

tech-savvy citizen routinely held up as the ideal model of cosmopolitan identity? How might the uneven technological basis for celebrity status in the West and in the global South complicate or even undermine Afropolitan models of self-fashioning?

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***The Dance of Politics: Gender, Performance, and Democratization in Malawi***. Lisa  
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In this work, Lisa Gilman explores the historical use of women's song and dance in the Malawian political sphere. Through ethnographic experiences, historical research, and interviews, the author discusses how the practices of women song leaders have had an enduring impact on women's political participation, gender parity and power relations. Gilman demonstrates how women have garnered support for political parties and candidates, through the performance of song and dance at political rallies. Though women have had much to gain through participation in these rallies (including material gifts, the creation of social bonds, and opportunities to articulate political opinions within a sanctioned space), Gilman reveals that participation in these events reinforces the existing patriarchal system that disenfranchises women. Throughout the work, Gilman exposes how female praise performers negotiate these contradictory

experiences, and demonstrates how women use performances to enact social change while upholding tradition. The book is organized chronologically, with some breaks for discussion of relevant issues. Gilman covers three main political eras in this text: the independence movement, Banda's presidency, and after the transition to a multi-partyism. The book focusses primarily on issues of agency on the part of political dancers, asking, to what degree do women have a choice in participating as performers? Why do they choose to do so? How does their participation impact politics? And how are their own dance idioms shaped by participation in political rallies?

Women's involvement in organized political singing and dancing in Malawi began in the 1950s during the move towards Independence. According to Gilman, "Local customs of using performance both to sustain hierarchical power structures and as tools for resistance were the foundation for how performance genres catalyzed the struggle for liberation from the British" (27). After Independence, President-for-Life Hastings Kamuzu Banda saw the potential for women's dance in promoting culture and national pride, and mandated that all women must participate in all political rallies and national celebrations. This soon became an oppressive practice that exploited women and was later overturned at the onset of the multi-party elections of the 1990s. Though women were no longer required to sing and dance at political events, most women continued to do so in order to support their favored political parties and to articulate their opinions. Despite the voluntary nature of these performances, the relationship between female praise singers and primarily male politicians was still characterized by extreme social, political, and economic disparity (16-17).

The performers still had power within this relationship, because it was through their performance that one political party or candidate was legitimated, while another was criticized or discredited. Gilman writes, "Those in subordinate positions often creatively manipulate resources at their disposals to increase their opportunities for self-expression or to improve their social or material well-being" (17). Through their praise songs, women of generally low economic and political status, upheld gender and power hierarchies that reinforced the status quo. However, their songs, slogans, speeches, and dancing also allowed them to exercise their own "coded" lyrics and symbols that served to negotiate disparities in power and gender relations.

Rallies served as crucial sites for interactions between politicians and their people, during election season. One trope repeated throughout, is how women within these spaces come to represent the "traditional." At political rallies, women are expected to dance local traditional dances. Their attire further marks them as traditional. Gilman juxtaposes this image of the traditional with their male counterparts, who are dressed in suits and ties. The author problematizes the labeling of "traditional." She states, "The labeling and justification of women's political dancing as traditional is also problematic because it implicitly equates women and their political activities as "African," while men and most of their political contributions are not presented as culture or tradition, put as profession or political." As she later describes, this label of "traditional" is used to maintain social hierarchies. Continuing to use this term, implies that it will not be

challenged or changed. Women then continue to remain voiceless within the political arena out of the call to maintain “traditional” values.

Though these events were a way for women to express their political support of a candidate through “traditional” expressions of culture, these rallies also served to reinforce the patriarchal political system. In discussing a rally she attended for President Muluzi, Gilman comments that on the surface the choice of a female MC and her observation of the progressive nature of the UDF due to their selection of ten female MPS demonstrated the party’s commitment to women’s rights. However, these actions served more to illustrate the disparity between male and female political agency, as ten female MPS only correlate to five percent of parliamentary seats, and demonstrate the continuing dependence of women upon male political leaders.

