

CHAPTER 6: METHODOLOGY

In the seminal essay, *Towards a Theory of Orality in African Cinema*, Professor Keyan Tomaselli describes a critical failing of Western film theory to sustain relevance in the context of African film studies (Tomaselli 1995: 18). This sentiment is echoed in the work of *Theory from the South* which calls for epistemic reflexivity by privileging the African world view in a ‘pointedly provocative and partially parodic’ manner (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 12). In order to address these big ideas one’s duty as a researcher in the field is to develop a larger set of voices which provide a bigger picture than the solo voice of the researcher alone. The monotone of one voice is not sufficient to create an authentic narrative of what is happening in New Nollywood right now. In this regard I have adopted a self-reflexive methodology which tries to index the ideas of inverting the epistemic scaffolding as outlined in *Theory from the South* and simultaneously, giving voice to an indigenous (vernacular) theory posited in *Theory of Orality* (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 12; Tomaselli 1995: 21). As Tomaselli articulates the notion of ‘indigenizing theory’:

European methods and theories often cannot account for ways in which African forms of expression have integrated with other forms, or for indigenous ways of knowing and making sense and interpreting films (Tomaselli 1995: 21).

In order to privilege the Afrocentric view, this research has adopted an autoethnographic methodology, which draws all participants and interlocutors into dialogue in drafting the final analysis (Tomaselli: 2007: 21). Filmmaking has always been a collaborative art form and thus autoethnography is the most cogent way to allow multiple points of view to emerge in understanding the complex process of making a film. This research posits New Nollywood filmmaking techniques and analysis as autoethnography – a contribution towards a multifaceted and evolving body of theory. The research is auto/biographical in nature, creating portraits of the filmmakers based on a collage of information accumulated in video recorded interviews, watching and discussing their films, textual analysis, photographs and online information. Autoethnography will allow the films to speak for themselves and for the authors who made them. As far as possible, every effort will be made to include filmmaker’s observations, their dialogues and their subjectivities to form richly textured personal portraits of New Nollywood filmmakers. By so doing, New

Nollywood filmmakers will be positioned as vernacular theorists thus answering a call for theories which are needed to:

...explain the various, often widely different and original, African applications 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).

6.1 CULTURE AS COMODITY

Nollywood is a projection of the cultural subject into the realm of the market and stamped with intellectual property which commands revenue for its efforts (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 59). There is a tension that exists in film theory discourse concerning communities that seek to monetise culture in order to survive by branding and packaging the 'Other' in order to do so. This tension results from Marxist constructs practised in Third Cinema, which Tomaselli cites as: 'seen rather simply and elegantly to efface the Western dichotomy of Subject and Object. It also restores some measure of the radical ideal of a collective consciousness (Tomaselli 1995: 31).' New Nollywood applies Afrocentric cultural agency as well as empowering economic agency, placing these tools in the hands of the filmmakers who have mobilized to form a far-reaching collective cinematic representation. Anxieties about banalization of the cultural object are largely misplaced in the context of New Nollywood. The commodification of ethnicity in this is a celebration of the African world view and a platform to mobilize theory from the south for all to see.

The cultural project which allows Nigerian filmmakers and their emulators elsewhere in Africa to explore 'Afromodernity' in cinematic narrative form is a coup for the African cultural object. This mode of filmmaking allows emerging filmmakers to share in the collective cultural voice activated by popular culture, which is a powerful force in articulating the aspiration of the people. O'Regan outlines how films are imagined in the realm of cultural relevance:

The cultural materials can also include our ways of conceiving cinema itself. These consist of ideas about what cinema is, what it can be, how it can be important, in what ways its study should be approached (O'Regan 1999: 265)

Cultivating cultural relevance is vital to African filmmaking and its survival in the global domain. Nollywood is 20 years old and Hollywood is 120 years old. Both are

examples of First Cinema which are commercially structured film industries (Tomaselli 1995: 25). But Nollywood cannot compete with Hollywood in terms of production values, which are directly proportionate to the budget. The average New Nollywood film is made for between \$50 000 - \$100 000; whereas Hollywood films are made on average for \$100 million (Barrot 2008: xi). Where African filmmakers are well endowed with ingenuity is in the domain of multiple hybrid cultural expressions. Negotiating the projection of identity into the marketplace is the basis of cinematic representation known as distribution. Distribution of cinema cannot take place without negotiating local and international film markets. Here lies the nexus of what it means to be a filmmaker from Africa in the global market place:

Those who seek to brand their otherness, to profit from what makes them different, find themselves having to do so in the universally recognizable terms in which difference is represented, merchandised, rendered negotiable by means of the abstract instruments of the market: money, the commodity, commensuration, the calculus of supply and demand, price and branding. (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 24).

What is particularly exiting about this new form of commodification is that it replaces the sale of labour with the sale of creativity and culture. Patently the political dimensions of ethnicity are critical to understanding identity production in the Information Age. In the age of the online experience where everyone is required to be 'connected,' agency and representation hold enormous power (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 43/44)'.

The research aims to analyse the Nollywood style of filmmaking, identifying key roles played by industry professionals whose creativity; talent, discipline and skill drive the entrepreneurial machine of Nollywood. More concisely, the methodology will map out the process of making a film from script to screen according to the methods of New Nollywood.

The various disciplines and skills relevant to the production of films anywhere in the Global South are displayed in the following table:

DISCIPLINES	PRODUCTION PHASES	SKILLS REQUIRED
Narrative	Development	Screen writing
Economics	Pre-Production	Producing
Aesthetics/Performance	Production	Directing/Shooting
Medium	Post-Production	Editing
Economics	Distribution	Producing

There are only five critical skills needed to make a film: writing, producing, directing, shooting and editing. In Hollywood movies the credit roll scrolls through scores of names of the crew who worked on these productions. In Nollywood the methodology is guerrilla filmmaking where individual filmmakers will always perform more than one of five key skills listed above. This new mode of skills drafting in film crews has a levelling effect on traditional top heavy hierarchies in that small intimate crews operate like comrades and are geared towards streamline content creation. Each crew member performs a critical function in the value chain and each person's contribution is equally vital. The digital revolution has flattened the pyramid of power at work on the old celluloid sets where an army of men was required to the schlep the heavy analogue equipment around. All the filmmakers I met in Lagos operate on this basis instinctively. Each filmmaker has a diverse skills set. A brief elaboration of the five skills follows with the aim of refocusing the attention on new expectations in the converging world of digital filmmaking.

6.2 DIGITAL FILMMAKING SKILLS

The future of digital filmmaking is moving in the inevitable direction of online content creation as new media convergence democratises the means of production and exhibition (Anderson 2009: 135). 80 million hours of video is consumed every day on Youtube. 48 hours of video content is uploaded to Youtube every minute (youtube.com). Anyone can shoot, cut and share content, anytime anywhere (Harvell 2012:9). Filmmaking tools are inexpensive, ubiquitous and autodidactic (almost) eliminating the need for film school training. Digital filmmaking equipment is lightweight eradicating the need for large crews. Films can now be made by five multi

skilled people radically altering the structure of former hierarchies. These film crews operate more like a band of likeminded individuals with a vision and a message to communicate. This radical reconceptualising of the mode of production in all its facets is facilitated by rapidly evolving technology like the iPhone 4, which has a built in broadcast quality camera, which shoots full HD (high definition video) (Harvell 2012: 10). This device wields the creative power of an entire film studio and fits in your pocket (Harvell 2012: 8). 'Broadcasting' has shifted to a greater emphasis on 'narrow-casting' which translates into greater diversity as online exhibition platforms proliferate directly impacting traditional television broadcasters which are in decline (Douglas 2011: 3). The decline of broadcasting power is a direct result of audiences exploring online 'transmedia' alternatives thus reducing the audience ratings (Kastelein 2012). In this sense Nollywood has prefigured the future of online convergence as it emerged from the digital revolution. Staying ahead of the digital curve translates directly into multiple skills accumulation.

Screen writing: Almost every one practices the culture of idea exchange. People talk in 'movie speak' constantly narrating concepts for films, bantering and brainstorming ideas of what could work in the context of a film. Adaptation is increasingly popular with stories culled from any number of sources: books, newspapers, comics, urban legend, adaptations of foreign films with Afrocentric twists, traditional mythology and oral tradition. Producers and directors will often perform proposal writing for fund raising. Before a production has secured bankable funds in order to commence production there will not be funds to pay a fulltime script writer and so the producer or director may write the first few drafts of a script. At the very least, the director will be expected to write synopses and scene breakdowns in the form of beat sheets. A beat sheet is the narrative architecture for the critical dramatic moments in a script including:

1. ***The inciting incident*** – a big moment of conflict which sets the narrative in motion
2. ***The first act turning point*** – an event that will propel the protagonist on a journey to which s/he is challenged and must resolve through moral agency
3. ***The midpoint*** – the story must deliver increasing tension, complications and conflict if it is to be powerfully sustained to the climax or else it will suffer what is known as the 'second act sag'.

4. **Second act turning point** – the protagonist arrives a moment of false triumph only to be thwarted again temporarily before s/he reaches...
5. **The Climax** – conflicts reach their zenith and are then resolved via the agency of the protagonist who must undergo a major transformation, learning an important life lesson.

Without exception, the Nollywood filmmakers I met all had a sophisticated grasp of narrative and an innate sense of three act structure with attendant narrative devices of conflict and resolution.

Producing: This skill is focussed on finance and logistics. Fund raising is critical because without it the film will never materialise. Managing the finances and securing the crew and a decent script all falls to the producer. The producer will be committed to the project longest from raising the money to distributing the film to festivals and allowing the reproduction of DVDs. The producer is responsible for ensuring a return on investment for sponsors and investors. All logistics, scheduling and planning of principal photography falls into this person's portfolio.

Directing: some filmmakers in Nollywood like to joke about how the director is disposable because all they do is 'call action and cut!' This seems to have evolved from the culture of the producer who holds the purse strings and therefore seeks to puppeteer the writer and director by applying the strategy of divide and conquer. If the role of writer and director are played by two people, the producer has more control of the project. In New Nollywood these three roles may all be performed by the same person, not always, but certainly in extremis or at least until there is a budget for development. The director will guard the overall vision for a film and nurture nuances in character developments and performances. S/he will also sculpt the mise-en-scene which is the visual harmonising of all elements in the frame. New Nollywood is now producing 'rock star' directors like Kunle Afolayan, Lancelot Immaseun, Stephenie Okereke and Chineze Anyeane. Their names associated with a film imply a new standard of aesthetic quality.

Shooting: Cameras upgrade constantly and it is essential to remain abreast with new technology. Digital cameras are largely autodidactic if you have a basic training

in cinematography, reading the manual and a perfunctory test shoot will neutralise most operational problems. Shooting digital requires that you automatically take care of the sound in addition to the pictures. The camera operator is expected to perform multiple functions from charging batteries to setting up lights. The cinematographer is also expected to wrangle data and ensure it is archived, logged and captured to an external hard drive once the HDV (high definition video) camera card is full. New Nollywood cinematographers are also adept at grading their pictures. In between takes on set the cinematographer will tweak contrast ratios and colour saturation, applying filters and effects to test out a new 'look' for the film. This avid obsession with picture quality has set a new standard of aesthetics in cinematography.

Editing: The cinematographer will be required to have a working knowledge of Final Cut Pro, the editing software of choice. This is important to be able to view footage over a long shoot and check for missing shots and possible pick up shots. Logging and capturing the footage and preparing the workflow is something the camera personal will need to be able to do for close scrutiny of the footage. In New Nollywood the editors live in the edit suit until the project is complete. They not only cut the pictures together but they also mix sound effects, music, dialogue, graphics and titles to the final touches. The editor will be expected to build DVD menus and run multiple copies of the film and archive it correctly once completed. Most directors will learn how to get around Final Cut Pro particularly if a difficult scene is not cutting together because the crew were under pressure for any number of reasons and the shots envisioned on the story board failed to materialise. The director will experiment with lateral thinking in the edit and try to avoid the cost and embarrassment of having to shoot pick up shots or scenes. Most filmmakers have a version of Final Cut Pro on a lap top and the software is self-explanatory if you have an instinct for editing. The personal computer has led to the demystification of the editing process in this regard.

In Hollywood each aspect of post-production is specialised requiring: offline editors; online editors; assistants who only log and capture footage; graphic designers who specialise in title sequences; visual-effects specialists. In Nollywood, all these functions would be executed by a single person.



Figure 23: Lagos traders line the streets

Ubiquitous entrepreneurs



Figure 24: The 'informal economy' everywhere on the streets of Lagos



Figure 25: Lagos street on Victoria Island

Nollywood DVD shop



Figure 26: Nollywood DVD entrepreneur

The road to Victoria Island

6.3 GATHERING DATA IN THE FIELD

The data for this research project was acquired over a period of a year from March 2012 to March 2013, beginning with ethnographic encounters with Nigerian filmmakers living in Johannesburg, South Africa and culminating with further ethnography in the New Nollywood circles of Lagos, Nigeria. In total the research covers the thoughts, experience, comments and opinions of more than 40 interlocutors who consist of filmmakers, corporate executives and academics, specifically:

1. *New Nollywood filmmakers based in Lagos*
2. *Transnational Nigerian filmmakers based in Johannesburg*
3. *DStv Multichoice Africa Magic executives from South Africa and Nigeria*
4. *pan-African and international Nollywood scholars at CILECT (2011) & IAMCR (2012) conferences*

The research uses a qualitative method to gather information which aims to contribute to the existing Nollywood discourse on popular culture filmmaking.

Qualitative methods used include:

1. In depth interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Field notes
4. Film analysis
5. Ethnographic video
6. Case studies
7. Participatory research

6.4 ETHNOGRAPHY IN JOHANNESBURG

Field work in South Africa was conducted in Johannesburg on-set with transnational Nigerian filmmaker Adeze Ugah shooting a comedy for SABC 1 called *My Perfect Family*. Adeze Ugaha has shot 208 episodes of *Isibaya* for Mzansi Magic and the research included on set observations of him directing and interacting with cast and crew. Adeze screened his debut feature film titled *Gog Helen* (2012) on the AFDA campus and we were able to engage in a lively question and answer session afterward. *Gog Helen* is the story of a vigilante grandmother living in a squatter camp who has to ward off a criminal pimp who comes in search of her granddaughter who has escaped his brothel at her grandmother's behest. The 90 minute film was shot in 10 days on the Panasonic F3 camera on a total budget of R500 000. Although the film is not specifically Nigerian in content, the methodology of New Nollywood was appropriated in so far as Adeze's aim was to produce a feature film for a tiny fraction

of a Hollywood budget and develop a narrative for a grassroots cinema audience. The challenge for Adeze was to make a film under these constraints that offers a solid narrative structure with elevated aesthetics that resonates with African ontology. Adeze developed the script after attending world renowned script doctor, Robert McKee's workshop. Adeze is something of a marvel in that he has the ability to shoot 20 pages of scripted content a day. He developed this muscle while shooting the telenovela *Isibaya* where the crew works a six day week shooting 20 to 22 pages of script every day. This equates to a full episode of the show to be shot each day. This is standard practise for studio based multi-camera soap operas but not for location shoots with a single camera. Adeze is one of a kind in this regard as the industry standard for feature film productions is to shoot five to ten pages a day. He shot 90 pages in 10 days on *Gog Helen*. The film bears the hallmarks of New Nollywood in that narrative and aesthetics were not compromised in the constraints of shooting a guerrilla film for a grassroots audience.

