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Higginson, Pim. *Scoring Race: Jazz, Fiction and Francophone Africa*. Publisher: James Currey, Suffolk, United Kingdom. 237 pp. Year: 2017. ISBN: 9781787440371.

Reviewed by: Sarah Sharp, PhD, Independent Scholar.

Scoring Race: Jazz, Fiction and Francophone Africa offers a complex historical analysis of the utilization of jazz as a race producing genre and a symbol of 'object whiteness'. Pim Higginson gives a history of institutionalized racism from the height of Greek thought up until the current day. Further, the film describes how the role of the 'other' is systematically placed within the timeline of Western modernity. In the nineteenth century, schools of thought in anthropology, history, ethnology and biology secured the racial boundary. In the twentieth century, the dynamics of global exchange, industrial development and cultural convergence impacted avant-garde intellectual movements.

Higginson's investigation into the score of jazz commences in interwar France. He addresses how French authors intellectualized a colonial subjectivity via an African-American export and created a racialized canon that continues to define the 'other'. Francophone African and Caribbean authors responded to the imperfect but mythical Western image of jazz and reflected a parallel history that continues to be contextualized in order to address emerging theoretical, aesthetic, cultural demands and desires. Higginson examines the works of eleven Francophone authors and two filmmakers who develop, query, and contest the legendary representation of jazz.

The introduction of jazz in interwar France encouraged a radical but naïve image of a new culture that was disconnected from its history and fabricated into an essential illusion of the 'other'. It habituated a disconnect between the brilliance of jazz and the image of genera. The estranged history that distinguishes the discourse on African-American jazz and the colonial subject in French literature is conceptualized in Higginson's analysis of Phillippe Soupault's *Le Negre* (1927), Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausee* (1938), Boris Vian's *L'Ecume des jours* (1947), and Enzo Cormann's *Vita Nova Jazz* (2011). These texts demonstrate the way in which jazz is intellectualized, appropriated and applied in avant-garde French literature as a motif that negotiates and defines a simulacrum amid the self and the 'other.'

In interwar France, jazz was historicized by avant-garde white society and excluded 'French intellectuals of color' (Higginson 2017, 44). However, Francophone African and Caribbean authors contributed to the dialogue on race and reflected on the symbol of jazz. Higginson appraises how Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris* (1937), Emmanuel Dongala's *Jazz et vin de palme* (1982) and *A Love Supreme*, and Mongo Beti's *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* (1999) and *Branle-bas en noir et blanc* (2000) reproduce the image of jazz in an autonomous creative space that is disaffected from the force of the colonial other. Jazz is reflected in a parallel modernity. However, reflectivity is an applied technique that modifies the prose of written history from the rhythm of experienced reality. Instead of emancipating the image of jazz, the reflection

emits a fetishized commodity that duplicates the racial paradigm. Higginson introduces methodical traps that emerge in the process of racial deconstruction and transformation. He proclaims the implausibility of an autonomous non-Western, non-white, non-male modernity and the homecoming to a 'precolonial innocence.'

In the twenty-first century, Francophone African authorship attempts to reclaim jazz from its Western contextualization by inverting its symbol, relocating its function, and transforming its narrative. Higginson presents how Kangni Alem's *Cola Cola Jazz* (2002), Fiston Mwanza Mujila's *Tram 83* (2014), Abdourahman Waberi's *La Divine Chanson* (2015), and Leonora Miano's *Tels des astres éteints* (2008) and *Blues pour Elise* (2010) apply the inverse idea of jazz and redefine it as an inclusive cultural hybrid. Higginson claims that Alem, Mujila, Waberi and Miano protest against jazz as a neatly-contained African-American export, and he says that they rescue the 'African ingredient from its identification with American consumerism' (Higginson 2017, 152). Jazz is as a strategic site for survival, improvisation and meditation on the cultural *mélange* of the diaspora. It is a place to ruminate on the relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial present. However, Higginson determines that the twenty-first century application of jazz also fails to dissociate from the entrenched racial score.

In literature, jazz is often utilized as a practical and popular illusion that connotes great black male artists. Late into his study, Higginson attends to the excised female body, which is somewhat elaborated on in his final chapter which addresses how jazz is scripted, imaged and filmed in T. Gréville's *Princesse Tam-Tam* (1935) and Joseph Gai's *Ramaka Karmen Gei* (2001). Higginson determines that Gréville appropriates and personifies Josephine Baker's legendary stage persona in his impression of *Princess Tam-Tam* that simply re-situates her exotic, innocent, natural, and sultry persona. He suggests this reframing was a response to consumer culture and demand in interwar Paris. The concept of replacement and appropriation is also conceptualized in Ramaka's *Karmen Gei*, which adapts Karmen to expose the commodification of the post-colonial 'other'. However, Higginson's consideration of the score of jazz in film and his contemplation on gender are not complete investigations.

Higginson expresses how Western acculturation, intellectualization and transcription defined the contested image of jazz and revealed the 'white subject.' However, he circumvents the opportunity to demonstrate the politicization of jazz as a national cultural commodity in transnational spaces. His obtuse account of how Negritude ideologues used art to forge a national and cultural identity and recognition in (trans)national spaces is understated. Additionally, his two demonstrations of how African-American jazz musicians combined national patronage and cultural exchange in Africa is more shocking than nuanced. He initiates disbelief rather than intercultural and transnational discourse on how race and culture are commodified and politicized.

Scoring Race: Jazz, Fiction and Francophone Africa reflects how jazz functions as a Western historical and epistemological place-maker and demarks the space and body of the 'other.' Higginson tells how French authors fabricated the conventional insignia of jazz. Jazz is an emblem that Francophone and African and Caribbean writers dispute as a sign of dejection. Contemporary Francophone African novelists re-situate this genre in historically unconventional spaces. The score of Jazz expresses a transitional meditation on colonial history and postcolonial

materialization, and Higginson's study exhibits that it continues to be haunted by institutionalized racism from the West.

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