

SCHOLARLY REVIEW ESSAY

Radio in Africa

Florence Brisset-Foucault. *Talkative Polity: Radio, Domination, and Citizenship in Uganda.* Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019. 344 pages. List of Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$80.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 0821423770.

Harri Englund. *Gogo Breeze: Zambia's Radio Elder and the Voices of Free Speech.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018. 288 pages. 11 illus. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$100.80. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0226498768.

Liz Gunner. *Radio Soundings: South Africa and the Black Modern.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019. 240 pages. List of Figures. List of Abbreviations and Acronyms. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$110.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1108470643.

Marissa Moorman. *Powerful Frequencies: Radio, State Power, and the Cold War in Angola, 1931–2002.* Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2019. 240 pages. List of Illustrations. Abbreviations. Chronology. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$80.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-0821423691.

Frantz Fanon's essay "This is the Voice of Algeria" is a still-underused text in the study of radio. The book it comes from, *A Dying Colonialism*, is often regarded as one of Fanon's weaker works, since its sociological studies of the Algerian revolution are considered to lack the rhetorical mastery and philosophical heft seen in his more famous books. At least in the case of his essay on radio, however, this perception is misguided, as recent literature on the history of radio in Africa shows.

Radio history, in general, is a phenomenon of the last twenty years. Before that, the history and sociology of radio, with a few exceptions, was written as a history of institutions and not as media history. The historiography of the medium in Africa started in earnest in the 2000s, with some notable earlier examples (Fardon & Furniss 2000; Muller, Tomaselli, & Teer-Tomaselli 2001; Spitulnik 1993).

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Fanon's essay is one of these exceptions, because it firmly embeds the medium in colonial society and its power structures. Fanon took on the question not just of the reception of media content, but also of the effect of the medium itself and its characteristics in the societies in which it was introduced, specifically how radio blurs the distinction between public and private space, how a medium introduced by colonial states in order to control colonial subjects became a medium of anticolonial revolution, and how radio would, in his estimation, become the medium of a unified nation. These characteristics have only been systematically explored by the social sciences in the last twenty-five years, by taking up the challenge of media theory, especially from the theoretical tradition of Cultural Studies. In the case of radio history in Africa, the field has only really taken up the challenge of anthropology and media studies in the last ten to fifteen years (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, & Larkin 2002). The publications under review here show the field at its prime, due in large part to the years of careful, interdisciplinary research that inform them.

Fanon's essay, unsurprisingly, is featured in a recent book by Arthur Asseraf, *Electric News in Colonial Algeria*, which discusses radio, among other mass media, in the era of colonial Algeria (between 1830 and 1950). Asseraf introduces it only in the epilogue (the book covers a different time period than the one when Fanon lived and fought in Algeria) but dedicates seven pages to discussing it (2019:183–89). Asseraf takes some of Fanon's observations and expounds on them, while challenging his relatively strong binary between colonial power and the revolution as well as his temporality. Fanon saw subversive uses of radio as a new phenomenon, brought into being by the Algerian revolution and its radio, the "Voix d'Algérie" (Voice of Algeria). But subversive uses of radio—and media more generally—have always been part of media reception. Asseraf emphasizes the "bricolage of various forms of news" that Algerians used to make sense of the world around them, using media that they were well aware needed to be actively interpreted and suspiciously read, viewed, or listened to, a bricolage that he also finds in Fanon's text, but situates much earlier. More than that, Asseraf challenges Fanon's revolutionary temporality, which envisions a post-revolutionary future in which "a disparity between the people and what is intended to speak for them will no longer be possible" because "the identification of the voice of the Revolution with the fundamental truth of the nation has opened limitless horizons" (Fanon 1994:97). Asseraf then points to what makes the history of radio in Africa such an important counterweight to histories of radio in Europe or the US: the narrative prevalent in them. First employed academically by Benedict Anderson in "Imagined Communities" (Anderson 2006), this narrative posits "print-capitalism" as a necessary factor in the rise of nations and nationalism, but it is made much more complicated by the cases that do not fit into it, such as colonies, and which demonstrate the "messiness" of media and media reception. Nation-building as a process was made much more complicated in colonial and post-colonial societies. The "messiness" that Fanon described would remain a characteristic of media

reception after decolonization, and taking it apart provides new perspectives on the history of radio, even outside the African continent. This analysis is what the studies under review here undertake, and it speaks to a larger trend in academic research and writing about radio in Africa.