Emmanuel Olabode, a former AFDA student, is a veteran Nollywood cinematographer with more than 110 film credits to his name. Many hours were spent in interviews and on film sets, shooting and reviewing films in post-production, and visiting personal spaces like home, Church and friends. Emmanuel recently called me from Lagos to say that his film *Hope* (2012) has won an award in a short film competition in London.

In addition, field research was conducted at the premiere of Akin Omotoso's latest film *Man on Ground* (2012) where many industry professionals and Nigerian celebrities viewed and discussed the film. Omotoso's entire filmography of two documentaries, two feature films and four short films were viewed and analysed.

Ethnography was conducted at Chris Don Productions, a transnational Nigerian production company based in Randburg, Johannesburg. Chris Don, the executive producer, partly financed Omotoso's *Man on Ground* (2012). The company also financed *Ghetto Child* (2010) and *Jozi Kings* (2011) which are two violent crime films written and directed by Justice Umeh (pseudonym Jungle Justice). Interviews were conducted with Justice Umeh in Johannesburg as well as in Lagos.

6.5 ETHNOGRAPHY IN LAGOS

A decade ago Lagos could not escape lurid descriptions of urban dystopia, apocalypse, anarchy, catastrophe, crime, pollution and human suffering. The pathological paradigms of this city are said to be compounded by massive overcrowding with population statistics estimated to be around 20 million currently. But Lagos and its legendary inhabitants, the entrepreneurial Lagosians have turned this city around under the leadership of Lagos State Governor Tunde Fashola. Traffic is much more navigable and crime has dropped significantly since Fashola implemented street lighting in the inner city at night. Lagos now rejects and defies the negative clichés and beleaguered adjectives which cast the city and its inhabitants as merely ‘coping’ and struggling to survive in slum-like conditions (Haynes 2007: 132). Everywhere the streets of Lagos are lined with ingenuity and manic energy evidenced in the ubiquitous informal economy.

The vast and dynamic Afropolis that is Lagos reflects a striking and controversial duality. On one hand Lagos is a sprawling metropolis overrun by informal trading and collapsed infrastructure. On the other hand, Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas sees Lagos as a futuristic example of a self-regulating, postmodern celebration of creativity and resilience by the people who make this megacity what it is. The United Nations estimates the population will reach 23 million by 2015, making Lagos the third-largest city in the world (Haynes 2007: 131). Nollywood and Lagos are symbiotic, thriving off each other and mirrored in each other. The filmmakers of Nollywood exhibit a startling alacrity found everywhere on the streets of Lagos made visible by the agency of the informal economy. Nollywood films are popular because they represent ‘cinema from the street’. This is grassroots cinema that reflects the trials and travails of the people with vibrant honesty. Nollywood exploded in Nigeria in the early nineties, then across the African continent and now, has made significant global inroads manifest in a transnational proliferation of this proletariat film form. Nollywood achieved this in two decades because it placed **content ahead of form** and aesthetic fixation. This observation is well documented in Nollywood scholarship and easily referenced by watching the Africa Magic channels on DStv, which was a good grounding before heading off into the field of Lagos movie making.



Figure 27: The criss-crossing electricity power lines in Lagos.

For a first-time anthropologist going out into the field, Professor David Coplan offers a salubrious self-help mantra in the form of his 14 commandments for 'extended experience of immersion in otherness.' Coplan's tried and tested methodology was appropriated in so far as:

1. The ground was well prepared with facts and reading before venturing into the field. 90% of the literature review had been completed before leaving for Lagos. Every attempt was made to know as much as possible. The Bradt book of travel in Nigeria, endorsed by Michael Palin and written by travel journalist Lizzie Williams (2012) was imported as travel research. Oddly there were no recent travel books on Nigeria available in South Africa. I spoke to filmmakers from Nigeria who have friends and family in Lagos who put me in contact with interlocutors who were able to provide local knowledge of the field, culture and people.
2. My 'mission' was fairly straightforward: to learn as much as possible about the filmmaking methodology that produced Nollywood, which translated well to the people hosting me. The 'mission' was intelligible because I referred to myself as a writer, teacher, learner, student and fan. I engaged in free labour in exchange for being connected to vital interlocutors. I shot an interview for a producer at NTA (Nigerian Television Association). I edited a short biographical documentary to help my hosts who were working day and night on another project. I shot casting tapes for free for the X-Factor crew in order to meet Nollywood actors. I also conducted a script writing workshop with my hostess Oghomwen Edward. As Coplan says: 'Sincerity is not enough, integrity is everything' (1998).
3. I followed the rules and helped with domestic chores like cooking and washing up and learned to make jollof rice and fried plantain. My hosts and I engaged in 'deep hanging out' by watching Nollywood movies together. We watched two critical New Nollywood films: *Ije* (2012) and *The Figurine* (2009) and discussed New Nollywood versus Old Nollywood and the narrative themes and overall methodologies engaged in these two schools of filmmaking.



Figure 28: Buying cassava in the market with Oghomwen Edward, Shasha, Egbeda, Lagos.

My host and cinematographer, Yinka introduced me to Kunle Afolayan who made the landmark films *Irapada* (2007), *The Figurine* (2009) and *Phone Swap* (2012) and have just completed shooting *October 1* (2013). I was able to join the crew on the set of a music video featuring collaboration between old school and new school musicians Victor Olaiya and 2Face Idibia.

On set, I was able to meet the Production Designer, Pat Nebo a formidable man with a military background always in quasi-military fatigues, who studied drawing, painting and sculpture in Italy and doubles as Kunle's assistant director on set using his martial training to drill orders into the crew. Nebo uses his army experience in the way that he approaches filmmaking, which he explains as organized chaos where creativity must be channelled through hard work to achieve excellence. Nebo won the Best Art Director Award at AMAA 2012.

The editors Yemi Jolaoso (pseudonym Mista Whyjay) and Tosin Adedeji were present on set ensuring they did not skip a beat in interpreting the subtleties of the footage recorded onset when editing in post-production. The music video set attracted a large crowd of celebrated Nollywood filmmakers including the legendary icon of New and Old Nollywood, Tunde Kelani (TK) who agreed to an interview at his offices in Oshodi, where I was able to purchase his entire filmography. Kelani discussed the production of his new film, *Dazzling Mirage* which is currently in production.

Fabian Lojede, the protagonist in the Omotoso film, *Man on Ground* (2012) was also on set and in Lagos to promote the film at the Nigerian premiere release of *Man on Ground* at the Silverbird cinema chain. Fabian and I discussed the roles he plays as a transnational Nigerian actor and how critical it is to steer the representation of Nigeria in African cinema. Playing a cocaine dealer for example is non-negotiable for Fabian as this stereotype is extremely damaging to Nigerians everywhere and undermines their incredible achievements in the arts namely; music, literature and cinema.

African Film and Drama Academy (AFDA) alumni Uche Ekilisi who now produces Tinsel, the premiere Nigerian television soap opera. She introduced me to Tope Oshin Ogun, a young Nollywood woman directing Tinsel who had just finished shooting her

first feature film called *Journey to Self* (2013). Tope is very enthusiastic about New Nollywood and is currently enjoying rave reviews about her feature film which was on cinema circuit at the time in Lagos. Uche produces *Tinsel* in a large multi-camera studio with a full cast and crew of close to 50 people. The Lagos studios were far better equipped than familiar South African studios and the soap opera *Tinsel* enjoys high audience ratings. Ironically *Tinsel* is about the movie business in Lagos, but no one ever uses the word Nollywood on the show. *Tinsel* is seen as premier entertainment and DStv subscribers can only view *Tinsel* on the premiere M-Net channel, which costs more to view than the affordable compact bouquets on offer. The fact that *Tinsel* distances itself from using the term Nollywood is indicative of the pejorative reputation Nollywood still suffers in elitist circles.

Former AFDA student Emmanuel Olabode was shooting a comedy in Lagos and introduced me to Lancelot Immaseun. We met at the Surulere Stadium at a restaurant called Ojez, an often frequented Nollywood meeting place. Lancelot was accompanied by Ejike Asiegbu, the former president of the Actors Guild of Nigeria. An in-depth interview with Asiegbu revealed remarkable transition in the film industry from the seventies until now.

Friend, actress and television presenter Karima O introduced me to O.C. Ukeje and Femi Branch who are prominent Nollywood actors. We held an on-camera focus group to discuss the role of marketers in Idumota and the rise and fall of old Nollywood.

Femi Branch offered an intriguing anecdote that juxtaposes the methodology of North and South, Hollywood and Nollywood approaches to filmmaking. Femi was producing, directing and acting in a film and as is custom in Nollywood and the crew was still shooting after two in the morning. It was an action film and so Femi had to perform a stunt jumping from the roof of a building to the ground in a gun chase sequence. The crew dutifully performed a rehearsal and all went according to plan. As they were rolling the master shot however, the exhausted actor/producer/director doubling as a stunt man miscalculated his landing and snapped both ankles. This is an example of how tight budgets and wearing multiple hats force filmmakers into negotiating situations that would be absolutely unthinkable in Hollywood.



Figure 29: Enterprising Lagosians engaged in trade.

The production had to wrap as the producer/director and lead actor lay in a hospital bed until he could walk again. The crew were furious because no one got paid as the film's funds had to be diverted to take care of Femi's medical emergency.

Dele Fadahunsi, my former colleague on an MTV Base production in 2006 and my interlocutor on this trip in 2013 spent time with me at his office studio apartment in Maryland. Dele runs a television studio in his bachelor apartment where he lives and works 24/7. Dele is a force of nature – one-stop content creation shop. Dele writes, produces, directs, edits and even designs graphics. In the few days I spent with him he was scouting for larger office premises and jet setting to Dubai to purchase state-of-the-art digital equipment to boost the profile of his production company. (He already owns a Canon 5D but was investing in a Red Epic camera.) We discussed the relationship between television and Nollywood and how the two industries feed into one another. We spent a lot of time in his big black air-conditioned SUV trawling Lagos traffic discussing South African and Nigerian politics. Dele is a strident cynic who insists that Nigerians are capable of much greater heights than the current standard of films being produced in Nollywood. Even New Nollywood films do not impress him. Dele believes Nigerians can produce films that will win Oscar Awards in the not too distant future. It should be noted that he found my view on Nollywood patronizing as a transcript of the interview shows:

Q: Why you find my praise of Nollywood's achievements patronizing?

A: *As a product, Nollywood should not be swept away by praise for the size of the industry, it being the second largest in the world. Yes, this is great, but, ultimately it is a cultural product and film is a huge reflection of the people: the people making the films and the people consuming the films. So if these films are severely technically deficient and if they are severely creatively deficient in terms of storyline, (like for example when the films go on for three hours in three part instalments, when the narrative could take place in 20 minutes if it was well paced and well produced) they become very predictable. Ultimately, Nollywood has a huge global audience and market, but the demographics of that market has nothing in common with the main stream international market. Not a single Nollywood film could stand up next to a Hollywood film at the international box office. Yes, there are festivals and awards and yes New Nollywood is making some inroads into the diaspora communities but we are not 'big' and we have not 'arrived'. When we do 'arrive', I think the economic impact and social impact will be tremendous. But even now we could be doing much better.*



Figure 30: Dele Fadahunsi at his workstation in Maryland. He holds two MA degrees in software and electronic engineering and completed an internship with the BBC in television production.



Figure 31: Trawling the streets of Lagos with Dele who is an entrepreneur, writer, director, producer, camera operator, editor and graphic designer.

If we look back to 30 years ago, there were real filmmakers, like Moses Olaya, Baba Sala, Ogunde and others, not people making the equivalent of 'day time TV' like now in Nollywood. It's not about 35mm film, you could shoot a brilliant film on DV cam or even VHS, but it's about craft and storyline. It will take another generation, at least 10 – 15 years before the audiences themselves evolve and develop more sophisticated tastes. A lot of well-educated people come to Nollywood full of praise, even though they themselves would not ordinarily watch the films and pass them on to their friends to watch. This is patronizing because it's like saying, wow look what these little guys are doing here in backward Africa. Isn't this fantastic? It's like taking 12 year old kids at school and saying look, these kids are making great films. But, we are not 12, and the films are slow and predictable, so why all the praise? What we were doing 30 years ago was better. So the praise for Nollywood as it is; is preventing us from achieving a proper global box office hit that can stand up to Hollywood. Yes there are New Nollywood films like Ije and Figurine that are doing well but how do you compare these to mainstream international productions? In this context, the euphoria in Nollywood scholarship sees us as poor little Nigerians and this is patronizing because we do have real scope for international filmmaking in Nigeria.

Driving around the streets of Lagos as Dele tended to business it was impossible to ignore the proclivity for entrepreneurship displayed by Lagosians. The ubiquitous markets and traders line both sides of every road and street in the city. The informal economy is bustling signalling vitality of economic life. Again, Dele was cautious about my enthusiasm:

It is dangerous for us to look at teeming Lagosians and commend ourselves and say wow, we are really burning energy and we are really enterprising. We are selling tomatoes over an open sewer because ultimately everything comes down efficiency and productivity. What is it exactly that all this energy is turning itself into? We have some very fundamental infrastructure deficiencies here, so in some ways we can commend Nigerians for finding ways around the lack of power supply for example. Most Nigerians get only 20 – 30% of their power supply from the National Grid spending the rest of the time inefficiently burning fuel in generators, which is very expensive. This makes all the products and services we use more expensive than they should be which makes us globally uncompetitive. It means that whatever products or services we are producing are carrying a lot of waste and are more costly than the same goods or services being produced elsewhere. So by that system we are globally uncompetitive because we don't have decent transport or power infrastructure and these are not things we as enterprising people can solve alone. We solve them individually in that we build our own houses, lay our own plumbing, provide our own electricity. Every street in Lagos even has its own vigilante security system. Nigeria has huge potential to be the economic power house for the entire continent. Culturally we are already one of the top contenders in terms of music and Nollywood, even fashion and literature and these are not areas that require infrastructure.



Figure 32: The informal economy at work on the streets of Lagos.

Cinematographer Wale Adebayo, who shot multi AMAA Award-winning film *Sitanda* (2007), and I were both house guests at Yinka and Oghomwen's home. We spent a lot of time together driving around Lagos visiting filmmakers and markets. We conducted an interview around the evolution of cinematography in Nollywood.

4. Video interviews were recorded and transcribed with the following interlocutors: Yinka, Oghomwen, Wale, Dele, Damola, O.C., Femi, Kunle, Lancelot, Tunde, Pat Nebo, Yemi, Tope, Tosin, Emmanuel, Damola, Ngozi and Fabian. Field notes were recorded in a field diary daily. Interviews with Juniper Musa from Multichoice; Uche Ekilisi from Tinsel and Ejike Asiegbu were recorded on a dictaphone. 2000 photographs were taken of entrepreneurial activities on the streets of Lagos in addition to numerous portraits of the filmmakers.

6.6 CROSS-CULTURAL FILMMAKING

My research in Lagos will hopefully contribute to the existing discourse on Nigerian popular culture filmmaking by engaging with New Nollywood filmmakers in an effort to document their response to the changing dynamics in the Nollywood film industry. The New Nollywood filmmakers interviewed here have all consciously doubled their efforts in narrative and aesthetic outputs in response to critiques of first wave Nollywood. These efforts have been acknowledged by the filmmaking community and the public in the form of awards like the AMAAs (African Movie Academy Awards). In this endeavour, Nollywood continues to bolster its pan-African propensity to unite filmmakers across the continent in a collective effort to establish a popular African cinema. The New Nollywood filmmakers are the natural evolution of Old Nollywood and foreshadow the future of digital filmmaking in Africa.

