

LESSONS FROM NEW NOLLYWOOD: A THEORY FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH
 SECOND DRAFT: SEPTEMBER 2013: Shmerah Passchier

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This essay is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at The University of The Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other institution or university.

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LESSONS FROM NEW NOLLYWOOD: A THEORY FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

A Visual Anthropology Research Report by Shmerah Passchier

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ABSTRACT

New Nollywood is eclipsing old Nollywood as first wave films are supplanted by second wave films characterized by improved narrative complexity and aesthetic nuance reflected in advanced overall production values. Nollywood is showing signs of far reaching impact as the films mature significantly after two decades of production. The explosion of Nollywood films consumed across Africa and exported to the diaspora as packaged popular culture from Anglophone Africa has accelerated a major turning point in the history of Nollywood as this mode of filmmaking is now considered a transnational practice. Nollywood films are mimetically reproduced in the pan-African context as well as globally. This explosion of popular cinema has been facilitated by digital innovation. As filmmaking technology evolves to be more cost-effective and user-friendly, it erases the barrier to entry for new filmmakers. Likewise, as the digital revolution transmogrifies filmmaking, 'Global North' cinema cultures of celluloid and the silver screen are in decline (*Economist* 2013). But even as the old film model is atrophying, democratization of filmmaking technology means that anyone with imagination, aptitude and meagre resources can now make a feature film. No one understands this better than Nigerians who release up to 50 new films each week, more than Bollywood (15 films/week) and Hollywood (10 films/week) (*Economist* 2006, UNESCO 2009). Nollywood filmmakers have harnessed the tools of the digital revolution to redefine the terms of popular culture production, consumption and distribution. Nollywood films are not only inexpensive to make but also offer good returns on a minimal investment – lessons of enormous significance for filmmakers elsewhere in the 'Global South', especially in an era where media convergence and global competition implies a trend towards consumers expecting online entertainment to be 'Free' (Anderson 2009: 137).

In this research the filmmakers themselves and their revisionist practices are the voices of vernacular theory in constructing *Lessons from New Nollywood: A Theory*

from the Global South. In the constantly changing landscape of the digital revolution, theory tries to stay abreast of ubiquitous transformation and thus theory: 'will be understood here as any attempt to make meaningful generalizations for interpreting or evaluating local experiences and practices (Jenkins 1999: 234).' Jenkins intertwines theory and practice as co-dependent concepts that are inextricable. In digital filmmaking as in the domain of digital media, practice precedes theory and theory hypothesises practice.



Figure 1: Nollywood DVD/VCD entrepreneur in Shasha Egbeda, Lagos (2013). Femi is 18 years old. He owns his own DVD and VCD stall in the open air street side market. Next to his shop on either side are vegetable vendors. Nollywood movies can be bought every wher on the streets of Lagos. DVDs and VCDs are ubiquitous household supplies as important to the average shopping list as tomatoes and cooking oil.

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEMATIC QUESTION

Allegedly, 'Nollywood is the most visible form of cultural machine on the African continent (Krings & Okome 2013: 1).' Nollywood in Africa usurps descriptions such as: 'the ancient world', 'the primitive world', 'the third world', 'the developing world', and now the 'global south' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 1). New Nollywood mirrors the ideas theorised by the Comaroffs in, *Theory from The South*, which postulates a central premise – what if the global south holds the key to privileged understanding of the world at large? By appropriating this concept, we can theorise by extension that Nollywood has advanced to the point where global north culture may be slipping into decline, allowing Africa and the global south to add a cinematic voice to the complex digital domain where theory and practice are interchangeable, fuelled by multiplicity, hybridity and fluidity (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 7)? Thus, at the core of this research is the question: Although the reception of Nollywood in the global domain has been enthusiastic, why is it still denied canonization as African popular cinema by local film theorists?

Connecting interdisciplinary modes of Nollywood theory production from the divergent realms of cultural studies and film studies is a challenge as these two modes of thinking are divergent on the subject of Nollywood. The discourse on Nollywood in the field of anthropology is 'euphoric and celebratory' and is the proposed here as the 'thesis' (Krings & Okome 2013: 15). Current theorists in film studies provide a useful 'antithesis' at this juncture in the evolution of Nollywood, now reaching 21 years of production. Film theorists are calling for anthropologists to interrogate Nollywood and move beyond the 'celebration' and 'euphoria' of its entrepreneurial success and call for a politicised method of filmmaking in the vein of Third Cinema, which is associated with cinema culture in the developing world, and still focuses on post-colonial liberation themes. In addition, this research attempts to bridge these two divergent schools of thought by introducing a 'synthesis', namely the voice of film practitioners as 'vernacular theorists' who are proponents of an on-going digital revolution in filmmaking. Most of these 'vernacular theorists' are associated with New Nollywood, a movement that is eclipsing Old Nollywood.

As Nollywood grows in popularity and is now widely regarded at a transnational film form amongst scholars, filmmakers, and fans, some film theorists persistently

question its legitimacy. This point of view persists notwithstanding anthropologist John McCall referring to Nollywood as de facto 'pan-Africanism', as seen in the movements growing influence across the African continent (McCall 2007: 92). The dissemination of Nollywood via DStv satellite, the internet and piracy has seen this mode of film production stimulate unprecedented progress in global south film industries including copycat film industries in countries like: Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and South Africa (Krings & Okome 2013: 1). Although one school of thought heralds Nollywood as African popular cinema expressing various 'modes of modernity'; the 'other' school refuses it rightful place in the theoretical canon of African cinema (Krings & Okome 2013: 12).

Film theorists Jyoti Mistry and Jordache Ellapen construct an argument which is central to the problem to be analysed here. In their essay titled *Nollywood's Transportability: The Politics and Economics of Video Films as Cultural Products*, the nexus of contrasting schools of thought in African cinema is juxtaposed in summary:

There is an implicit tension between the politically progressive definitions of African cinema (derived from an alliance with Third Cinema) juxtaposed with the popular form of Nollywood films that may suggest an ideologically regressive politics (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 48).

Mistry and Ellapen acknowledge the importance of Nollywood films as cultural product in the discipline of anthropology but refuse Nollywood similar recognition in film studies and even go so far as to question Nollywood film the right to be canonised as African cinema. Mistry and Ellapen prescribe Third Cinema as the only mode of cinema production relevant to filmmaking on the African continent. Mistry and Ellapen cite Mbye Cham (1982) affirming that Third Cinema's primary objective is still to 'decolonize the mind' (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 58). This theory is problematic in that Nigeria achieved independence in 1960. Insisting that the primary function of cinema should be to 'decolonize the mind' seems patronising for Nigerian filmmakers making films 53 years post-independence. By contrast, Nollywood discourse Vnegotiates provocative terrain in that while enthusiasts celebrate the triumph of pan African identity expressed in these films, critics are concerned *inter alia* with representations of witchcraft and gendered stereotypes of women which allegedly show contemporary Africa as backward. These criticisms however, grow weary as

women are welcomed into the spotlight in New Nollywood productions, playing central roles both in front of and behind the cameras (Krings & Okome 2013: 15).

Although New Nollywood has produced many award-winning films with prodigious advances in narrative and aesthetic representation, critics like Mistry and Ellapen use early Nollywood films to frame their arguments regarding Nollywood's alleged failure to reverse the Western hegemonic gaze. My analysis of New Nollywood production practice and the resulting theoretical observations will hopefully help to generate a synthesis of interdisciplinary discourse towards theory from the south. Third Cinema cannot but view Nollywood as backward. Nollywood responds that Third Cinema is counterintuitive and retrogressive, adhering to archaic notions of imagined political revolution as rather than embracing the progressive and tangible digital revolution currently underway in contemporary filmmaking. New Nollywood poses a problem to proponents of Third Cinema in the current climate of digital filmmaking and the inevitability of online media convergence as Jenkins puts it:

A fundamental technophobia runs through not only traditional humanism but the theories and critical practices of the old Left. Technology is understood as inhuman or anti-human, as destroying more organic pre-technological cultures. Technology is viewed as the instrumentation of surveillance, power, and social control, rather than as a toolkit for social and political transformation (Jenkins 1999: 241/242).

Advocates of Third Cinema erroneously maintain that Nollywood proliferates on the basis of 'technological paternalism,' suggesting that colonizers control the means of production (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 49).



Figure 2: Pictured above: Nollywood DVDs for sale on the streets of Lagos is visible evidence of Nigerian entrepreneurship. Filmmaking is not merely production of culture or aesthetic contemplation of the socio-political. It is critical to acknowledge this industry as a major economic force on the African continent. Anthropologist John McCall rightly turns our attention away from Nollywood film as cultural discourse but insists we see the films also as valuable products of labour and exchange (McCall 2012: 10).

This completely misunderstands Nollywood filmmakers and their enormous efforts in adapting the use of digital tools to create a highly productive and innovative industry. New Nollywood makes a compelling case that the business of digital filmmaking, prodigy of the digital revolution, is harnessing technology to produce social and political change. That change is the creation of the second largest film industry on earth and has led to significant economic empowerment for scores of thousands of Nigerian entrepreneurs. Filmmakers did not set out with a political agenda in mind when they founded Nollywood in 1992. Their motive was to communicate in the language of video by generating popular culture narratives that would entertain millions of their countrymen and unite them in a shared encounter with modern African identity.

In this regard, Nollywood has inspired the rest of the African continent's film and television industries. Okome and Krings describe the impact of transnational Nollywood's 'cultural models of narrativization':

In Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa, for example, Nollywood has served as a model of film production and inspired the growth of local film industries, which in the case of Tanzania have already begun capturing a regional market (Okome & Krings 2013:1)

There is a growing body of evidence revealing that Nollywood is permeating through the borders of Nigeria and satiating a common desire for pan-African unity through the popular culture medium of films that express 'Afromodernity', as coined by Comaroff and Comaroff (2004). This is substantiated by the proliferation of Nollywood inspired vernacular derivatives like Riverwood in Kenya, Ugawood in Uganda, Bongowood in Tanzania and Mzansiwood in South Africa (Krings & Okome 2013: 11). Jonathan Haynes (2005) verifies the pan-African popularity of Nollywood films on the African continent and in the diaspora worldwide:

The export of Nigerian films has been remarkable, even if most of the profits do not end up in the right hands. They are on television in Namibia and on sale on the streets in Kenya. In Congo, they are broadcast with the soundtrack turned down while an interpreter tells the story in Lingala or other languages. In New York, their biggest consumers are now immigrants from the Caribbean and African Americans. Chinese people are buying them too. In Holland, Nollywood stars are recognized on the streets of Suriname, and in London they are hailed by Jamaicans (Haynes 2007: 106).

The global experience of 'Afro-modernity' as showcased in Nollywood films is further reflected in John McCall's essay, *The Pan-Africanism We Have*, which highlights how African intellectuals have yearned to establish a shared identity that expresses the aspirations of those who live in post-independence, post-colonial Africa. McCall underlines how cinema in particular has the ability, more so than any other art form, to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries and open up discourse across Africa:

African philosophers, political visionaries and artists have devoted political doctrines and movements to various conceptualizations of pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism and Negritude. The poets of Negritude sought a deep and distinctively African rhythm that would resonate in the hearts of people from Dakar to Nairobi, providing the backbeat for a cultural poetics that could ring as true in a Congo village as on the streets of Johannesburg (McCall 2007: 92).

Despite Nollywood's accomplishments, in this regard, Nollywood films still provoke extreme critique from theorists and intellectuals who object to repulsive subject matter such as: voodoo, witchcraft, objectification of women, money worship cults and homophobic content. While these criticisms are true for first wave Nollywood films, they are less true of New Nollywood films. By analysing the filmmakers' production practice from script to screen including: writing, directing, producing, shooting and editing, we learn that New Nollywood filmmakers are responding and adapting vociferously to the tide of criticism. New Nollywood films remain controversial in that they still invoke African cosmology and Magical Realism to express themes of witchcraft. However, these new films are more thoughtfully structured and elegantly made. New Nollywood films such as *The Figurine* (Afolayan 2009) and *Ije* (Anyanwa 2012) have made massive progress in narrative and aesthetic trends. There are many lessons to be learned from analysing these breakthrough films. Film theorists can no longer pan Nollywood for not achieving production values as New Nollywood films are beginning to satisfy demand for connoisseurship and artistic expression emphasised by advocates of Third Cinema (Mistry & Ellapen 2013:63).

New Nollywood films signal a coming of age reflecting lessons learned in two decades of output. Filmmakers everywhere have much to learn from New Nollywood and should allow this enormously successful mode of popular culture production to permeate film discourse in theory and practice. In *Theory from the South*, the

Comaroffs hypothesise an inverted vantage point that is ripe for appropriation as New Nollywood becomes a vanguard of future global film theory:

What if we subvert the epistemic scaffolding on which western enlightenment thought is erected? What if we posit that, in the present moment, it is the global south that affords privileged insight into the workings of the world at large (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 1)?

New Nollywood is the embodiment of theory from the south and seems to have positioned itself as a forward thinking model of cultural production as filmmakers leverage the digital revolution in service of entrepreneurial activity and cultural development by making films which embody artistic expression and identity formation and yet remain enormously popular.

Film theorist O'Regan points out the dichotomy of north/south cultural exchange and why it is important for New Nollywood to lay claim to embodying theory from the south:

Studies of the flow of cinema have quantified this cultural exchange, indicating the largely one-way cultural flows from the richer to the poorer, from the developed to the underdeveloped, from the North to the South (O'Regan 1999: 268).

By canonizing New Nollywood films and opening up new chapters in African Cinema and film theory to incorporate the hybridity and fluidity of New Nollywood, the unequal character of global cultural-exchange dynamics can be reversed. By reversing these dynamics, agency and authorship are restored to the filmmakers of the global south, creators of the second largest film industry on earth. Canonization is owed to the filmmakers as New Nollywood films deliver a new level of aesthetic, now recognised by the winning of awards, which represents a new standard of creative expression and production excellence.

New Nollywood films demand recognition for their success in harnessing new systems of technology in the service of constantly striving for improving the standards of image-making, distribution and exhibition.

New Nollywood is reversing the historic flow of entertainment product. Historically Africa has been a passive market for international films.



Figure 3: The Classy Nollywood DVD shop in Shasha, Lagos is an example of the 'informal economy' at work. In *The Capital Gap*, McCall suggests that we acknowledge the difference between 'the formalized mechanisms of capitalism and the informal commerce that predominates in Africa and has been a crucial one for researchers concerned with understanding the economic lives of Africans' (McCall 2009: 11).

Now Nollywood is expanding into the global domain, establishing a new balance of power that fashions a more inclusive image of Africa while halting the dominant and predatory flow of film cultures from the north to the south and indeed reversing these flows.

The new standards of narrative and aesthetic excellence set by New Nollywood films call for film and cultural studies to reconcile their theoretical differences. Proponents of Third Cinema have extolled the ability of film to resist the *'power dynamics of the international cinema prescribing a cinema of research and experimentation, equidistant from both mainstream and auteurist cinema'* (O'Regan 1999: 279).

Popular discourse on Nollywood from an interdisciplinary point of view held widely by scholars on the subject would welcome a shift to more flexibility on the part of film theorists, which would allow greater cultural exchange in the on-going north/south binary of cultural production. If the gate keepers of film theory allow New Nollywood the agency it deserves, we can begin to anticipate a *'contemporary reflection on the order of things approached from a primarily African vantage, one that is full of counter-intuitive surprises that invite us to see familiar things in different ways'* (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 2).

Euromodernist narratives of the past two centuries – which has the south tracking behind the curve of Universal History, always in deficit, always playing catch up – there is good reason to think the opposite: that given the unpredictable, under-determined dialectic of capitalism-and-modernity in the here and now, it is the south in which radically new assemblages of capital and labour are taking shape, thus to pre-figure the global north (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 12).

This theory is as provocative as Nollywood itself calling for *'epistemic reflex'* and the need to embrace an inverted world view of Africa where we start to see *'old margins becoming new frontiers'* and *'the global north becoming more like the south'* (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 13). This could be achieved in far less abstract terms by conflating (film) theory and (New Nollywood) practice, thereby reducing the critical distance between film and culture studies as articulated by Jenkins:

The fusion between theory and practice shapes not only the content of media theory but also the forms theory takes and the contexts within which it circulates (Jenkins 1999: 240).

