument classification system devised by Hornbostel-Sachs. He points out that local cultures in many cases perceive of instrumental classifications differently, and also provides a welcome inclusion of the human voice as an instrument. A particularly noteworthy discussion in the “Language and/in Society” chapter is that of the historiography and mechanics of “the talking drum.”

As in his previous scholarship, Agawu provides critical analysis of the idea of African rhythm. In the chapter titled “The Rhythmic Imagination” he writes, “The difference between African and Western rhythm, I would argue, is not categorical, not indicative of a radically different way of being in the world. The difference is largely a matter of emphasis and idiomatic preference” (156). The chapter on musical form (an aspect of African music often neglected) includes subsections titled “Call and Response,” “Additive Form,” “Narrative Impulse,” and “Moment Form.” In the chapter on harmony Agawu identifies several types of harmonic arrangements found in African music, including singing in union and parallel octaves, singing under an anhemitonic pentatonic regime, singing in parallel thirds, modality, and triadic successions. He also comments on the inherently communal nature of harmony, pointing out that “to sing with others is to assent to the belief that ‘I am because we are’” (267).

There are a few puzzling omissions in this work. Although the final chapter titled “Appropriating African Music” discusses the ways in which

African musical genres have been appropriated by the West, there is no extended discussion of the reverse phenomenon (i.e., Africa's appropriation of the West), although the chapter on harmony contains a brief subsection titled "Western Harmony." Furthermore, the author's treatment of African diasporan music amounts to a scant half page. These are, however, minor concerns. All in all, this is a much-needed work that will spur in-depth discussions about the core features of African music. The book is geared toward advanced undergraduate and graduate students, preferably with a strong background in musicology, ethnomusicology, or music theory. Nonspecialists, however, will still find much to ponder here. Most important, an African readership will find this to be a very welcoming and useful text.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2016.111

MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHY

Galawdewos. *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walatta Petros: A Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an Ethiopian Woman.* Translated and edited by Wendy Laura Belcher and Michael Kleiner. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015. v + 500 pp. Maps. Photographs. Index. \$39.95. Cloth. ISBN: 978-0-691-16421-2.

When in the sixteenth century an invading Muslim army threatened the Christian highlands of Ethiopia, Emperor Lebna Dengel sought the assistance of the Portuguese. Having long desired contact with the land of Prester John, the Portuguese sent several hundred musketeers, who helped defeat the invading army. This action, however, brought on another sort of invasion—Jesuits intent on converting already Christian (Orthodox) Ethiopians to Roman Catholicism. During the next one hundred years priests served royal families as advisors, educators, and diplomats to the West, and managed to convert two successive kings. These conversions generated ongoing rebellion that tore at the fabric of Ethiopian society. Some of the strongest resistance from those who remained faithful to the Ethiopian church came from women. Among such women was Walata Petros (1592–1642). Married to one of the king's counselors and military commanders, who had converted, she not only refused to convert but conspired to leave her husband and become a nun. *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Walata Petros* is her story as recorded by a monk named Galawdewos in 1672–73. The introduction, by Wendy Belcher, wonderfully contextualizes the manuscript and its author, providing an overview of the history, religion, and role of women in this period, and the text that follows is an