Media reception cuts across the artificial boundaries of political, cultural, and social history. Though neatly separated in the structure of media organizations, news, entertainment, discussion, and music programs in practice feed into each other, and in African contexts where communal listening was the standard way of interacting with radio, and writers and performers actively constructed communities around their programs, the sociability of the medium becomes obvious. While media anthropology has developed analyses over a longer time that take this seriously (Ginsburg et al. 2002), media history, sociology, and political sciences have increasingly followed the trend. The recent literature on radio points to the historical conjunctures and articulations of radio in rapidly changing societies, the complicated relationships between states and their subjects that it has helped establish and mediate, and the countercurrents—subjects building resistant communities of their own across and through even highly controlled and censored radio institutions—that put limits on propaganda and censorship. The “messiness” of radio production and reception is given concrete form in these works, which follow it along singular threads, such as the biographies of radio personalities or the history of one specific radio program or genre.

This “messiness” does not just pertain to news or to the nation-building process. It is an inherent part of media reception, and it has resisted many attempts to catalogue it in media theory. In the African context, it recombines with the complications of black identity under (late) colonialism, the contradictions of modernity, colonial capitalism, and everyday resistance far beyond political movements. It starts, as Liz Gunner shows in her book on Zulu radio drama, with the messiness of identity itself, and the contradictory and difficult positions colonialism and Apartheid forced Africans to inhabit—difficult politically, socially, and culturally. In *Radio Soundings: South Africa and the Black Modern*, Gunner argues that, despite the heavily controlled character of apartheid radio in African languages (such as the infamous “Radio Bantu”), artists, writers, and broadcasters in South Africa and in exile (through radio dramas) managed to develop a Black modernity that spoke to their listeners in ways unintended and opposed by their apartheid bosses. “Radio Bantu was predicated by its practitioners, if not its white managers, on building a community not only of resistance but of the imagination and the senses, in particular the auditory, a kind of aural but also a moral economy of shared understanding of past and present” (Gunner 2019: 137). Gunner invokes Raymond Williams’s notion of “structures of feeling,” which is intended to capture a specific, dynamic, and fluid relationship between individuals and societies, not through supposedly clear-cut, fixed ideologies, but rather “meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt” (1977:133).

Gunner uses biographies of various writers and performers, as well as individual dramas or series, to trace the changing “structures of feeling”

through the different eras of South African history in the twentieth century—from the time before the official implementation of Apartheid until the democratization era of the 1990s and 2000s. Starting with King Edward Masinga, the first Zulu announcer, and Alexius Buthelezi, who would continue in Masinga's path to write musical dramas for the radio, Gunner explores the complexity of Zulu broadcasters' position and their careful balancing acts between control and carving out spaces of creative freedom. Their success parallels the success of radio among black listeners, as cable rediffusion services in the townships and, more and more frequently, wireless radio sets became common.

Both Masinga and Buthelezi are presented as trickster figures, crossing between different zones with the power to exist outside the structures. While outwardly working as propagandists for heavily controlled apartheid radio, they constantly subverted the propaganda by using their art in ways that transcended it. Negotiating traditional forms and themes within the modern context of their listeners' lived experience, bridging the different black social worlds of rural/urban, class, and gender, their plays and dramas spoke to listeners in a voice that was modern, but at the same time familiar and unique.

Gunner's book also follows two South African writers in exile, Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi. Both worked in London for the BBC and attached production firms, thus straddling another ambiguous divide, between exile and home, and between the BBC's idea of "Africanness" and their own as well as their listeners' experience. Gunner stresses the communities built by the broadcasters, which connected them to their listeners in ways that could transcend and subvert the logics of their institutions. As outsiders both with regard to South African radio—which they did not want to be a part of—and to the BBC—with which they had an uneasy relationship—they created multiple publics for their dramas in Britain and across anglophone Africa. Thus, they were also able to speak to wider pan-African and diasporic audiences. Even in heavily censored and controlled dramas, which seem to present pure apartheid propaganda, there are traces that model a resistant community and "trans-ethnic identity" (Gunner 2019:133).

