

Thomas Turino. *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. University of Chicago Press, 2000. x, 401 pp.

Reviewed by Ron Emoff

Tom Turino begins his most recent book, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*, by discussing interactions between “the global” and “the local.” Turino concerns himself here with the dynamics of such interactions in urban popular music production in Harare, Zimbabwe, from the 1930s through the 1990s. He writes that his main goal “is to clarify the continuities and parallel cultural effects of colonialism, nationalism, and cosmopolitanism—three phenomena often understood in opposition to each other” (4).¹ He contends that an ideologic opposition as such commonly proves to be ephemeral among Zimbabweans themselves, who experience and embody globalizing processes more at the level of their own “lifeways,” cultural values, and sense(s) of identity. Turino writes that while this analysis is not unique to Zimbabwe, it is of particular impact there due to the “historical proximity and rapid pace” of such processes of global interaction in Zimbabwe. It is likely that Turino’s prior interest in performing on *mbira*, a Zimbabwean musical instrument, has also affected his choice of locale in which to perform ethnography, and thus to interpret these specific histories and constructions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism.

Turino expresses an apprehension toward a common explication of globalism in which a modernist ideology vies against a more “traditional” one, in which a capitalist system is pitted against “indigenous” alternatives. He draws in part upon anthropological authors such as James Clifford (1992), Jean and John Comaroff (1993), and Arjun Appadurai (1996) to devise a schema of cosmopolitanism that draws its breath from “objects, ideas, and cultural positions that are widely diffused throughout the world and yet are specific only to certain portions of the populations within given countries” (7). Since cosmopolitanism becomes manifest through the lives, actions, experiences, and perceptions of actual people in unique situations, it is always localized or locationally distinct, yet it is also translocal, in that the world is culturally and productively connected through “cosmopolitan loops” (8) that link particular cosmopolitan ideas and technologies. As a mode of interacting in the world, cosmopolitanism transcends particular homelands, individuals, or groups. One might also reflect here upon the very positioning of the ethnographer her/himself, who commonly moves freely between local(e) to translocal and back so as

to represent specific cosmopolitanisms to other “locals” throughout the world. Ethnographers might be vital, though perhaps backgrounded, mediums for processes of cosmopolitanism.

Turino further evokes cosmopolitanism to identify situations in which “local people deeply internalize foreign ideas and practices and make them their own; that is, foreign dispositions become deeply constitutive of local habitus” (8). Such internalization/appropriation implies unique imaginations that can improvise upon foreign ideas, materials, and people. Internalizing the foreign can comprise a vital component of cultural expression in other parts of Africa as well as the rest of the world.² Turino conveys the incorporative and integrative nature of Zimbabwe cosmopolitanism, which is not simply a mode of conforming to global styles, ideas, and forms, but a way of imbricating these into local aesthetics and politics. We are privileged to view the regenerative and recyclable capacities of cosmopolitanism in Zimbabwe. In musical terms, cosmopolitanism here does not necessarily refer to a particular source, such as Delta Blues or Cuban *son*. Rather, it draws upon a *flow* of other cosmopolitan styles. Turino illustrates such a cultural flow, for example, with the popularity and influence of Mills Brothers recordings in Zimbabwe during the 1940s and 1950s. Moses Mpahlo of De Black Evening Follies, who performed “concert” music between 1943 and 1960 in Zimbabwe, said “I wouldn’t say we used to write music as such. What we used to do is . . . take two, say, tunes, and we combined them together. We then composed *our song* (my italics) from those two tunes” (130–31).

Turino defines musical nationalism, which becomes a prime medium or venue of cosmopolitanism, as “the conscious use of any preexisting or newly created music in the service of a political nationalist movement” (190). Turino depicts examples in Zimbabwe in which musical practices explicitly become part of nationalist political movements, such as with the impact of *chimurenga* songs (“songs of the struggle”) from within the Zimbabwe African National Union in the 1970s. He is critical of a model of musical nationalism based on “folk” or “vernacular” elements simply being incorporated to form cosmopolitan musical styles, a model that does not adequately distinguish between nationalist movements and nationalist *sentiment*.³ Instead, Turino advocates a focus on “musical nationalism in relation to political nationalist movements and state nationalist projects” (190).⁴ In his discussion of nationalism, as elsewhere, Turino draws upon theoretical frameworks commonly outside the scope of much musicological writing. For example, on nationalism, he evokes Partha Chatterjee (1986, 1993)—in part a postcolonial theorist—who has asserted that nationalism “produced a discourse in which, even as it challenged the colonial claim to political domination, it also accepted the very intellectual premises of ‘modernity’

on which colonial domination was based" (164, italics in the original). Referring to this particular citation, Turino writes that "by the 1950s in Zimbabwe, nationalism was not simply a product of imitating European Enlightenment models. By this time, the ideas of nationalism were deeply ingrained and internally generated by the black cosmopolitan leadership" (164).

Turino has written more broadly elsewhere (1999) on Peircian semiotics. He deploys such a sign-oriented analysis in this book to discuss, for example, middle-class identity construction (129). In this instance, it is musical literacy and carefully orchestrated harmonies that act as "indexical-dicents" (i.e., the object is implicitly understood to affect the sign itself: a weathervane is a sign for wind) upon middle-class consciousness. While Turino's evocation and application of Peirce's semiotics can be illustrative in the text, one might wish to hear more elaborate enunciation of this interpretive system as it works amongst Shona—perhaps even some evidentiary confirmation *from* Shona.