Venturing into the complex domain of cultural identity and popular culture production in film is a tenuous undertaking as interdisciplinary discourse between filmmaking and anthropology is not clearly defined. The intention from the start of this research project was to find a way to privilege the visual.



Figure 33: A young boy sells 'foo-foo' (pap made from pounded cassava) in the market alongside Nollywood films seen in the background.



Figure 34: Nollywood films can be purchased in the markets that lines the streets of Lagos along with tomatoes, peppers and moin-moin (bean curd cakes) seen in the foreground above wrapped in banana leaves.

On a fundamental level it seems natural that an authentic attempt to create an anthropological account of this popular culture film form should to some extent make that representation explicitly visual. In reading the work of prominent visual anthropologists like Schneider and Wright there is an awareness of the flow of thinking and research exploration between art and anthropology where the terms of engagement are fraught with anxiety and self-reflexivity. Emerging from the field with 100 gigabytes of video footage, 2000 photographs and reams of notes, one finally begins to appreciate their angst. Schneider and Wright discuss the interdisciplinary 'mixing' as a mixing of colours. Sometimes the results are messy and congealed, other times the colours bleed beautifully into each other. The traffic between art and anthropology seems to suggest that the two disciplines need not treat one another with mutual phobia. Schneider and Wright imply that anthropology has in the past suffered from an 'iconophobia' or fear of images (Schneider & Wright 2008: 2). The authors call for expansion into this area of collaboration. In this regard, a concrete attempt has been made here to experiment with placing the visual in the foreground. This is achieved by subverting the black on white tradition of text into white on black and by animating the text with visual references. This subversion seeks to respond to the appeal in *Theory from the South* which calls for epistemic reflexivity by privileging the African world view in a '*pointedly provocative and partially parodic*' manner (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 12). By equating the visual with the narrative content presented in this research, the world of Nollywood is brought to life in accordance with the aims of Schneider and Wright:

Our concern is to encourage the kinds of experimentation that would result in new and dynamic directions for both contemporary art practices that revolve around various kinds of documentation, and to enlarge the range of work being produced within anthropology and within visual anthropology in particular (Schneider & Wright 2008: 3).

Schneider and Wright point out that audiovisual anthropology is essentially a sensory modality of mixed media that should encompass a tripartite field of sound, image and culture (Schneider & Wright 2008: 15). They advocate the idea of embracing chance and the arbitrary as part of a process similar to creation in post-Abstract Expressionist art (Schneider & Wright 2008: 20). This organic acceptance of creativity at work in the realm of ethnography is very productive as this guiding principal allows for all encounters to become the basis for ethnography.



Figure 35: Nollywood movies for sale on a car bonnet outside Daystar Christian Church

This maxim is echoed in the sound field work advice given by Professor David Coplan in an essay titled *We are just gossiping; but for you this is work* (1998) where he suggests that one should 'treat everything as an ethnographic encounter'. I found this advice useful after landing in Lagos only to find out that for some bizarre reason I could not draw money from any ATMs at all. An extract from my field diary: Day 1:

Banks play movies and music on the ATM screens. There's even aircon but no money. Disaster - no money suddenly everything is off line. Crying, almost went straight back to the airport and got on the first plane back to SA. Borrowed \$250 from the X-Factor crew and sulked in a cheap hotel watching Nollywood movies and taking pictures of the TV screen: a three hour long

jungle melodrama by Chico Ejiro called Festival of Fire starring Saint Obi and Regina Saskia.

On day 2, I went out and changed the few dollars I had left in the street and was promptly robbed by a cunning money changer. I was late for a meeting with Yinka Edward at Barcellos on Isaac John Street in Ikeja. I had no money and nowhere to go, so putting my pride in my pocket asked Yinka if I could sleep on his couch for the night until I figured out my next move. We had a wonderful meeting with Wale, Emmanuel and Justice. Then Yinka took me home to meet his magnificent wife who was not in the least perturbed to find an Oyibo had imposed herself upon her husband. I spent the next two weeks with them in their apartment in Shasha, Egbeda. I was surprised by the hospitality of my hosts who shared their home and food and transport and friends and knowledge with such ease and grace. Yinka and Oghomwen's kindness to me was a shared moment of Ubuntu, where we they were able to share humanity and I my vulnerability. We have stayed in touch communicating by email every other week.

In conducting this research, I have tried to be aware of the fact that the value of recording ethnography for the sake of cultural conservation may not be sufficiently compelling for the interlocutors to cooperate with the researcher. As David Coplan points out:

...Understandable suspicion now reigns that the ethnographer is somehow misrepresenting and or marketing the knowledge subjects provide for personal or other palpable gains, while leaving his all-too-generous collaborators empty handed (Coplan 1998: 2).

A DHL package arrived in Lagos soon after I left for Yinka and Oghomwen thanking them for their incredible hospitality.



Figure 36: Morning devotions with Yinka, Oghomwen and Wale.



Figure 37: Shopping with Oghomwen Edward for Nollywood movies in Shasha Egbeda, Lagos.

6.7 SYNTHESIS IN METHODOLOGY

Combining interdisciplinary methodologies of anthropology and cinema studies, using autoethnography will document the full cycle of the filmmaking process from script to screen. In this context the filmmakers will become vernacular theorists, and the resulting theory will emerge from the 'attempt to make meaningful generalizations for interpreting or evaluating local experiences and practices (Jenkins 1999: 234).' In this regard, autoethnography allows the researcher to assume multiple roles and responsibilities in analysing the vast forms of data from film production methodologies to ethnographic encounters with pan African filmmakers. Autoethnography allows fluidity in that the interviewer may at times become the interviewee and the appraised data may be infused with opinion. This methodology is an effective tool in blurring the lines between participant and ethnographer imposing the voice of self-reflexivity described by Tomaselli as:

...autoethnography strives to write all participants in the encounter – their observations, their dialogues, their subjectivities – into the story or stories being told (Tomaselli 2009: 21).

This has been achieved through in-depth interviews, case studies and participatory research with over 40 interlocutors including: writers, directors, producers, cinematographers, editors and marketers, thus intertwining theory and practise.

CHAPTER 7: WRITING IN NEW NOLLYWOOD: FORM VERSUS CONTENT

The form versus content debate has fulminated for decades between the different schools of thought in film theory. First, Second and Third Cinema filmmakers each have a different approach towards the role of narrative and the function of screen writing. First Cinema, which embodies Hollywood and commercial cinema, adheres to a strict code of psychological character development tropes that demand a third act climax with resolution and fulfilment for the protagonist. The narrative code embedded in First Cinema is sacrosanct as internationally recognised screenwriting authority Robert McKee describes:

Originality is the confluence of content and form – distinctive choices of subject plus a unique shaping of the telling. Content (setting, characters,

ideas) and form (selection and arrangement of events) require, inspire, and mutually influence one another. With content in one hand and a mastery of form in the other, a writer sculpts story. As you rework a story's substance, the telling reshapes itself. As you play with the story's shape, its intellectual and emotional spirit evolves (McKee 1997: 3).

Second Cinema would argue that narrative structure is a bourgeois construct that is overtly formulaic and governed by a multitude of oppressive rules and principles. Second Cinema or Art House Cinema argues that the film form of First Cinema is based on deception as it favours narrative above all other cinematic elements. According to these auteur cineastes, First Cinema is therefore not a true art form as it essentially brings all other elements of the cinematic medium to service the grand narrative structure. Stylistically, First Cinema demands the film narrative to be subtle and invisible which is designed to seduce the viewer into the fantasy realm of the narrative, a filmic term known as 'suspension of disbelief'. Suspension of disbelief in film can best be described as the opiate sensation of disappearing into the narrative, like with a good book. First Cinema demands that the medium should not draw attention to itself by jerking the viewer out of the 'suspension of disbelief' with overt experimentation which draws attention to the medium itself. This happens when the flow of narrative communication is disrupted through the use of jump cuts or jarring sounds for example. Rather, every effort is made to be invisible so as not to disrupt the flow of 'Story'. In narrative terms the successful application of this technique is known as 'audience engagement'. Successful audience engagement by the filmmaker commands a premium as this is a high-level skill which takes a lifetime to master. *Audience engagement* is a narrative construct which dates back to Aristotle and must be conceived in the scriptwriting phase for the film to be successful. Wole Soyinka's work is replete with references to ancient Greece and the archetypal similarities found in Yoruba mythology, comparing them to Dionysus, Apollo and Prometheus (Soyinka 1976: 140). All the New Nollywood filmmakers I interviewed had been to film school or had attended a number of short courses and were always looking for ways to develop skills in order to monetise them. Professional filmmaking is highly skilled requiring adept screenwriting and a sophisticated application of *audience engagement* theory to make a successful film in the popular marketplace.

The collective effort of storytelling and mythmaking requires active participation of the audience as evidenced in the popular Yoruba plays of Nigeria which is the source of contemporary Nollywood cinema. Nollywood filmmakers have long used the traditional of the griot who is depicted talking directly to camera, or the ‘voice of God’ as the omnipresent voice over narrating over the pictures, and is used to summarise the moral of the story with a homily at the denouement. Tunde Kelani’s film *Agogo Eewo* (2002) and Kunle Afolayan’s *The Figurine* (2009) both use this technique effectively.

Transcribed from the Omotoso documentary, Master Griot Wole Soyinka gives this advice to incumbent writers:

We have not begun actually using words to punch holes inside people. But let us do our best to use words and style when we have the opportunity to arrest the ears of normally complacent people. We must make sure we explode something inside which is a parallel of the sordidness which they ignore outside (Soyinka in Child of The Forest 2009).



Figure 38: Archive photographs from the documentary *Soyinka: Child of The Forest* (2009) directed by Akin Omotoso for M-Net

CHAPTER 8: VERNACULAR THEORIST: TUNDE KELANI SCREEN WRITER, PRODUCER, CINEMATOGRAPHER AND DIRECTOR

Tunde Kelani began his career in the television industry in 1970. He is one of the few filmmakers who have crossed over from the film culture of the seventies to the video culture of the nineties. His vast body of work is considered to be timeless and even now, his films are considered to be part of the New Nollywood zeitgeist. He is a veteran filmmaker and mentor to New Nollywood filmmakers like Kunle Afolayan, the son of legendary actor Adeyemi Afolayan popularly known as Ade Love. Tunde and Ade shot *Iya Ni Wura* in 1977 together with Kelani acting as cinematographer. Tunde Kelani, popularly known as TK, summarises his screen writing methodology as beginning with a profound appreciation of Nigerian literature as an extract from his interview shows:

My idea of filmmaking is the connection between literature and cinema. There are wonderful stories here in Nigeria and I have chosen to use the medium of film to tell them. Over the last 15 years I have made these films and I work mostly by adapting literature. I take books and make them into films. O Leku 1 and 2 are adaptations. Thunderbolt (Magun) is an adaptation. The Narrow Path is an adaptation and Koseegbe is also an adaptation (Kelani 2013).

Beginning a screenplay with a published text enables the filmmaker to proceed with a degree of confidence that the film is rooted in concrete narrative coherence, which is more likely to attract funding than an original screenplay, which often takes years of development. Obtaining the rights to adapt a screenplay can be difficult to negotiate for young filmmakers as there are concerns from the author about fidelity to the text and a proven track record that inspires a degree of confidence. The author and publisher need to protect the integrity of the book and ensure that it will not be tarnished by an abject cinematic rendition of the text. Veteran filmmaker, Tunde Kelani however enjoys an on-going collaboration with Nigerian authors and the result is clearly visible in the poignant tone of his films.

8.1 FILM ANALYSIS: MAGUN 'THUNDERBOLT' (2000) PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY TUNDE KELANI

Magun is an adaptation based on the novel by Adebayo Faleti. The narrative exhibits clear A, B and C story lines and follows all the major turning points displaying a deft resolution of complex social and cultural conflict. The A story line deals with marital tension and fear of infidelity between a husband, Yinka and his wife, Ngozi who are newlywed and have to endure a longdistance relationship as his wife must complete National Youth Service stationed in another town. The B story line explores the ethnic tension between the Ibo and Yoruba and the ways in which both groups stereotype each other. Ngozi is Ibo and Yinka is Yoruba. Yinka becomes increasingly paranoid about his beautiful wife living in another town where he cannot keep a watchful eye over her. As their sex life deteriorates, his beer-drinking male friends feed his insecurities by eliciting stereotypes of Ibo women and their supposed propensity for infidelity. As Ngozi is a beautiful woman, Yinka assumes that she is cheating on him. He places a spell known as a 'Magun' on her which curses any man who sleeps with her to death by massive haemorrhaging. This 'Magun' is the leading factor in the C story line which deals with the tensions between traditional healers, who seek to 'cure' the afflicted woman, and proponents of Western science, who deny the very existence of such a curse.

At the denouement the film offers a startling example of 'Afromodernity' when a sceptical doctor Dimeji agrees to have intercourse with Ngozi to prove that the Magun is imaginary. The unlikely couple have to perform intercourse in a hospital room before an audience comprised of both traditional healers and Western doctors in white jackets. As the couple take off their clothes, the film coyly cuts to a montage which provides a useful visual recap of events that got the embarrassed Ngozi into this strange and humiliating position. When the montage ends, we see the couple alive and well, suggesting that the western sceptics have seemingly won this debate. As the couple begin to dress, however, the doctor falls to the floor haemorrhaging blood, only to be rescued by the posse of traditional healers, who perform sacred rites and save his life. Doctor Dimeji makes a full recovery. The moral of the story is inescapable. The Magun is real, and western medicine cannot cure supernatural afflictions. The film concludes with Ngozi and Dimeji agreeing to marry despite the fact that she is Ibo and he is Yoruba.



Their ethnic tensions have been resolved by enduring this paranormal trauma. The narrative is therefore a compelling example of how folkloric wisdom can bridge the binaries of the traditional and modern in the formation of a useful aphorism that neutralises ethnic tension and affirms the African world view.

In this context, the use of magic and the supernatural becomes a highly creative tool opening up endless narrative possibilities for story tellers and filmmakers which resonate with Magic Realism. Magic Realism seeks to 'naturalise the supernatural by dwelling on stories and plots that blend fantasy and reality (Eghagha 2007: 71).' Reflecting the interplay of the magical and the real, Hope Eghagha writes about Nollywood's riveting blend of voodoo, politics and Christianity. She describes Nollywood as having a strong capacity to direct the 'deep currents in the psyche of its captive audiences, particularly its African audiences'. The interchange between the magical and the real is part of the African consciousness and is part of the popular culture of postcolonial Africa as evidenced in the works of Ben Okri and Wole Soyinka (Eghagha 2007: 71). Wole Soyinka himself expresses it thus in his seminal essay *The Fourth Stage*:

The persistent search for the meaning of cultural or private experience is, at the least, man's recognition of certain areas of depth experience which are not satisfactorily explained by general aesthetic theories...there, illusively, hovers the key to the human paradox, to man's experience of being and non-being (Soyinka 1976:140).

Soyinka describes the tensions between natural and supernatural, fantasy and reality as the world of the living, and the world of the dead, and the world of the unborn: 'The past is the ancestors'; the present belongs to the living, and the future to the unborn (Soyinka 1976: 149).'