Filmmakers themselves often shy away from the unintelligible ‘gobbledygook’ that posits itself as film theory, according to ethnographic filmmakers Barbash and Taylor. Film practitioners often cite the phrase: *‘Film needs theory like it needs a scratch on the negative’* which deftly captures resentment to the over analysis from academia. Jenkins however, finds solace in film theory and goes on to illustrate how theory is useful in the context of the rapidly changing landscape of digital filmmaking:

For many, theorizing restores predictability and stability to a world rocked by radical change, while for others, theory fuels change, directing the energies unleashed by the digital revolution toward altering the nature of political life or personal identity. Our fantasies and fears about change shape our theories (including supposedly disinterested academic theories) as much as our theories help master those fears and fulfil those fantasies (Jenkins 1999: 237).

The world was rocked in January 2012 when 100 years after the birth of Hollywood, Kodak worldwide declared bankruptcy. Celluloid now has to be imported from and processed in Europe at exorbitant rates in order to shoot a ‘film’ in Africa. Film cameras are now virtually obsolete. Celluloid productions are being scrapped from film studies curricula across the globe. Celluloid’s decline has been mirrored by the rise of digital in the nineties. Digital filmmaking became the new voice of the medium (and the message) as in the Danish Dogme 95 movement, which inspired imitators all over the world to take the digital vow of chastity -- essentially a rejection of indulgent Hollywood style in favour of a leaner European aesthetic, which produced films like *Festen* (1998) or Mike Figgis’s *Timecode* (2000), another important leap forward in the evolution of analogue to digital filmmaking. The leap from film to video was not without trauma as film theorists reeled from the decline of celluloid (film), the very substance upon which the validity of their discipline was based.

Marshall McLuhan’s magical turn of phrase: ‘The movie, by which we roll up the real world on a spool in order to unroll it as a magic carpet of fantasy, is a spectacular wedding of the old mechanical technology and the new electric world’ had become obsolete (McLuhan 1964: 249). Film theorist literally had the magic carpet ripped out from underneath them as Rodowick explains in a deftly titled paper, *Dr. Strange Media, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Film Theory* (2008) on converging media and the role of film studies therein. According to Rodowick, the

changes taking place in this field caused great anxiety. As film studies unfolded in the twentieth century, technology, culture and economics changed over a period of a lifetime. This was already extremely fast compared to changes that took place in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries. Rodowick agonizes about the future of film:

Now at the edge of the twenty-first century, these same changes are taking place in less than a generation. The rapid emergence of new media as an industry and perhaps as an art raises a more perilous question for cinema studies. The twentieth century was unquestionably the century of cinema, but is cinema's time now over? And if so, what is to become of its barely matured field, cinema studies? (Rodowick 2008: 375).

Rodowick laments the demise of political modernism which was mostly concerned with representation, ideology and subjectivity, and which has since evolved into the direction of cultural studies like anthropology and sociology. He admits that film theory has 'fallen on hard times' and that film studies and film theory are now mutually exclusive:

This is a hard pill to swallow for the pre-video cinephile generation...the disappearance of 'film' as a clearly defined aesthetic object anchoring our young discipline is the cause of some anxiety (Rodowick 2008: 375).

The summer of 1999, also known as the summer of 'digital paranoia', saw the release of three major neo-noir science fiction films: *The Matrix* (Wachowski 1999); *Dark City* (Proyas 1998) and *eXistenZ* (Cronenberg 1999). In all these films, the 'solid, messy analogue world' of celluloid had been replaced by digital simulation (Rodowick 2008: 37). Thirteen years on, a Disney press release revealed that paranoia had grown even deeper and with reason:

Hollywood executives have long been paranoid and insecure. Now they have cause to be. "The business model within film is broken," says Amir Malin of Qualia Capital, a private-equity firm. Between 2007 and 2011, pre-tax profits of the five studios controlled by large media conglomerates (Disney, Universal, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox and Warner Bros) fell by around 40% (Economist 2013).

By 2020, the traditional Hollywood studios' share in the global feature film market will have dropped by 95% as the new media invasion takes over. South Africa's mainstream filmmakers are faring somewhat better. Their market share is up by 28% with 23 films made in 2010 (NFVF 2011 Annual Report). But these films are

expensive (the average budget is R6 million) and subsidised moreover by the government-financed National Film and Video foundation, which pumped R24, 4 into local films in 2010 (NFVF 2011 Annual Report). One thing is for certain, both American and South African film industries have a long way to go before they catch up with Nigeria, which produces up to 125 films each month with no government funding at all. This is particularly enterprising considering that 65% of the population survive on less than \$1 a day (*Africa Survey 2012: 750*). The question is how can filmmakers in the rest of Africa and the global south learn from the Nigerian success story? This research will attempt to provide answers pointing to New Nollywood as an embodiment of digital filmmaking on the African continent: a nexus of film, culture and technology.



Figure 4: Nollywood movies for sale at Mobil fuel station and Mr Biggs fast food restaurant in Maryland, Lagos (2013). The sale and purchase of Nollywood DVDs and CVDs in Lagos is synonymous with topping up fuel in your vehicle or stopping for a fast food meal. The films on display by the salesman pictured above are comedies starring Aku and Paw-Paw. Aku and Paw Paw are dwarves who are often cast as gangster children because they appear to be 10 years old when in fact they are both in their early forties. In the VCD film pictured above, they are dressed in drag in a production titled, Sisters. The Sisters have magical powers to disappear and to stop bullets.



Figure 5: Produced in Lagos, Nollywood films are shot and distributed via informal street markets and shops across the country. Lagos is the nexus of Nollywood as it is the economic capital of Nigeria (Ajibade 2007: 2). To ignore the fiscal dimension in film production is to ignore economic empowerment in the audio visual arts. Until now the commercial dimension of the Nollywood phenomenon has largely been glossed over (McCall 2012: 10).

CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF HISTORY OF NOLLYWOOD AND THE EVOLUTION OF THIS NARRATIVE FORM

Famed Nigerian pop star Fela Kuti referred to the tragicomic disposition of contemporary Nigerians as 'suffering and smiling'. Few countries have endured as much conflict and bloodshed, beginning in 1895, when British naval forces laid siege to the Niger Delta with a view to siezing control of the lucrative palm oil trade, used to grease the cogs of the industrial revolution in Europe. The Biafran War followed seventy years later, claiming one million lives. In 1995 tensions in the Niger Delta culminated in global outcry at the execution of ecowarrior Ken Saro-Wiwa (Appiah & Gates 1999: 1436; Okonto & Douglas 116). From 19th century palm oil trade and conflict to 20th century crude oil trade and conflict, oil has been the boon and bane of Nigeria for centuries. Barrot describes the dichotomy of crude oil and the impact of its attendant patterns of violence and conflict on the Nigerian imagination as witnessed in the films of Nollywood:

Oil – the poison chalice has created obscene amounts of wealth while leaving the majority of people more poverty stricken than in the 1960s; an explosive cocktail of more than 250 ethnic groups; a propensity for religious fanaticism which spares neither Christians nor Muslims; a level of corruption rarely achieved elsewhere; a succession of dictatorships among which that of Sani Abacha (1994-1998) exceeded all previous records of excess and cruelty (Barrot 2007: 19).

Barrot argues that high levels of fear and violence have contributed to extraordinary output in the Nollywood industry because it is a 'powerful stimulant to scriptwriters' imagination' (Barrot 2007: 19).

Before the analogic term Nollywood was widely used, there were two modes of film production in Nigeria. The first was auteur celluloid production, designed to tackle the task of 'decolonising the mind' according to theorist Mistry and Ellapen (citing Mbye Cham). This mode of filmmaking failed to create a National Cinema because 'neocolonial economics made it impossible to get indigenous films into the distribution system, which were controlled by foreign monopolies' (Haynes 1994: 6). Secondly, Yoruba films which began in the 1970s and evolved from Yoruba travelling theatre, which succeeded because the 'The Travelling Theatre companies are outside the distribution system which serves Nigeria's theatres; they have succeeded because they have their own system (Haynes 1994: 6)'.



Figure 6: African economist Moeletsi Mbeki says, 'The number of Nigerians living below the poverty line increased from 19 million in 1970 to 90 million in 2000' (Mbeki 2009: 21). Mbeki asserts the malevolent role played by oil in the collapse and decay of nation states. The motivation to make the state function deteriorates as outlined in this implicating scenario: 'The most graphic illustration of the iron law of African underdevelopment is the role played by the oil industry in oil rich countries such as Nigeria, Libya, Algeria and Angola...When this happens there is no need for the elite and the state it controls to invest in the mass education, healthcare, housing and transportation infrastructure that the population at large needs. The result is that the countries lapse into decay (Mbeki 2009: 22).'

The Yoruba popular traveling theatre groups date back to the fall of the Oyo Empire in the 1830s and deploy indigenous methods of storytelling which combine mythology, ritual, narrative and performance (Falola & Heaton 2008: 74).

Yoruba theatre is a powerful confluence of masquerade, ancestral worship, mime, satire and acrobatics which draws on the metaphysical life lessons reflected in the tragedies and triumphs of the Yoruba deity, Ogun. Wole Soyinka, a Yoruba playwright in addition to being Africa's most celebrated author, argues in *The Fourth Stage* (1973) that Ogun possesses the combined qualities of the ancient Athenian gods; Dionysus (decadence), Apollo (order) and Prometheus (chaos). Soyinka describes Ogun as the 'God of creativity, guardian of the road, god of metallic lore and artistry, explorer, hunter, god of war and Custodian of the sacred oath (Soyinka 1976: 140)'. In the 1970s Yoruba theatre productions were filmed, videotaped or broadcast live by the Nigerian Television Association. They continued to privilege the supernatural by exploring subject matter considered taboo or 'backward' under the modernizing forces of both colonial and early post-colonial elites, thereby ushering a return to 'traditional' representations in film. Supernatural narratives depicted witchcraft and sorcery in vivid detail, much to the chagrin of nationalist elites (Larkin 2008: 171). As stated, supernatural themes in Nollywood narratives are one of the key reasons for film theorists denying this film form canonisation as African popular cinema.

The first Yoruba traveling theatre foray into film was *Ajani Ogun*, directed by Ola Balogun in 1977. The protagonist is a hunter and symbolically resembles an incarnation of the Yoruba immortal, Ogun. Yoruba films, including *Ajani Ogun* were shot on exclusive 35mm celluloid in the seventies. 1977 was the pinnacle of post-independence and the rebirth of a nation (Apter 2005: 21). High on the oil boom and petrodollars lubricating the economy, Nigeria hosted the historic pan African gathering of black nations worldwide at the FESTAC (1977) cultural extravaganza (otherwise known as the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture) (Apter 2005: 82). Boom turned to bust when the oil price dropped in 1981, throwing Nigeria into recession (Falola & Heaton 2008: 203).



Figure 7: Nigeria now exports 2.4 million barrels of Bonny light crude oil a day worth around \$25 million on the open market (CIA factbook 2012). British Petroleum was nationalised in 1979 with Shell owning 20% and NNPC Nigeria's ruling elite owning 80% (Shell.com). Very little revenue however trickles down to the people who were once sustained by the bounty of the Niger Delta (Okonta & Douglas 2003: 80).

The unfavourable exchange rate coupled with the high price of imported celluloid put an end to celluloid films in Nigeria. Later, surviving Yoruba film entrepreneurs would switch to video and found Nollywood.

In 1986 Nigeria suffered social and economic contingency as a result of Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPs) introduced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Haynes 2007: 30; Okome 2007: 2; Barrot 2008: 72). The oil price crash and resulting recession coupled with IMF loan repayments fuelled another military coup this time by General Babangida in August 1985. Despite previous oil revenues filling government coffers the corruption of military law saw federalism end in IMF bail outs and a crippling SAPs implemented (Okonta & Douglas 2003: 25). Economist and Oxford Professor Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion* (2007) describes the onset of poverty as a result of the SAPs:

The swing from big oil and borrowing to little oil and repayments approximately halved Nigerian living standards... The reform-induced growth only helped slightly to offset the misery of falling living standards... Unsurprisingly, Nigerians think that the terrible increase in poverty they experienced was caused by the economic reforms that were so loudly trumpeted. Until reform, life was getting better; then along came reform, and poverty soared (Collier 2007: 41).

Film and television industries were hard hit resulting in many filmmakers losing their jobs and others immigrating to USA and UK. The Nigerian Television Association (NTA) could no longer afford to commission local soap operas and began to import inexpensive Latin American telenovelas (Barrot 2007: 74). Don Pedro Obaseki refers to Nollywood as a 'child of television' because it was out of this vacuum of culturally relevant narratives on air that Kenneth Nnebue made the first Nollywood film in 1992. Nnebue, an Ibo entrepreneur in electronic goods would finance the Yoruba travelling theatre productions and sell them on VHS tapes. By recording these productions on videotape, he learned how to make films even though the productions were shot on VHS and edited on two VCRs. This technology seems absurd now but Nnebue made history with these humble tools. He scoured soap operas for stars and narrative form, read newspapers for sensational tabloid journalism and listened to the radio and observed the substance of conversations of ordinary people (Haynes 2007:31). Nnebue was then able to take this magic formula and transform it into a cult classic titled, *Living in Bondage*, which is now accredited

as having started Nollywood in 1992. *Living in Bondage* sold 500 000 copies and spawned an industry now worth a staggering \$320 million annually, shipping 600 000 DVD units to African and the diaspora daily (Saro-Wiwa 2008: 17). Nnebue collaborated with Okechukwu Ogunjiofor and Chris Obi Rapu to make *Living in Bondage 1* and a sequel, *Living in Bondage 2*.

Although Nnebue is a speaker of Igbo, *Living in Bondage* was shot in the style of the videotaped Yoruba traveling theatre productions on domestic quality VHS tapes. Sadly, as a result, this great work of popular culture has deteriorated to the point where only fuzzy, warped and pixelated fragments of it can be found on Youtube. (This would never have been the case if *Living in Bondage* were shot on film.) This epic film is now largely lost to the archive of Nollywood history which is lamentable considering the subsequent rise of Nollywood 'with its prolific output, its spectacular popularity and its unprecedented ability to reach remote and non-elite audiences, is the most radical development to date in the history of African media (McCall 2007: 94).' Today, Nollywood actors are the highest paid professionals in Nigeria. Big blockbusters sell up to 200,000 copies in a single day, creating an industry that employs more than 200,000 people. The industry is said to be worth \$320 million annually (Barrot 2008:13). Okome sanctions the vast productivity of Nollywood:

From the standpoint of output, it is the largest film industry in the world, accounting for over 1000 feature films every year (Okome: 2007:8).

Brian Larkin links Nollywood's rise to the collapse of the state economy and the rise of the informal economy. Also relevant are religious and ethnic tensions spurred by the 'fast capitalism' associated with the early-1970s oil boom. Larkin points out that economic insecurities manifest themselves in Nollywood films as an 'aesthetics of outrage' (Larkin 2008: 183). This 'aesthetics of outrage' is a commentary on the kleptocracy which continues to plague Nigeria (Falola & Heaton 2008:181). The widely-cited witchcraft scenes in *Living in Bondage* show animal sacrifice rites performed by so-called money cults attempting to supernatural forces for economic advancement. *Living in Bondage* regards wealth accumulation by elites in the post colony as an essentially sinister process, linking it to Okome's view of a 'lottery economy' where the corruption and oil wealth are synonymous (Okome 2007: 9).