Gunner is not alone in using a biographical approach to make sense of Fanon's "messiness," which also manifests as the multitude of people, institutions, programs, and listeners involved in producing radio and placing it at the center of many people's daily routines. The many radio personalities on the continent not only transformed radio itself as a medium, an institution, and an artform, but they also form its memory in the minds of its listeners. Radio personalities built communities around themselves, established intimate connections with their listeners, and have remained present in their memories for years after the programs ended. Fanon's keen eye for the dissolution of the borders between public and private spaces is given an empirical foundation in such analyses, but they go far beyond his essayistic exploration to trace the specific ways in which broadcasters and listeners engaged with each other, belying one of radio theory's classic arguments

about the “one-directionality” of the sort of communication radio as a technology enabled (Brecht 2004; Moyo 2013). They also go beyond circulation theories in the wake of the Cultural Studies paradigm, in that they emphasize direct connection between presenters and their audiences, as well as community building which transcends the infrastructure of radio itself. Radio personalities and their interactions with institutions on the one hand and listeners on the other provide us with a glimpse into radio as a socially embedded medium that affords more opportunities for communication than may be found in theories focused on the technology itself.

This becomes clear in Harri Englund’s *Gogo Breeze: Zambia’s Radio Elder and the Voices of Free Speech*. “Gogo Breeze” (Grandfather Breeze) was the main radio personality on Breeze FM, a privately owned radio station situated in and mostly serving Zambia’s Eastern Province. Central to the analysis are Gogo Breeze’s call-in shows, a popular radio genre throughout Africa that, as Florence Brisset-Foucault shows in her book, is highly relevant for any analysis of democratic practices on the continent. These shows are contentious for many governments, as they provide a space for critical discourse, as well as for problematic speech up to and including hate speech. Englund emphasizes the multivocality in Gogo Breeze’s broadcasting praxis. Gogo Breeze, in his role as elder and speaker in front of the microphone, employed techniques that, in Englund’s interpretation, allowed for a Bakhtinian “plurality of independent and unmerged voices” (Englund 2018:81). In laying out a specific case of conflict, Gogo Breeze would receive letters, SMS messages, and phone calls, and present them on the air, with the written submissions read out and discussed with female presenters in the studio, his so-called “granddaughters.” In his monologues summarizing a specific issue that had been discussed, he “encompass[ed] various subject positions” (Englund 2018:76) and brought additional voices from off the air into the discussion, bringing “all relevant considerations and subject positions to bear on the final judgment,” “combin[ing] rather than merg[ing]” them (Englund 2018:77). Englund describes the practice: “While allowing, and even asking for, other voices to be expressed, [Gogo Breeze] reserved to himself the right to judge. Yet the voices he assembled remained independent instead of becoming subsumed under the radio grandfather’s authoritative pronouncements” (2018:96).

Englund traces this multivocality and Gogo Breeze’s ways of establishing and managing it through several social issues presented by the programs. Starting with Gogo Breeze’s discussions of market, social, and political issues such as the relations between customers, traders, and government officials or the presence and influence of big Chinese companies in the agriculture business in the region, Englund explores his management of gender and generational issues, which were also often bound up with material problems. These issues were sites of intervention from government and NGOs, and they involved local political and social hierarchies, from headmen to administrators to politicians. Gogo Breeze also used well-known Chinyanja idioms to provide intertextuality, going beyond specific instances of fraud or other

morally dubious practices to compare these issues to others. His show was not just a call-in show; it was also a program on Chinyanja idioms which he would explain and discuss, and sometimes these idioms would be integrated into his discussion shows a few days later.

Englund conceptualizes this broadcasting practice in a specific way, emphasizing its sensitivity toward the local (or rather, as he calls it, provincial in the sense of Breeze FM serving a particular Zambian province, Eastern Province) social and kinship networks Gogo Breeze sought to incorporate into his programs. Rather than centering “vox populi” or “the man on the street,” as many radio programs all over the world have done throughout the history of the medium, Gogo Breeze contextualized the grievances brought to him, and challenged his interlocutors when they presented themselves—a “broadcasting of voices that emanated from recognizable persons in relationships rather than from a small number of social types” (2018:198). He used kinship, his own moral status as an elder, and his voice, diction, and language (a throwback to Walter Benjamin’s radio theory, which provides a useful contrast to the Brechtian one mentioned above) in a way that fit well into the types of public intimacy radio enabled. Like Gunner, but in a geographically more limited and more clearly delineated context, Englund traces the ways radio personalities such as Gogo Breeze used the technological characteristics of the medium to build and maintain communities by straddling the divide between the public and the private.

