mism, for he believes that members of NMMZ are keen to consider local community participation seriously and hold a genuine desire for meaningful consultation with all stakeholders. He advises NMMZ to loosen its control over management and the representation of Great Zimbabwe to allow space for the effective inclusion of other perspectives on its past. It remains to be seen how far and how seriously the NMMZ will take the advice.

This is a challenging and deeply absorbing book that will fascinate a wide range of readers, offering provocative analytical insights on Great Zimbabwe. There is little doubt that in *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe* the author sets a high and most welcome standard of excellence for future scholarship.

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Brian Larkin. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria.* Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008. xi + 313 pp. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $84.95. Cloth. $23.95. Paper.

On the surface, *Signal and Noise* appears to be a study of a narrow field, that of Nigerian video film—specifically of Hausa film. More narrow yet, the study appears to have grown from Brian Larkin's earlier work on the influence of Hindu films on these Hausa video films. However, those acquainted with Larkin's earlier work will be aware that they are dealing with a particularly insightful scholar, whose study of the immediate issues at hand engages issues of broader significance to African culture and society. In this case, he explores how new technology and new media enter into the spaces of African societies—how the introduction of railroads, radios, film, telephones, video and television into Africa during the modern period not only served the purposes of colonial or postcolonial rule but also shaped urban spaces in ways that force us to rethink and re-evaluate the very nature of early media—and, indeed, of media theory itself.

The specific African context here is always that of Kano; the media considered in detail are radio, then cinema, and finally video films—Hausa films, as Larkin terms them. But the ground is cleared by a broader consideration of media in general as it entered into Nigerian life in the twentieth century. In this study one enters into the most intelligent of discussions of what constitutes early media, with the author's acuity shown in his bold contestation of established views—views that had been grounded largely on the introduction of radio or cinema into Western societies and that, predictably, had been understood as having universal validity.

As *Signal and Noise* moves into more recent periods, with the development of film and video films, its understandings of the relationship

between media and society deepen, providing us with brilliantly insightful constructions of how colonial society and postcolonial society adapted to developments in media. I view this study as one of *the* indispensable works on contemporary African society, not because of the insights it provides on the nature of Hausa films—that being only a sidebar in the larger study—but because of the tremendously valuable sets of understandings it provides on the nature of contemporary African society and culture: the ways that colonialism worked; the ways that modernity functioned; the elements that govern the shape of African social forms and relations, including religion, government, and education; and finally, the kinds of choices that marked the formation of key media and that thus gave shape to Nigerian subjectivity in the modern period.

The study of media is viewed here as being enabled by the "conditions of existence" that fashioned their forms, thus providing us with key insights into African societies themselves. The tensions, insecurities, and cultural productions that mark the deployment of instruments of power, from colonial to postcolonial, from "traditional" to modern, mark the media; these elements, in turn, are marked by the media, not only in their content, but also through the processes of their flows, their physical constitution. The study of these elements yields basic insights not only into the films, but also into the social relations they influenced, the social patterns they enabled, the social conflicts they embodied, and the social subjects they formed.

There are a multitude of marvelous moments that one gleans alongside the larger understandings of Nigerian society under the impact of these media, including notions of spectatorship, of spectacle, of the affects generated by technological instruments. The mobilization of historical features is marked by assiduous consultation of the colonial archive and attention to the immediate physical impact, as in the act of attending a film shown during the colonial period under the protective eye of the Emir, or (in the postcolonial period) the author's sensitive account of riding on the back of a motorcycle to the movie theater. Extending outward from the immediate experience, inevitably, the argument moves toward the broader theoretical issues at stake, which are brought to bear on the larger Foucauldian project of presenting the conditions that marked the implantation of key modern media and their flows, their signals. Simultaneously, we learn of the effects generated by the impedance of those flows: the signals that passed unperceived, and the noise that made their absence visible, audible, painful, and ultimately productive of new cultural forms.

A true intellectual tour de force, *Signal and Noise* should have a major impact on the way we understand Africa in the contemporary period.

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