

## Preface

The metaphor of commercial cultural exchange that informs this book is travel. I propose thinking of exchanges of television, film, music, and other forms of popular culture through the heuristic metaphor of travel because of the connotations of change, power, effort, and uncertainty that the word bears. To travel is to make a conscious choice to leave one's familiar, everyday surroundings and, in some manner, be changed. Through travel, no matter how touristic, one agglomerates the traces of the people and places that one encounters. Travel is reserved for the privileged of the world, or at minimum, for those of moderate privilege who have the disposable income and time to plan and execute a trip. We have other words to describe the temporary or permanent relocations of the oppressed—exile, immigration, guest worker programs, the Middle Passage.

The word “travel” shares a root with “travail” and continues to bear the traces of the struggles and uncertainties associated with that term. For me, this makes travel a more accurate way of describing the dangers, miscommunications—even surprises—that attend African American television as it journeys the world than other contemporary ways of characterizing global television: flows, circulation, exchange, trade, export.

When cultural products such as television travel abroad, they likewise exhibit the changes, privileges, efforts, and uncertainties that mark human travel. When non-U.S. broadcasters air imported African American television programs, their actions and perceptions can alter the way those programs are thought of domestically, as well as the ways African Americans are portrayed. Cultures, like people, agglomerate the traces of their travels—something that the metaphor of travel foregrounds much more directly than other metaphors. Moreover, not all forms of culture “flow” or “circulate” equally; instead, it is the cultures of the privileged or moderately privileged that travel most frequently and widely. This is even the case for Nigerian videofilms, which enjoy wide distribution across Africa, the Black Atlantic, and beyond, and which address the abjection of life lived at the periphery of modern capitalism. Still, Nollywood is among the more privileged of the underprivileged media industries in the Global South, capable of exploiting a range of domestic and foreign markets to generate revenues.

Cultural travel, like human travel, is both exciting and dangerous. What happens, both culturally and politically, when, say, viewers abroad watch *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Chappelle's Show*, or even *The Cosby Show*? Chance encounters and unexpected affinities lie around every corner, as do devious hucksters, strange customs, and simple, utter confusion. Indeed, in my opinion, these excitements and dangers are precisely what make the study of cultural globalization so compelling. I hope that this volume helps spark, renew, or enlarge a similar commitment in some of its readers.