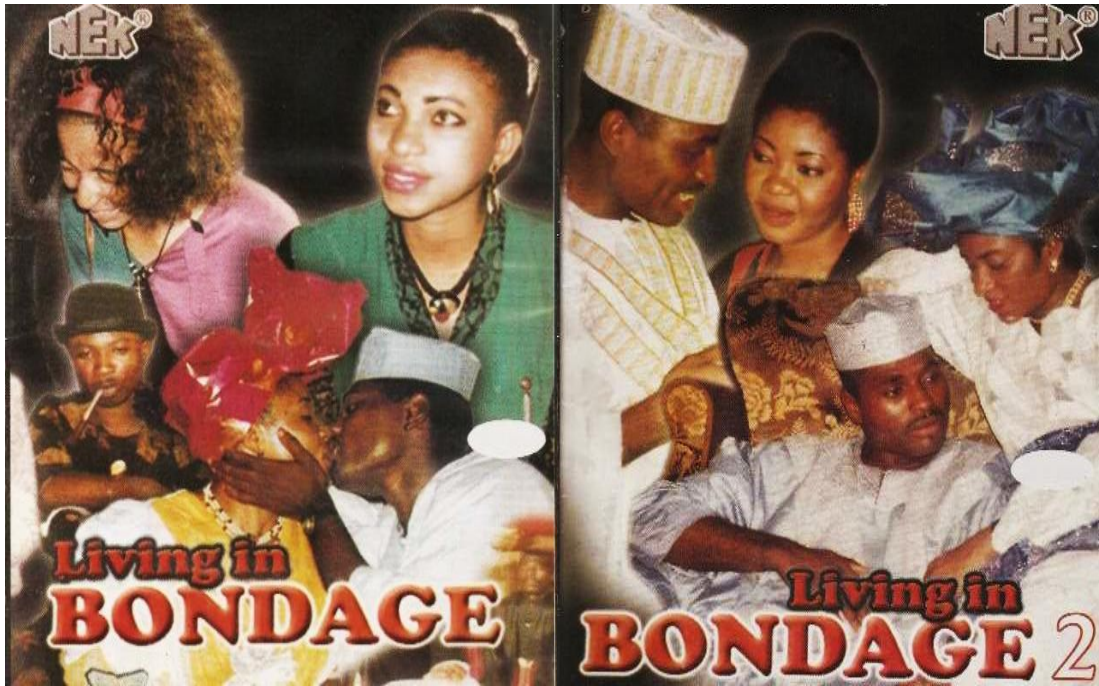


Figure 8: VHS art work for *Living in Bondage 1 & 2* (1992) Produced by Kenneth Nnebue. *Living in Bondage* sold 500 000 copies and by all accounts is considered to be the inception of Nollywood, which is now worth \$320 million annually shipping 600 000 DVD units to African and the diaspora daily (Saro-Wiwa 2008: 17).

The wealth generated by the oil industry in Nigeria continues to be spirited away leaving the majority poverty stricken while ruling elites exercise power through excess. Nollywood's 'aesthetics of outrage' are a socio-political commentary on a society where statecraft and witchcraft are conflated. The Biafran civil war of the 1960s was triggered by the Igbo community's desire to control a fair share of the oil wealth in its region. Today, the oil-rich Niger Delta continues to breed polarisation of extreme wealth and abject poverty, leading to human rights and environmental violations so extreme that the region is often characterized as 'a time bomb' (Collier 2007: 21).

Paradoxically, Nigeria's greatest source of wealth, crude oil, is also its downfall according to Collier who believes the Biafran civil war was a key factor in reversing development and creating a poverty trap (Collier 2007: 17). Even though Nigeria enjoys a petroleum-led economy that earns trillions for oligarchs in government, the 162.4 million Nigerian citizens see very little of this revenue in the form of infrastructure or service delivery (Census 2011). Overlapping military coups have also helped to trap Nigeria in a cycle where history keeps repeating itself as conflict leads to poverty and poverty leads to more conflict (Collier 2007: 37). Collier

condenses the economic, political and environmental catastrophe in the oil rich Niger Delta as follows:

One important incipient rebellion is taking place in the delta region of Nigeria, where the country's oil comes from. The delta region is the stuff of rebel legend because it combines four toxic ingredients: oil companies (greed), degradation of the environment (sacrilege), government military intervention (oppression), and a dead hero, the activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was hanged by the Nigerian government in 1995 (sanctity) (Collier 2007: 30).

Nollywood narratives reflect the conditions of a Mephistophelean existence characterised by frustration and desperation felt by the people towards a government devoid of ethical order (Okome 2007: 6). This narrative trend began with *Living in Bondage* (1992) and expanded into the 'Juju' genre movie, which remains Nollywood's favourite genre according to Zina Saro-Wiwa (2008: 22). Content acquisition executive Juniper Musa, who works for DStv's Africa Magic Channel in Lagos refers to the 'Juju' genre as a 'guilty pleasure'.

Civil War driven by political and financial motive to control the oil-rich NigerDelta region has impacted on the film industry. Jonathan Haynes describes Nollywood's crucial themes as reflections of a state that has failed its people: 'The corruption, moral turbulence and pervasive anxiety of the post-oil-boom era, the garish glamour of Lagos; titillating and dangerous sexuality, melodramatic domestic conflicts and imminent supernatural forces include both dark cultic practices and Pentecostal Christianity (Haynes 2007: 30).'

The films resonate with audiences because they portray a moral framework which explains the insecurities in a society full of corrupt politicians, con-men, 419 scammers and unfaithful lovers (Larkin 2008: 216). *Living in Bondage* set the tone for the emergence of an uncanny African cinematic genre. Brian Larkin suggests the recurring occult themes are a way to explain crippling inequality in a society that is both 'rapidly modernizing and deeply traditional'. He writes that 'Southern Nigerian films probe this world through an aesthetics of outrage, dramatizing and exaggerating the forces of corruption at work in the world' (Larkin 2008: 216).



Figure 9: Filmmaker Wale Adebayo fills the generator to run household appliances in Shasha, Lagos. Every household has at least one generator roaring for 80% of the average week. Generator noise is often to blame for the poor quality of sound tracks in Nollywood films. Government electricity supply accounts for as little as 20%. Power comes on in the early hours of the morning and is cut off by midmorning. The generator dominates Nigerian life: 'The loud, smelly, coughing smoke into the air from the backs of houses all through urban neighbourhoods, the generator provides the ambient sounds and smell of the city (Larkin 2008: 244).'



Figure 10: 'Yan dada' (gasoline hawkers) patrol the streets selling black market generator fuel. A generator costs roughly 1000 Naira/day (\$6) to sustain a middleclass household's electricity needs.

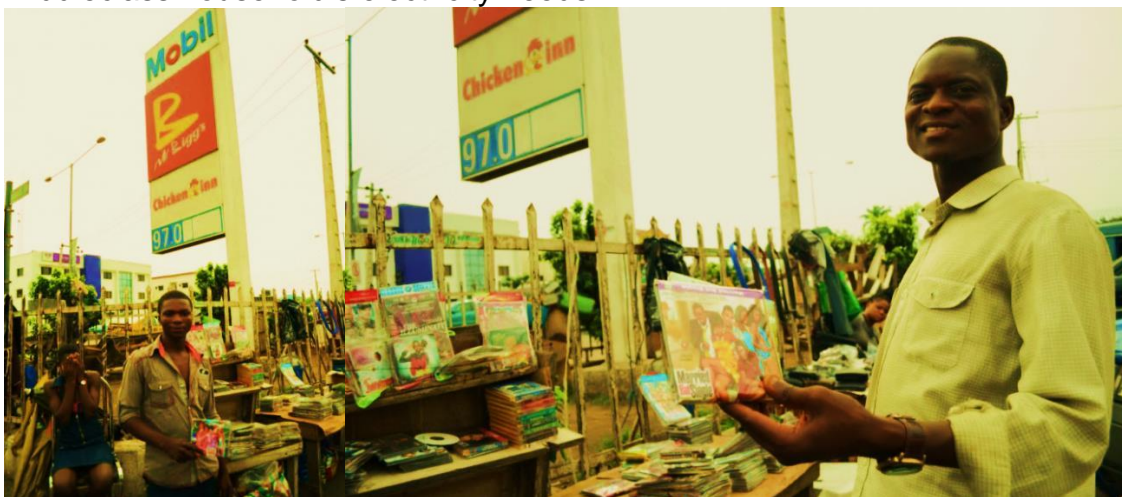


Figure 11: Nollywood films for sale at fuel stations in Lagos.

Some Nollywood scholars argue that *Living in Bondage* became the meta-narrative that all Southern Nigerian films would follow and repeat in slight variations thereafter. In *Living in Bondage*, Andy, the protagonist moves to the big city where he is forced to sacrifice his wife in order to gain financial wealth. After performing a ritual sacrifice in aid of wealth accumulation (money worship) he is haunted by the ghost of his dead wife. The film reaches its denouement when the protagonist finds salvation in the church and renounces his sins. As Okome observes, the failure of the state to counteract the effects of the 'Lottery Economy' has seen Nollywood filmmakers appropriate the meta-structure of the timeless morality play (Okome 2007: 9). This is ironic given that Nollywood began in reaction to the cheap Latin telenovelas shown on state TV in the SAP era, when Nigeria could no longer afford to produce local content or import classier fare. The telenovela is defined by the morality tale ending in which good triumphs over evil. Early Nollywood film-makers appropriated this missionizing message, even though their films often exhibited strong thematic content associated with Juju and witchcraft. Ultimately the moral conflict is resolved through Pentecostalism (Larkin 2008: 212). Larkin explains his theory of Nigerian cinema as an attempt by the people to 'moralize the political economy' by exploring 'traditional' sides of life marginalized by the discourse of modernization: 'Nigerian films draw on the sides of African life that were downplayed in the colonial period, in the nationalist era of independence and in the discursive concept of African cinema. Nigerian films, however, draw on themes of corruption and betrayal, naked desire for material goods unrestrained by ties of loyalty or love (Larkin 2008: 171).'

Nollywood has endured ridicule for failing to adopt a cultural activist approach to filmmaking in the service of 'decolonising the mind'. Larkin acknowledges that Nollywood tends towards melodrama, focussing socio-political commentary in the domain of the home as opposed to the unwieldy world of Nigerian politics. Melodrama is easier to depict on a shoestring budget and so the microcosm of the family dynamic becomes a mirror for the macrocosm in the larger domain of politics reflected in the rapacious behaviour of Nigeria's ruling elites:

Plots are often driven by family conflict, melodrama predominating, with its emphasis on moral polarities, excessive situations, and exaggerated acting. There is a strong element of the grotesque in elites' extreme sexual and

financial appetites, their willingness to betray friends and family to gain wealth (Larkin 2008: 184).

The parallel universe of 'Jesus films' and 'Juju films' is compelling in that these two genres play off each other in order to fulfil supernatural elements in the narrative. Both these genres subscribe to the morality tale denouement. The relationship between Nollywood and Pentecostal Christianity is fascinating and needs further investigation. Nollywood films from the Christian South of Nigeria seem to follow the architecture of a morality play infused with elements of witchcraft in which conflicts are ultimately resolved by moral solutions borrowed from the telenovela. The telenovela form demands a moral crescendo at the end of the three-act structure that translates into a useful homily - an aphorism by which to live one's life. Larkin pinpoints the reasoning here:

Precisely because it is organized around morality, melodrama offers a means with which to speak about tensions in African society that mimics the idioms of Pentecostalism, Islamism and witchcraft (Larkin 2008: 183).

THE HERO'S INNER JOURNEY

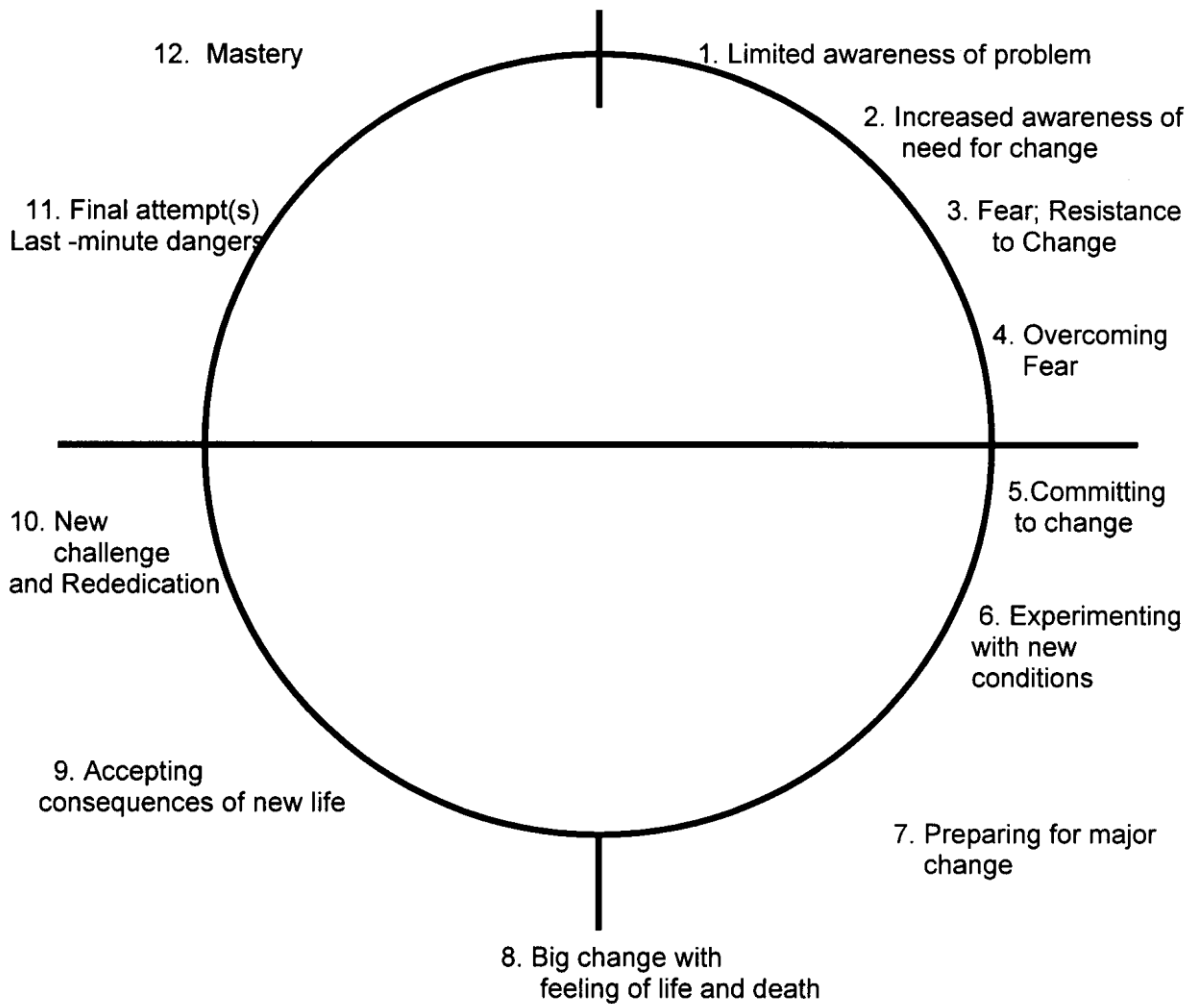


Figure 12: *The 12 stages of the Hero's Journey by Christopher Vogler (2007:9)*

The hero/ine is introduced to an **(1) ORDINARY WORLD** where s/he receives the **(2) CALL TO ADVENTURE**. S/he is **(3) RELUCTANT** at first to **(4) CROSS THE FIRST THRESHOLD** where s/he eventually encounters **(5) TESTS, ALLIES** and **ENEMIES**. S/he reaches the **(6) INNERMOST CAVE** where s/he endures the **(7) SUPREME ORDEAL**. S/he **(8) SEIZES THE SWORD** or the treasure and is pursued on the **(9) ROAD BACK** to her/his world. S/he is **(10) RESURRECTED** and transformed by his/her experience. S/he **(11) RETURNS** to her/his ordinary world with a treasure, boon, or **(12) ELIXIR** to benefit his/her world (Vogler 1985: 7).

Christopher Vogler (2007) proposes in *The Writers Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* that there are only two or three human stories that go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if never heard before (Vogler 2007: 3).

Vogler attests that these stories and their patterns are as old as the pyramids, cave paintings and Stonehenge. Vogler suggests that filmmakers like Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, and Francis Coppola conjure up these ancient tools and wield them in the modern context, ensuring their successes by writing the ageless patterns that Joseph Campbell identified in the *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949).

