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Chérie Rivers NDALIKO, *Necessary Noise: Music, Film and Charitable Imperialism in the East of Congo*

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L'auteur & les Éd. Mélanie Seteun

discusses Léopold Sédar Senghor's ideation of Negritude and his meditations on jazz as expressed in his poetry and prose essays. Jaji recasts Senghor's Negritude alongside the World Festival of Negro Arts in 1966, which was foundational in the realization of Negritude. Jazz is brought into a web of reportage between Africans and African Americans thinking through the notion of "blackness" and "soul."

The focus of Chapter 4 is on women as consumers in the era of radio and print media. Jaji applies the term "sheen reading" to the act of flipping through glossy magazines as a part of social significance. The active realization of modernity for African women conjured in the glossy magazine covers and pages, invites the reader into a kind of imagined future without the rigid restrictions of forces like the oppressive apartheid regime. Chapter 5 deals with the historicizing and memorializing of tragedy as given by the transatlantic slave trade. The chapter traces the experiences of African Americans encountering slave memorial sites in Ghana for the first time. Chapter 6 situates piracy as a tool by which users hack into the archive of media exemplifying transnational black solidarity.

Africa in Stereo provides a fascinating analysis of sonic, visual, performance and print media forms that speak to the notion of transnational black solidarity. It should appeal to students of music, film, literature and African & African American studies. For music scholars, the chapter on transcription is particularly exciting and innovative because it uncovers the practice of writing in Africa in nuanced ways throughout the twentieth century. It incorporates African languages in the body of writing such as

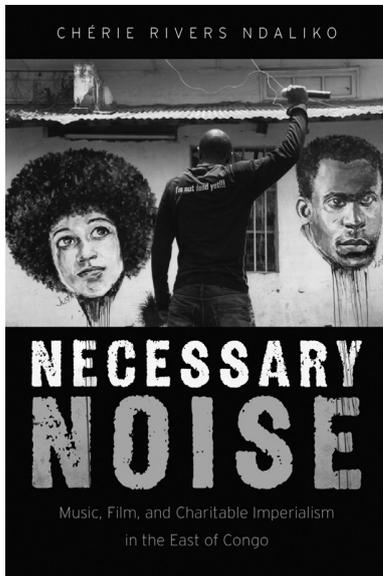
John and Nokutela Dube's *A Zulu song book* and represents the importance of studying African music alongside African languages.

While the author has brought to light several subtle connections that affirm an ongoing conversation between Africa and its diaspora, the notion of transnational/black solidarity is not necessarily a new concept emerging from a tragic history of separation, domination and colonization. *Africa in Stereo* is a timely intervention in an already unfolding dialogue between Africa and the diaspora.

Chérie Rivers Ndaliko, *Necessary Noise: Music, Film and Charitable Imperialism in the East of Congo*, Oxford University Press, 2016

By Mumbua Kioko

In recent years, Western media has been criticized for its persistence in rehashing negative images of Africa, especially images of war, poverty, and fly-ridden starving children. The notion that there is some political and economic gain for the West in keeping Africa poor is disturbing to many. Chérie Rivers Ndaliko's new book,



Necessary Noise: Music, Film and Charitable Imperialism in the East of Congo, speaks to this problem while foregrounding local artistic production in the midst of a war-torn region. In an engaging ethnographic work, Ndaliko delivers a thought-provoking account of the practice of art as social engagement centered around Yole!Africa, a locally developed arts organization in Goma, a town in the North Kivu province in the east of Congo. Ndaliko positions herself on the frontlines, reporting on the tensions that exist culturally and politically in Congo as the youth, survivors of the war-torn region, struggle to find their voices and identities through militant art i.e. a refusal to subscribe to the pressures of international NGOs and the State in determining their artistic product.

One of the main contributions of the book is the innovative approach to ethnographic writing, in particular, the incorporation of “socially engaged (activist) scholarship.” Ndaliko, from the outset, is

critical of international NGOs in the east of Congo who feed off the problems of the war-torn-region (poverty, violence and victimhood) in order to advance their own agenda, which ultimately serves Western capitalism. She expounds on the divisiveness of such interventions under the rubric of “charitable imperialism” while tracing these issues through the historical and political condition of the country since 1884. *Necessary Noise* is organized into four chapters and a Companion Website. The Companion Website is well worth the visit and includes photographs, music and the films discussed in the book. As the music and film are produced by local artists associated with Yole!Africa under the directorship of Congolese filmmaker Petna Ndaliko Katondolo, the audience has the opportunity to engage with scenes of ordinary life in Africa that also depict local agency in addressing particular kinds of social and political issues. Additionally, Ndaliko draws extensively on filmic analytic insight in her discussions of music and film promoting social engagement through art. So, it is helpful to see and hear each creation with its technical points.