This, Englund maintains, is closely connected to a “moral market,” a term he uses to describe Gogo Breeze’s efforts to employ his instruments in order to merge market relations with relations of class, race, gender, and community in the province without having the former dominate the latter. Whether defending farmers against exploitative practices of mill owners or Chinese agribusiness, or navigating the marital market in programs where listeners sought out partners, Gogo Breeze, while himself a market actor in his efforts to bring advertising revenue to the private Breeze FM, sought to “make the market moral,” in that he challenged interlocutors on all levels about their greed and their fraudulent or exploitative practices, and invoked multifaceted forms of authority—from headmen to kinship relations to the government itself—in order to ensure that the market would remain just. This, Englund shows, is very much connected to the forms of multivocality Gogo Breeze employed. The historical context, one that encompasses the biographies of Gogo Breeze as well as the founder of Breeze FM, was the privatization of the airwaves in Zambia in the 1990s, which paralleled the reorganization of farmers’ cooperatives. While Breeze FM was a commercial station, its founder, who had worked for the state-owned station before, retained a “curious mix of commerce, paternalism, and public-service ethos” (2018:18) rather than focusing on a purely profit-oriented venture.

While Englund analyzes issues of free speech and multivocality mediated (conceptually and empirically) through one radio personality, Florence

Brisset-Foucault's *Talkative Polity: Radio, Domination, and Citizenship in Uganda* explores multivocality through the multiplicity of actual voices and people speaking in *ebimeeza*, "round table" discussions (the literal translation of the singular *ekimeeza* in Luganda), a popular genre of discussion programs on Ugandan airwaves from 2000 until their prohibition by the government in 2009. Englund approaches the question of free speech through the practice of one radio personality establishing a multivocality by himself in interaction with the community he serves, but Brisset-Foucault looks at the democratic spaces of discussion and deliberation that the *ebimeeza* constructed. The political context in which this happened was the transition from a "non-party" system established by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM), which organized elections based on "individual merit" rather than party tickets, to a multi-party system established after a referendum in 2005. The media context was the liberalization of the airwaves and the mushrooming of private radio stations starting in 1993.

The *ebimeeza*, although in theory open to everyone, started as debate clubs for the Kampala political elite and developed into a broader format while retaining some aspects of their roots. Several radio stations jumped on the format to establish their own *ekimeeza*, and the format was adopted by local stations outside of Kampala. Many *ebimeeza* organized debates using lists and prominent guest speakers, but their relative openness allowed less well-known politicians (often from rural or provincial constituencies) from both the NRM and the opposition parties to gain some prominence and access to political networks in the capital, and to be heard outside of parliament by a broader public via the broadcasts. Brisset-Foucault, through fieldwork undertaken during the period under examination and many interviews with producers, journalists, politicians, and participants, explores the *ebimeeza* as an expression of a changing political culture as well as an important factor in this change.

To accomplish this, she analyzes the political culture that birthed and formed *ebimeeza*, the political economy of radio in which they took place, and the relationship between the radios, the *ebimeeza*, their participants, and the state, with a focus on Ganda royalism, which was a major challenge to the NRM's national project. At the center of her work is the question of the policing of speech. Far from it being a question of simple control by the state, Brisset-Foucault argues that the opening up of discussion brought with it a host of issues relating to the economic strength of radio stations dependent on advertising revenue (often, especially in economically weaker regions, provided by NGOs), the self-image of journalists, the languages used, and the places where the debates were held (especially considering the question of alcohol use).