Contemporary incarnations of the Hero's Journey can be found in film epics like: *Lord of The Rings* (Jackson 2001), *The Matrix* (Wakowski 1999) films and the *Star Wars* (Lucas 2005) Trilogy, all of which exhibit strong supernatural elements in the narrative yet would never be referred to in the pejorative as 'backward' for doing so. Something film theorists fail to notice is the fact that Nollywood's great success as evidenced in the large number of exports to the diaspora is that it produces an African world view of the supernatural. Although Nollywood instinctively uses this ancient tried and tested method of storytelling, it remains resistant to rote replication because it counteracts the cultural imperialism by populating the primordial structure of the S/hero's Journey with the culturally specific domain of 'Afromodernity.'

Living in Bondage (1992) is the quintessential epic, using a variant of the narrative told and retold in all cultures across centuries. In this African variant, the protagonist overcomes the amoral economy through mastery of Pentecostal world and thereby constitutes a new moral economy. The key story chapters share an archetypal pattern with the narrative theory of Joseph Campbell as outlined in the monomyth: *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). The premise of this seminal text is that the great narrative myths of all societies across the globe share a timeless universal commonality. The narrative structure is evident in all monotheist global cultures from Buddha, to Moses, Christ and Mohamed.

**LIVING IN BONDAGE (1992) NARRATIVE MATRIX AS PER (2012)
VOGLER (2007) AND CAMPBELL (1949)**

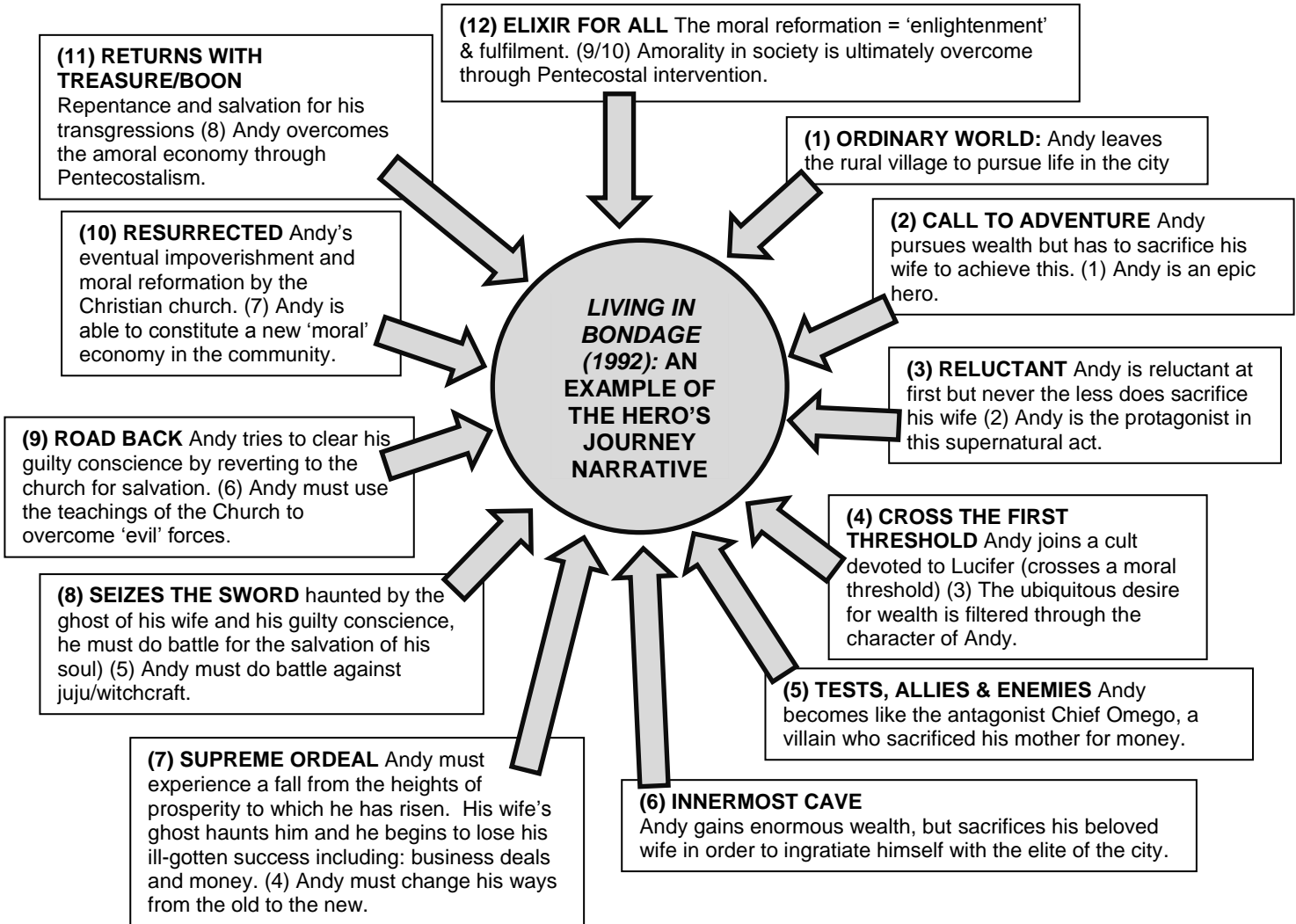


Figure 13: Illustration above: the Nollywood narrative pattern conforms to the 12 stages of the Hero's Journey (Vogler 2007:9) pictured above. The standard Hero's Journey narrative as reflected in the twelve stages of universal cyclic adventure feature consistent narrative patterns i.e.: the calling, great trials and tribulations with attendant suffering, followed by rebirth, fulfilment and ultimately exultation.

Sanctioning the African world view in comparison to the protagonists of the monotheist monomyths (Buddha, Christ, Mohamed and Moses), Wole Soyinka proposes a compelling case for the Yoruba God, Ogun. Ogun's metaphysical journeys share patterns with the narrative outlined in the passion play of Christ's trials and tribulations on earth (Soyinka 1976: 159). In Soyinka's *The Fourth Stage*

(1973) he credits Yoruba tragedy to the mysterious domain of Ogun which he describes as:

...plunging straight into the chthonic realm, the seething cauldron of the dark world Will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming. Into this universal womb once plunged and emerged Ogun, the first actor, disintegrating within the abyss. The actors in Ogun Mysteries are the communicant chorus, containing within their collective being the essence of that transitional abyss (Soyinka 1976: 142).

This extract loosely describes a version of the Hero's Journey in that Ogun is subjected to horror and anguish in a supreme ordeal, which he must overcome or else face annihilation in the abyss. Ogun can only accomplish this by calling on the power of his Will. Ogun embodies the power of human Will to overcome obstacles. The Will embodies the paradox of destruction and creativity. Ogun, the metal smith must seize the sword. He must be tried and tested by the stresses of psychic forces at play in the chthonic realm. Ogun the metal smith must be refined by fire in the 'furnace of hell'. Ogun represents the forging and mastery of the Yoruba Will in the furnace of suffering. Once purified and fortified by fire and made new Ogun will be resurrected and rise up like the phoenix from the ashes (Soyinka 1976: 150). The mythology of Ogun expresses a Nigerian world view of suffering followed by celebration as the god hero returns with treasure and the elixir. This is expressed as Ogun's ability to achieve 'aesthetic joy' and victory of the cosmic struggle and vicarious restoration of his (Ogun's) primordial being (Soyinka 1976: 142/3). Ogun must master the chthonic subterranean netherworld in order to attain fulfilment of the Hero's Journey. The journey necessitates a supernatural element to resolve a moral conundrum in society as Soyinka illustrates: 'Morality for the Yoruba is that which creates harmony in the cosmos (Soyinka 1976: 156).'

As we have seen from the references above including, Vogler, Campbell and Soyinka, the Hero's Journey reveals universal patterns as narrated by the protagonists Ogun and Jesus, both of which require god to become human and fallible, expressing their innate humanity (Soyinka 1976: 152/3).

Interchangeably, man must endure extreme suffering in order to become godlike. The Yoruba world view and Christian world view are meshed together in Nollywood narratives where Juju and Jesus plots intertwine to form a postmodern supernatural narrative which opines 'Afro-modernity' in popular culture form.

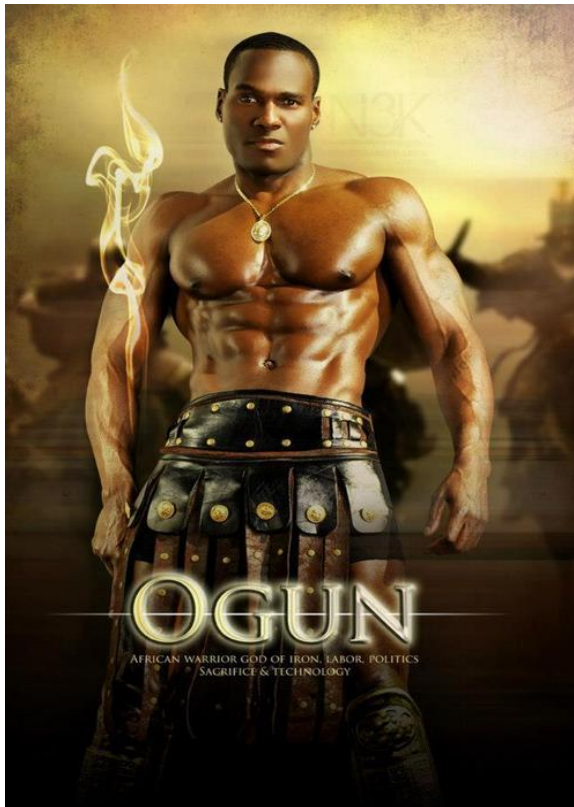


Figure 14: Image by James C. Lewis

Ogun is the Yoruba warrior god. Ogun is god of iron, labour, politics, sacrifice and technology. Wole Soyinka points out in his seminal essay, *The Fourth Stage* (1973) that the trials and tribulations of Ogun are similar in nature to that of Christ as evidenced in the narrative of *the Christian passion play* (Soyinka 1976: 159).

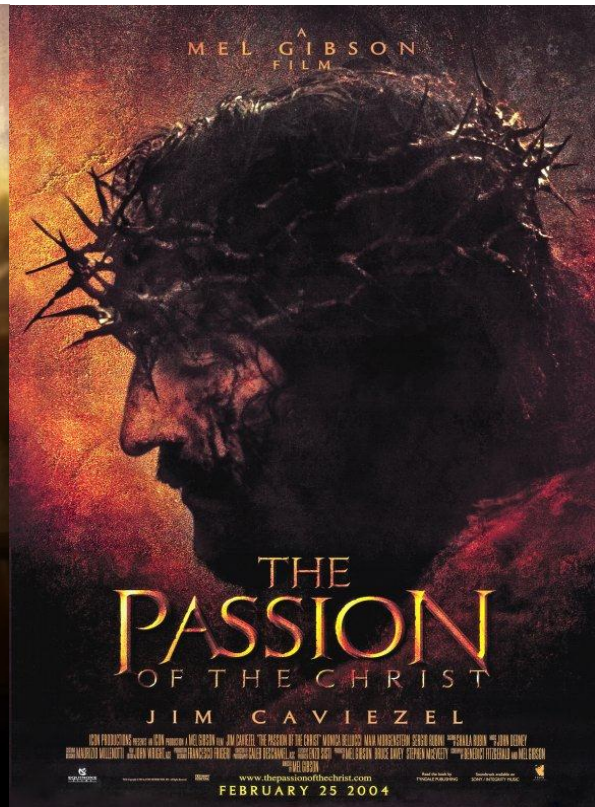


Figure 15: Photograph from the film; *The Passion of The Christ* (2004). The Hero's Journey narrative structure is evident in this story. Christ is born into an **(1) ordinary world** where he receives the **(2) call to adventure** as he becomes Christ (godlike). He is **(3) reluctant** to make public claims of being god but never the less **(4) crosses the threshold** into godlikeness where he has to endure **(5) tests** but has many **allies** and **enemies**. **(6)** He reaches the **innermost cave** placed in a tomb after crucifixion where he endures the **(7) supreme ordeal** by conquering death. He **(8) seizes the sword** by overcoming evil and defying death. He returns to earth in the **(9) road back** and reveals himself to the world where he is **(10) resurrected** and transformed into god as he **(11) returns** to heaven but leaves behind the **(12) elixir** - the message of peace and love.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Nollywood (2013) draws on global scholarship on the topic of Nollywood with contributors from Europe, North and South America as well as Africa. This book declares Nollywood a transnational practice as evidenced in the production of Nollywood genre films across the globe. The text critically informs the exciting developments in the domain of Nollywood which is constantly undergoing rapid transformation. Many authors are featured, juxtaposing ideologies that are both pro and anti-Nollywood.

Global Nollywood features a chapter by Mistry and Ellapen who vocalise what many film school lecturers and cinephiles are generally too timid to say in public, although the discourse is verbose on campus. In their essay titled *Nollywood's Transportability: The Politics and Economics of Video Films as Cultural Products* (2013) Mistry and Ellapen call for dialectic enquiry into the apolitical nature of Nollywood: 'There is an implicit tension between the politically progressive definitions of African cinema (derived from an alliance with Third Cinema) juxtaposed with the popular form of Nollywood films that may suggest an ideologically regressive politics (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 48). Their championing of Third Cinema provides a useful argument and contributes towards a fruitful theoretical framework for outlining the inherent contradictions of Third Cinema practised in contemporary Africa. But their concomitant denigration of Nollywood is likely to provoke fierce debate for many years to come.

A Companion to Film Theory (1999): This text catalogues the major discourses in film theory in terms of psychoanalysis, culture studies and the digital revolution. In the illuminating chapter titled, ***The Work of Theory in the Age of Digital Transformation***, Henry Jenkins discusses the rapid transformations constantly taking place in the digital domain where technology becomes obsolete so rapidly that theory struggles to keep pace with the phenomena. Jenkins elaborates on how 'vernacular theory' abounds in the digital realm and has been a welcome new voice in theorising the digital revolution. This voice theorizes from outside the academy, offering compelling case studies and concomitantly, modes of theory formation from unorthodox sources such as: tutors, executives, fans, activists, or visionaries (Jenkins 1999: 238).

Theory from the South Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa (2012)

Jean and John Comaroff's book is an essential text in the formulation of the central theoretical premise of this research report. *Theory from the South* postulates the inversion and the subversion of northern epistemic scaffolding and seeks to privilege an Afrocentric world view. *Theory from the South* describes 'Afro-modernity' as repudiating Euro-American assertions of ideological claim to global dominance. Comaroff and Comaroff proffer a new way of seeing African modernity:

African modernity, in sum, has always had its own trajectories, giving moral and material shape to everyday life. It has yielded diverse yet distinctive means with which to make sense of the world and to act upon it, to fashion social relations, commodities and forms of value appropriate to contemporary circumstances not least those sown by the uneven impact of capitalism, first colonial, then international, then global (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 8).

In this context Comaroff and Comaroff combine Nollywood with Negritude, Pan-Africanism, Africentrism, Ubuntu and the African Renaissance to create a startling new view of Africa (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 8/9). My own research hopes to contribute supporting theory by proffering New Nollywood as a form of vernacular theory from the South. As we have seen, media convergence enabled by the digital revolution is forcing stressing traditional production modes and forcing filmmakers online in search of innovation as the price of entertainment drops towards zero (Anderson 2009: 93). In this context, *Theory from the South, Or How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa (2012)* hypothesises that Hollywood could be evolving towards the fantastic 'Other' film culture of Nollywood as 'Global North' cinema cultures of celluloid and silver screen continue to decline.

Writing in the San/d: Autoethnography among Indigenous Southern Africans (2007) Edited by Keyan Tomaselli, this a collection of ethnographic writing under the auspices of Keyan Tomaselli provides useful insight into applied the methodology of reflexivity in transcribing field notes into anthropology. This text offers a wonderful intellectual freedom to imagine research as experiential assimilation with multiple ways to rethink and write about fieldwork. Embracing reflexivity was initially difficult, given the wide range of information and data collected for this project. *Lessons from New Nollywood* is located in the interdisciplinary nexus of film studies and cultural studies and concerned largely with imagining the future at this digital junction and its

implications for filmmakers in Africa. Autoethnography allows the researcher and the researched to merge and by so doing privileges experiential analysis. Tomaselli echoes the theoretical construct outlined in *Theory from the South* (2012) in his 'refusal or inability to interrogate Western derived theory which assumes Cartesian dualist perspectives (Tomaselli 2007: 45).' Likewise, Nollywood is born of African ontology rejecting Western constructs of what it ought to be. Framing this argument is impossible in the singular voice of the researcher.

