Jade L. Miller, **Nollywood Central, The Nigerian Videofilm Industry,** London, UK: BFI Palgrave, 2016, 175 pp., £22.99 (paperback).

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In a world where Hollywood is accepted as global and the industrial logics of cinema as an industry appear increasingly homogenous, Jade L. Miller's ***Nollywood Central*** recasts a cultural geography that places Hollywood at its center. From the perspective of globe as media marketplace, Africa is seen as largely irrelevant, as demonstrated by industry discourse centered on lack: lack of infrastructure to make reliable profits, lack of regulation to prevent piracy, and lack of transparency to trust significant investment. In *Nollywood Central*, Miller looks at Nollywood as a new cultural industry separate from the networks of global Hollywood. As indicated by the title, Miller turns the discourse of lack on its head, arguing that Nollywood is in fact central to an alternative network of media production, distribution, and consumption. As the center of this alternative network, Nollywood, Miller argues, has produced its own economic model rooted in infrastructural breakdown and informality, and the economic viability and export of this business model is perhaps as significant as the cultural products themselves.
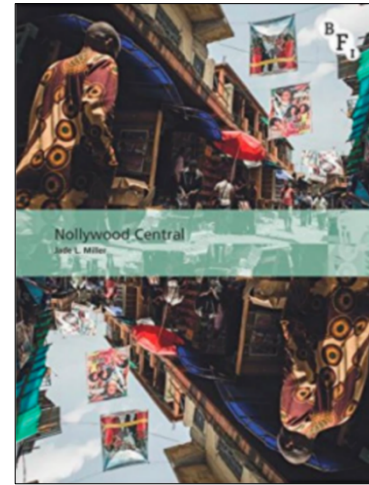
Miller defines *Nollywood* as an English-language small screen industry based in the southern Nigerian city of Lagos. She locates Nollywood's roots in a confluence of economic and technological factors that emerged in the 1990s: World Bank–coordinated economic restructuring and its deleterious effect on public broadcasting, growth of under or unemployed cultural workers, and a glut of VHS tapes acquired cheaply from Asia by Nigerian electronics dealers, in addition to broader dynamics of urbanization. The industry produces films intended for home viewing that Miller and others contend are stylistically more in line with soap operas than Hollywood films or even the auteur-driven film festival films from more elite Nollywood producers (what Miller calls "New Nollywood"). In prioritizing quantity over quality, Nollywood turns Hollywood's blockbuster mentality on its head, relying on the interchangeability of content and making profits over a large catalogue of titles rather than a single hit. Miller emphasizes that Nollywood remains first and foremost an industry of physical marketplaces and video compact discs, but also addresses emergent entrepreneurial attempts at digitization and digital distribution.

This book will be of interest to scholars of media industries, cultural geography, and global media more generally. It raises debate about scholarly tendencies to generalize a global Hollywood or even global art cinema, demonstrating that there are industries and cultural geographies that have very little to do with those networks. In doing so it offers a rare account of Global South–Global South cultural networks and exchange, as indicated by the VHS technologies mentioned above or the export of Nollywood's business model to industries in Tanzania and Kenya, where Nollywood films have been popular. Particularly significant

are the infrastructural components of the Nollywood story, whereby fragmented exclusion from the material realities of globalization (electric grids, fiber optic cables, etc.) mean that Nollywood emerged in the gaps of government policy and hegemonic global networks of cultural production and distribution. Miller takes seriously informal mechanisms of industry emergence and growth at a time when the creative economy has become an object of policy fetishization, with local and national governments emphasizing cultural industries as an engine of economic growth. Ultimately Miller paints a compelling picture of the complex interweavings of the local and global that elucidate a radical contingency dependent on from where and what perspective one looks.

Structurally, *Nollywood Central* offers a cohesive narrative that moves through the history and emergence of Nollywood in the 1990s, the political economy of the industry, the texts themselves, varied attempts at regulation and policy, and, finally, its transnational reach. The depth and breadth of fieldwork is an apparent strength. Methodologically the book is based on participant observation and interviews with Nollywood media practitioners, marketers, regulators, and entrepreneurs, as well as textual analysis. Some might want to know more about the social context that shaped interviews and observations, but overall this is a good contribution to grounded media research that looks both at Nollywood's internal networks and its connections (and disconnections) to global circuits of capital and culture.