Interactive radio formats such as call-in and talk shows have a long history in many African countries going back to the late colonial era, when radio targeting an African audience was first introduced, but they mushroomed and changed in quality with the proliferation of private radio and, later, mobile phone use in the 1990s and 2000s. The *ebimeeza* are distinguished

among these formats because they developed from organized debates in specific places (elite bars, at first) rather than being developed as a radio format from their inception. The question of how to control speech was present from the beginning. Importantly, the issue of free speech was not simply derived from governments' (and advertisers') mistrust of criticism and open debate, but also from genuine questions journalists had to ask themselves, especially relating to exclusionary or incendiary speech. This also went hand in hand with a narrow definition of what "politics" was: "not as the management and discussion of collective issues, or as the power structure, but as national leaders' decisions and behavior, and viewed in a negative light" (Brisset-Foucault 2019:63). The *ebimeeza* navigated this complicated landscape, first under the "no-party" movement system and later with multipartyism. The idea of being "balanced" played an important role, but especially in the "no-party" system, it was unclear how this balance should be achieved in practice. Brisset-Foucault describes a multiplicity of identifications, from "sides" to "affiliations," "backgrounds," "NRM vs. opposition" or "pro- and anti-establishment." Some *ebimeeza* employed a relatively classic Westminster debate system, taking care to follow a "pro" opinion on any given issue with an "against" opinion (2019:70ff). Nevertheless, they provided opportunities for both opposition and NRM politicians to develop political profiles in public and gain access to networks. In the case of Buganda royalism, the *ekimeeza* of the Buganda radio CBS provided a "platform of the construction of a new nationalist narrative" (2019:110). Presenting oneself as a political leader in the *ebimeeza* meant redefining political leadership in terms of wit, intellect, and pedagogical approach rather than patronage and redistribution.

The prominent role of the *ebimeeza* made them a prime target for government interference. In a first effort to ban them in 2002, and a second, successful one in 2009, the complicated issues of free speech, political contestation, and social peace that Englund emphasizes as being negotiated by one radio personality come to the fore in a context with more actors, in which speech and multivocality couldn't be managed and controlled in the same way that Gogo Breeze was able to do. In the debates surrounding these bans, different definitions of politics and speech clashed, which were deeply intertwined with Ugandan postcolonial history and ideas about different registers of speech, distinguishing intimate and public speech as well as local (vernacular) and national or international speech. This distinction pitted a private/vernacular "emotional" talk and a public/national "rational" talk against each other. The *ebimeeza*, government officials argued, especially if they were held during a broadcast in vernacular languages, blurred this distinction, which made them dangerous. This discourse, as shown by Mahmood Mamdani (Mamdani 1996) also referenced different models of citizenship; rather than giving citizens the right to free expression, citizenship should be based on expertise and responsible talk (Brisset-Foucault 2019:157). This approach distinguished an "old," "dirty" (pre-NRM) form of politics from a "decent" one that eschewed conflict and sectarianism and ensured development. What followed from this for the *ebimeeza* was that "(s)peech needs to be compartmentalized" (2019:159), a

principle that the orators in the shows, who reserved the right to speak on any topic, eschewed. The *ebimeeza* “were banned not only because they were harboring speech that opposed the regime, but because they challenged established representations about who was entitled to talk about ‘politics,’ and who was not” (2019:160).

At the same time, the producers of *ebimeeza* themselves acknowledged the need to manage speech in order to have coherent discussions and ensure the quality of the broadcasts. To do this, the shows developed codes of conduct, committees, and moderators. These were more than a reaction to repression; they were also seen as instruments to enable a “good polity” (Brisset-Foucault 2019:165). Brisset-Foucault contrasts the shows with the appearance of “ordinary people” in Western radio and TV; there they are expected to make emotional arguments to challenge political leaders, to “testify” rather than “analyze.” In the *ebimeeza*, ordinary people were “encouraged to be as analytical and objective as possible”; “their speech was recognized as having intellectual worth” (2019:182). The final ban in 2009 can thus be seen as the result of a conflict around the extent to which the *ebimeeza* had managed to make “polite citizens” (2019:190).