In this regard, *Writing in the San/d* (2007) is a critical text in that it informs stylistically the writing up of all the participants into the research who appear as individual vernacular theorists (Tomaselli 2007: 21). The need for reflexivity in writing was not embraced out of a struggle against 'othering' but rather to channel diverse interdisciplinary fields of research namely: film, anthropology and digital convergence. According to Jeursen and Tomaselli, '*narrative becomes the primary mode of inquiry, redefining the relationships between authors and readers* (Jeursen & Tomaselli 2007: 21).' In this regard, *Lessons from New Nollywood* follows the script of *Writing in the San/d* (2007) privileging the narrative analysis.

Towards a Theory of Orality in African Cinema (1995) by Keyan Tomaselli is a visionary precursor in the domain of film studies to what Comaroff and Comaroff are calling for in *Theory from the South* (2012). Tomaselli asserts the failure of Western film theory to grasp African cosmology (Tomaselli 1995: 18). In African film theory we witness the juxtaposition of the pre-modern with modernity where the oral tradition and filmmaker as griot are conflated (Tomaselli 1995: 26). Tomaselli calls our attention to the interrelating ideas of 'text' and 'context' and how this needs to be understood in terms of an Afrocentric world view: '*the objectivity of this kind of thought is rooted in Bantu, all the people who were there engaging the ready-to-hand, the consequences of which are now ours* (Tomaselli 1995: 22).' Ubuntu and the African Renaissance together become an important philosophical matrix by which to assist in the application of knowing and the production of knowledge. Tomaselli calls for African applications of knowledge: '*Theories are needed to explain the various, often widely different and original, African application of imaging and recording technologies and their resulting aesthetics, which take into account the subjectivities and cosmologies of particular sets of viewers* (Tomaselli 1995:

22). Although Tomaselli attributes Third Cinema to this achievement, the burgeoning Nollywood mode of African film production resonates with far more economic and aesthetic agency than the ideologically bound proponents of Third Cinema. In this context it is important to note the timeline of development. Nollywood was still in its infancy in 1995 when the article was written and Third Cinema provided the most suitable platform to interrogate the production of cinematic culture. There are now many examples of the agency of the griot at work in New Nollywood cinema, particularly in the work of Kunle Afolayan (for example: *Irapada* (2007) *The Figurine* (2009)).

***Inventing Film Studies* (2008)** is a collection of essays from leading film theory authors and scholars in North America, specifically New York. Haidee Wasson discusses the '*idealized divide between popular movies and sacred art*' in the essay titled: *Studying Movies at the Museum: The Museum of Modern Art and Cinema's Changing Object*. In 1935 MoMA announced that it would not only exhibit paintings but also films. Many believe this was 'a welcome rejection of the low cultural status imbued upon the movies'. Film had finally earned a place in high art.

By incorporating film, MoMA explicitly proposed that a cultural form largely understood in America as popular, commercial, and disposable was a form of valuable knowledge, a distinct aesthetic expression, and an educational viewing activity (Wasson 2008: 122).

The 'arrival' of film as a respected medium in the art world placed this form in a relevant context to be taken seriously in the realm of sociology, history, politics and aesthetics. What makes this text relevant for the study of Nollywood is the debate that still rages around popular culture films in Africa versus the 'Embassy Film' genre that dictates film should reflect the ideals of high art and political emancipation narratives. Nollywood shuns this mode of filmmaking because it lacks relevance as reflected in the absence of popular appeal and commercial incentive. Recent developments in New Nollywood are levelling the binary ideologies between art film and pulp film.

Contributing author to this book, ***Inventing Film Studies* (2008)** D.N. Rodowick discusses the anxiety of change in the realm of film studies as film – the historical celluloid object becomes a blip on the graph of the digital revolution.

In the essay titled ***Dr. Strange Media, or How I learned to stop worrying and Love Film Theory*** Rodowick says:

Periods of intense change are always extremely interesting for film theory, because the films themselves tend to stage its primary question: what is cinema? The emergent digital era poses this question in a new and interesting way because for the first time in the history of film theory the photographic process is challenged as the ontological basis of cinematic representation.

Rodowick confides in the reader that the problem with film studies is rooted in the attachment to film as object. If film scholars are not able to divorce themselves from 'film fetish' they run the risk of being excluded from the future of the film form which is digital filmmaking. The digital revolution dominates audio visual media currently and 'film studies' has taken on a historic tone and threatens to leave academics behind all together. The solution to this problem is merely to adopt the term *cinema studies* thereby including all audio visual media projected onto a variety of screens from miniature smart phones to colossal Imax screens. Rodowick asserts that film and cinema are no longer synonymous. Film is photochemical celluloid while most other forms of audio visual motion picture medium are now discussed as cinema. The evolution of the digital domain implies that digital process across a spectrum of disciplines will now or in future displace analogue processes (Rodowick 2008: 378).

Chris Anderson, author of ***Free, the Future of a Radical Price (2009)*** writes about the disastrous economic impact on the music industry after the arrival of iTunes and implies that all entertainment products face a similar future and need to adapt to the radically changing marketplace if they want to survive. This culture inducted into the digital domain came about as a result of a pedagogically sound ideal: *Information wants to be free*. This phrase has come to define the digital age. What does this mean for the future of filmmaking? What will Youtube do to video/film? Will filmmakers be able to survive by making entertainment product in Africa? How will filmmakers monetize their skill and culture through cinema in the budding digital age where the price seems to be falling towards zero (Anderson 2009: 96)? These are all anxieties which need careful attention if the craft of filmmaking and the cultures it transmutes are to have a future on the global stage. Remarkably, Nollywood seems to have found answers for these difficult questions: the mode of production must be equal to the mode of consumption; which must also be equal to the mode of distribution.

Ethnicity Inc. (2009) by Jean and John Comaroff is a projection of the cultural subject into the realm of the marketplace. With more than 8 billion people on earth, the ever increasing cost of living and shrinking job market, communities now seek to monetize their culture in order to survive by branding and packaging the 'Other'.

Something strange is happening to the thing we call "ethnicity", the taken-for-granted species of collective subjectivity that lies at the intersection of identity and culture (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 1)

But *Ethnicity Inc.* is more than just the sum total of the rampant commodification of culture. The Comaroffs explore the intriguing and disturbing metamorphosis of ethnicity and cultural practice into product. *Ethnicity Inc (2009)*, shows how culture is a commercial enterprise and reflects the contradictions of neoliberalism as identities are being mined for survival all over the world.

Cultural identity is two things, the object of choice and self-construction, Typically through the act of consumption, and the manifest product of biology, genetics, human essence (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 1).

Nollywood is no stranger to 'ethnoprise' exporting cultural product to the rest of Africa and diaspora. The ideas promulgated in *Ethnicity Inc (2009)* are precisely the reason why Nollywood films are celebrated as popular culture and incentivised by entrepreneurial success.

In Township Tonight! (2007) by Professor David Coplan describes the need for popular culture to exist in the idiomatic expression of the people (Coplan 2007: 136). Nollywood narratives seem to obey this rule and hence their success. Coplan goes on to discuss how elitist ideology in the cultural sphere is not helpful in the production of popular culture. This seems to be where South African filmmakers are stymied although there is much progress in the arena of music (Coplan 2007: 137).

Where Vultures Feast (2003) by journalist Ike Okonta teamed up with Oronto Douglas, the human rights lawyer who was a member of the legal team in the Ken Saro-Wiwa case against the Royal Dutch Shell company. This emic research catalogues the destruction of the Niger Delta by the coalition of corrupt Nigerian Government officials and the giant multinational force bent on extracting every drop of crude oil from the tropical forests of the Niger Delta. Corruption in the oil industry has emerged as an important theme in Nollywood movies which are informed by

what Brian Larkin terms '*An Aesthetics of Outrage*'. Nollywood is the second largest industry after oil in Nigeria and the filmmakers have created this without government subsidies (Saro-Wiwa 2008: 19).

Signal and Noise (2008) by Brian Larkin chronicles the development of media, infrastructure and the anthropology of urban culture in Nigeria. This work is particularly useful as a text to gauge the nature of interdisciplinary work in the areas of media studies. *Signal and Noise* charts the terrain of anthropology, African studies and film theory to create a dense and nuanced work that spans the colonial historic context of Nigerian cinema as well as the achievements of Nollywood in the present day. Larkin's sweeping analysis of Nigerian film brings the emergence of Nollywood into sharp focus:

In the logic of modernization theory, media were expected to be the technologies that effected the labour of making Nigerians modern. The developmentalist task of colonial films was taken up by the new medium of television, where their generic forms and political prerogatives fed into the emergence of television dramas. In contrast to these media, commercial cinema rose in popularity along with an urban Nigerian leisure class that flocked to cinemas, imitating the cowboy swagger and gangster slang of Hollywood stars. In the 1990's, these two cinematic traditions collided and were mutually transformed by the rise of a wholly new genre of media called Nigerian video films (Larkin 2008: 168/169).

Larkin goes on to explain how the arrival of Nollywood collapsed the divide between state and commercial media and between upliftment and escapism. Simultaneously, Nollywood is fueled by entrepreneurial drive in that face of the collapse of state economies and the rise of informal economies.

Intellectuals and African Development (2006) by Bjorn Beckman and Gbemisola Adeoti is a vibrant and critical book that is not afraid to tackle Africa's socio political problems. This text defines the emergence of the 'popular democratic alternative' embodied in the success of Nollywood. Adeoti is also an outspoken Nollywood scholar. Adeoti and Beckman discuss candidly popular aspiration of the youth in Africa and how this might be realised by defying repression.

Adeoti wrote an essay titled ***Home Video Films and the Democratic Imperative in Contemporary Nigeria (2009)***. This essay is important as it highlights the reason for Nollywood films avoiding overtly political content as years of military rule as well as the censorship board keep filmmakers afraid of infraction and loss of income and investments made to produce the film. Hence, the films typically revolve around love affairs, machinations of wealth accumulation, Magical Realism, witchcraft, crimes and retribution.

Encountering Modernity, Twentieth Century South African Cinemas (2006) by Professor Keyan Tomaselli expands on the modes of filmmaking in South Africa. His analysis of First, Second and Third Cinemas in the South African context elicits the need for appropriation from Nigeria:

The Nigerian experience can teach the South African Industry about creating demand for local content by telling local stories, rather than aiming for expensive Hollywood scale productions (Tomaselli 2006: 30).

In Nollywood, the emphasis is on story and not on technique as is the case in ***First Cinema*** cultures that reflect a mainstream approach, not dissimilar to Hollywood. ***Second Cinema*** is *auteurist*, art house or independent cinema and is more concerned with aesthetics than with overt politics. ***Third Cinema*** is consumed by the experience of oppression, reinforcing a discourse of political revolution. Tomaselli links Third Cinema to the oral tradition in Africa where the role of the griot has been central in constructing narrative (Tomaselli 2006: 79). Tomaselli asserts that much of what we know to be African cinema is still categorised as Third Cinema. Nollywood offers an important diversification of this single story mode of cinematic representation of Africa.

Black and White in Colour (2007) by Vivian – Bickford Smith and Richard Mendelson provide a critical insight into colonial cinema on the African continent and is an essential guide to the history of Africa on the silver screen. The book approaches African filmmaking from a historical records perspective and critiques the filmmakers for their various scholarly oversights. There is evidence of tension in cinematic attempts by Francophone filmmakers to 'claim an authentic African heritage against the colonial or neo-colonial denigration of culture' (Austen 2007:

34). The book acknowledges the appropriation of French aesthetic into African film as showcased at the annual FESPACO film and television festival:

It is France's concern for maintaining influence over its former territories that accounts for the financial support which makes francophone West African cinema possible. Paris's highly developed cinema culture also helps to explain the intellectual and aesthetic seriousness that has distinguished film production in this sector of the continent (Austen 2007: 31).

Nollywood discourse agitates for the right to represent its own cultural concerns outside of the theoretical frame work of Francophone Embassy films, art house films and Third Cinema. The emergence of Nollywood cinema is evidence of a new form of postcolonial filmmaking that is more autonomous and independently African in its production of culture. This is evidenced by contrast to the Francophone tradition of filmmaking in West Africa.

From a historic perspective, Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates give a concise history of Nigeria from the Nok empire (500 BCE) to the assassination of Ken Saro-Wiwa (1995) in their mammoth volume; ***Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience (1999)*** (pages 1432 – 1438).

The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria (2005) by Andrew Apter provides an astute anthropological insight into the FESTAC 1977 Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture hosted by Nigeria at the height of the country's oil boom. In 1977, Nigeria was awash with petro dollars and was able to treat the African diaspora to a spectacle of cultural display. This critical text makes a case for the subversion of 'othering'. Apter argues: 'In many ways, FESTAC inverted the conventions of imperial expositions by transforming the gaze of othering into one of collective self-appreciation (Apter 2005: 4).' Nigeria is an admirable nation in that it has managed to throw off the yoke of 'othering' which seeks to reassert the role of the oppressed. This was achieved at FESTAC in 1977 and again in 1992 with the advent of *Living in Bondage* and the Nollywood film industry which this film spawned. Nollywood is a triumph of 'collective self-appreciation' as were the 1977 FESTAC festivities.

Lindiwe Dovey covers the intentions of Third Cinema aptly in her book ***African Film and Literature, adapting Violence to the Screen (2009)***. She begins by noting that

all 'African' films in the colonial era were financed and created by whites whose views of the continent were essentially Victorian:

Films made about Africa and Africans shared an assumption that Africans were inherently violent. Colonial film production and exhibition was symptomatic of the colonial process as a whole. The savagery imputed to the savage is shown at every turn (Dovey 2009: 29).

Dovey goes on to illustrate how the first films made by Africans themselves were conspicuously devoid of and fundamentally opposed to retaliatory violence.

African film theorist Mbye Cham confirms: 'African cinema is no doubt a child of political independence, its birth as a political cinema in a critical rather than revolutionary sense has not been adequately addressed (Dovey 2009: 29).'

Dovey points out that sub-Saharan Africans only began making films in the 1950s in parallel to the decolonization struggle and resulting Independence (Dovey 2009: 29). She argues that African film of this period was rooted in politics as a reaction to colonial cinema and ethnographic filmmaking in Africa. A subsequent generation of African filmmakers took its cue from Argentinean filmmakers Solanas and Getino and their 1969 manifesto, *Towards Third Cinema*. On this basis Third Cinema ideologues reject 'First Cinema' as illusions from the Hollywood factory which enforces consumer ideology. They were heavily influenced by Marx, Gramsci and Fanon, creating a revolutionary film theory that would be appropriated all over the Third World: Asia, Africa and Latin America. This mode of cinema essentially encouraged revolutionary uprising (Dovey 2009: 30). Third Cinema filmmakers adopted the doctrine of guerrilla warfare into guerrilla filmmaking portraying the camera as an 'inexhaustible expropriator' of 'image-weapons', while the projector functioned as a gun that could 'shoot 24 frames (bullets) per second'. They argued that cinema should incite revolutionary action. Films were supposed to be detonators in the process of liberation. Propaganda was elevated above the Art Film in Latin America provoking demonstrations and debates. Third Cinema was ultimately used to 'educate' cadres. Screenings had to be guarded by armed revolutionaries (Dovey 2009: 30).

Naturally there is a major clash in ideology between Nollywood and the adherents of Third Cinema. Nollywood seeks to create industry and entertainment while Third

Cinema is devoted to agitation, propaganda and decolonization. To counter such ideas, it is important to correctly frame the pan-African potential for filmmakers across the continent. Sustainable production of culture driven by commerce has the potential to create a middle class workforce of artisans, technicians, professionals and managers using the tools of the digital revolution in the production of popular culture low budget filmmaking. The results may reveal an embrace of complex African plurality that describes the transition from post-colonialism to postmodernism.