Chapter 1, “Art on the Frontline,” documents the inception of Yole!Africa, the brainchild of Congolese filmmaker Petna Ndaliko Katondolo who had successfully set up a similar project while living under asylum in Uganda. Yole!Africa develops as a local resistance movement against the backdrop of tensions that exist between the State and local artists. Based upon the notion of storytelling, Yole!Africa enters the world of artistic expression via music first, which historically had been part of the political currency of politicians to win

favor for themselves, and subsequently ventures into film production and finally the integration of both on screen. The youth, aligning themselves with the global hip hop movement, find fuller self-expression in their musical works and also begin to engage with the aesthetics of film production in order to convey their message of resistance without alienating their audience. Chapter 2, “Re-membering Congo,” traces the history of Congo from the most brutal era, the Congo Free State under King Leopold II of Belgium in 1884, through the Belgian colony, Lumumba, Mobutu and the present generation. The youth at Yole!Africa participate in regular film screenings followed by discussions challenging their notions of a prescribed history and ushering in a new understanding through popular history i.e. a history that attempts to reconstruct and tell the truth about Congo’s past. Ndaliko lays bare the sins of the West for its hand in manipulating and corrupting the Congo for its own economic gain while turning a blind eye to the humanitarian crisis in the Congo where over ten million people died, noticeably halving the population. Chapter 3, “Peacemongers,” unleashes a relevant and poignant critique of international NGOs for their role in the east of Congo. At face value, international NGOs perpetuate the alleviation of suffering through humanitarian aid/projects but a closer look reveals a disparate power dynamic between local communities and international NGOs where the latter undermine local autonomy and agency. The final chapter 4, “Jazz Mamas,” highlights the rampant sexual assault and violence against women in Congo under the guise of collateral damage from the

war. Yole!Africa brings together top local artists to write a song addressing the issue of rape. A music video and a documentary capturing a women’s protest against rape is also produced and screened around the country. Ultimately, the first legislation is enacted, which recognizes rape as a crime and not as a weapon of war.

Necessary Noise is a timely ethnographic work that brings the east of Congo into the scholarship on African music. As it engages music textual and filmic analysis for further insight into how art functions as a tool for social engagement and change, it would benefit music and film enthusiasts as well as those engaged in anthropological work, Development studies and African studies. The author leaves no stone unturned in fleshing out critical points relating to film, music, voice, social engagement and power among other aspects. The heavy critique of international NGOs may on the surface appear as one-sided; however, it should be lauded as the willingness of one scholar to tell the naked truth. It is sometimes unclear whether the call to decolonize Africa is falling on deaf ears or not. This author through amplifying the voices of Africans makes a lucid point of the urgency of such decolonization. As a trilingual scholarly work (English, French and Kiswahili), the only minor concern is where some Kiswahili translations could afford to be slightly more accurate. Although the broader meanings of the text are not completely obscured in the translations, for Kiswahili speakers (and learners) there may be some disconnect when reading both the Kiswahili and English translations. Below I’ve highlighted some examples and provided an alternative translation in parenthesis:

Sita taka huyu uchungu tena na.

I don't want those **machine guns** again (78) [I don't want this **pain** again (and)].

Tuna kosa leo masingira

The **wildlife** is being polluted (212) [Today our **environment** is no more]

The word for environment is used primarily in reference to reforestation and conservation efforts but having to do with trees, plants and broadly sustainable farming. Wildlife has a different word: *wanyama*; *wanyama wa porini*. Nonetheless, it is interesting to read Kiswahili in its regional grammatical form and colloquial style, which situates the east of Congo nicely on the map of African ethnographies.

Jack Hamilton, Just around Midnight: Rock and Roll and the Racial Imagination, Harvard University Press, 2016

By David McCarthy

The history of rock and roll has long provided fertile ground for what the scholar K. Merinda Simmons identifies as a “‘post-black’ rhetorical schema” (2015: 13). As Simmons describes it, this schema advocates access, agency, flexibility, fluidity, mobility, and the ultimate autonomy of the individual, opposing what it asserts is a “problematically dated [...] philosophy,” in particular America’s stark black-and-white racial structure (*ibid.*). From Maureen Mahon’s *Right to Rock* (2004), an ethnographic study of the New York-based Black Rock Coalition, to Elijah Wald’s pithily entitled *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock’n’Roll* (2009), scholars have repeatedly demonstrated that the whiteness of rock has been a pernicious obstacle for musicians and audiences alike. Jack Hamilton’s *Just around Midnight* seeks to answer one of this literature’s most crucial questions: how did a cultural form famously rooted in black music become “another way of being white?”

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