Magic Realism is a well-established genre in literature yet in Nollywood filmmaking this genre fails to gain traction with critics. Zina Saro-Wiwa observes that initially juju films were thought to tarnish the nation's moral health (Saro-Wiwa 2008: 23). But the 'intercourse of the natural and the supernatural is part of the African imagination', says Eghagha (Eghagha 2007: 71). Magic Realism is an ideology born of a creative desire to claim cultural liberation and assert Afrocentricity in aesthetic and narrative form (Eghagha 2007: 74). Magic Realism is a creative tool with which to throw off the shackles of global cultural imperialism. To negate the use of magic, voodoo or juju in Nollywood films is to steal the thunder from the gods, to deprive Ogun of his chthonic charm. Contravening the supernatural in African film is to sanitise its world view and deny it of innate power – a grotesque throwback to the 'developmental' task of colonial films (Larkin 2008: 168). Eghagha reminds us that in this context, 'power' translates into control: political, cultural and economic. The right to control a

collective representation and projection to the world at large of what Africa is, not what others think it should be (Eghagha 2007: 74).

Magun (2000) fulfils this criterion while delivering a masterfully told story with universal appeal. *Magun* (2000) is structurally near flawless exhibiting hallmarks of canonised screen writing film theorists from Campbell to Vogler and McKee. *Magun* is also an exceptional film as it undermines the masculine domination of the Hero's Journey, thus reversing the narrative construct and repurposing it as a Heroine's Journey. Although there is much criticism for the masculine orientation of The Hero's Journey, it is important to consider the concept of the hero is a universal narrative device that represents the ego in psychological terms (Vogler 2007: 29). The 'hero' is androgynous vehicle to construct male or female protagonists with universal qualities that the audience can relate to as they are alpha beings through whom we live and learn vicariously.

B E G I N N I N G	<i>Hero with a Thousand Faces</i>	<i>The Writer's Journey</i>	<i>Three Act Structure</i>
	Departure 1. The world of the common day 2. Call to adventure 3. Refusal of the call 4. The reluctant hero/ine 5. Supernatural aid 6. The threshold of adventure	Establish 1. Ordinary world 2. Call to adventure 3. Refusal of the call 4. Reluctant hero/ine 5. The wise old man 6. Into the special world	The situation 1. Opening event with a disturbance 2. The major dramatic question
	Initiation 7. Road of trials 8. Meeting the goddess 9. Woman as temptress (Man as vindictive) 10. Atonement with the father 11. Apotheosis 12. The Ultimate boon	Develop 7. Tests, allies and enemies 8. Approach the innermost cave 9. Supreme ordeal 10. Reward	The complication 3. Conflict, crisis & obstacles 4. Complication & reversals 5. Rising action 6. The dark moment
	Return 13. The refusal of return 14. The Magic flight 15. Rescue from within 16. Crossing the threshold 17. Return 18. Master/Mistress of two worlds	Fulfill 11. The road back 12. Resurrection 13. Return with elixir	The conclusion 7. Enlightenment 8. Climax 9. Catharsis

Figure 40: *The diagram pictured above is used as a comparative analysis tool to parallel the universal patterns in screenwriting theory shared by Joseph Campbell's Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949) Christopher Vogler's Writer's Journey (2007), Aristotle's three act structure (340 BC).*

In addition to being a masterful cinematic storyteller, Tunde Kelani, embraces both form and content to create unparalleled conceptual and cultural relevance in his films. This is perhaps why he is Nigeria's most widely acknowledged director and producer with a treasure trove of awards to prove it. Tunde Kelani says that digital production and distribution is the only way to succeed in the Third World (Barrot 2008: 90). He has a channel on Youtube which he uses to disseminate promotional material for the films produced through his production company, Mainframe Film and Television Productions. The Mainframe website is also replete with new media applications that enable fans to download clips and engage with behind the scenes footage and interviews with the filmmaker. Tunde Kelani has prefigured the future of filmmaking in Africa by positioning his enterprise at the point of convergence in the digital domain. TK is also a shrewd businessman who has long since realized how to counter piracy by giving away just enough free content online to tantalize the viewer. He then strategically has his entire filmography available for purchase online or at his

office in Oshodi, Lagos. TK says scarcity is often the reason for piracy. Good quality films at the right price will attract customers. As an entrepreneur, Kelani places narrative and aesthetics ahead of economics in the art of filmmaking:

For me, filmmaking has never been just commerce. It started as art but you need elements of commerce because you need to live. You need to make a livelihood. But popular Nollywood even now is just commerce, people who invest in the films just want to sell anything. It has come to the point where the content is no longer important. It is merely a commodity, an object of exchange. But within that space there are people who are fascinated by cinema although its commercial. First we must recognize that it is an art form. We need to make films where people will go to the cinema and they can be seen. There is the core of Nollywood that sees film as a commodity but there is a diverse classification of films now.

Tunde Kelani has made films that span many different genres from personal to political narratives. Kelani's body of work refutes claims by critics of Nollywood that the films lack political imperative. On the contrary, Kelani has produced several films he refers to as 'consciousness films':

I have made several consciousness films, these are films that have a political theme. The conscience films are Saworoide and Agogo Eewo, Arugba and Campus Queen. All these films have socio-political themes.

In the essay, *Home Video Films and the Democratic Imperative*, Adeoti reminds us to consider that although filmmakers enjoy freedom under contemporary democratic rule this was certainly not the case during the military dictatorships in Nigeria from 1966 to 1979 and from 1983 to 1999 (Adeoti 2009: 38). Even now the National Film and Video Censors Board, exerts pressure and keeps artistic freedom in check. In this regard, Tunde Kelani's films like *Agogo Eewo* and *Arugba* skilfully employ satire and metaphor in a process of 'veiling and distancing techniques to address contemporary politics (Adeoti 2009: 39).' In this context, *Arugba* (2012) meets the criteria specified by Janet Wasko in that the political economy of this film does integrate social change, moral grounding, history and entertainment (Wasko 1999: 227).

8.2 FILM ANALYSIS: ARUGBA (2008)

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY TUNDE KELANI

Arugba (2008) redefines power relations in a Yoruba village community as the protagonist, Adetutu, takes centre stage when she is chosen by the Oracle of Ife to be the symbol of purity for a community seeking rebirth, cleansing and social cohesion through an annual ritual.

Ten years before making *Arugba* (2008), Tunde Kelani was commissioned to shoot a documentary in the town of Osogbo in South West Nigeria. Kelani collaborated with the renowned Ifa priest, Yemi Elebuiban and a Yoruba scholar Adebayo Felati. The documentary focussed on the celebrated Arugba, a young virgin girl who is chosen to carry a sacrifice upon her head in an annual ritual procession from the King's palace to the banks of the Osun River. The film is a typical example of a heroine's journey as the 12 stages in the narrative of *Arugba* (2008) will reveal:

Adetutu is asleep, dreaming in her university dormitory in the **(1) ordinary world** when she is visited by the river goddess, Yemoja and is **(2) called to adventure** by a troop of water nymphs to become the Arugba. Adetutu is **(3) reluctant** at first because there is fierce competition in the King's household amongst his several wives who all want their daughters to be the Arugba. Unfortunately none of them qualify as they all have 'loose thighs' (meaning that they are promiscuous). Adetutu is however called by the Oracle of Ife to be the Arugba as she is the only eligible young woman who is a virgin. The consequences are severe as death may be visited upon a young woman who addresses the Oracle in an 'impure' state. Adetutu therefore **(4) crosses the threshold** by accepting this spiritual calling and remains a virgin as commanded by the Oracle and Yoruba custom. Adetutu is tempted and undergoes many **(5) tests, (allies and enemies)** when a young talented musician named Makinwa pursues her relentlessly. He wants to collaborate with Adetutu but her all girl-band refuses him entry. The members of her all girl-band are therefore Adetutu's **allies** in that they protect her from losing her virginity. Adetutu also has many **enemies** at the King's palace who plot against her to ruin her honour and force her to renounce her role as Arugba. **(6)** Adetutu is kidnapped by the King's henchmen and locked up in jail – symbolically the **innermost cave**.

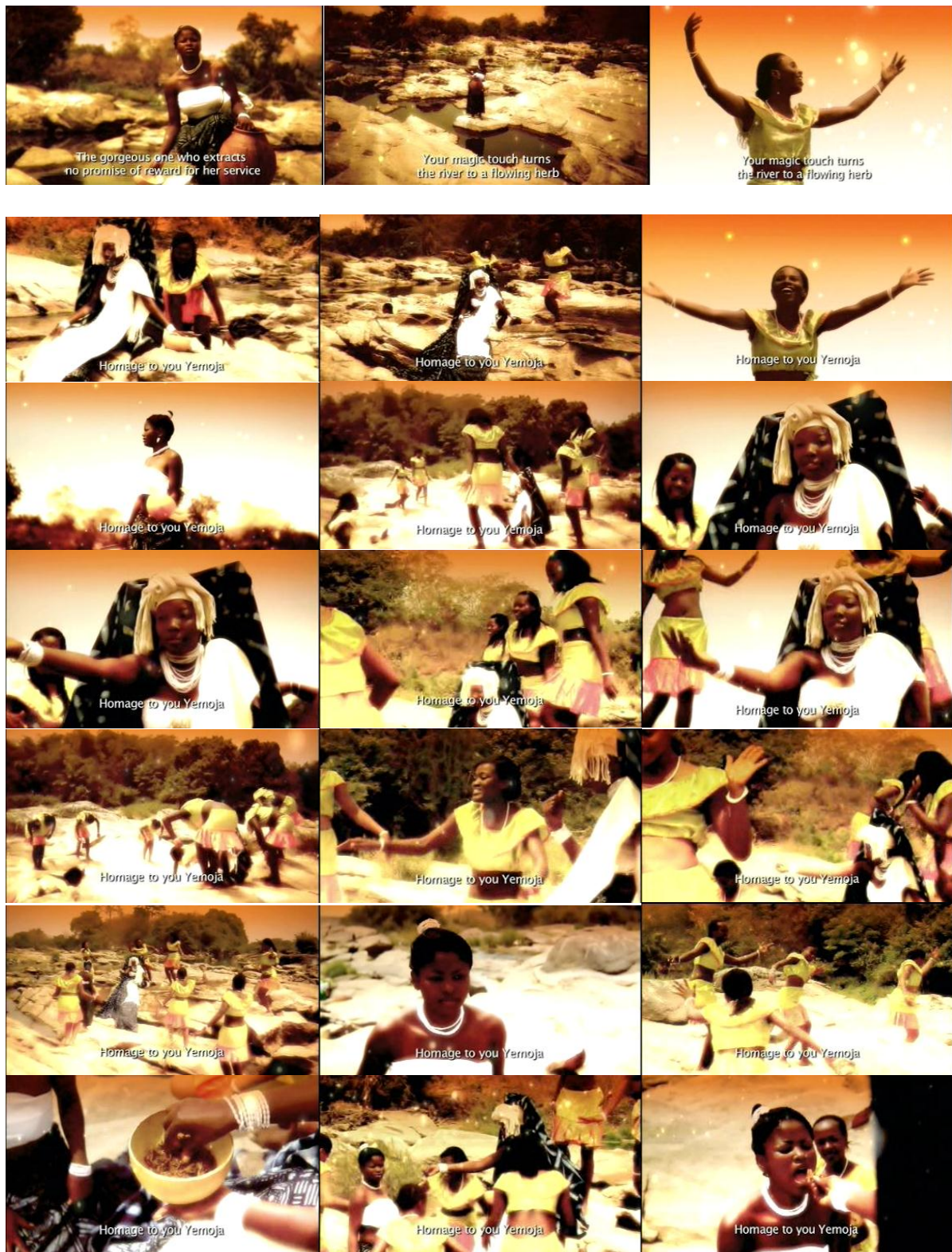


Figure 41: Stills from the opening scene in the film Arugba (2008) produced and directed by Tunde Kelani. This scene makes use of Magical Realism to animate African cosmology.

She has to endure a **(7) supreme ordeal** when the town questions her virginity as rumours are rife that she was raped by three men in jail. She tells the crowd of how she tricked the men in prison and escaped but the crowd are not convinced. She must endure public humiliation by a virginity test performed by the town matriarch. Adetutu emerges triumphantly from the test and declared a virgin to all. Adetutu **(8) seizes the reward** so coveted by the girls in the King's household and is celebrated as the Arugba by the entire community. She is lead through the streets of Ife and follows the **(9) road back** down to the river where the film began when the river goddess first called her. Adetutu delivers the sacrifice to the river and the community rejoices as they are renewed. After her duty as the Arugba is fulfilled, her love interest Makinwa is **(10) resurrected** and the two young lovers are allowed to pursue their romance. The river goddess Yemoja **(11) returns** and appears to Adetutu one last time before she disappears. The **(12) elixir** is her gift of sacrifice. She sacrifices her own desire to place the needs of the community ahead of her own. Fulfilling the duty of the Arugba allows the community to experience rebirth and cleansing.

Although the political commentary in this film is subtle, Adeoti calls us to look at the 'codes, symbols, parables and idioms' in a film like *Arugba* as the parallel of corruption in the King's household mirrors on-going corruption by Nigeria's oligarchs (Adeoti 2009: 52). The King systematically drains public funds by diverting international donor health care funding into his foreign bank account before absconding abroad. The innocent Arugba is ironically called upon to atone for the sins of the community. Her service to the community in the form of self-sacrifice against all odds and plotting by the King is a lesson in the practice of democracy. The film shows how the vulnerable in society must be safeguarded and protected. A film like *Arugba* (2008) is a priceless contribution to Nigerian cinema (and world cinema) in that this film archives history, ritual, culture, performance and belief systems including cosmologies and ontologies that current and future audiences can learn from. This film enshrines Tunde Kelani as a 21st century griot.

I asked Tunde Kelani what advice he had for young aspiring filmmakers on the African continent and what lessons we could all learn from Nollywood. This is what he had to say:

Nollywood started from the market place. It was made possible by the advances in technology. With a reasonable budget you could achieve quite a lot. Nollywood is a cinema of diversity and a cinema of commerce. It is cinema of the people for the people. But there are other Nollywood films made with a good standard of quality that can go to the cinemas and cross audiences. In other words start local then cross boundaries internationally. But ultimately Nollywood is about achieving something with less. We knew we were handicapped from the beginning but we knew what we could achieve. You have to seize advantage, you have to be smart. You have to be skilled. You have to take advantage of technology to get yourself heard. Then you don't have to wait for anybody. You can do it. You can look around you, you can look inwards, look at your culture, look at your heritage, look at your literature, look at your philosophy and get the tools to get yourself heard. That is New Nollywood, because we don't wait. We identify a goal and we go and get it. Go out there and do it.



Figure 42: Stills from the documentary Arugba (1998) shot ten years prior to the feature film in 2009. Directed and produced by Tunde Kelani. The Oracle of Ife speaks through the priest who interprets the signs in floury white substance in the wooden tray seen above. The Oracle reminds the Arugba to be cheerful at all times.