In ***Architects of Poverty (2009)*** Moeletsi Mbeki points out that sub-Saharan Africa is home to the 'bottom billion' poorest nations on earth (Mbeki 2009: 152). Proffering a solution Mbeki suggests: 'For South Africa to develop, it needs to create an overabundance of artisans, technicians, professionals and managers, the formula that has led to the rapid development of China and India (Mbeki 2009: 89).'

By applying this solution Mbeki envisages the development of a middle class capable of creating a 'thriving capitalist system and develop a modern state' (Mbeki 2009: 155). Discussing the needs for industrialisation, Mbeki points out the urgent need for economic renewal in Africa:

Sub-Saharan Africa today consists of fossilised pre-industrial and pre-agrarian-revolution social formations, and therein lies their inability to grow economically. The absence of an industrial revolution on the African sub-continent has left it with socio-economic structures that are, in the main degenerative rather than accumulative (Mbeki 209: 17).

Urbanisation and industrialisation in Africa is a key angle to the narrative of Nollywood. Lagos will be the 3rd largest city in the world by 2015. Economy and trade need to upscale to accommodate the populace of the largest city in Africa. Enterprising filmmakers are responding to this challenge and have created the country's largest export after oil, employing hundreds of thousands of people.

The pan-Africanism we have: Nollywood's invention of Africa (2007) by Anthropology Professor John McCall is a seminal Nollywood text that defines the phenomenon that is Nollywood in the contemporary African media scape of popular culture. This text defines Nollywood as radically horizontal in its organisation where a shifting field of thousands of independent contractors can rent equipment for a few

days and transform themselves into Nollywood producers (McCall 2007: 96). Nollywood sets the tone for a continent-wide popular discourse about what it means to be African. This triumph however is not without vicious backlash from critics and scholars. The major critique is that Nollywood lacks the ideological mission that could make it relevant to political and social transformation in Africa according to Lawuyi in an article titled, *The Political Freedom of Video Marketing in Nigeria* (Lawuyi 1997: 477). A rebuttal from McCall says:

We must not be too hasty to classify Nollywood as apolitical. We must be careful not to condemn it because it departs from intellectual formulations of what progressive political thought is supposed to look like. Instead we must discern what the movies actually convey, why these messages resonate broadly across the continent, and how this new medium might shape Africans' ideas about their own future (McCall 2007: 94).

Professor John McCall's latest publication, ***The Capital Gap (2012)***, takes the Keith Hart coinage of the 'informal economy' and expands its discourse into the domain of Nollywood, seen as a popular culture machine that exists outside of the formal economy. McCall continues to be adept at pointing out 'cultural chauvinism' when it comes to film theory analysis of Nollywood. He says of Nollywood:

We have much to learn about Africa, and nothing to lose but our misconceptions (McCall 2012: 18).

Jonathan Haynes has written extensively on Nollywood since the late nineties: ***What's in a Name (2007)*** discusses the analogical name of Nollywood and the criticism endured for adopting a derivative of Hollywood or Bollywood. Since Nollywood is First Cinema, the name expresses a self-determination which has been achieved and well lauded internationally. Nollywood has proven to the world that it is not a cheap imitation of Hollywood or Bollywood, rather that it is as uniquely African as Bollywood is Indian. Haynes argues:

But we don't have to take the name as meaning that Nollywood is in third place; it points rather to the fact that we live in a multipolar world where the old patterns of cultural imperialism have changed and viewers have a much greater choice in the media they consume (Haynes 2007: 106).

In the essay ***Nnebue: The Anatomy of Power (2007)*** Haynes discusses the origin of Nollywood beginning with the seminal film: *Living in Bondage* (1992) made by

Igbo marketer Kenneth Nnebue. Haynes explains the emergence of Nollywood by taking us back to the Yoruba Traveling Theatre groups and how Nnebue cross-pollinated with them, which gave him the necessary skills to develop an Igbo cultural base for pulp films.

Onookome Okome has also written extensively on Nollywood and is one of the foremost champions of this emerging film form in Africa. In ***Nollywood: Africa at The Movies (2007)*** Okome discusses the fundamental difference between Nollywood and the prerequisites of Third Cinema:

Nollywood is radically different from the francophone African film. It is a 'Third Cinema' in ways that are unimaginable in the practice of francophone African filmmaking. Yet, there is no one discernable cultural or even political project in Nollywood, as is the case with the project of 'third cinema' practice in Latin America of the 1960s. But Nollywood is extremely aware of its local audience. It has direct appeal and deals with matters that concern this audience. It is pragmatic, always with an ear to the ground, seeking local stories. Its narrative style is eclectic and exuberant (Okome 2007: 28).

Okome describes in ***Nollywood: Spectatorship, Audience and the Sites of Consumption (2007)*** as a '*popular rendezvous where social meanings meet with the fictional world of the video film, and are then recast into an unending spiral of other social texts*' (Okome 2007: 3). Furthermore, Okome describes the spectatorship of Nollywood as being '*a complex task...as the ironic location of this army of the abject that live dangerously in the tragic economy begotten by Africa's kleptomaniac leaders*' (Okome 2007: 8). Although the suggestion in this essay is that Nollywood is a cinema of the poor, the scope of Nigerian film has since mushroomed enormously and the cinematic offerings now cover a wide range of films from cinema release titles that garner Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) and International Awards to the so-called "Two-Day films" which according to my interlocutors are films which are 'shot today and released tomorrow'.

Nollywood, The Video Phenomenon in Nigeria (2008) edited by Pierre Barrot, takes a more condescending approach to its subject. Barrot has been severely criticized by McCall and Okome for failing to see the success of Nollywood outside of the prism of francophone films and the aesthetics they project. Barrot is a French cineaste who favors the works of French New Wave filmmakers like Jean Rouch

who infamously said of Nollywood that 'it is the AIDS of the film industry' (Barrot 2008: 3). Okome challenges Barrots' elitist projection of what cinema in Nigeria should be:

Barrot's suggestion that only the re-invigoration of the moribund 'movie theatres' and the screening of Nigerian films in these venues and on television will assure the growth of this art form misses the point. This position surely smacks of a lack of understanding of the history of the audience of popular video film (Okome 2007: 5).

In the article, ***Recent Developments in Ethnographic Filmmaking and the Aesthetics of Anthropological Inquiry (2011)***, Grimshaw discusses Margaret Mead's camera mounted on a tripod and simply turned in the direction of the subject matter (Grimshaw 2011: 255). Although the discipline has evolved to the point where we can now see how problematic this is, it is none the less important to acknowledge her contribution to the development of visual epistemology. Even though Mead's modes are now outdated, she was an essential champion of the visual and outlined the crisis in Anthropology as a discipline in her 1977 article titled *Visual Anthropology In a Discipline of Words*:

Department after department and research project after research project fail to include filming and insist on continuing the hopelessly inadequate note-taking of an earlier age, while the behavior that film could have caught and preserved for centuries (the joy of those who dance a ritual for the last time and for the illumination of future generations of human scientists) disappears – right in front of everybody's eyes. Why? What has gone wrong? (Emphasis added).

Anna Grimshaw's article in ***Cultural Anthropology (2011)*** discussing the ethnographic film *Sweetgrass* (2009) by Barbash & Casting-Taylor shows that there has been at least some progress from 1977 till 2011. It seems at last that some balance has been achieved between artistic representation and scientific fidelity. The film has been called a monumental anthropological achievement, conspicuously lacking in such documentary conventions as voiceover, interview, explanation, music, and 'diary cam'. In addition, the film also articulates:

...a self-conscious painterly style with marked sensitivity to light, composition and framing. It declares without shame that how something looks is as important to the filmmaker as what is being looked at. The use of different lenses, the deliberate positioning of the camera, the extended unbroken takes create a rich visual world that asks the viewer to engage with scenes in a particular way – namely to explore relationships between foreground and

background, stillness and movement, distance and proximity (Grinshaw 2011: 252).

Making Movies with your iPhone: Shoot, Edit and Share Anywhere by Ben Harvell (2012), is a 'how to guide' explaining the jujitsu effect of the ubiquitous digital revolution in domesticating filmmaking technology previously considered high end, professional and specialist. This text is endemic of the intergenerational cleavage between digital natives and digital immigrants which becomes more pronounced as a new generation begins to activate new technologies via intuition while the analogue generation still struggles with technophobia and the onslaught of a rapidly converging media landscape. The book gives us a paint-by-numbers approach to entry-level digital filmmaking, pointing out that a cell phone can become a movie studio in the palm of your hand, weighing less than a cup of coffee. The notion is extraordinary and simultaneously terrifying in its foreshadowing of the future of filmmaking.

CHAPTER 4: NOLLYWOOD IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research project will attempt to draw together the divergent disciplines of film studies, cultural studies, and technological innovation in the hope of formulating new understandings of Nollywood. Nollywood has proliferated at such a prodigious rate as to become a globally recognised transnational film form (Jedlowski 2013: 25). Through enquiry into the closed nature of film theory on the subject of Nollywood, I hope to open up discourse through the agency of autoethnography which allows the filmmakers themselves to become vernacular film theorists (Tomaselli: 2009: 21). This research seeks to investigate why Nollywood is denied canonisation on the grounds that it fails to 'decolonise the mind' (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 58). One reason is that film theorists who are concerned with 'connoisseurship of the medium' fail to consider New Nollywood films, which represent a significant departure from Old Nollywood conventions but remain conspicuous by their absence from the work of such critics as Mistry and Ellapen.

This is of particular concern in the realm of knowledge production from the South, which by nature has a pedagogical duty to uplift local knowledge production by

including developments in curricula devised to teach filmmaking to a new generation of aspirant African filmmakers. By analysing the praxis of New Nollywood filmmakers, I aim to begin a dialogue between film studies and cultural studies set against the backdrop of ubiquitous technological innovation in the domain of digital filmmaking. (See illustration below in attempt to frame New Nollywood as Theory from The South). By articulating the practices of the filmmakers, a vernacular theory will emerge in the portraits of the New Nollywood filmmakers that index notions of the future of African Cinema. To this end the filmmakers and their praxis will produce a vernacular theory, defined in this context as any attempt at articulating the New Nollywood filmmaking experience and practice (Jenkins 1999: 234). Theory and practice are symbiotic concepts that are inseparable as practice precedes theory and theory hypothesises practice.

FRAMING A THEORY FROM THE SOUTH

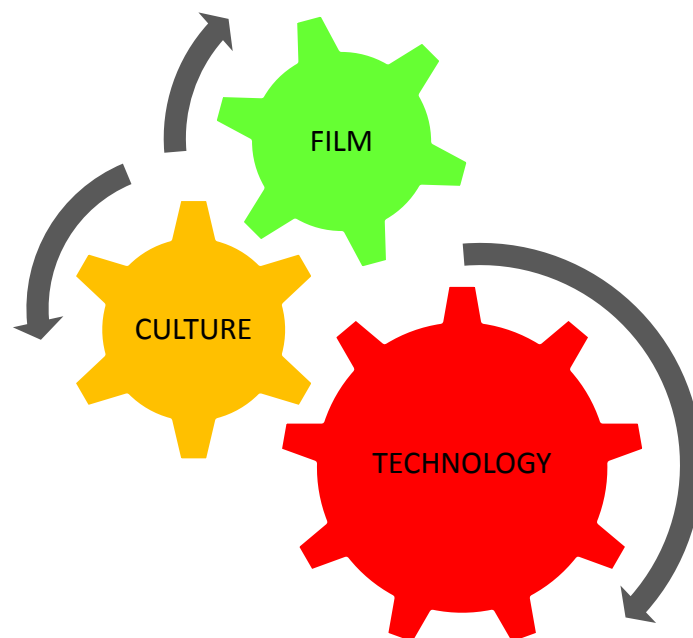


Figure 16: New Nollywood films provide compelling evidence that film, culture and technology are interconnected cogs that must function together, in concert, to create relevant cinematic narratives that address the entertainment needs of the pan-African, postmodern audience in the 21st century.

4.1 CULTURAL STUDIES

The position of cultural studies on the Nollywood phenomenon is summarised in *Theory from the South* (2012), which conjures up distinctly filmic references as appropriated in the chapter: '*Mise en Scene, in Two Parts: Afromodernity in practice and theory* (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 7). Afromodernity is defined as vast, rich, dense and complex, existing in its own universe, negotiating its own terms and opposing the notion of the Global South being a carbon copy of the Global North. African modernity defines its own trajectory of progress negating the tropes of western gaze. Nationalist and anticolonial movements such as Pan-Africanism, Negritude and Afrocentricity are conflated with Nollywood in a producing a vision of modern aspiration on the continent (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 8).

Lindiwe Dovey articulates the tension that exists in understanding difference of opinion on Nollywood in her book, *African Film and Literature* which outlines divergent positions held by film scholars and anthropology scholars. Anthropology it seems permits a much wider world view:

Nigerian filmmakers and historians such as Afolabi Adesanya and Wole Ogundele, and African film critic Kenneth Harrow, are deeply troubled by the commercial nature of the video industry and what it means for 'serious' and critical African art. Alternatively, anthropologists such as Brian Larkin and Birgit Meyer express excitement at the local and global access to audio visual media for Africans created through the video industries (Dovey 2009: 22).

4.2 FILM STUDIES

Film theorists Mistry and Ellapen, in their essay *Nollywood's Transportability: The Politics and Economics of Video Films as Cultural Products* (2013), cleave a politicised polarity between Third Cinema and Nollywood by denouncing Nollywood as politically regressive because it fails to:

1. Censor depictions of witchcraft
2. Censor depictions of women in stereotypical roles
3. Negate economics in favour of politics

Mistry and Ellapen discern tension between *the 'politically progressive' mode of Third Cinema versus 'ideologically regressive' Nollywood* (Mistry & Ellapen 2013:

48). Their ideological position is opposed to the sort of rampant commercialism described by Okome:

Nollywood is commercially savvy. It values the entertainment of its clientele. The entertainment bit is primary to the mode of representation in the industry, yet in that pursuit, one cannot forget its sense of mission, which is to produce culture from the bottom of the street (Okome 2007: 2).

Anthropologist McCall is arguably more progressive than Third Cinema-aligned critics in his reading of Nollywood as an agent of a much larger narrative with Pan-African dimensions (2007). McCall insists that Marxist influence in West African francophone cinema runs contrary to contemporary pan-African popular culture:

Twentieth-century pan-Africanism fell prey to Cold War politics, Marxist despotism and neocolonial economics. While a monolithic postcolonial pan-African consciousness did not emerge in the form prophesied by the pan-Africanist philosophers, this does not mean that a postcolonial pan-African consciousness is not beginning to take shape. This growing and increasingly passionate discourse about what it means to be African is not the product of programmatic philosophy or ideological 'consciousness raising'. The nascent discourse on African identity is a natural outgrowth of an emergent continental popular culture transmitted by various media - music, broadcast and satellite television and now most significantly, video movies (McCall 2007: 3).

While Mistry and Ellapen acknowledge the importance of Nollywood films as cultural product in the discipline of anthropology, they refuse Nollywood similar recognition in film studies and even go so far as to deny Nollywood's right to be canonised as African cinema. Mistry and Ellapen prescribe Third Cinema as the only mode of production relevant to filmmaking on the African continent. Third Cinema's primary objective is to mobilize social change by decolonizing the mind (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 58). The imperative to 'decolonise the mind' is contradictory in the sense that Nollywood is a force that is reversing western hegemony in film production and freeing Africa from dependence on imported international blockbusters. In this context, Third Cinema is exhibiting a tendency to dominate at the cost of cinematic diversity, multiplicity and hybridity as signified by the fluidity of the digital domain.

Jonathan Haynes also draws our attention to ideological differences between film critique and cultural studies:

African film criticism and the Nigerian videos are not well suited to one another: the videos are not what is wanted by the criticism, and the criticism lacks many of the tools necessary to make sense of the videos (Haynes 2000: 13).

McCall contextualizes the discursive polarities in the disciplines of film versus anthropology in his analysis of Nollywood films: '*Nollywood's radically indigenous movies are a much greater interpretive challenge to scholars used to film festival award winners.*' He goes on to explain how Nigerian filmmakers are oblivious to the interests of film theorists, neither do they care. Narrative conventions in Nollywood require an Afrocentric appreciation of the cultural context as McCall explains:

Story telling conventions deployed in Nollywood movies are distinctive and they require a certain amount of cultural contextualization to be intelligible to the uninitiated. While film scholars may be confused and dismissive of Nollywood movies, Nollywood's artists are likewise skeptical about this 'other' African cinema that is so well known abroad and so inaccessible to Africans (McCall 2012: 16).'