Informality as Industry Logic

The defining question of *Nollywood Central* is the question of Nollywood's relationship to the global. Building on Castells' (1998) conceptions of the network society and the global fourth world as the experience of exclusion from that globally integrated world order, Miller argues that Nollywood is both disconnected from the infrastructure of dominant networks and global in its own right. She places Nollywood as a dominant force at the center of an alternative media network characterized by "informality, opacity and the decentralization of power" (p. 5). For Miller, informality is the key characteristic from which opacity and decentralized power structures emerge. Here, informality is defined according to five criteria: not documenting sales, not utilizing prosecutable legal contracts, not using agents, not pursuing copyright violations, and privileging undocumented financing and distribution networks. While addressing critiques of scholarly celebrations of informality, Miller suggests the analytical importance of informality resides in its significance for Nollywood power structures. She sees informality not as a de facto state of affairs, but rather a strategic form of organization orchestrated and enforced by the "marketers" who control the financing and distribution of Nollywood films through informal networks often based on self-organization and personal connections rooted in trust and ethnic identity networks. By structuring Nollywood as an industry according to the characteristics of informality outlined above, marketers make it difficult for corporate, government, or entrepreneurial players to usurp their power. Ultimately, informality is both problematic for certain players (actors who may not get paid, for example) and an entrance point to prolific cultural production that few industries have managed to make economically viable. In a world where most countries manage to produce a few feature films a year and fill remaining demand with Hollywood, Bollywood, or martial arts films, Nollywood offers a model for independent and popular production.

Alternative Media Capital

Nollywood's informal networks provide the foundation for Miller's conceptualization of an alternative media capital centered on Lagos. Taking up Curtin's (2003) work on media capital, Miller expands the notion to suggest a multiplicity of types. Alternative media capital provides a way to move beyond nation-based analytical frameworks and provide a system for industry classification based on institutional and economic structures. It also addresses the emergence of cultural industry hubs in places with highly variegated relationships of inclusion and exclusion from dominant global networks—where the totality of a nation or even a city cannot be assumed to exist in the same state of connection or disconnection. A key example of this (and an answer offered by Miller to the question, "Where is Nollywood?") would be the Alaba International Electronics Market on the outskirts of Lagos. While this open-air market might be excluded from dominant networks of technological development and sales represented by Silicon Valley and corporate consumer electronics retailers carrying every cycle of shiny new devices, Alaba can also been seen as a central node of Nollywood as an industry and an alternative global network. Because many marketers have their offices there, Alaba operates as a Nollywood power center as well a source of trading connections to Dubai, Singapore, Beirut, Mexico City, and other nodes of a global urban periphery. Technologies seen as outdated or ineffective in initial markets are traded through these secondary and often informal markets, in addition to unauthorized versions of cultural products that might be inaccessible or too costly for consumers via formal markets. And yet Miller recounts that in a different version of the same city exists a Sony store favored by Nollywood cinematographers for equipment and training, clearly connected to dominant global networks and indicating that informality and formality, dominant and alternative, always exist as a continuum, and it is this multiplicity of dis/connections in urban space that Miller's alternative media capital accounts for so effectively.

Taken as a whole, *Nollywood Central* engages with important questions about global flows of culture and emergent cultural industry hubs outside the Global North. The slim volume falls among the rare breed of academic book where readers may be left wanting more. Questions remain as to what extent Nollywood can be considered a unitary industry and the relationships between the differing dimensions analyzed by Miller: a domestic Nollywood of the marketers, a New Nollywood of aspirational auteurs, and the Nollywood of digital entrepreneurs, among others. The power of these various components and the extent to which they all exist as contraflows to a dominant global network is a conversation opened up by Miller and sure to continue throughout the life of this still young cultural industry center.

References

Castells, M. (1998). *End of millennium*. Maiden, MA: Blackwell.

Curtin, M. (2003). Media capital: Towards a study of spatial flows. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *6*(2), 202–228.