When Ryan Coogler’s film *Black Panther* hit cinema screens in 2018, many in Africa and in the African diaspora celebrated its fantastical but affirming portrayal of Africa and its peoples. From the Americas to Europe, Angola to Zimbabwe, Accra to Zanzibar, movie patrons turned screenings of the movie into Afrocentrist parties reveling in African and black achievement. Set in the fictional country of Wakanda—typically poor on the surface but stupendously rich underground—the highly acclaimed film chronicles Wakanda’s attempt to keep its unique mineral resources from the grubby hands of would-be colonizers and exploiters. However, as Cajetan Iheka points out in his powerful new book, despite *Black Panther*’s pan-African sensibilities and its successful challenge to stereotypes about Africa, the film relies on the “illusion of infinite resources and reinstates the continent as a site of conflict fueled by resource control” (p. 2). That is, *Black Panther* presents itself as an Afropfuturist work when its fictional setting resembles in fact contemporary Africa. As Iheka says in his searing indictment of the film, “The future promised by the film is not only implicated in the Africa-in-crisis trope; it also relies on an infinite supply of vibranium,” the mineral to which Wakanda has exclusive access and on which its wealth rests. That, Iheka reminds us, is simply “not in keeping with the realities of our finite planet” (p. 2). What, Iheka asks, would it take for us to “begin the work of imagining eco-conscious futures that sidestep the repetition of the problematic present in *Black Panther*” (p. 3)? What would it take for us to imagine a positive future for Africa? *African Ecomedia* seeks to answer these questions.

The book explores the residue, what Iheka calls the “ecological footprint,” of technology as well as the media representation of environmental crises in Africa. In Iheka’s own words, the book is about the “ecology of images and images of ecology” regarding Africa (pp. 2-3). Iheka challenges depictions of Africa as marginal to media technologies by demonstrating the continent’s “centrality to the making, use, and disposal of media devices while highlighting important insights on the planetary crisis inscribed in African cultural artifacts... including film and photography” (p. 3). Bringing his acute literary skills to bear on his research material, Iheka looks at how artists, filmmakers, photographers, and theorists deal with the ecological degradation caused in part by the dumping of technological waste in Africa. In a novel move, *African Ecomedia* helps the reader see the connection between oil, cobalt, and uranium extraction,
on the one hand, and obsolete technologies, such as discarded computers and cellphones, on the other. As the book illustrates, oil extraction and cobalt mining are not discrete activities. They are connected. Iheka takes us, through some of the photographers he studies, to the literal dumping sites of technological waste in Africa to show how that connection works. More importantly, he shows how the “adverse ecological consequences of media do not cease with their production” (p. 4). This, on its own, is a welcome reorientation of studies that seem content to do nothing more than remind us of the cobalt in our smartphones. Iheka alerts us to what happens when those phones become obsolete and are turned into waste products. As he explains, “media, broadly conceived, make possible communication and sustenance, but they are equally tethered to social and ecological degradation in Africa from their production, distribution, consumption, and disposal” (p. 5).

Part of what makes _African Ecomedia_ truly ambitious is that the book brings together a range of often siloed fields, from African studies, environmental humanities, and energy humanities, to literary studies and media studies. Iheka makes the case for why Africa needs to be seen as more than a place of environmental crisis. To advance his argument, he puts forth the notion of “imperfect media” (p. 10). As he explains the term, “imperfect media” treats Africa as a vantage point from which to see the complex ways the continent’s artists provide examples of “infinite resourcefulness crucial for making media in a time of finite resources” (p. 22). Rather than display Africa as nothing more than a wasteland, Iheka draws from the continent examples of what it might be like to live ethically. He writes: “African ecomedia, including film and photography, deliver the world to us, allow us to visualize the impacts of ecological degradation, and urge us to reorient our cultural habits to address the problem of climate change” (p. 221). With imperfect media, Iheka describes media objects that point to a future at peace with finitude and in keeping with a world living ethically within its means. These objects are imperfect because they are what many consider waste; they are discards. By repurposing these artifacts, by pulling them back into circulation and not dumping them in hazardous sites around Africa, African artists are showing the world that it is possible to do more with less; they are showing the world that enough is enough. We don’t always need more. That message makes this a hopeful book.
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