Mistry and Ellapen (2013) raise questions of 'progressive' versus 'regressive' political agendas when discussing Third Cinema in comparison to Nollywood. Ideologically these two modes of film production are diametrically opposed. A brief comparative analysis is required to appreciate the principles operating in these dual modes of cinema production in Africa.

4.3 FIRST CINEMA VERSUS THIRD CINEMA

Tomaselli defines Third Cinema as:

...a set of strategies developed by critical filmmakers in South America and North Africa. First Cinema describes commercially structured film industries, as in Hollywood entertainment; Second Cinema accounts for avant-guard and Third Cinema offers resistance to imperialism, to oppression. As a cinema of emancipation it articulates the codes of an essentially First World technology into indigenous aesthetics and mythologies (Tomaselli 1995: 25).

Tomaselli was writing in 1995 when South Africa had just achieved freedom from apartheid, and when Third Cinema still possessed agency against the forces of imperialism. Nearly 20 years later Afrocentric representations of Afromodernity have evolved to a more complex means of self-expression. New Nollywood now produces films with traces of First *and* Third Cinema at work in the opus of films exhibited in

the market place and on air. Based on the evidence presented in this research project I would argue that New Nollywood does in fact produce a postmodern popular culture cinema in line with what Tomaselli refers to as '*emancipation that articulates the codes of indigenous aesthetics and mythologies* (Tomaselli 1995: 25).'

By contrast, Second Cinema emerged from a fine art tradition and is less concerned with audience engagement, preferring to make the viewer an active participant in watching the film. The viewer must think, feel and react. The viewer may not be passive or lulled into a false fantasy. Second Cinema demands an appreciation of the aesthetics of the medium and is opposed to all focus being directed towards the realisation of a formal script. Second Cinema was challenged by Third Cinema filmmakers who were less concerned with artistic expression and more motivated by political action. Lindiwe Dovey summarises the appropriation of Third Cinema from Argentina to Africa as a reaction to colonial cinema and ethnographic filmmaking:

Fernando Solana and Octavio Getino, who in 1969 published their ground breaking manifesto, 'Towards Third Cinema', reject what they call 'First Cinema', constituted primarily of seamless constructed illusionistic Hollywood movies, which, they argue, situate the viewer as 'a consumer of ideology not as the creator of ideology' and proposed Third Cinema as an alternative to Second Cinema, which they see as failing to challenge First Cinema (Dovey 2009: 29).

Third filmmakers assimilate the identity of guerrilla warriors to promote revolutionary violence by using the extended metaphor of the camera as an 'expropriator of image weapons' which shoot 24 frames per second. In this regard, the agenda of Third Cinema is ironic given that violence and bloodshed causes poverty and poverty causes violence and bloodshed (Collier 2007:17).

On the other end of the narrative spectrum, Third Cinema has a proletariat agenda and therefore requires the narrative to be entirely coherent and accessible to the masses. Privileging narrative prevents audience alienation and draws the viewer into engagement. In this sense Third Cinema narrative adopts the role of the African griot, appropriating the culture of oral tradition. Lindiwe Dovey traces the timeline of convergence from oral tradition to the role of the African filmmaker as a 'screen griot':

They claim a position as the inheritors of the tradition of communal West African oral storytelling and critique. Adopting this title, and translating oral stories as well as literary texts to the screen, African filmmakers are able, first of all, to reach non-literate African audiences, and, second, to encourage audiences to react to the cinematic experience in the same way that they would to a griot's performance of an oral tale... As modern-day griots, African filmmakers play two roles: as the preservers and transmitters of African culture to future generations in the wake of the demise of oral storytelling; and as critical mediators of social realities, encouraging audience response and (re)action (Dovey 2009: 13).

Third Cinema places more emphasis on the need for clear communication. The narrative must be universally comprehensible to all sectors of society. Second Cinema is more elitist in the sense that some knowledge of art and cinema is essential for the appreciation of this type of film.

In this regard, argument can be made for Nollywood's aspiration toward Hollywood as reflected in its derivative name and the intention of its the people to create a First Cinema firmly rooted in small-scale capitalism and the generation of profit. An African variation of First Cinema is the dominant ideology in the cultural production of Nollywood, although economies of scale are smaller. The average Hollywood film is made for around \$100 million while entry level Nollywood films can be made for as little as \$10 000 (Barrot 2008: xi). A financial return on investment is critical for Nollywood producers, who are not supported by government grants and rely on profit for survival. A four million Naira investment in a film can earn the executive producer a 20 million Naira return a month later. In this regard Nollywood is supremely pragmatic. The films are made inexpensively and sold inexpensively but still turn a profit for the entrepreneurial producers. According to Okome, Nollywood is '*cinema of the street*' in a sense at once literal and metaphoric:

Although Nollywood is also consumed in the context of the domestic sphere, which renders the appropriation of the videoed world as a familial engagement of the fiction of Nollywood, it is the uncontrolled sites of consumption in the streets and the video parlours that account for the democratization of the narratives and purpose of Nollywood (Okome 2007: 6).

The organic emergence of Nollywood as '*cinema from the street*' stimulated a demand for films that featured witchcraft and magic, arguably a form of Magical Realism. Hope Eghagha argues that privileging the paranormal is Nollywood's prerogative:

Nigeria has churned out movies that were constructed around a mode of narrative that seeks to naturalize the supernatural by dwelling on stories or plots that blend reality with fantasy...The interplay between the magical and the real is part of the African consciousness and is part of the popular culture of postcolonial Africa (Eghagha 2007: 71).

Magic realism is present in the great works of literature from Nigeria, in the writing of Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri and is enshrined in the oral tradition. Films in the style of Magical Realism are much closer to the ancient oral tradition of the griot. Sorcery and witchcraft feature prominently in major works of Third Cinema like *Yeelen* (1987) by Souleyman Cisse and in Ousmane Sembene's *Xala* (1975). Senegalese Sembene, the 'Godfather of African Cinema' likened his role as a filmmaker to that of the griot and the oral historian in a 1978 interview:

The African filmmaker is like the griot who is similar to the medieval minstrel: a man of learning and common sense who is the historian, the raconteur, the living memory and the conscience of the people. The filmmaker must live within his society and say what goes wrong with his society... The filmmaker must not live secluded in an ivory tower; he has a definite social function to fulfil (Saul 2006: 45).

Sembene is best-known as a proponent of Third Cinema. It could therefore be argued that the tradition of the cinema griot and Magical Realism are common to both Nollywood and Third Cinema films:

Griots can present history, epic tales, folk lore, genealogy, and general knowledge in their stories. Tales can move from the real to the fantastic, from one era to another and express a union with the natural world where humans and animals live together. The oral tradition also expresses the collective values of society (Russell 1998: 9).

The fundamental difference between First and Third Cinemas in the African context is the representation of the individual versus the group. In Third Cinema, emphasis is placed on the group – 'The People,' whereas in First Cinema the emphasis is on the journey of the protagonist and his/her psychological fulfilment which arises out a need for self-determination. Nollywood stands firmly in the First Cinema tradition, even in films driven by Larkin's '*aesthetics of outrage*,' which are an expression of repulsion directed at corruption. In these narratives, a single protagonist embodies the collective desire of the people to overcome temptation by invoking a new moral economy (Larkin 2008: 183).

What makes Nollywood cinema compelling is the eclectic transitions it has gone through over the last 20 years and its ability to subvert any attempt by cineastes to dictate its ideological content. Nollywood courts the many contradictions it poses to traditional film theory as evidenced by the myriad forms on display in the market as Nigeria negotiates rapid change and modernity. In many ways it can be argued that Nollywood is leading the way out of the recurring ideology of Third Cinema being equated with the Third World, the 'third estate' and the disparaged realm of the beleaguered. Nollywood is developing a new cinematic discourse that frees Africa from seeing and projecting itself in terms of the tropes of colonial oppression. Nollywood is vibrant, diverse and provocative embracing the modern and the traditional. New Nollywood filmmakers are 21st century griots, making films which embody a convergence of oral tradition and Afromodernity:

They claim a position as the inheritors of the tradition of communal West African oral storytelling and critique. Adopting this title, and translating oral stories as well as literary texts to the screen, African filmmakers are able, first of all, to reach non-literate African audiences, and, second, to encourage audiences to react to the cinematic experience in the same way that they would to a griot's performance of an oral tale... As modern-day griots, African filmmakers play two roles: as the preservers and transmitters of African culture to future generations in the wake of the demise of oral storytelling; and as critical mediators of social realities, encouraging audience response and (re)action (Dovey 2009: 13).

Nollywood filmmaker Tunde Kelani fulfils these criteria. He is the epitome of the 21st century griot, preserving and communicating culture for current generations and those to come. His film *Arugba* (2008) was intricately researched for a period of 10 years. *Arugba* catalogues a complex cultural ritual of cleansing and sacrifice in a small village in the surrounding area of Ife, Ibadan. The Arugba must be a virgin as she is a symbol of purity for a community yearning for cleansing and rebirth in a society plagued by political corruption. The protagonist in the film is a young woman named Adetutu who is born into a family of politicians. As a young girl, she is chosen to be the Arugba, a pure and virginal creature who plays an important role in traditional religious rites. But then she leaves to attend university in Ife, where she becomes the lead singer in an all-girl band. In Ife, Adetutu must negotiate a complex modern life of study, pop-musicianship, caring for ill friends and resisting the advances of a persistent love interest. When she returns to the village, it is assumed

that she has lost her virginity and may no longer fulfil her role as the Arugba. A public test is performed where it is concluded that she remains pure, much to the surprise and rejoicing of the community. Adetutu is thus able to deliver the sacrificial offering to the river in an elaborate procession with song, dance and incantations through the streets and down to the river.

Arugba (2008) exhibits dazzling moments of Magical Realism such as the opening scene where the protagonist is visited by a river goddess in her dream. The river goddess is surrounded by a troupe of singing and dancing young women who call upon Adetutu to be the Arugba. This exquisite contribution to African cinema should not only be canonised but studied in the curricula of films schools across Africa as a cinematic example of the role of the 21st century griot. Tomaselli goes so far as to endow the cinema griot with a global physical and psychic ability to transcend worlds, cultures and ontologies as storehouses of oral knowledge:

Peculiarly, the evolution of modernity has collapsed geographical space in a way that makes this kind of travelling one of the few ways open for exploration, with film being one of the vehicles where in the explorer can voyage on quests, not of 'new' discovery, but of rediscovery (Tomaselli 2006: 77).

Films revive the once-silenced voice of the global griot now deemed popular culture through the distribution and consumption of these narratives (Tomaselli 2006: 77). As ancient knowledge systems are absorbed into the Information Age under the auspices of digital filmmaking, oral cultures are able to reach a much wider audience than previously imagined. It is precisely at this juncture that New Nollywood begins to explore the postmodern potential of future filmmaking in Africa. Tunde Kelani's filmography should be enshrined along with works by Ousmane Sembene, Gaston Gabore and Souleyman Cisse.

4.4 TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The journey from amateur to auteur is faster and easier than ever before. Speeding along the digital highway sees 'digital natives' erasing barriers to entry and enjoying greater democracy and access to knowledge through technology. Digital filmmaking tools are auto-didactic and more intuitive to 'digital natives' who have 'grown up online' than to 'digital immigrants' who have only recently entered the digital domain.

This phenomenon can sometimes alter power relations in the class room when students learn faster than lecturers who are not wired in the same way experientially to cope with the rapid transformations in technology. This has become particularly acute since Kodak's bankruptcy heralded the end of celluloid in 2012. Soon we will not be able to purchase or process film stock on the African continent. Lecturers from the celluloid generation are increasingly alienated from learning environments where 'digital native' students ride the cusp of the information age and expect lecturers to keep pace with evolution in the digital domain. As a 'digital immigrant', I was dismayed to see a former cinematography maestro approach a first year student on campus to show him how to switch on a digital camera while in a workshop. This is education in reverse where the institution charges fees and students know more than the lecturer in this area.

But how do educators keep pace with the voracious pace of change? Television and new media pundit Richard Kastelein (2012) gave a lecture at Hanze University of Applied Science in Groningen, Netherlands where he discussed the pace of change from analogue to digital and the massive uptake of media distribution platforms in society over the last fifty years:

- 1. Radio began broadcasting in the 1920s taking 38 years to reach 50 million people*
- 2. Television began broadcasting in the 1930s taking 13 years to reach 50 million people*
- 3. In 1992 the world wide web began to take hold in the public imagination reaching 50 million people in only four years*
- 4. iPod released in 2001 took three years to reach 50 million people*
- 5. Tablets (iPad/Kindle/Samsung) had reached 126 million in 2012*
- 6. Beginning in 2004 Facebook now has 1.11 billion users worldwide in 2013 that translates to 1 billion people (the population of sub Saharan Africa) in under nine years*
- 7. iPhone applications hit 1 billion in nine months*

Popular culture proliferates by the powerful democratic vote of the people. At the Hanze University lecture, Kastelein (2012) went on to cite an example of the definitive democratizing effects of technology and the implication that it has on society in the realm of politics. In debates preceding the 2012 Dutch elections, for instance, viewers could vote for politicians who made the best speeches in areas of socio-political concern. Winners were determined by audience voting via their remote controls in the televised debates. This has enormous potential as methodology for

conducting elections. Technology has come to define the terms of popular culture as it proliferates and delivers massive numbers of viewers to website. Without these massive numbers, online video streaming is not worthwhile for the website host.

The downside is that the value chain is currently constructed for massive numbers of viewers, with minuscule earnings for content providers. Musicians complain about eking out an existence in a world where online 'file sharing' annihilated the royalty collection mechanisms that once supported a huge industry. Now they upload their songs to websites like Spotify and Pandora where a million plays earns a paltry \$16.89 - less than the proceeds of a single T-shirt sold at live concerts (*The Guardian* 2013). In an article titled *The Internet Will Suck All Creative Content Out of the World* (*The Guardian* 2013) music guru David Byrne speculates that film and television industries may face a similar fate to that of the music industry:

If, for instance, the future of the movie business comes to rely on the income from Netflix's \$8-a-month-streaming-service as a way to fund all films and TV production, then things will change very quickly. As with music, that model doesn't seem sustainable if it becomes the dominant form of consumption. Musicians might, for now, challenge the major labels and get a fairer deal than 15% of a pittance, but it seems to me that the whole model is unsustainable as a means of supporting creative work of any kind. Not just music. The inevitable result would seem to be that the internet will suck the creative content out of the whole world until nothing is left (*The Guardian* 2013).

In the last fifty years entertainment consumption has changed dramatically. In the film industry the de/evolution of cinema has seen massive transition from movie theatres to television and DVDs in the home; then to hard drives and binge viewing on personal computers, followed by Youtube and Netflix on tablet devices. Today content can even be viewed on cell phones. This in effect means that entertainment consumption can take place in three ways:

1. *Anywhere*
2. *Anytime*
3. *On any number of devices*

This would seem to imply enormous freedom for users but what of the producers? This question is too vast to fathom in the scope of this research project but it requires vigilant observation as the survival of filmmaking and filmmakers depends on it. In

this context freedom for users and starvation for producers might not be mutually exclusive:

Freedom, in this market driven world, amounts primarily to the right to choose: to choose, among other things, identities and allegiances – and also the modes of producing them (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 143).

CHAPTER 5: NEW NOLLYWOOD VERSUS OLD NOLLYWOOD

There have been considerable changes since the inception of Nollywood in 1992. Over the last two decades Nollywood films have suffered harshly at the hands of critics who call the films 'disposable' revealing creative atrocities such as copyright infringement, plagiarism, bad sound, melodramatic acting, depreciation, piracy and general barbarism (Saro-Wiwa, 2008: 19). New Nollywood is acutely aware of this critique and has responded with the production of numerous films that have turned the tide on the pervasive critique, earning the filmmakers prestige in the form of AMAA (African Movie Academy Awards) awards. Although filmmakers and film theorists may be sceptical about the meaning of awards and question their validity as a true index of achievement, filmmakers in Nigeria and Nollywood (and throughout Africa) covet these statuettes a great deal.