CHAPTER 9: VERNACULAR THEORIST: KUNLE AFOLAYAN SCREENWRITER, ACTOR, PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

Kunle Afolayan is the wunderkind of New Nollywood; an entrepreneur, a producer, writer, director and actor. He is a descendent of a family once involved in the Yoruba traveling theatre tradition. These stage productions were transmogrified onto film by Ola Balogun, Nigeria's leading film director in the seventies. Balogun is credited with making the first Yoruba film, *Ajani Ogun* (1977) with Duro Lapidó and his troupe, starring Adeyemi Afolayan popularly known to his fans as Ade Love (Haynes 1994: 6). Ade Love is Kunle Afolayan's father, making Kunle the natural heir to his father's legacy. Ade made Kunle promise that he would not go into the film industry and instead get a real job. Kunle dutifully studied accounting and worked in a bank for several years before breaking into the industry as an actor in the footsteps of his father. The pragmatic advice of his father no doubt played an important role in Kunle combining his creative and business skills to become a multidimensional movie mogul. An extract from Kunle Afolayan's interview reveals a multitalented filmmaker and provides insight into the accomplishments of New Nollywood:

I have been a part of filmmaking in this country from the very beginning. I grew up on film sets with my father in the seventies when they still shot on film. This gave me the ability to create structure and a business model for my company. I saw the industry change to video film with the Nollywood phenomenon and now the new era where people want quality films. When Nollywood started it was mostly a commercial thing. It was about moving the DVDs and VCDs. People were prepared to compromise the quality. It was about putting Genevieve Nnaji and Ramsey Nouah's faces on the covers and seeing how many copies you could sell.

The Figurine changed people's perceptions about quality films because beyond theatrical release you also get to showcase your film at festivals all around the world. The difference between Old Nollywood and New Nollywood is that we consider production values much more because high production values give you mainstream distribution. In New Nollywood films quality is a priority.

Old Nollywood was all about a known face on the DVD. People didn't care about story or sound. That was the old era. But the new era is totally the opposite of Nollywood in the 90s and early 2000. This era is all about exploring all the distribution channels available. People want to put their films on the internet or pay per view Video On Demand (VOD) on television in America. People can tell by watching your film for five minutes if there is

production value or not. I belong to that school of thought where production value comes first. Commerce is key because there is no point in making a film that only you will end up watching. That way you won't make another film. You have to stay in business. You still need to consider the commercial aspect of filmmaking. You have to ask yourself, 'What is that thing that will take your film to the next level like a premiere screening at a festival? What will give your film that thing which will qualify it for mainstream distribution?' You need to consider all this before you make the film. Ask yourself who am I shooting this film for? Is it Yoruba people? Is it for Nigerians, Africans or the world? If I'm looking at a small market I need to cut the budget. Ideally, the story must be something people can relate to and has universal appeal.

The New Nollywood obsession with quality stems from the international film festival circuits where production values determine distribution. Production values in New Nollywood films are distinctly advanced compared to Old Nollywood. The five critical areas that make up production value are:

1. **Narrative:** New Nollywood scripts have a solid universal structure in accordance with Campbell, Vogler and McKee but also critically include Magic Realism which articulates 21st century African cosmology.
2. **Aesthetics:** mise-en-scene is critical to New Nollywood where Kunle works with a meticulous cinematographer (Yinka Edward) to his left and a brilliant art director (Pat Nebo) to his right. Together they compose cinema in concert working with set design, lighting, colour and composition to produce highly sophisticated Afronoir images. Afronoir is a neologism that describes the aesthetics of Kunle's cinematic style which combines the angst of noir and thriller genres infused with blends of Afrocentric Magic Realism and 21st century 'Afromodernity'.
3. **Medium:** Kunle's first film, *Irapada* was shot on Sony HDV, which is an entry level camera mostly used for television broadcast and not suitable for big screen reproduction. *The Figurine*, however was shot on the Red Epic and used on all his films as he now owns this camera rig.
4. **Performance:** Kunle was born into a family culture of acting and Yoruba theatre so performance is instinctive for him. Kunle lives and dreams his films at such a deep level that three days before shooting *Figurine*, he switched

roles with Ramsey Nouah, making the handsome Nollywood heart throb play the unlikely sinister antagonist. This stroke of genius worked well in the film because the audience did not suspect this character of foul play. This inspired switching of cast at the 11th hour substantially contributed to the intriguing twist in the ending earning Ramsey the AMAA for best actor.

5. **Economics:** Kunle was born in the seventies and grew up during economic contingency in Nigeria observing directly the impact of austerity on the production of film when celluloid changed to video. Working in a bank taught him fiscal prudence and the pragmatics of entrepreneurship. Kunle is relentless in pursuing every possible distribution platform for his films. Distribution has diversified exponentially in New Nollywood since increased production values translate into the need for bigger budgets. A bigger budget means more pressure to meet return on investment. Meeting return on investment means distribution needs to be multiplatform including: film festival circuits, cinema release, DVD release, DStv satellite release and online internet release. Each platform must provide its own revenue stream to balance the budget and offset costs.

AMAA CEO Peace Anyiam-Osigwe dates the start of New Nollywood to Kunle Afolayan's *Irapada* (2007). Anyiam-Osigwe says:

I love anything to deal with African myths and mysticism. This movie may not have the best sound quality but the storyline was interesting, and it was the first Nollywood film to make it to mainstream film festivals including the London Film Festival and Pan African Film festival in Los Angeles after winning an AMAA for Best Indigenous Film in 2007 (ama-awards.com).

The success of *Irapada* (2007) took Kunle to the New York Film Academy where he met Kemi Adesoye. Kunle and Kemi went on to collaborate on the screenplays for *The Figurine* (2009) and *Phone Swap* (2012). *The Figurine* (2009) won five AMAA Awards for Best Picture, Best Cinematography, Best Art of Africa Film and Best Visual Effects. The AMAA Awards are said to be the 'most prestigious and glamorous entertainment industry event of its kind in Africa (ama-awards.com).'



*Figure 44: Kunle Afolayan, director, producer and actor at his production company: Golden Effects Services Limited photographed against the backdrop of his many awards, including the fetish prop from the film *The Figurine* (2009).*

Consequently, Kunle Afolayan, the 38-year-old actor, producer, writer and director has apparently developed an award fetish. His office in Ikeja, Lagos is home to a shrine of awards where more than 50 statuettes and plaques adorn the bespoke glass shelves lit by noir spotlights where these trophies bask for all to admire. Having raked in all these awards in his comparatively short career gives Kunle a distinctly competitive advantage over other filmmakers. The awards and the accompanying media attention translate into fiscal productivity and serve to lubricate further business deals when it comes to attaching brands for product placement and sponsorships, which ultimately finances future films. The imperative to produce good quality films which win awards stems from a desire to ease the challenging task of raising a production budget. *Phone Swap* (2012) was funded by Glo, one of Nigeria's major cellphone networks. In fact Glo went so far as to name Kunle Afolayan a brand ambassador on the basis of his body of highly celebrated work. Awards represent economic agency because brands want to be associated with good quality films as this in turn bolsters their own profile as they are seen to be stimulating the development of the industry in an upwardly mobile direction. *The Figurine* (2009) was nominated for 10 AMAA awards and won five, earning Kunle the title of 'A Scorsese in Nollywood' by the New York Times (2011).

9.1 FILM ANALYSIS: THE FIGURINE 'ARAROMIRE' (2009) PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY KUNLE AFOLAYAN

The Figurine (2009) is Kunle's second film and uses the Magic Realism formula of juju and witchcraft with a sensational modern twist to the tale. *Figurine* is a contemporary African supernatural thriller which features a love triangle among three close friends Femi, Mona and Shola. The love triangle and the bitter resentment of unrequited love form the A story line. Femi has been in love with Mona since university but she only has eyes for Shola even though he cheats on her and treats her badly. Femi cannot accept that Mona has rejected him in favour of the philandering Shola. The B story line juxtaposes ancient and modern notions of supernatural forces at work in the world. The film begins with a supernatural inciting incident set in 1908 in the archaic world of Araromire - a mythical village named after a sinister deity. The deity Araromire commands the village priest to carve her form from a cursed tree and so the fabled wooden carving, the figurine comes into being.

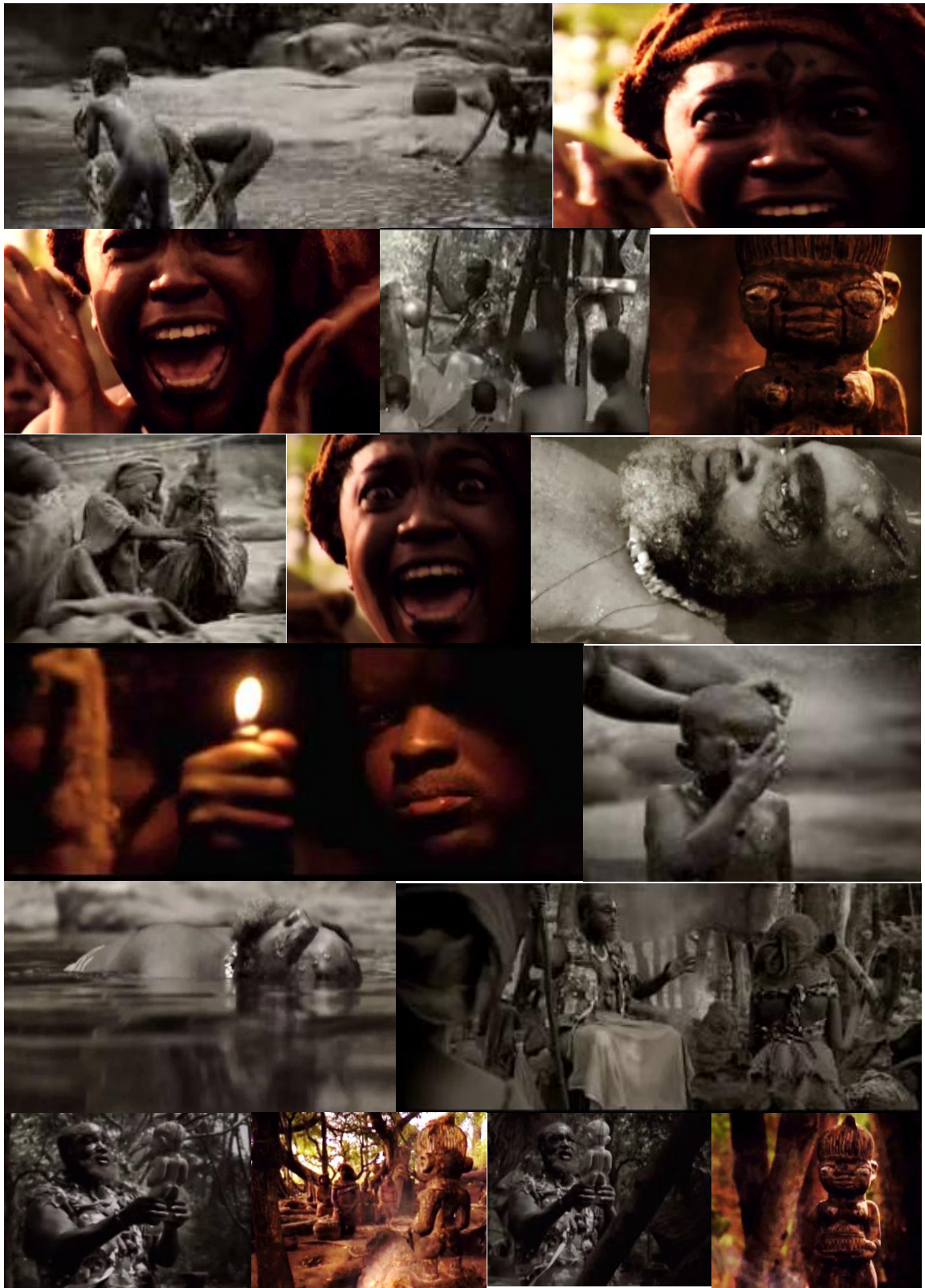


Figure 45: The Figureine (2009) produced, directed and starring Kunle Afolayan. Kunle even performed the underwater stunts to prop up the dead priest from below in order to cheat the floating body shots.

Legend says Araromire later turned against the priest and struck him down and drowned him in a river, causing villagers set fire to the figurine to avenge his death. Araromire then commands thunder and lightning to destroy the village. At this point the story transitions into the modern day where Femi, Shola and Mona are stationed in the small village of Araromire to attend National Youth Service. Femi and Shola discover the fetish object in a deserted hut while lost in the tropical forest.

The C story line considers modern cultural belief systems which disparage the idea of fetish objects and question whether fetish objects do in fact possess real power. In the first act of the film, Mona, Femi and Shola are leading a charmed life of ease and luxury. Folklore has it that anyone who owns the figurine will enjoy seven good years followed by seven bad. As the seven good years come to a close, horrendous misfortunes begin to fall upon the three central characters. Femi's father dies and Shola is caught for tax evasion. Femi loses his high-powered job then Shola's stocks crash. The midpoint in the film is revealed when Mona dreams of the ancient village where the figurine first came into being. She wakes up screaming when the figurine's eyes start to bleed. We are led to believe that Mona loses her unborn child as a result of the ominous figurine. The second act turning point occurs when a hysterical Mona calls her friend Linda to bring Christian evangelicals to cast the evil spirits out of her home. Shola comes home to find them all in his study and proceeds to expel them with violence. He drags his wife out onto the beach where he pours fuel over the figurine and sets it on fire to prove to everyone how 'backward' and 'primitive' they all are to believe that the statuette has any power. Just then, their young son, Junior climbs over the balcony and falls to his death. The death of her son leaves Mona comatose and shattered by grief, convinced more than ever that evil forces are to blame. A twist in the tale reveals that it was in fact Femi all along who was trying to scare Mona and Shola into a break up so that he could finally have her for himself.

As with all good thrillers, the twist in the narrative asks the viewer a poignant question: do fetish objects possess supernatural power? The brilliance of *The Figurine* (2009) is that it lures you into the world of the story by activating suspension of disbelief as applied through the genre of Magic Realism. We are persuaded by the power of cinematic narrative to believe the events presented in the world of the narrative, the figurine really is imbued with sinister powers.

The narrative then skilfully rips the conceptual carpet out from underneath the viewer, forcing you to reject the assumption you have just been beguiled into accepting. Magic Realism is therefore used as an agent of deception that ultimately forces us to ask pertinent questions when juxtaposed against a world view devoid of magic that attributes ill fortune to mere coincidence.

Although Magic Realism is essentially a literary term, it can be applied to visual arts and film. Writers use this literary genre to articulate mythology in contemporary settings. Countless other Nollywood movies Old and New, use Magic Realism in film. Juju films enjoy immense popularity in the market and Brian Larkin offers a reason for this phenomena:

The perceived rise of witchcraft in everyday life, the widespread belief that new elites are part of secret cults, and the fear of urban occult violence demonstrate the intensity of these fears...The fear is that behind the operation of this unstable new economy, powerful occult forces are at work (Larkin 2008: 180).

Comaroff and Comaroffs (1999) refer to this as 'occult modernity'. In Nollywood films this is often revealed when courts fail to meet out justice and the victim seeks vengeance by hiring the services of a jujuman (Eghagha 2007: 92). Magic Realism therefore allows narrative agency to comment on these forces that resonate with society and allows the filmmaker to segue from the real to the unreal, the seen to the unseen, the natural, to the supernatural.

During our interview, I noticed the figurine from the film amid all the awards on the shelf in Kunle's office. I was shocked, perhaps this was because I had just watched the film and was susceptible to its ambiguous message. But Kunle clearly does not share his audience's superstitions. Perhaps he was able to display the figurine along with his awards as a token of dramatic irony at play in the film and mirrored in his own life?