Like Englund, Brisset-Foucault situates radio at the center of debates and competing ideas about political culture, especially the question of free speech. But the format of the *ebimeeza* and their role in Ugandan media and politics makes them a more unruly object of study. Whereas Englund emphasizes the multivocality employed by Gogo Breeze, despite his being the main orator in front of the microphone, Brisset-Foucault turns this around and focuses on the unifying features of *ebimeeza* as a format intended to manage the multiplicity of voices it carried. Despite their formal openness, most *ebimeeza* had a core set of orators and a hierarchy of voices. Class, political networks, and academic skills were important factors limiting the possibilities for a political breakthrough via speaking in an *ekimeeza*. “The *ebimeeza* were the product and reflection of a speech order that was carefully elaborated, constraining, and echoed a composite heritage” (2019:245).

In her book on the history of radio in Angola, *Powerful Frequencies: Radio, State Power, and the Cold War in Angola, 1931–2002*, Marissa Moorman explores the relationship between state and radio from another angle. The medium itself, she argues, was a catalyst for the colonial “nervous state” (Chikowero 2014; Hunt 2016), a state which, even while trying to control its subjects in ever more intricate ways, saw control constantly slip between its hands. Moorman’s main source is the archives of the “Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado” (PIDE), the Salazarian state’s secret police which also operated in the colonies and which was obsessed with radio reception among black Angolans. Like Asseraf, she invokes Fanon, showing his prescience in his analysis of radio as a bridge between private and public that went both ways while countering his revolutionary hope that a successful nationalist independence struggle would fundamentally transform the relationship between the state and his subjects, and thus radio itself. The postcolonial Angolan state, Moorman shows, even while providing the anti-Apartheid

guerrilla stations in its southern region with technology, studio space, rebroadcasts, and more, was as nervous about UNITA's radio as the Portuguese colonial state had been about the MPLA's *Voz de Angola*.

The history of radio in Angola begins with private radio clubs, rather than the state. Radio formed part of a specific settler identity centered around modernity, technology, whiteness, and masculinity. Even while these radio clubs, operated by and for settlers, helped construct colonial spaces through sound (and importantly, silence), the colonial state felt that space constantly threatened by "foreign voices," especially guerrilla broadcasts that started after the MPLA had established a headquarters in Brazzaville in 1964. The MPLA station "Angola Combatente" (AC), which was part of a larger media effort involving newspapers, magazines, posters, and many more, was ever present in both the colonial administrators' minds and Angolan *musseques* (informal settlements), where slogans broadcast over the airwaves appeared on walls as graffiti. Clandestine listening practices loom large in the memories of Angolans. Moorman contrasts the efforts of the colonial state broadcaster with the nagging subversion of "Angola Combatente," listened to in clandestine ways and further broadcast through word of mouth. Like in Fanon's account of the *Voix d'Algerie*, AC's broadcasts were difficult to hear, but their content (if not always relayed correctly) went far beyond the direct listenership. More than the actual content, the presence alone of AC subverted colonialism's technopolitical efforts to curb anticolonialism through combined strategies of development and repression—sending PIDE out while promoting modernity through its own radio acting in the service of "colonial sublime" (Larkin 2008). In Moorman's retelling, the different radios become a multiplicity of voices vying, from different angles, for an audience that seems more powerful than it imagined itself.

This multiplicity of voices continued into postcolonial Angola. The MPLA government inherited some of the characteristics of colonial radio, but also, especially through its reporting on regional conflicts, forged a "new soundscape" weaving together the civil war in Angola with other regional nationalist wars—especially the war in Namibia, which partly took place in Angola itself—and the global Cold War in an "affective rhythm" that structured its news broadcasts. Moorman's emphasis on the affective quality of radio recalls Williams's "structures of feeling" (which she, unlike Gunner, doesn't employ), but bringing the state into these as an agent reminds us how power and affect are entwined in the broadcasts.