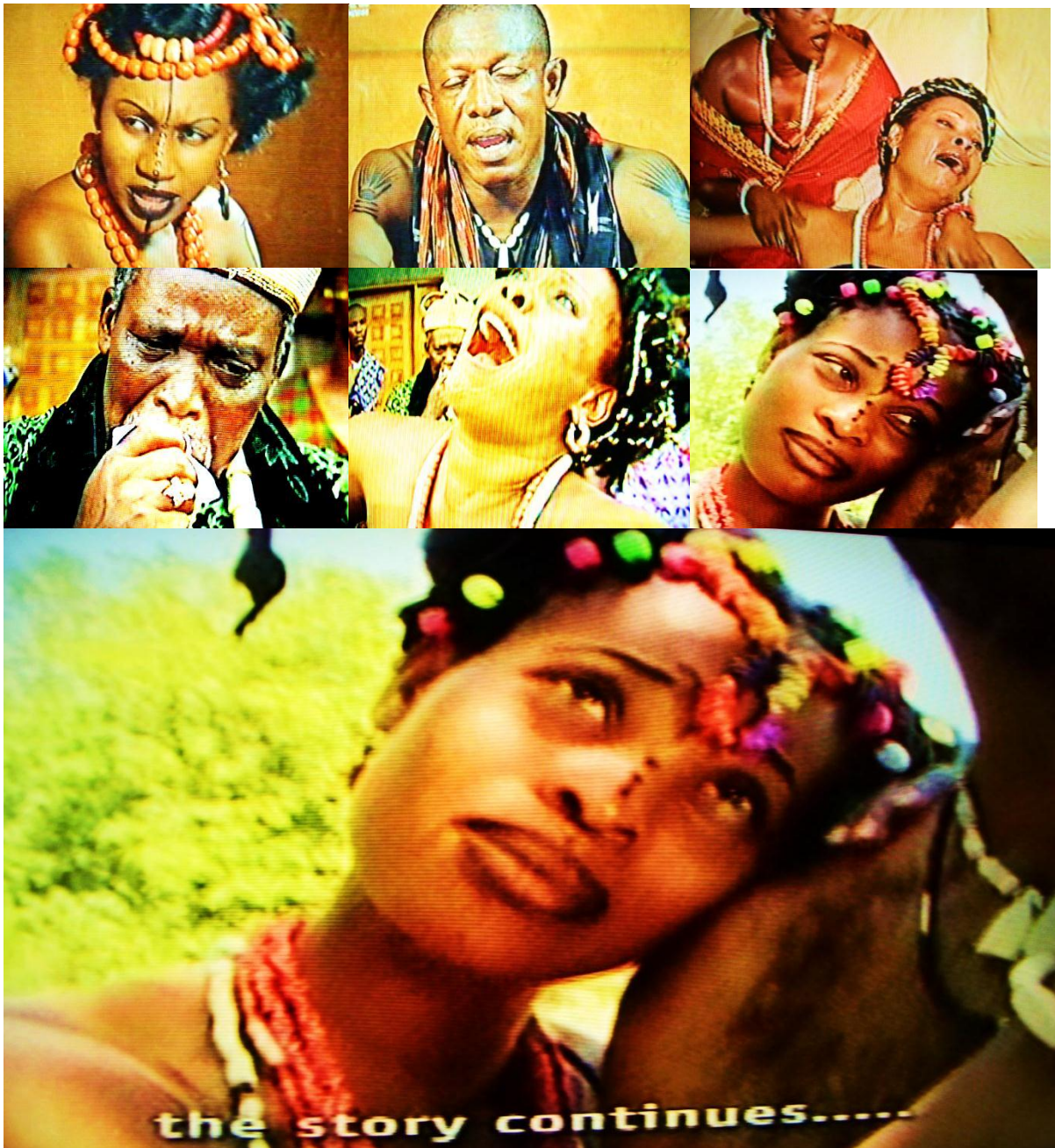


Figure 17: *Stronger than Pain* (2007) directed by Tchidi Chikere. The stills above have been photographed during broadcast from the screen and show glimpses of (old/first wave) Nollywood films on DStv's Africa Magic, channel 152. These films elicit reminiscence for a lost African past depicting imagined archaic village life and fulfil a desire for authentic cultural experience. Diaspora audiences consume these films because they satisfy a 'semantic void' and are experienced as a panacea for 'cultural dislocation' (Kriings & Okome 2013: 6). Diaspora audience consumption of Nollywood films has enabled a transnational dimension and inevitable evolution of this global form as new wave Nollywood films mature going into a second decade of production.

Nigerian filmmaker Peace Anyiam-Osigwe founded the AMMA awards in association with the African Film Academy in 2005. Her vision for this platform is based on rewarding best practice and is geared towards development and propagation of African film. Reward and recognition is the driving concern for filmmakers who:

...work hard with very little and have, not through serendipity but through sheer audacity, managed to build the third largest film industry in the world, and are poised to take poll position, beating America and India (ama-awards.com 2005).

The introduction of the AMAA awards into the Nollywood landscape has evidently impacted the attitude of the filmmakers and consequently the methodology of filmmaking techniques. A case in point is Nollywood veteran Lancelot Imaseun who has completely changed direction in terms of his approach to filmmaking. In the documentary *Nollywood Babylon* (2008) Lancelot claimed he had already shot 157 films. When I interviewed him in January 2013, I began by asking how many films he had completed in the six years since the shooting of this documentary. He balked at my line of questioning and changed the topic to his achievements by placing firm emphasis on the number of awards he has won in the 18 years of his career - more than 80, he says. His refusal to discuss how many films he has shot in his career signifies a change of attitude in Nollywood circles. All the filmmakers interviewed echoed these sentiments. Each one made a point of stressing the evolution of New Nollywood and the separation of the New from the Old. At first I was sceptical, thinking this was hyperbolic showmanship, but as the evidence mounted through conversations and film analysis, I changed my mind. It became clear that all my interlocutors were speaking of a will to change, reinvent, renew and progress. Two decades after Nollywood began, it was ready to close the door on an old chapter and open a new chapter – a new wave called New Nollywood.

Jedlowski attributes Nollywood's growing international popularity to the metamorphosis from Old to New Nollywood. Although he certainly has a point, this is merely one factor in a host of factors that are reshaping the industry. The pragmatics of Nollywood still requires rigorous fiscal control for it to be viable in a country where per capita income hovers around the \$1 a day mark and 5000 people apply for a single job opportunity (Adichie 2009).



Figure 18: *Festival of Fire* (2002) directed by Chico Ejiro (pseudonym Mr Prolific) on account of having shot 80 films in five years. *A Festival of Fire* (2002) centres around a missionary catholic nun who comes to a village to 'save' the 'primitives' from the practice of sacrificing the twins born into the community. These themes were first introduced to the popular imagination in the Nigerian novel by Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

Economic focus has always incentivised First Cinema as per Hollywood which renders Jedlowski's remarks about the collapse of the video industry (mentioned below) irrelevant. According to Jedlowski:

The growing transnationalization of the industry appears to be commercially driven as well. It might be a phase, or it might be a solid development. It might mean the end of the video industry, but it could also represent a further revolution in the geography of media consumption on the continent and throughout the diaspora (Jedlowski 2013: 41).

True, there is a revolution underway but it most certainly will not spell the end of the video industry, which is merely diversifying. The boom and bust cycles of an informal market in flux are attributed to a number of factors, not merely New Nollywood filmmakers trying to reach a 'transnational-elitist audience'. This conclusion is reductive and fails to recognise the reflexive nature of the filmmakers in their considerable responses to two decades of criticism from film theorists (Jedlowski 2013: 40). To obtain a better understanding of the boom followed by bust cycle in 2008 I interviewed a video marketer, Ngozi Igwe who runs Chico Ejiro's video outlet in Surulere called Grand Touch Pictures. Her insights proved invaluable as she has seen the rise and fall of Old Nollywood as the industry ballooned and then burst after 2008. She attributed this to a flooding of the marketplace with what she calls the 'Two-Day film'. A 'two day film', she explained, is shot today for release tomorrow. Ngozi says New Nollywood films are referred to as 'mature films' because they have higher production values and customers only watch these films now. They have outgrown the 'Two-Day films' because they are poorly made. The 'mature' films have won a lot of awards and the stories are good according to Ngozi. She showed us a pile of 'Two-Day films' on the floor collecting dust because their market evaporated since New Nollywood films began to enter the DVD market in 2008. Ngozi's vernacular theory for Nollywood films and their different quality categories put the transition from Old Nollywood to New Nollywood into startling perspective. The audience was responding to the shift in aesthetics with the powerful vote of their hard-earned Naira. To produce more sophisticated aesthetics naturally requires larger budgets than the 'Two-Day films'. New Nollywood films cost more to make and thus fewer films are being made. Fewer films to sell translate into fewer sales so the previously booming video market in Surulere now has only three stores operating



Figure 19: The once thriving Nigerian Film Market in Surulere is now in decline. Notice the sign above the entrance is partially destroyed. Grand Touch Pictures VCD & DVD shop at the front of the Nigerian Film Market pictured above is owned by Chico Ejiro.



Figure 20: Ngozi Igwe who works at Grand Touch Pictures in Surulere Lagos describes Old Nollywood films as ‘Two Day’ films and New Nollywood films as ‘mature’ films. An over turned table covers the ‘Two Day films’ as customers no longer buy them as they are ‘spoiled for choice’ with New Nollywood films.

Marketers complain that business is bad. Piracy, DSTV's Africa Magic Channels, video streaming on free internet sites and most notably, the reintroduction of burgeoning movie theatres in Lagos have all contributed to the collapse of the once prosperous video markets. The distribution markets including Idumota, Onitsha and Surulere are still functioning but no longer ship the massive numbers they did before 2008.

New Nollywood is also extremely savvy in dealing with piracy. Filmmakers have learned the hard way that in order to stay ahead of pirates and ensure that the revenue trickles back into the right hands, they must develop new, multipronged approaches to distribution. New Nollywood producers aim to premiere at film festivals for additional public relations and the attendant free publicity, followed by a cinema release via the Silver Bird and Genesis film theatre chains. These new digital cinemas are typically located in suburban shopping malls and typically screen blockbusters from the Global North at prices accessible only to Nigeria's elite plus expatriates. Almost by definition, this upper-class audience turns up its nose at Old Nollywood fare, but New Nollywood films are welcome. Two definitive New Nollywood films, *The Figurine* (2009) and *Ije* (2010), were both on the cinema circuit for two years and enjoyed an encore by the people, which repeatedly forced the chains to recall the films back onto circuit. Only after these lengthy cinema releases did the films come out on DVD, the medium most vulnerable to piracy.

Old Nollywood, precariously underestimating the effects of piracy, would release their films immediately on VCD (video compact disc) which lead to a glut of illegal copies and consequently deprived the producers of their investment returns. New Nollywood has adapted to these obstacles by introducing multiplatform distribution, and making fewer films of higher quality. High volume low cost and substandard execution is no longer acceptable in the marketplace as audiences are now spoiled for choice. Nollywood pundit Jonathan Haynes describes the commonly held view of the 'Two-Day film' producer or, in this instance, 'Igbo marketer' in his essay *Anatomy of Power* (2007):

The Igbo marketers who largely control Nollywood are bitterly resented by many filmmakers who stereotype them as a mafia of semiliterate traders with no education or real interest in cinema and an extremely narrow and short-sighted view of the film industry. They blame them for choking the industry's

development through their demand for immediate and reliable profits guaranteed by cheap and predictable products, for their philistinism and for their ability to impose worn-out stories and overly familiar actors and to kill any project that doesn't meet their tastes (Haynes 2007: 31).

There is patently a desire from New Nollywood filmmakers to distance themselves from such philistines. Despite the distance, the storylines still hew to time-tested Nollywood themes, including the classic juju genre. New Nollywood films devise their cachet from the glamorous display of well-polished aesthetics as evidenced by the exquisite cinematography, compelling and subtle performances from actors, tasteful production design and a sophisticated modern twists in the scriptwriting.



Figure 21: A selection of Old Nollywood movies known colloquially as ‘Two Day films’ purchased from Grand Touch Pictures showing a wide variety of genres: comedy, juju and pre-colonial ‘epic’ films are beginning to wane in popularity in comparison to New Nollywood films, according to Ngozi, a DVD marketer in Surulere.

5.1 A METAPHOR FOR NEW NOLLYWOOD FILM ANALYSIS: *NOLLYWOOD HUSTLERS* (2009)

The transition from Old Nollywood to New Nollywood is hilariously alluded to in the New Nollywood comedy titled *Nollywood Hustlers* (2009). This film is an astute example of Nollywood's propensity for parody and self-reflexivity. The plot is about two charlatans who dupe a wealthy Igbo entrepreneur named Prince into funding a film only to rob him by producing an appallingly bad 'Two Day' film and pocketing the bulk of the budget. Elvis and Lucky promise that Prince that if he invests four million Naira in the film, he will earn 20 million in two weeks when the film goes to market. The film is a disaster and the real life 'hot shot' movie producer, Lancelot Immaseun is called in to salvage the production from the shambolic mess made by the two impostors. The subplot features actress/producer Uche Jombo who dreams of being a Nollywood star and becomes embroiled in the scam when she pitches her aspirations to the imposters at the pepper soup restaurant where she works. The protagonist Elvis and his comic side kick Lucky set to work auditioning a long line of young would-be starlets hoping to be case in the major role of the love interest in the film. The two goons conflate casting with fraternising, forcing the young hopefuls to play the role of girlfriend off screen if they expect to do so on screen.

Elvis and Lucky squander most of Prince's money on a shopping spree then head off to a movie premiere where a pantheon of Nollywood stars arrive in a long limousine. Elvis and Lucky steal shots of the stars on a camcorder from a distance, planning to somehow use these shots in their film so that they can use the stars' and likenesses to boost sales. They also set up a lunch date with Ramsey Nouah, Nollywood's biggest heartthrob, claiming to be UNICEF ambassadors. A hidden camera captures the farce from afar as the producers will stop at nothing to avoid paying the A-listed Ramsey his astronomical acting fees. Stalking A-list actors Monalisa Chinda and Ramsey Nouah eventually backfires when the intended victims realise that the UNICEF conference is all a scam. Their bodyguards capture the camera man and hand over the video tape to an angry Ramsey who holds the tape aloft while Lucky leaps into the air desperately trying to snatch it back. Lucky is decidedly unlucky when he receives a swift kick in the crotch which changes his voice to a high-pitched squawk.

Although the characterisations are excellently sardonic, the film at times parodies questionable Old Nollywood conventions. The camera for instance remains at a stationary eyelevel to the actors panning left and right, only occasionally zooming as though shooting a stage play. The third act climax signalled by the arrival of acclaimed New Nollywood director Lancelot to rescue the shambolic film is an analogy for New Nollywood being the panacea for Old Nollywood's short comings.



Figure 22: Nollywood Hustlers (2009) is the story of two con artists who use filmmaking as a front for a scam. To avoid paying top Nollywood star Ramsey Nouah they try to rope him into being a 'UNICEF ambassador' instead.



Elvis and Lucky pose as UNICEF ambassadors to dupe Ramsey Nouah into a scam while a cameraman shoots illicit footage from a distance in the restaurant where they are meeting.



Uche Jombo the actress and producer plays a waitress who auditionas for the film only to be scammed along with everyone else by Elvis and Lucky.



The Igbo entrepreneur who invested in the film warns Elvis and Lucky that the film does not meet with his expectations.



The UNICEF scam pictured above is where Mona Lisa China and Ramsey Nouah realise that they have been duped by charlatans and give chase to the camera man.



Mona Lisa Chinda beats the cameraman with a handbag. Ramsey Nouah kicks Lucky and destroys his tape.



The real life Lancelot Immaseun is recruited to salvage the production.



Lancelot directing on set with Mona Lisa China and Ramsey Nouah.

Stills from satirical comedy, Nollywood Hustlers (2009) where New Nollywood director Lancelot must rescue a shambolic film from two con artists. Produced by Emem Isong and Uche Jombo. Directed by Moses Iwang.