

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

such as Sugar Hill; and 2) live events through break dancers, graffiti taggers and rappers (2). These social characteristics of hip hop became globalised and standardised in the 1980s and 1990s in Africa. A generation of African break dancers emerged in the 1980s in Bamako (1983), Cape Town (1983), and Dar es Salaam (1984). Live performances were popular, however, recordings of African hip hop only became accessible in the 1990s (16).

This book contributes qualitative, historical information on how African hip hop started as a social movement and developed later into a musical one as a result of the emergence of the African hip hop record industry. The topics covered in the various chapters follow four general categories, according to the diverse approaches by the contributors to the study of African hip hop: “the study of solo artists (Tang, Reed); broad overviews (Charry, Watkins, Collins, and Seedobe); a balance between the two previous approaches (Shiple, Fen, Schuz, Shonekan, Kidula, and Perullo); and intensive participatory ethnography (Polak)” (Charry: ix).

In the study of solo artists, Reed examines the musical negotiation of Fakoly’s political lyrics. The Ivorian artist uses reggae as a means of communication. Sometimes, Fakoly uses choruses and speech against dictatorship and military forces. Such lyrics provoked death threats in his home country and he decided to migrate first to Burkina Faso and later to Mali (92). In this context, Reed does intertextual analyses, meaning that he describes the interlinkage of diverse musical contexts in Fakoly’s music and lyrics. Moreover, intertextuality is related to the use of reggae and the French language as a global idiom. Thus, the general political content about the oppression of Africans make Fakoly both a global artist and a local hero for the young generations of the Ivory Coast (96)<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, Tang analyses Africa Bambaata and Lumumba Carson in Senegal. As mentioned earlier, rappers in Senegal are also seen as modern *jelis*. Tang comments on the historical dimension of rappers who are linked with an idealistic Africa in which hip hop comes back to the homeland, an example being Positive Black Soul’s album “Return of da Djely” in 1996 (86). In this case, the general use of Wolof language in Senegalese rap gives hip hop closer links with tradition and a sense of rootedness. Polak explains how urban drumming in Bamako has found a place to create a musical culture similar to rap in which there are people dancing, making speeches. The drumming sessions with *djembe* in Bamako also invite people to improvise song and dance (261).

Among the articles based on broad overviews about African hip hop, Watkins observes that women were not associated with rap in some countries in Africa, because rap is linked to street life (60). Although gender issues restrict the participation of women in hip hop in Africa, nevertheless, women are a common subject in song lyrics in African rap either in sensual terms, or as is the case in Malawi, to advise young girls to listen to their mothers (238). African hip hop has been linked with theories

<sup>1</sup> This point is consistent with Alim’s views on the intertextuality on hip hop defined as a “global linguistic flow” (2009: 11).

of “creolization, hybridity and glocalization” and never as an original musical culture (189). This book makes clear that hip hop is adopted by Africans as a global beat originating in the USA. In some cases, there is a debate on a historic boomerang effect as through ancient linkages with *jelis* mastering the art of the word in Senegal (79). Another general characteristic in African hip hop is the association with other global musical styles such as reggae or gospel. As a case in point, Seedobe in his chapter comments on the specific use of gospel for its Christian moral value and how gospel has been fused with hip hop in Malawi (246).

The question of African musical authenticity is also debated as both: postcolonialism and globalisation contributed to evolution of new identities of music, either transposing traditional sounds into electric ensembles (electric guitar, bass, drums, wind sections) or emergence of styles influenced by Cuban rumba as in Congo or Mali in the 1970s (288). As a case in point, in the last Chapter, Charry defines African hip hop as a process of “imitation-assimilation and transformation” similar to African rumba in the past (300). Thus, the study of African hip hop falls into similar cultural processes as rumba during the first period of post-independence in some African countries.

In conclusion, this book is recommended for scholars interested in urban spaces in Africa and cosmopolitan music such as hip hop. In my view, this book is an important contribution to African hip hop as a musical genre. Charry’s book opens up a broad area of research to ethnomusicologists interested in urban African music. Without falling into generalizations, this book offers distinctive examples of how hip hop has been introduced in local cultures in some African countries. However, there are certain chapters that are not clear as to how they can be categorized as part of Africa’s hip hop musical culture. That is the case with Reed’s article on the political speeches of the Ivorian reggae artist Fakoly and Polak’s ethnography on the *djembe*’s local and urban dichotomy in Bamako. On the other hand, there is a qualitative study on how hip hop has been fused with other global styles such as gospel, reggae, and locally with traditional instruments. In Ghana, the creation of *hiplife* as a fusion between hip hop and highlife music is a case in point. As the Ghanaian rapper Panji Anoff observes, through mixing global beats with traditional instruments, “we make Africa global” (11).

Charry’s book touches upon certain social aspects of hip hop in African countries. The chapters of this book do not go as in-depth into hip hop research as for instance Condry’s book specifically based on Japanese hip hop (2006). However, both books are based on the study of how hip hop as a global musical style affects the local culture in certain countries. In comparison with other books focused on hip hop as a musical culture, this collection does not touch upon the issues of race and hip hop as previous publications such as those of Alim, 2006; Chang, 2005; Forman & Neal, 2004. Discourse on black consciousness linked to hip hop has been an on-going debate among hip hop scholars. However, in Charry’s book, the various chapters on hip hop musical culture do not address racial issues or black identity as a focal point. Thus, this book offers another discourse to scholars specialized on hip hop culture in its broad focus on

the impact of hip hop in several African countries. Further, this book can be useful to academic disciplines such as cultural studies, sociology, anthropology or politics, particularly in its emphasis on how the global impact of hip hop has contributed to African local culture.

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