The aggressive accumulation of awards by New Nollywood filmmakers reflects a tension around the fetish of accolade. There is an urgent determination to prove that they are a cut above the rest, and that they are the new visionaries, the fabulous and the celebrated. Awards are their proof. Awards in the film industry reward perspiration and become a token of success and achievement. Awards objectify

aspiration and qualify the filmmaker's skill, work ethic and talent. They are fetish objects that signify New Nollywood.

Kunle Afolayan is a Renaissance man and a raptor. A 'raptor' is a television industry term for a multi skilled person who does not specialize in one area of expertise alone. A raptor is a multi-talented hybrid creature born of necessity adapting to the demands of a rapidly diversifying technology in the digital domain. A raptor is a 21st century guerrilla filmmaker operating in the frontier of new media convergence. A raptor is a filmmaker with a cornucopia of skills able to reduce budgets and work to the scale required to make exceptional films on modest budgets. I asked Kunle how he was able to play three roles on set, the producer, the director and the actor. This is how he became a raptor:

Multitasking happened for me as a result of growing up on set where I learned the business and trade of filmmaking. Producing and acting comes naturally for me because I learned this from my father. I learned how to multitask because I read a lot and I watch a lot of movies and I talk to other directors. I also did a short course in digital filmmaking so I can wear three hats but directing is my core, my dream. Sometimes it is overwhelming to wear three hats because it's difficult to balance everything so I bring in crew to help with associate producer and production manager roles. Your workload is much easier when you have a great team. It is important to surround yourself with excellent crew. I work with a great Art Director and a great Director of Photography (DOP). They are extremely competent and qualified people. I always have the winning team on my side.

Kunle Afolayan is an example of the agency that digital filmmaking provides. Filmmakers are empowered by cultivating multiple skills and harnessing multiple platforms for distribution of multiple narratives which serve to forge the Afromodern identity. New Nollywood raptor Afolayan invokes the ideology of the African Renaissance which calls for moral and political awakening with a need to merge identity with autonomy (Gevisser 2007: 33).

Appropriating the ideas in *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009) filmmaking is an assertion of identity and therefore a cultural product selling cultural identity, then films are objects of self-construction (Comaroff & Comaroff 2009: 1). This makes a compelling case for the interplay between identity as cultural product and entrepreneurial drive that produces a large scale industry like Nollywood where creativity, culture, identity, talent and skill collectively produce popular cinema. These films are cultural product projected into

the global and pan-African market place. I asked Kunle about his method for mobilising his films in the market place:

With Figurine, distribution was a tug of war. We don't have a properly structured distribution model in this country so I had to travel with the film. Like travelling cinema, I go from one state to another showing the film in any available venue. We did release via the formal cinemas in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt but that is not enough. That does not cover 1% of the population. So you have to look at other avenues. We showed the film at some schools. We do all that in-house. We have projectors and mobile cinema so we also do screenings for corporate organizations. I'm glad that distribution is changing. We now have more digital cinemas. African Magic is also starting to pay for premium content so that sorts out television distribution. Then there are so many online platforms. Youtube, owned by Google is looking to do good business with filmmakers where you can start your own channel by placing content online and create a lot of revenue that way.

Online adaptation is inevitable as the digital revolution has allowed the pace of production to speed up exponentially where a project can be produced from script to screen much faster than ever before. Faster, cheaper, easier, better are the four key adjectives that lubricate media convergence. Shooting fast requires crew to be multi-skilled so as to execute multiple functions. Raptors are not about reducing the need for human capital but rather up-scaling skills to ensure productivity in increasingly trying economic times. This is a survival strategy for filmmakers who plan on harnessing the democratising tools of the digital revolution in the production of online content. Kunle's latest music video for artist 2Face used exactly this strategy where fans had to pay per view online to see the Nigerian mega star's new video. The idea was to test this model with the audience to see if it could work for feature film distribution. This case study proves the viability of what Kastelein (2012) describes as a new trend in online content working on the basis of an 'artist-to-fan' relationship. Kastelein cites a working example as the 'artist-to-fan' relationship that Lady Gaga has with her 14 million followers on Twitter. This eliminates the need for Ticket Master, which takes a commission to sell her tickets. Harnessing online content distribution with a functional pay-per-view system that is accurately monetized and hacker-proof is something all digital filmmakers dream of. Cinema complexes are high cost infrastructure which filmmakers must pay for if they want to screen their films in this manner. Ster Kinekor in South Africa takes 70% of all tickets sales to screen their films, which means the filmmakers pay for the building as well as for the

air-conditioning and electricity bill. In this regard, the emergence of online video has the potential to change the industry dramatically. Already, more than a million people worldwide earn revenue this way by uploading videos to Youtube (youtube.com). But what will happen if you are the filmmaker and this year you can charge 20 cents for a pay per view online streaming of your film but next year the market price drops to 0.20 cents due to flooding and overabundance? Will the online audience pay a sustainable price for good quality African films? For now a strictly online distribution platform is still far off as internet speeds in Africa are generally slow. Another threat comes from internet websites that host Nollywood films for free like onlinenigeria.com (Jedlowski 2013: 30)? The current emphasis is on 'transmedia' which is a multipronged distribution platform incorporating: cinema screenings, television broadcast, DVD sales and online pay per view. In this respect, New Nollywood is developing theory from the global South as filmmakers like Kunle (an actor, producer, director and writer) perform multiple filmmaking functions using multiple transmedia technologies to prefigure the future of digital filmmaking everywhere.



Figure 46: Silverbird Cinema at Ikeja shopping mall in Lagos shows Hollywood and Nollywood films.



Figure 47: Still frames from the motion picture *Phone Swap* (2012) produced and directed by Kunle Afolayan.

CHAPTER 10: VERNACULAR THEORIST: AKIN OMOTOSO SCREENWRITER, ACTOR, PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

Akin Omotoso is also a raptor - a writer, director and producer who became a household name in South Africa after his roles in *Isidingo* on SABC 3 and *Generations* on SABC 1. Akin is a transnational pan-African global citizen with a mother from Barbados and a father from Nigerian now living in South Africa. The Omotoso family lived in Ibadan, Ife where Akin's father Bankole Omotoso was a Professor of Drama and English. Young Akin grew up modelling his writing ambitions on Nobel Laureate Soyinka, a close family friend. Akin was raised on the traditions of Yoruba theatre and dramatic art, a promising start for a young man intent on becoming a 21st century griot. In positioning himself in South Africa as a transnational filmmaker he is attempting to leverage opportunities for an assault on Hollywood. Omotoso's friends Gavin Hood and Hazeem Kae-Kazim both have made the leap into Los Angeles so this ambition is within reach for Akin. Ambition aside, Akin is complimentary about Nollywood and in fact cites Nollywood as being the impetus for him to go out and shoot his seminal film *God is African* (2002).

God is African (2002) is set in South Africa 1995 where the protagonist, a Nigerian student called Femi played by Hazeem Kae-Kazim tries to raise awareness to free Nigerian author and activist Ken Saro Wiwa by using the campus radio station as a mouthpiece. He comes up against post-apartheid resistance by the station manager who insists on a policy of 'no politics on air' which mimics the policy of quiet diplomacy adopted by Mandela in the face of Saro-Wiwa's persecution by Abacha. *God is African* (2002) is arguably the first transnational New Nollywood film made in South Africa. Akin acknowledges that he was inspired to make the film because of what was happening in Nollywood where Nigerians support their industry versus the culture of inertia and complacency displayed by South African filmmakers:

In my experience, we still have a long way to go in convincing South Africans to come to the cinema to support their own. Coming from Nigeria, it is a shock because if you know about the Nollywood situation – Nigerians watch their own! The Nigerian film industry is able to survive because Nigerians want to see Nigeria (McCluskey 2009: 161).

Akin acknowledges that *God is African* (2002) is asking – what is an African? The film argues for a pan-African cognizance, where being African is an identity and not a

nationality (McCluskey 2009: 164). Omotoso made *God is African* guerrilla-style in a climate of what he describes as apathy where South African filmmakers would sit around and complain, which Omotoso saw as 'a waste of energy'. Harnessing the legendary entrepreneurial proclivities of Nollywood, Akin and Hakeem used their own money to bankroll the film and they hustled the cast and crew to work on it for free. Everyone had day jobs at the time so the film had to be shot at night and on weekends. It took them 24 days to finish shooting *God is African* (2002) and another three years to edit and distribute the film. At the time myopic local filmmakers laughed at Akin because they did not understand why he was shooting his film digitally on a shoestring budget (McCluskey 2009: 160). Now, virtually all South African productions are digital after the global economic crisis of 2008 and the collapse of film manufacturer, Kodak in 2012.

Nollywood films have become a transnational film form at least in part because the diaspora forms a large receptive audience, creating demand for these films to be produced all over the world outside of Nigeria including the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Africa (Krings & Okome 2013: 7). *God is African* (2002) and *Man on Ground* (2012) Omotoso's two feature films both deal with xenophobia and the Nigerian experience of life abroad. It is in this context that Akin's films become important New Nollywood texts for us to read and learn from.

God is African (2002) is a resounding call for Africans all over the world to unite in the spirit of 21st century pan-Africanism. Akin skilfully uses the Nigerian perspective of being an ethnic outsider in South Africa to articulate the need for Afrocentric cohesion. The death of Ken Saro-Wiwa might have been prevented if Mandela had spoken out against the detestable actions of Abacha and Shell. *God is African* is a conscience call for transnational Ubuntu.

Man on Ground (2012) written by Omotoso ten years later also focusses on xenophobic tensions and the need for social cohesion where ethnicity does not preclude African people from a right to life and dignity. The narrative has been constructed with the aim of addressing xenophobic tensions that remain after the xenophobic attacks of May 2008. The film was loosely based on the gut-wrenching account of a young African immigrant, Mozambican Ernesto Nhamuave, who lived in an informal settlement on the East Rand near Johannesburg and who was tragically

burned alive while witnesses laughed. Omotoso turned this tragedy into an appeal for pan-African healing. The critical scene in the film reenacts the horrendous xenophobic ordeal when the character Femi is thrown into the boot of a car by a group of hoodlums who douse the car with fuel and set it on fire. An extreme close up shot of a match strikes the flint of a match box and the match burst into flame. Femi's fate is sealed in the boot of the car. The scene is utterly traumatic to watch and goes on and on using a single unflinching shot in slow torturous motion. Virtually everyone in the audience wept as the experience was harrowing.

Femi played by Fabian Lojede in *Man on Ground* said that his mission was to take an appeal for multicultural cohesion to the world. Omotoso and Lojede want to draw our attention to insidious forms of discrimination that are fundamental to human nature with this film.

After attending the premiere of *Man on Ground* (2012), I was struck by how long the credit roll at the end of the film was. It seemed to go on indefinitely. During the festivities later this came up in conversation. Apparently the long credit roll was Omotoso experimenting with a new funding strategy known as 'crowd funding'. Akin posted an invitation to all his friends on Facebook to contribute to the costs of postproduction of *Man on Ground* (2012). In return he would put their names in the credits. This worked remarkably well and had the added benefit of drawing a crowd to the cinemas to see their names in the credit roll. This kind of innovation is a startling example of the manner in which the digital revolution and its online platforms can be used to rally support around a film project. This case of 'crowd funding' is also in keeping with the culture of ingenuity displayed by Nollywood producers who have created the second largest film industry on earth with no infrastructure or government funding.

Even though *Man on Ground* (2012) is a low-budget labour of love, it still went on to win Best Film at the Jozi Film Festival 2012. The film also enjoyed international premieres at the Toronto, Berlin and Dubai Film Festivals. *Man On Ground* (2012) has set a new standard of filmmaking as critics have lauded the film for its' landmark aesthetic.



Figure 48: Still frames from the motion picture *God is African* (2002) written, produced and directed by Akin Omotoso. In the opening scene of the film Femi played by Hakeem Kae Hazim prays for Ken Saro-Wiwa in prison saying, 'I pray that tonight God is African'. Omotoso was inspired by what Nigerians were doing in Nollywood so he shot *God is African* (2002) on Betacam SP video.

Oddly, after careful analysis Akin decided not to release *Man on Ground* (2012) in South African cinemas as Nigeria offered better percentages for distribution than the cinemas in South Africa who were only offering a 30% - 70% split with the cinema taking 70% of ticket sales. This explains why Omotoso distributed *Man on Ground* (2012) in Nigerian cinemas which offer a 40% - 60% split with 60% of ticket sales going to the cinema and 40% going to the filmmaker. In addition filmmakers in South Africa must pay Cinema houses a fee of R150 000 for marketing and Public Relations. If the film does not gross enough to cover these astronomical expenses, the contract states that the remainder will be paid by earnings received in the DVD market. These crippling fiscal restraints will see filmmakers take their films elsewhere – namely Lagos. The digital revolution in this regard is a double edged sword. On one hand guerrilla filmmakers actively seek alternative distribution platforms to avoid the crippling expenses incurred by the infrastructure of cinema houses. But online distribution is not the panacea we dream of. It is in fact fraught with piracy and the problem of monetising the streaming of content. Films are simply too labour and resource intensive to make for free. Return on investment is essential, if only to break even. On the other hand cinema houses seem like dinosaurs - inflexible to change and will possibly soon be swallowed up by online distribution platforms that herald democratization of exhibition spaces. The switch from formal cinema screening to online streaming is inevitable as the allure of radically reduced distribution costs become virtually free in the realm of media convergence.

In addition to being a multi skilled filmmaker, Akin Omotoso is also an entrepreneur with his own production company T.O.M Pictures. His pragmatic approach to fundraising and sponsorships for his films gives him economic agency to continue to tell the stories he needs to tell. Akin's documentary on Wole Soyinka for M-Net titled *Child of The Forest* (2009) is an intimate introduction to the Laureate griot. His politics and activism are reflected in his distinctly Yoruba world view expressed through a belief in the deity Ogun. Soyinka's call for multiple stories and representation in Africa is brazenly captured below in a witty yet profound anecdote extracted from Omotoso's documentary:

We embraced ideologies in an uncritical way. We swallowed them hook, line and sinker. I remember at university, before the fall of Communism. Marxism was equated by many as a sign of intellect. Many could not accept that it was

possible to be an intellectual and be conservative or a monarchist, fascist, radical, anarchist etcetera. No, no, no! You see, you had to have the Marxist view of society, human development, even natural phenomenon. You had to apply Marxism to knitting. You could not knit properly unless you were a Marxist and you were able to apply the principle of dialectical materialism to the interaction between the pins and the wool to make patterns with them. It was a very foolish period. The same is true of the conservative who misuse their intellect to justify exploitation and oppression even dictatorship. This left me an outsider because I refused to be taken in. So I was labelled a bourgeois reactionary or by the other side as an anarchist or a closet Marxist. I just said: 'look, a society in which one lives must evolve its own ideology based on history and based on reality. But profiting? Definitely. Profiting also by the ideological experiences of their societies (Soyinka 2009).

Like Omotoso, Soyinka does not apologise for his livelihood. During our interview I asked him about the future. He told me that someday he hoped to adapt Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1993) into a film. This would clearly necessitate high-end CGI (computer generated imagery) laboratories of Hollywood that produced James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) at a mammoth cost of \$ 237 million. Perhaps the prayer in *The Famished Road* (1993) is also in part meant for Akin and his efforts to see the book transmogrified into a film:

The road will never swallow you. The river of your destiny will always overcome evil. May you understand your fate. Suffering will never destroy you but make you stronger. Success will never confuse you or scatter your spirit, but will make you fly higher into the good sunlight. Your life will always surprise you (Okri 1993: 46/47).