What unites these contributions to the history of radio in Africa is their emphasis on voice. Voice becomes the key to understanding radio. The works examined here offer many examples: the many registers of voices that South African broadcasters used in order to subvert the very mission of the radio they were working for; the multivocality employed by Gogo Breeze who unites many voices in his own, grandfatherly one; the voices debating in Uganda's *ebimeeza*, understood either as a danger to a fragile national unity, an opportunity for backbenchers to shine and build networks, or a forum of free speech; and the cacophony of "unnerving" voices pitted against each

other on the Angolan airwaves. Whereas earlier works on radio in Africa emphasized the circulation of media content (Spitulnik 1996) and the technology itself (Spitulnik 2002; Larkin 2008), these works go beyond the question of who broadcasts to whom and in what way, and look at the communities that form around radio, for which broadcasters themselves, rather than merely being “senders” communicating to “receivers,” act as catalysts. Broadcasters do try to actively build their communities, but there needs to be something that can be built on and someone who communicates back. This becomes clear in Gunner’s account of broadcasters in exile, as in Sekibakiba Lekgoathi’s work (which Gunner and Moorman build on) on radio Xhosa and the ANC-operated “Radio Freedom” (Lekgoathi 2010; 2022). In the space between the broadcasters’ “voices” (meaning both their actual voice and their distinctive style) and the multivocality that Englund and Brisset-Foucault describe, radio’s communities are formed and have, as the Internet age is wont to say, effects “IRL” (in real life), beyond the medium itself.

Voice also transmits and forms relations of power. All four works under review here trace these complex relations, starting with the very first broadcasts in Africa. Whether radio clubs tying white settlers culturally to the motherland and establishing colonial worlds via sound as much as silence, or “Radio Bantu” stations designed to construct soundscapes in accordance with the physical, political, and social spaces of Apartheid “homelands” that chained black South Africans to pre-defined “traditional” identities, radio was consciously used by colonial states and settlers as an instrument of constructing colonial spaces structured by race. But it was always a double-edged sword, allowing for alternative spaces to be constructed at the same time. Targeting black African listeners demanded opening the medium up to their input, not only by allowing black broadcasters in, but more generally because broadcasts needed to integrate listeners’ needs in order for them to be listened to. Even in the most restricted circumstances, this meant an opening for “structures of feeling” of alternative communities to be present in and developed through radio. Be it in South African Apartheid cultural programming, Ugandan *ebimeeza*, or Zambian talk radio, it becomes clear that power, in radio, is dynamic, reciprocal, and contradictory. This is what made colonial and postcolonial states “nervous” about radio. In this, the works under review take up Cultural Studies’ challenge to take seriously the criss-crossing lines of power and agency as well as the ways in which culture and politics are entwined, even while transcending the circulation model of media reception coming out of the same theoretical tradition.

With the extension and proliferation of radio technology, and the wave of decolonization that produced independent states and gave them control over their own stations, the contradictions of power played out over the continental airwaves themselves. Radio’s distinguishing feature, its ability to easily transcend national borders, had been a source of both hope (for those who wanted to overcome the nation state) and anguish (for those who wanted to uphold it) since Radio Moscow started to address the world proletariat. But

anticolonial, nationalist radio became more, unnerving an already nervous state by addressing its very own subjects in a new, targeted fashion, as members of an independent nation. As Sekibakiba Lekgoathi, Tshepo Moloi, and Alda Romao Sauta Saide have shown recently (Lekgoathi et al. 2022), Southern African Guerrilla Radios were a specific regional emanation of the larger phenomenon of international radio broadcasting, operated by nationalist movements from already independent states, for whom the support for anticolonial and anti-Apartheid broadcasting was an act of practical solidarity. They offered a direct, institutional alternative to the communities promoted via colonial radio. But radio's communities were not simply built through listeners choosing between different offerings. All four works under review show, in very different contexts, that communities were formed through practices of listening and the practices surrounding radio, as well as the interaction between listeners and broadcasters. Between listeners relegated to turning a knob on a radio set and calling in to a talk show or showing up for an *ekimeeza*, there are a host of such interactions, not necessarily direct. Broadcasters, even while disconnected from their audience, needed to be sensitive to its needs and wishes. Banning a popular program could be as risky for states and governments as allowing it to continue, and stations depended on interacting with the communities they served beyond program content.

These qualities of radio and its emotive power, along with its central role in the changing “structures of feeling” in the long African twentieth century (marked by colonization, decolonization, continued dependence, and democratization), contributed to “long revolutions” (Williams 1961) that might not be felt by contemporaries, but which demonstrate their effects for the media historian. They teach us not to neglect one of the most important media of modern, and even postmodern times, an importance that shows itself more clearly in African contexts, but which media scholars everywhere should be more attentive to.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2023.5

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