Interestingly, economic incentive has become the primary motivator in female performance at political rallies. While the practice of paying dancers has been a long-standing custom in Malawi, some consider it akin to “buying votes.” Though female praise performance has customarily been a way to demonstrate support for a political candidate or party through the medium of *ngoma* traditions, in recent years, participation in political rallies has been stimulated by the lure of material benefit, rather than actual support for a political party. Gilman writes, “Given the widespread devastating poverty in which many of these women live, politicians take advantage of their economic neediness by giving them small amounts as strategies to obtain political power, while many of these same politicians neglect to attend to these women’s long term needs” (210). These economic incentives meet the immediate needs of these women, yet do not address the greater problem of need for female education, empowerment, and representation, all of which could help to alleviate the political, social, and economic struggles faced by these women and their families.

Even when messages of social commentary and criticism of politicians were not directly stated through music or dancing, the presence of supporters and praise singers at rallies acted as a way to make politicians accountable for their actions to their constituents. Gilman relates that at one particular rally the claim that Bakili Mulezi’s government was committed to alleviate the suffering of the poor and had already made great progress in this endeavor, was brought up short by the physical evidence of poverty displayed in the worn clothing and malnourishment of supporters. The obvious disparity between the well-kept and wealthy politicians and VIP attendees, and the praise singers and other supporting acted as a visual commentary on the corruption of the Muluzi government and their broken promises.

Though it is easy to criticize Malawian women for not being active enough in bringing about social change through already existing musical and political institutions, such as rallies, Gilman states that it is both unfair and unrealistic for us to project our ideas of what these women should be doing to address issues of power and gender. For many of these women, enacting change and improving their lives comes on a more personal level, rather than on a national political scale; their participation in these rallies can often afford them personal agency in addressing issues in their own lives,

and thus it is important for them to engage in the existing system in order to enact political and social change. However, as Gilman suggests, the improved position and empowerment of women will only come as women seek to gain representation beyond political dancing, and to endeavor to create new systems characterized by economic, social, and political equality.

Gilman's prose is accompanied by exemplary descriptions of Malawi's history, culture, political context, and landscape. She provides songs texts used by the women as a basis from which to draw her conclusions. Gilman's willingness to deal with the ambiguity, subtleties and complexities surrounding women's political dancing in Malawi, illustrating the intricate webs of power at work, is this book's most compelling feature. This book will appeal to anyone interested in ethnomusicology, anthropology, or African studies, and should also appeal to members of NGOs and human rights organizations who want to expand their knowledge about gender issues and contemporary political discourse in Africa.

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***Hip hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World.*** Eric Charry, ed. 2012. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 390 pp.

A review of Hip hop in Africa is a broad task to cover in one book. However, Eric Charry and the twelve international contributors (Shiple, Watkins, Tang, Reed, Fenn, Schulz, Shonekan, Kidula, Perullo, Collins, Seedobe, Polak and Charry) have been able to analyse certain social and musical aspects of African hip hop as a global-local musical culture. This book covers Senegal, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa. Charry emphasizes that hip hop in Africa is a creative contribution of the African youth to a cosmopolitan musical culture (1). Further, hip hop is a musical culture that embraces rappers, spray painters and break dancers who contribute to developing a distinctive social movement in each African country. For instance, in South Africa, hip hop has been used as a form of community engagement with the townships in order to educate youngsters about social problems such as drug addiction, gangsterism and AIDS/HIV (Watkins, 65). On the other hand, rappers in Senegal are often linked with traditional music made by the *jelis/griots* who are commonly referred to as "the masters of the word". Thus, Senegalese rappers are also defined by their society as "modern griots" who tell new stories, report on social issues and keep their oral history alive (Tang, 79).

Before discussing the details of African hip hop, Charry offers a brief and condensed history of how rap was born in New York in the 1970s. Charry summarizes American hip hop as a musical culture with two social forms: 1) recordings through a record label