Figure 49: Wole Soyinka in the documentary *Child of The Forest* (2009) directed by Akin Omotoso

CHAPTER 11: VERNACULAR THEORIST: LANCELOT IMMASEUN DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

Lancelot Immaseun is from Benin State, Nigeria and has shot an estimated 200 films in 18 years of being a Nollywood writer, director and producer. Although he hails from the first wave of Nollywood video film production, Lancelot has made the transition to New Nollywood as indexed by a subject he is eager to expand upon – the number of awards he has accumulated. Below is an extract of his interview on the subject of awards:

For awards I think I have lost count. My friends joke that my kids now play with my awards but awards are very very important to me, honestly. Like there is an award I won for Best film, it was on human trafficking. I made a film that preached against human trafficking, HIV AIDS and stigmatisation and it won for best film. That award was very important because it came with money (laughs) most awards you just get a plaque, but this one came with money, so I was excited for winning that. I have won many awards, best director award at Nollywood African Film Critics Awards. There is hardly a year since I got into Nollywood that I don't pick up an award. Even special recognition awards so I give God the glory, that's what we say in Nollywood. When the AMAA awards started we all loved it and looked forward to it because everyone wanted to make good films to win the AMAA. So it means a lot to us.

I asked Lancelot how he got into the Nollywood industry and what things were like in Lagos in the early nineties for him. Lancelot recalls some hardships which paid off with success:

When I left Benin, the second day in Lagos I got a job working at the Nigerian Television Association (NTA). I was living in a parked bus on the street and all I had was 2 Naira. But because I know what it means to be of service I was hired at the NTA. People want to make excuses for their failure and why they can't make it. Yes, life is full of difficulties, no doubt, challenges, no doubt, disappointment, no doubt. But I don't give up easily – that is number one. The spirit of the average Nigerian is my hallmark. So this year is 18 years behind the camera as a director and I will keep counting.

I asked Lancelot what gave him the impetus to make award winning films with limited resources. Here are his reflections:

I realised early on in my career that we were bereft of finance and bereft of economic support. We did not have cranes and dollies and jibs and all the things that gave impetus to American films. Nobody will believe me if I can't tell a believable story. I can't say it's because I don't have money. No, my story must still be believable. So I put myself in the audience and I ask myself, 'How possible is this?' And this is how I produce award winning films. Actresses go on stage to collect the AMAA and they say, 'This award belongs to Lancelot'. So this is my gift.



Figure 50: Interview with Lancelot Immaseun at the Nigerian Television Association (NTA) Wale Adebayo on camera shooting the interview (2013).

We discussed the effects of globalisation on Nollywood cinema and Lancelot was optimistic about taking Nollywood films to a global audience:

When we started, it was for us, by us, but now the world is getting interested. There are global stories like my next film - Invasion 1897, the invasion of the Benin empire by the British. We want reparation. We want the artefacts and history of my people that was taken away, we want it to be brought back. 'Invasion 1897' is a deliberate attempt to attract global attention to the issue of repatriation. In 1897, the British government carted away billions of pounds of traditional artworks from Benin state. These are the history of a people, the records. We have a lot of bronze, wood and ivory carving that were carted away. So this movie is deliberate statement about reparation. It's not just a movie. We want this movie to prick them - that is part of globalisation. We are telling our stories more globally so that people can understand. Invasion 1897 is my biggest movie ever and I want to distribute it to at least 50 countries through-out the world so that I can make my money back.

In conclusion, I asked Lancelot what the future held for the development of Nollywood and he said:

We need to regulate the industry and introduce good practise. Nollywood has transcended Nigeria. Government officials are calling for Nollywood stars to endorse them. But what happens after the campaign? How do we take this to the next level? We need to sit down and get commitment from government to stimulate the industry.

11.1 FILM ANALYSIS: RELOADED 1 AND 2 DIRECTED BY LANCELOT IMMASEUN (2012) PRODUCED BY EMEM ISONG AND DESMOND ELLIOT

Reloaded parts 1 & 2 are part soap opera, part telenovela and part melodrama focussing on three couples and their various conflicts. The male characters are all chauvinists and the films are in many respects didactic, as if seeking to educate Nigerian males about what constitutes permissible behaviour towards women. The three male stereotypes are: the commitment phobic cheater, the relentless philanderer and the wife beater. All three men are placed under moral scrutiny by the narrator, a 21st century feminine griot played by Stephanie Okereke. Stephanie's character talks directly to camera, filling the audience in on intimate details and backstories of the characters that are unbeknown to the other characters in the script. She is part gossip girl, part agony aunt and part Reality TV presenter. Ironically, her relationship also has some complications which need to be aired

before the end of the show. *Reloaded 2* ends in a Reality TV simulated studio environment where all the women are interviewed by a presenter and are forced to reflect on the abuse they have had to endure by their badly behaved male counterparts. This morality tale ending is an empowering self-esteem boost to the collective female ego designed to encourage secular dialogue about domestic abuse both physical and psychological. The moral of the story is to show young women where to draw the line and the difference between what is acceptable male behaviour in a relationship and what is not.

CHAPTER 12: VERNACULAR THEORIST: CHINEZE ANYAENE SCREENWRITER, DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER

Chineze Anyaene, a filmmaker from Abuja is reportedly the youngest female director in Nollywood. In 2005, Chineze began a one year filmmaking program at the New York Film Academy, then went on to complete a Master's degree where she developed, produced and directed *Ije, The Journey* (2010). *Ije* was shot in Nigeria and the United States on a budget of \$2.5 million US dollars according to the internet movie database (imdb.com). This is an extremely high budget by Nollywood standards. *Ije* is a thriller based on African delusions about the American dream. Beneath the glossy veneer of first world society, racism and sexism are still rife particularly when directed at African women who are portrayed as being second class citizens in a global power struggle for equality. The effects of racism and sexism are experienced by two sisters, one behind bars for crime she did not commit and the other desperately trying to negotiate a legal system geared towards discrimination.

Ije (2010) is a woman's rights awareness film, with a portion of the sales going to the VOW foundation which raises awareness about gender based violence and inequality towards women in Africa. The film premiered at the Odeon in London, and was then distributed via Silverbird, Ozone and Genesis cinema theatres in Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt. The films' stars are two major Nollywood women, Genevive Nnaji and Omotola Jalade-Ekeinde.

12.1 FILM ANALYSIS: IJE: THE JOURNEY (2010)

WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY CHINEZE ANYAENE

The film deals with the ambiguous notion of America being the 'gateway to heaven' in the popular imagination of Africans. This myth is soon shattered when two sisters grow up in rural Nigeria then part ways in adulthood. Anya, the older sister immigrates to America in search of an imagined life of wealth and affluence. She marries a prosperous but shady gambler who holds private gambling parties in his mansion where Anya is expected to attend to their decadent whims. Her husband, 'Mr Machino' allows the gamblers to engage sexually with his wife while he watches. He then beats her to avenge his feelings of resentment and jealousy. These parties are fuelled by alcohol and illegal substances which inevitably lead to violence. Mr Machino is shot dead over a gambling debt and Anya is taken into police custody, accused of murdering her husband. Her public defender (lawyer) advises her to enter a plea bargain and plead guilty to a crime she did not commit in order to reduce her sentence. The circumstantial evidence of the case prejudices Anya as she is an African woman who is assumed to have killed her rich white husband for his alleged fortune. Anya's sister, Chioma travels from Nigeria in an attempt to untangle the legal mess her sister Anya has landed in. The film is intended to raise awareness of rape, domestic violence and gender inequality.

The depiction of African women in the film *Ije* is intended to be empowering, creating awareness of women's struggles against male domination and persistent discrimination directed at Nigerians abroad. The message and purpose of this film is rooted in Third Cinema style social activism which emphasises the oppression of women, specifically black women, who in the construct of the film, suffer racial prejudice and gender based violence. In this respect, *Ije* meets the demands of Mistry and Ellapen that films made in Africa should be '*politically progressive*' and embrace the ideals of social change. *Ije* also portrays African women on the global stage as powerful and victorious over a corrupt Western legal system, which further elevates the film in terms of its ideological mission (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 48). *Ije* (2010) wrests agency for African women while at the same time, paradoxically, reinforcing stereotypes of African women portrayed in international films as victims of oppression.



Figure 51: Still frames from the motion picture Ije, The Journey (2010) produced and directed by Chineze Anyaene and starring Genevieve Nnaji

The message encoded in the film is overtly political and ultimately seeks to reclaim the lost power of women to the towering legal and financial systems of the West.

Although the film was celebrated internationally at film festivals in the diaspora, *Ije* (2010) seems to have had mixed results with the Nigerian audience. According to Chineze, *Ije* did not break even after the cinema release, which is why it had to go to DVD. Only after international cinema release, DVD sales and online streaming did *Ije* break even and begin to turn a profit. This despite the film winning eight major international awards including: San Francisco Black Film Festival Award; Canada International Film Festival Award, Arizona Black Film Showcase Award, Treasure Coast Film Festival Award, Hawaii Film Festival Award, Mexico International Film Festival Award, Swansea Bay Film Festival Award and the Las Vegas International Film Festival Award.

After all the hype generated by the film's triumph on the international film festival circuit, *Ije* (2010) remained to be tested on home turf in Nigeria which is why Chineze started a production company called Xandria Productions in order to focus on distribution. Although *Ije* (2010) earned 60 million Naira (\$380 000) at the Nigerian box office, this paltry sum does not break even on the investment of \$2.5 million (Jedlowski 2013: 39). Distribution has always been a challenge for filmmakers as the only way to stop piracy is to ensure that the film is readily available in the market place. Research shows that people would rather buy the original film than pirate it because they can rely on the quality of an original DVD whereas pirated films suffer technical problems making them disappointing to watch. Pirated DVDs are notorious for digital drop out; blurry images; faded colour; pictures that skip and jump; missing chapters of the story; and duds that do not play at all. Pirates continue to release substandard and stolen product into the market unchecked, but Chineze plans to put a stop to this using *Ije* (2010) as a trial run. She achieved this by placing uniformed hawkers wearing *Ije* branded clothing, selling good quality original DVDs on the busy arterial roads of Lagos in peak traffic.

Distribution aside, *Ije*, may have suffered at the box office because the concept of the film failed to resonate with the audience in the same capacity as a film like *Phone Swap* (2012). *Ije*, the international courtroom drama, which features disturbing sexual violence towards African women overtly subscribes to the precept of Third

Cinema. The political imperative in the film forces the narrative into contradiction which unintentionally reinforces the stereotypes it seeks to undermine. In the words of female Nigerian author, Chimamanda Adichie, the portrayal of African women in this film narrates a 'single story' depicting women as objects of pity.

In contrast to *Ije* (2010) which struggled to break even on a budget of \$2.5 million, the budget of *Phone Swap* (2012) with an estimated budget of less than \$0.5 million was fully recouped at cinema release.

12.2 VERNACULAR THEORIST: KUNLE AFOLAYAN ON FILM FESTIVALS

Phone Swap (2012) is a bright comedy drama according to Afolayan who says the film was not only a commercial success but also performed well on the film festival circuit. *Phone Swap* (2012) is a romantic comedy based on the idea that opposites attract where the male and female lead characters are binary counterparts of one another. Akin is affluent and uptight. Mary is witty and working class. The two characters literally collide into each other at a busy airport. They both drop their identical phones on impact and stoop to pick them up in the crowd and so the phones are swapped. Mary now has access to Akin's information and he has access to hers. They end up taking each other's flights according to data received on the phones. They both realise they are on the wrong flight in mid-air and are forced to adapt to what events may await at the wrong destination. They walk a mile in each other's shoes as each one must negotiate the other's meetings and commitments. The social, cultural and gender juxtapositions create a vibrant context for comedy.

After the thriller, *Figurine* (2009), Afolayan seems to have also excelled at the romantic comedy genre. I asked Kunle to describe his experience of taking *Phone Swap* (2012) to film festivals:

I said to the people at the film festival screening that I did not make Phone Swap for the festival circuit and they said; 'No! Are you kidding? This film can easily do the festival circuit.' This is because it has a lot to do with the differences in class and language and culture embedded in the film. The film was shot on two locations: urban and rural which explains the difference in class structures, rich and poor, male and female. When I shot Phone Swap it was just meant to be popular culture. But at the end of the day, it was invited to the Rotterdam Film Festival and several other film festivals. So it is a festival film, but also a commercial film, which I find very interesting.

From my point of view, film festivals are a place to build a career. When I started making films I thought the best thing that can happen to anybody's career is to open or screen at a festival. But I have come to realise that you don't have to be at every festival, because at the end of the day, if you are an independent filmmaker from Africa, it is difficult for you to get your film bought by distributors except if there is some sort of collaboration or co-production deal with Europe or America. South Africa is different because they have won an Oscar and that is because there is a relationship with Europe and America. Meanwhile here as a filmmaker you are on your own, you do everything yourself. There is no support from government and that is the basic truth. Sometimes when a festival opportunity comes, people get to sell their films. But hardly anyone can sell a film if there is no co-production deal in place with the rest of the world. Figurine and Phone Swap created a lot of buzz and a new perception as far as the Nigerian film industry is concerned which is why people now acknowledge and want to find out more about the new face of Nollywood because those films are unique. Compared to the films people have seen, and the tag on Nollywood there is a lot of concern to see good quality films come out of Nigeria. This is what gives my films the edge over other films. From 2009 until now (2013) I have not spent more than three months in the country without going to festivals. Last year I had to cut back on festivals to focus on making films. But festivals have really helped and I encourage filmmakers to see how their films can get to festivals. Especially if you are considering making a commercial film, but purely commercial films don't go to festivals. It must have some sort of art. It must be arty in nature, a good blend of art and commerce. This thing at the end of the day is a business. If you can't beat them you need to join them. It is important to explore the opportunities in going to festivals.



Figure 52: Kunle Afolayan directing on-set.

CHAPTER 13: VERNACULAR THEORIST: YINKA EDWARD: CINEMATOGRAPHER

Yinka Edward, New Nollywood cinematographer is arguably the most talented cameraman in Nigeria with a modest stash of awards tucked away in his cupboard. I have not seen more exquisite pictures, framing, lighting and composition produced by anyone else in Nigeria. What makes Yinka's image production aesthetically pleasing is his lighting craftsmanship. Yinka has a penchant for noir lighting, which suits the Magic Realism of New Nollywood films as it expresses the social semiotics of the genre. Yinka has developed a signature style of cinematography, dubbed here as Afronoir. Afronoir is the aesthetic realisation of Magic Realism which brings to life the cinema imagined by Kunle and Yinka. Yinka is especially adept at lighting with bounced light, never using garish direct lighting. The light sources are always soft, clean and cosmetic, with 80% of the frame in darkness wherever possible. The rich noir world of Magic Realism he paints with brushstrokes of light are paintings captured at 24 frames per second.

Yinka studied cinematography at the National Film School in Jos. Like most exceptional cinematographers, he has a gadget fetish which include many hi tech tools of the trade from domestic appliances to high end cinematography equipment.

