Milosz Miszczynski and Adriana Helbig, eds.  

The glocalization of popular culture in post-socialist societies has led to predictable adaptations and surprising innovations, as the essays in *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* richly illustrate. The volume makes a significant contribution to the study of hip-hop’s transnational reach, at the same time that it documents and investigates the distinct forms that rap has taken in central and eastern Europe. Comprised of an eight-page introduction and sixteen essays, which together investigate rap culture across a broad geographic swath from Albania to Siberia, *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* represents an equally broad variety of disciplines, including ethnomusicology, political science, sociology, and ethnography. Edited by Milosz Miszczynski and Adriana Helbig, this diverse collection of essays demonstrates not only the connection of central- and east-European hip hop to the genre’s African-American roots, but also the novel forms of personal and political expression that rap has introduced into post-socialist societies.

Several overarching concerns unite the essays in *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* above and beyond the thematic sections into which the volume is divided. First, most essays begin with a brief history of hip hop in the region they treat, providing key dates, names, and concepts for the local rap culture under discussion. When taken with the references, discographies, and filmographies at the end of each chapter, this historical material provides a valuable point of entry for those unfamiliar with a given region or culture. Second, many essays explicitly address the thorny issue of rap’s authenticity in post-socialist space by considering what happens when a genre that emerged as a means of political expression for marginalized African Americans travels to parts of the world where the African diaspora is by and large absent. While some authors explore the ways in which ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma and Sakha) have adapted hip hop to express their own experience of marginalization, others articulate the political stakes of white, eastern-European men adopting a musical genre and lifestyle originally associated with African American masculinity. Third and most importantly, all of the contributions to *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* demonstrate the inherently political nature of the genre, as well as the diversity of political expression it has fostered in post-socialist space. Unsurprisingly, some contributions, for example, Veronika Zvánovcová and Tomas Mrhalek’s ethnographic study of Romany rap in the Czech Republic, argue that marginalized groups continue to use rap as a means of self-expression and protest. However, other essays, including Triin Vallaste’s study of Estonia rap and Anna
Oravcová’s discussion of mainstream Czech rap, find that the genre’s political power lies in its ability to represent largely white, middle-class, male interests and to resist overt forms of political expression.

Several contributions to *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* stand out due to their in-depth analysis and compelling arguments, which unite the volume’s three overarching concerns. For example, Goran Musić and Predrag Vukčević’s essay surveys the evolution of hip hop in Serbia from the 1980s to the present day. The authors then use this overview as a point of departure for analyzing the hybridization of rap’s global idiom with Serbia’s local *dizel* culture. Similarly, Peter Barrer’s overview of Slovak hip hop sets the stage for examining its commercialization in recent years. Focusing on the popular rapper Rytmus, Barrer demonstrates how commercial concerns have replaced political protest in mainstream Slovak rap, which is now dominated by scenarios of conspicuous consumption and extravagant masculinity. Also, in a chapter devoted to Albanian hip hop, Nicholas Tochka convincingly argues that Albanian performers mimic gangsta rap *without* incorporating local elements in order to signal their membership in a larger European and global community. Of particular interest is Tochka’s discussion of parodic Albanian rap, which mocks the country’s “rur-banity” in an attempt to cast off Albania’s perceived backwardness. In addition to synthesizing the volume’s concerns, these three essays provide a sense of the wide variety of material and scholarly approaches represented in Miszczynski and Helbig’s volume.

Although *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* covers an ambitious portion of central and eastern Europe, readers should be aware that several countries do not appear in the volume. Ukrainian hip hop, which Helbig treated at length in her 2014 monograph *Hip Hop Ukraine: Music, Race, and African Migration* (Indiana University Press), does not receive treatment, nor does rap from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Moldova, Latvia, Lithuania, or Georgia. Beyond this understandable geographic limitation, the book’s articles discuss only some aspects of hip hop’s culture of performance and performativity due to their brevity. More specifically, many contributions focus on the lyrics of popular rap songs without considering either their musical performance or reception by fans. As a result, the sonic texture and embodied affect of hip hop seem oddly absent from much of *Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge*. Considering the profoundly performative nature of hip hop as both music and culture would deepen the analysis of several essays in the volume, as would forging links between chapters that discuss the same national culture and comparable cultural trends.

*Hip Hop at Europe’s Edge* would also benefit from a lengthier introduction capable of explaining the editorial decisions that resulted in the volume’s selective approach to both geographic coverage and musical performativity.