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Matthias Krings. *African Appropriations: Cultural Difference, Mimesis, and Media.* African Expressive Cultures Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. Illustrations. 328 pp. $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-01625-6; $30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-01629-4.

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Matthias Kringsâs *African Appropriations* examines African engagement with and production of global media cultures. He initially entices his readers with an anecdote about a Tanzanian Seventh-day Adventist Church singing a fateful tale in Swahili about the hubris of the builders of and passengers aboard the *Titanic*. Krings explains that upon witnessing this performance his mind was jogged to other references to the *Titanic* disaster, including appropriations of James Cameronâs 1997 epic film. What follows is a uniquely creative book that intertwines these disparate and discontiguous cultural artifacts into a conversation about globalization, localization, transnational media production, mimetic articulation, and theorizations of cultural contact.

A central contention of Krings is that African cultural production today matches if not surpasses African cultural consumption; via appropriation and mimesis vast audiences and networks of African consumers recast foreign media and regain agency. While I am not entirely comfortable with the zero-sum game inference, I am attracted to the anti-canonical overtures of this framework. Africans mediate, domesticate, and borrow old, new, and experimental media to imagine difference, alterity, and desire, and to mimic. To demonstrate his argument, he assembles a set of stories about film, video, music, magazines, email, and digital and other media, which, analyzed together, weave a dynamic and innovative fabric. Krings pulls together a series of unique case studies primarily from Nigeria and Tanzania that also speak to each other via common themes and thus appear to have currency across the continent.

The bookâs structure follows a conventional case-study chapter format, and most of the chapters could be read or taught as standalone pieces. Two historical chapters trace the history of spirit possession by European colonial figures from the 1920s, and the proliferation of photo novels in magazines in the 1960s, notably the magazine *African Film*. The next three-chapter sequences examine film appropriations: the aforementioned riffs on the *Titanic*, Nigerian facsimiles of Bollywood (with a particularly unsettling study of the rise and fall of Kanoâs film industry), and Tanzanian replication of Nollywood. The final third explores the Osama bin Laden merchandise industry, the operations of cyber scammers and their appropriation of orientalist representations of Africa, and finally an odd assemblage of musicians who appear to be disquietingly at ease appropriating African musical forms for primarily European markets. Krings ends with a synthetic theoretical coda, a format that I found refreshing and preferable to a heavy-handed theoretical introduction, although some may crave a deeper theoretical engagement.

Historians and anthropologists will be attracted to Kringsâs persistent focus on agency. And geographers and sociologists may be seduced by the transnational, translocal, and continental resonance of the argument, in spite of a focus on several locations. Via his sympathetic characterizations residing in a broad cluster of cultural spacesâfrom church and rap music via post-terrorist hero-worship and ritual possession to brazen cybercrimeâhe offers a convincing account of how the socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts inhabited

by contemporary African subjects contribute to the dismantling of the original/copy duarchy, if not the domination/resistance binary.

Had this been published a decade or even half a decade earlier, the title would perhaps have featured the term âglobalization.â Saddled thus, some readers may have struggled to disentangle the theoretical strands informing Kringsâs remarkable compendium on the recent histories and present lives of media cultures in contemporary Africa. This fortunately is not the case; and instead Krings provides a richly rewarding journey through African mediascapes thoughtfully and cautiously engaged with the expansive literatures on mimesis, cultural production, and difference. Except for occasional editorial sloppiness, *African Appropriations* is a highly engaging, rigorous, and creative work, and among the most provocative and compelling books I have read in years. It is extremely suitable for undergraduate or graduate instruction, and highly recommended.

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