Turino gives a historical breakdown of relationships between musical taste and class distinctions throughout the past in Zimbabwe, basing his conceptions of class as analytic category on Bourdieu.⁵ For instance, an emerging middle class is purported to have coevolved there from about the mid-1930s with a fondness for "concert" music, a musical genre in which a clear distinction between performer and audience is established. Such a differentiation is less definable in *bira* ceremonial musical performance, a mode of ceremonial spiritual/musical performance in Zimbabwe that involves musically invoking Zimbabwean ancestral spirits. In chapter 4, Turino identifies concert, jazz, and ballroom genres as prime musical activities belonging to a local cosmopolitan elite. One might ponder the nature of cosmopolitanism's own class-ified "underbelly": how might cosmopolitanism or its (after)effects operate or become manifest in different ways among those outside of the privileged classes? In describing various performance traditions among Shona in Zimbabwe, Turino notes that the cultural distinctiveness of the term *Shona* itself derives from a colonial designation for what was actually a multi-"ethnic" region. Indeed, much of the colonized world's borders, both geographic and those more diaphanous, reflect colonially conceived divisions.

Turino is critical of "modernist reformers" who attempt to force the "most valuable" symbols from both individual and foreign cultures, and who thereby likely overlook the distinctive local meanings emergent from indigenous artistic practices. He implicitly chides such reformers for deciding what is culturally valuable to themselves, and not necessarily to the local people whose practices are being interpreted. Later in the book,

Turino asserts that “while modernist reformism often has preservation of ‘the traditional’ as one of its rationalizations, it tends to preserve surface features only, while having a major transformational effect at the level of cultural practice and ethos” (107). The Kwanongoma College of Music, founded in 1961 in Bulawayo, exemplifies this reformist inclination with its emphasis on “indigenous” music, though from within a European pedagogical framework. In this case, indigenous music was to be “improved upon,” and thus made more appealing to cosmopolitan audiences. Turino questions any actual conception of a traditional/modern dichotomy among Zimbabwe music-makers themselves, recognizing that such categorization often has arisen largely from colonial and postcolonial discourse, and not necessarily from local perceptions or interpretive stances. Especially with different ways that time is (re)figured throughout Africa and in many other regions of the world—for example in practices that revitalize ancestral spirits, places, and times into the present—schematizations pitting modern vs. traditional might not address peoples’ unique perceptions of ways that various senses of time affect one another.

Throughout the book, Turino gives critical readings of earlier scholarship on musical practice in Zimbabwe, including, for example, the work of Andrew Tracey (1972), Hugh Tracey (1961), A. M. Jones (1948), John Kaemmer (1975), Paul Berliner (1978), Robert Kaufman (1970), Dumisani Maraire (1990), and Angela Impey (1998). He thus interacts with, reconstructs, and refits prior ethnomusicological research, framing it within his own research findings. For example, he questions Hugh Tracey’s earlier claim that there had been a “revival” in *mbira* practice in Zimbabwe. He asks, “*why, then, assume prominence, decline, and revival*” (italics in the original), since the actual status of such practice prior to the 1930s, the era of Tracey’s claim, is purportedly unknown.

Turino’s extended analysis of Shona popular musician Thomas Mapfumo (a musician who receives the majority of Turino’s attention) as a performing embodiment of musical nationalism would perhaps be strengthened by some detail of actual band-audience and band-internal politics and aesthetics. What about the views of Mapfumo held by other Zimbabwe cosmopolitans or by his own band members, for example? Some notion of recording studio or touring dynamics—in other words, more insight into Mapfumo *as* performer—would enhance the reader’s sense of how musical nationalism operates on an everyday ground. And perhaps semiotic analysis could have been applied here as well to construct a signing system of musical nationalism in action, through Mapfumo. With the predominance of Mapfumo as primary “object,” one contrastive gap appears in the book in that there is little elaboration upon Zimbabwe’s

women, such as world-renowned *mbira* star Stella Shiweshe, or much on the role of women as music-makers throughout Zimbabwe's nationalist and cosmopolitan past.

Those who feel compelled to see written representations and analyses of "the music itself" might be disappointed to find little of this in *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*. However, for those who view musical performance as expressive culture, contingent upon multiple realms of experience, this book is a valuable asset for its historical, ethnographic, interpretive, and critical perspective.

Notes

1. Andy Bennet (2000) employs the term "glocal" (though perhaps a somewhat awkward one) to discuss multifaceted and multidirectional interactions between local and global processes in urban popular music- and identity-making, as well as reception in the United Kingdom.

2. See my new book, *Recollecting from the Past: Musical Practice and Spirit Possession on the East Coast of Madagascar* (2001), in part for various culture-specific methods for such internalization. In Madagascar, the very processes of internalization (rather than merely the products of such processes) are empowering, historicizing, and indeed often a vital component in a Malagasy imaginative and performative aesthetics.

3. Turino specifically cites Manuel (1987, 1994), Diaz (1996), Austerlitz (1997), and Bohlman (1988) in making this particular criticism.

4. Here Turino cites Capwell (1976, 1991), Buchanan (1995), Noll (1991), and Wong (1984) as exemplary authors.

5. "According to Bourdieu, class also involves the relative control over other types of capital [other than control over processes and resources of economic production]: *cultural* (e.g., social style, aesthetic taste, 'manners'), *social* (connection), *educational* (degrees), and *political* resources that are valued within particular social fields and that may be 'exchanged' or used to procure economic and other types of capital" (121).

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