

MacDonald, Michael B. 2023. *CineWorlding: Scenes of Cinematic Research-Creation*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Inc.

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Erlmann, Veit. *Lion's Share: Remaking South African Copyright*. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2022. xii, 386 pp., appendix, notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 9781478016328 (hardcover) and ISBN 9781478023593 (e-book).

Veit Erlmann's latest publication brings together a series of interesting and diverse ethnographic moments that illustrate the complex state of contemporary South African copyright. This substantial monograph opens with a dense theoretical foundation from which Erlmann proposes a new approach for bringing together law and anthropology: an anthropology *in law*. The key aim of the work is to engage legal scholars and anthropologists in a "deeper, substantive conversation about music and copyright law" (7). Erlmann does this without providing any definitive solutions for the messy obstacles relating to copyright, development or transformation made so obvious in South Africa. The refrain throughout the book is: When it comes to these creative and legal concerns, how can we understand each other better? The book encourages legal scholars, anthropologists, and musicologists to bring their heads together. The reflections that emerge in the text subsequently probe us to consider how one can communicate and interact meaningfully across all manner of divides within and beyond the academy. The "anthropology *in law*," proposed by Erlmann, is described as:

a novel way to frame the interdisciplinary study of law in which law's and anthropology's (or any other political, cultural, scientific) knowledges interpenetrate each other to a point where "speaking the same language" does not mean unconditional consensus, uniformity of codes, or what John Law calls the "singularity" of definitive sets of processes through which one may determine "discoverable entities" but an openness to a neverending cycle of questions and answers. (9)

The messy nodes or "cycle of questions and answers" that Erlmann refers to are immediately obvious as he narrates, in detail, stories and experiences relating to the famed

and multipart legal saga surrounding the Solomon Linda composition “Mbube,” the making of the South African Intellectual Property Laws Amendment Act 28 of 2013, police antipiracy raids, and the inner workings of the Southern African Music Rights Organisation (SAMRO). Each chapter is woven together with nuanced discussion of the key operational terms floating around and across each example—“development,” “community,” “indigenous,” “traditional,” “agency,” and others. Erlmann states: “Like *culture*, *development* is rooted in centuries of inequality, and like *culture*, it tends to function as its own referent, being immune to any further attempt at serious scrutiny” (28–29). He discusses how traditional knowledge is a mobile grouping spread across diverse networks (32). In discussing ideas around “indigenous communities” in legal contexts, he picks at the staticization of this term and rather suggests that indigeneity be understood as a complex system of contemporary strategies, practices, and enactments that put forward a “politics of belonging” (118).

The tension between individual rights and those relating to collective identity and creation is carefully unraveled against the backdrop of one of the most contentious sets of cultural arenas: apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Many of the debates around these key terms and their resultant politics are linked to their often long and invisible histories, locally and elsewhere around the globe. Drawing on Henry Maine’s *Village Communities in the East and West* (1872), Erlmann reminds us regularly that “the past is in the present” (108).

Erlmann’s resistance to the “tidy story” and simple binaries leads readers through winding tales of dysfunction, debate, misunderstanding, and sometimes misbehavior. This work strips away any myths of the apolitical positioning of legal frameworks and processes. It critiques the ability of these to create linear narratives of resolution or transformation. It also states clearly what is often unsaid in southern African spaces: that the state of South African creative industries, historically and today, is intrinsically related to the history of colonial copyright. Erlmann asserts that any more rigorous implementation of copyright law within these creative industries may not be the silver bullet to solve many current and future economic woes for a complex society.

Erlmann draws on Star’s writing on “boundary objects” as “plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” (Star and Griesemer 1989:393). We end up considering what the possible “boundary objects” between building blocks could be. Erlmann asks how connective mechanisms could help these disciplines, musicians, family members, lawyers, lawmakers, academics, and publics understand each other better. And there are no easy or neat answers to this. Erlmann proposes a few opportunities for connection and asserts the productive potential in the “disjunctures” and moments of failure so clearly displayed in this book.

From the position of music scholarship, this book is an interesting and thorough engagement with a legal drama with which many in music are familiar. The Solomon Linda case, however, has many phases and returns that may not be known to readers.

The detailed discussion of these in this book provides an opening for the exploration of other facets of contemporary copyright, creativity, duplication, and enforcement in South Africa. The impenetrable and dry nature of much of the legalese and the associated lawmaking processes in the text is remedied to some extent by the author's slow stages of explanation and scrutiny. Despite this, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and musical performers unfamiliar with copyright law and legal anthropological work may find the text dense and hard to digest at times.

Links are made to the micro and macro theoretical tools at play throughout the text and this continually bring us back to the book's core aims. With this book, Erlmann aims to generate an interdisciplinary framework for examining copyright and culture in postcolonial spaces. He highlights that when we examine legal functionality, past defective processes are still at play in the present, and that acknowledging and working with messy realities can be a productive point of departure. The detail in each story is supported by visual, documentary evidence in the form of photographs of contracts and evidence bags, and so on. This ethnographic granularity grounds the narratives presented. Additionally, it reminds us of the complex human stories and dramatic as well as mundane actions that have traveled with the author during the research process.

The Lion's Share is a substantial contribution to anthropology, legal studies, musicology, ethnomusicology, and history, and successfully creates bridges between these disciplines, methodologically and theoretically. Though the ethnographic detail is deeply rooted in South African histories and contemporary life, many of the book's themes resonate with complex issues around creativity, economy, and postcoloniality in many other regions of the globe.

References

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- Star, Susan Leigh, and James R. Griesemer. 1989. "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39." *Social Studies of Science* 19(3):387–420.

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