He is extremely generous intellectually, with a technical aptitude that surpasses the average person. His highly sophisticated sense of cinema aesthetic shows in his obsession with quality. This self-reflexive angst about excellence is a distinct characteristic of all New Nollywood filmmakers and arguably a formalised response to the former tide of critique against first wave Nollywood films from scholars and critics. But Yinka is able to harness this anxiety and make it productive. Nothing is good enough for him. He always wants to push harder for better results. Yinka is gifted with an exquisite cinematic vision and technical ability which is rare to find in such a disciplined technician with a daunting work ethic. What makes Yinka a raptor is that he is multi skilled. He shoots, grades, edits and does data wrangling. He also rents camera equipment and trains young camera technicians. Staying ahead in the rapidly changing business of digital filmmaking means that you need to be able to perform many functions to be part of a production. Being highly skilled is critical to 'break in' to Nollywood because the kind of commitment required is formidable,

Yinka told me about a New Nollywood feature film he had recently completed where the crew worked for four days straight without sleeping. On the fifth day he took a nap on set so that he could guard the camera equipment while catching up on some much needed sleep. The other crew members wandered off to rest but Yinka slept on set so that they would be ready to resume shooting when the crew returned.

Similarly, Yemi, the editor on *The Figurine* (2009) and *Phone Swap* (2012), lived in the edit suite for an entire month while cutting these films. He went home once a week to change his clothes. The work ethic in New Nollywood is intimidating. I kept wondering if there were any South Africans who would be prepared to make these kinds of sacrifices to build our film industry. I have never stayed awake for four days because I believed passionately in a project, let alone lived in an edit suite for a month. An acute sense of anxiety began to set in that my work ethic was lacking, hence my unexceptional career. Where was my award-winning feature film? New Nollywood filmmakers seemed to *actually* live the old hyperbolic film school maxim of '90% perspiration and only 10% inspiration.'

Being on set with Yinka and Kunle was pure fun, there was frenetic enthusiasm everywhere. Many journalists, bloggers and TV crew kept popping onto the set to shoot behind the scenes footage and ask crew members questions about the production. Yinka was on a crane shooting on the Red Epic camera sweeping over the crowd shot like a bird in flight. There were so many cameras on set at one point that it was hard to know who the core crew was and who the paparazzi were. More pictures were being taken of people shooting pictures. Cameras were pointed everywhere. Everyone was thrilled to be part of this happening, proud of their jobs and enthusiastic about being a part of a Kunle Afolayan production. It was plain to see why the filmmakers are able to give such enormous energy to a project as the camaraderie on set was palpable. Kunle has rallied a phenomenally talented team of filmmakers around him and they are a close knit family, not just hands for hire. Traditionally filmmaking has always been a top heavy dictatorial hierarchy but Kunle's set was an example of the digital revolution making these structures more horizontal; more collegial and less autocratic. New Nollywood film structures are fluid in terms of onset methodology and hierarchy. At midnight Kunle called a wrap and brought in pepper soup with catfish. It was delicious. We ate soup and drank beer,

then wrapped the set and went home. The next morning bellaniaga.com was full of behind the scenes pictures and hyper mediated stories of what happened on set the night before. And so the New Nollywood media machine rolls on.



Figure 53: Cinematographer Yinka Edward shooting on the Red Epic camera.

CHAPTER 14: VERNACULAR THEORIST: YEMI JOLAOSO AND TOSIN ADEDEJI: EDITORS AND SOUND DESIGNERS

Post production in digital filmmaking is the third and final phase of reinventing the original narrative. Editing can create an entirely new film in post-production, elevating a mediocre film to excellence in the right hands. Conversely, careless editing can also destroy a film. Yemi and Tosin both worked on *Figurine* (2009) and *Phone Swap* (2012). The two editors work in tandem sharing an edit suite where they edit all Kunle Afolayan's projects at his company Golden Effects Pictures. Yemi and Tosin are both devoted to postproduction and even attend the film shoots to gain a better understanding of how the footage should come together in the edit suit. Yemi and Tosin are both 'digital natives' meaning they 'grew up online'. This enables them master digital technology in the post environment where they are expected to fulfil several post production roles.

Firstly, the offline editing or the rough cut phase is where the narrative will be spliced together to tell a coherent story from hours of random footage shot out of sequence. Secondly, they will take the rough edit of a coherent story into the online editing phase which is where the footage will be graded to develop a highly aestheticized polish to all the pictures. Colour and contrast can be added or subtracted to all the scenes, which enhances the dramatic qualities of the narrative. For example in *The Figure* (2009), the opening sequence in the ancient village of Araromire is in black and white. The footage is graded by the editors to be black and white from colour so that it looks as if it is born from a previous century. Yemi and Tosin would also have added in the special effects like the thunder and lightning bolts later in this scene. Visual effects also include the title sequence of the film, the choice of font, colours, style and layout is all their handiwork. Typically they would move between three post production software programs to achieve this, namely: Photoshop, After Effects and Final Cut Pro. This degree of proficiency is rare on a feature film considering *The Figurine* (2009) won an AMAA for Best Visual Effects.

Yemi and Tosin are New Nollywood editors in that their style of cutting is much faster than first wave Nollywood films. Old Nollywood films were often guilty of an expanded style of soap opera cutting where the dramatic moments are deliberately teased out to string the drama on for as long as possible. Yemi and Tosin are both

adept at cutting across genres in terms of pace, rhythm and timing. *The Figurine* (2009) is a supernatural thriller and the style relies on carefully timed twists in the plot and unexpected reveals at the end of the film. Flash backs are used very sparingly to add pointed pieces of visual communication to the plot. Editing reveals crucial moments in the story at precisely the right time for the mind puzzle to fall into place. In this sense *The Figurine* (2009) is masterfully edited because it holds the viewer in suspense until the credits roll.

Phone Swap (2012) on the other hand is a comedy and the edit is required to play an enormous role in moulding the timing for inciting humour. Without a skilful sense of comedic timing in editing a comedy, the jokes and gags are bound to fall flat.

Kunle's production company, Golden Effects in Ikeja, Lagos is a camera rental company as well as a post-production company. Owning a post-production facility is essential in Nollywood in order to control distribution. Most post production facilities are connected to the internet which means that the finished film can very easily be uploaded and sold/distributed illegally. Fighting piracy is essential for New Nollywood filmmakers who make fewer films than the first generation. Making fewer films with higher production values means that strident control must be exercised in post-production for fear of the film being leaked without permission. If the film is leaked prematurely and pirated, it will not recoup its costs and the filmmakers will not be able to meet their return on investment deals, which ultimately leads to bankruptcy. The knock on effect of piracy will eventually kill this mode of filmmaking if unchecked. Old Nollywood films were more or less impervious to piracy because the turnaround period was so fast that the filmmakers made enough money to make ends meet. The original film and the pirated version would be in the market place at the same time, but given a choice the viewer would naturally buy the original because the quality was better and the price remained the same. In New Nollywood however, the distribution model is much more complex. A long cinema release means that not a single DVD can reach the market place until the producer breaks even at the box office. This is especially important with a greatly anticipated film like *Phone Swap* (2012) where a single illegal copy could produce thousands of pirated DVDs, which would lead to disastrous results at the box office. In this regard, the production company must be operated on trust as the master copies of the films fall

under the custodianship of the editors who must archive the film and produce duplicate copies for local and international festivals and cinema release.

14.1 THE FUTURE OF NOLLYWOOD: LAST WORDS FROM KUNLE AFOLAYAN

The interview Kunle concluded with a question about the future of Nollywood and filmmaking in Africa. This is what Afolayan had to say:

The future of Nollywood in Nigeria and in Africa is getting more interesting. We live in days if you don't have a million dollars, you don't shoot on 35mm, you shoot on a camcorder. The digital era came and changed things, now anyone can produce content. The internet has changed distribution, it's made the world a smaller place. You can even watch movies on your phone. Content wise Africa is the place to look at now because there are so many untold stories that we are yet to tap into in Africa. The future is...or rather will become rather interesting when African countries come together and do cross-border productions; making stories by pooling resources together to make great films. There is something peculiar about the African market. Our people watch our movies but the South African market is different, there people don't watch their own films. But imagine a coproduction deal where a South African filmmaker and a Nigerian filmmaker come together and look at what works here and what doesn't work there, and do a blend – a mix of all those elements and bring out a good film because there is no point in shooting a film that people don't see. Your film is only great when it is seen. It's not about the amount of money it took to record the film – it's about the amount of viewership the film attracts. This is what makes a film successful. Africa and Nigeria will be better when filmmakers stop thinking that it has to be about 'me'. Things will be better when filmmakers collaborate and pool resources. This will give the film a bigger name, big actors will come together and do something big. Nollywood films are now doing this, you see five to ten different production companies in the end credits. Producers are pooling resources to make better films. We all have dreams. We all have a bigger picture in our heads and government is not doing anything concrete to help, so the future lies in our hands. We will continue to have problems funding and distributing our films without collaboration. So, collaboration, I think is the future.

CHAPTER 15: CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, ‘vernacular theory’ has been explicated by vernacular theorists in the formation of New Nollywood hypothesising theory from the South. The filmmakers of New Nollywood theorizing outside the academy have created compelling case studies of theory constructed by analysing the praxis of: writers, producers, directors, cinematographers and editors. This has been executed in line with Jenkins’ description of how vernacular theory proliferates in the digital realm as per the essay, *The Work of Theory in the Age of Digital Transformation* (1999):

What counts as theory and what theory does are questions that rarely get asked...Theory will be understood here as any attempt to make meaningful generalizations for interpreting or evaluating local experiences and practices. Academic and vernacular theory carry different degrees of prestige, speak different languages, ask different questions, and address different audiences, though the line between them is rapidly breaking down (Jenkins 1999: 235).

Applying the method of autoethnography further blurs these lines between interlocutor and researcher allowing vernacular theory and opinion to shape the final outcome of the research presented here. In this context, some subjectivity is inescapable. However, one might hope that the body of evidence presented here is persuasive enough to present a degree of validity in the apparent transformation from Old Nollywood to New Nollywood implemented as a self-reflexive shift from quantity to quality.

Elaborating on this idea is a recap of the original premise of the research; if first wave Nollywood is the thesis and Third Cinema the antithesis; then New Nollywood powered by the digital revolution is a synthesis. To this end New Nollywood films set a new standard of production values showcasing progressive aesthetics and narrative evolution evidenced in the multiple awards garnered by the filmmakers locally and internationally.

Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie has spoken out about the need for multiple stories that reflect the diversity of how Africa is represented to the world:

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories can dispossess and malign and stories can empower and humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people but stories can also repair broken dignity. By rejecting a single story of any place or people we regain paradise (Adichie 2009).

Third Cinema has been a single story in African cinema, prone to prescribing the turgid task of 'decolonising the mind' 53 years post-independence in the case of Nigeria's. Is it not time for multiplicity of stories and methodologies? New Nollywood is a second story, a healthy alternative to Third Cinema, which deserves canonisation forthwith. This call for action arises from the fact that New Nollywood answers the political imperative required by the proponents of Third Cinema as described by Wasko. Janet Wasko describes how the:

...political economy of film must incorporate those characteristics that define political economy generally, as social change, history, moral grounding, and praxis' (Wasko 1999: 227).

In extracts of the vernacular theorists and analysis of their films we have seen how all these areas have been addressed in the affirmative: social change, history, moral grounding and praxis. To itemise these areas have been addressed in the affirmative as an index will summarise:

1. **Social change:** New Nollywood effects social change through economic agency. Despite lacking government funding and infrastructure Nollywood created the largest videofilm industry on earth (Okome 2007: 5).
2. **History:** New Nollywood filmmaker Lancelot Immaseun now in production with the historical epic titled *Invasion 1897* calls for British repatriation and the return of traditional artworks plundered from Benin state. This film actively reverses the colonial gaze of Africa.
3. **Moral grounding:** New Nollywood films have retooled the morality tale ending in their films appropriated initially from Latin American telenovela structure and merged with the narrative sensibility of the African oral tradition. In this context, the griot provides parabolic messaging and folk wisdom embedded in such narratives.
4. **Praxis:** several profiles on vernacular theorists and their methods of filmmaking have articulated the practices of these filmmakers which indexes notions of the future of African Cinema. To this end the filmmakers and their

praxis are theory from the South as theory and practice are symbiotic and inextricable concepts.

In summarising the four points made above, New Nollywood reverses the western gaze and its attendant colonial episteme about Africa. New Nollywood produces a second story of Africa expressing 'Afromodernity' by actively seeking to deregister the negative colonial gaze and refocus our attention on its achievements, progress and success (Okome 2013: 145).

Jonathan Haynes published evidence of agency in the late nineties of the empowering phenomenon of African filmmaking in an article titled *African Filmmaking and the post-colonial predicament*, he says: '*First World is always present as a source of technology, commodities, and styles, and as a place to go, but it is not a controlling force...the dynamic of colonization is really over. Agency is all with the Africans, mostly involving structures they make themselves* (Haynes 1999: 29).'

In addition, Lindiwe Dovey affirms the pan-African popularity and the power of popular culture narratives expressed through the economic and narrative agency of Nollywood:

The popularity and accessibility of films made in Nollywood (southern Nigeria), Kanywood (northern Nigeria), and Bongowood (in Tanzania), to name only a few of Africa's booming video film industries, suggests that it is not impossible for African films to reach African audiences. People are no longer relying on inept state structures to produce and consume their culture: they are doing it themselves (Dovey 2009: 22).

Jean Rouch, anthropologist and ethnographic filmmaker, founder of Cinema Direct, the precursor to the French New Wave, infamously referred to Nollywood as 'the AIDS of the film industry' (Barrot 2008: 4). This offensive remark was conceived with the analogy designed to illicit repulsion for the entrepreneurial efforts of the filmmakers and their supposedly promiscuous struggle to stay alive by any means necessary. Nollywood in his opinion was responsible for the death of cinema. Perhaps he was right to a certain extent. Nollywood certainly has displaced the dominance of Francophone auteur based cinema in Africa and made way for films that resonate with a global and pan African audience of millions, not just elite

intellectuals at Embassy cocktail parties. Controversy still abounds inside and out, even content acquisition executives for Africa Magic working at Multichoice head office on Victoria Island, Lagos refer to the juju genre in Nollywood movies as a 'guilty pleasure'. Gatekeepers of the old guard, Mistry & Ellapen describe Nollywood as 'ideologically regressive' (Mistry & Ellapen 2013: 48). Whatever the angle of view on the subject, Nollywood is undisputedly an expression of 'Afromodernity' (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 7). 'Afromodernity' presented in the films of New Nollywood forges a dual belief systems which includes witchcraft and Christianity; village and city life; traditional and modern experiences of life, which all serve to form 'vernacular modernity' (Okome & Krings 2013: 5; Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 8).

Filmmaking articulates the modern experience in Africa and New Nollywood filmmakers are engaged in a global power struggle to subvert the epistemic scaffolding of North and South.

Modernity in Africa...is a hydra-headed, polymorphous, mutating ensemble of signs and practices in terms of which people across the continent have long lived their lives; this partly in dialectical relationship with the global north and its expansive capitalist imperium... (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 7).

New Nollywood converges at a node which draws together film, culture and technology. This convergence exemplifies the Zeitgeist of digital filmmaking on the African continent where democratisation of technology has erased the barrier to entry for future filmmakers who want to tell African stories. Conversely, distribution platforms have become domesticated, the consumption culture has changed over the last 50 years where films are viewed in movie theatres, on DVD in the home, or on a personal computer, a tablet or even a cell phone. One can make, watch and distribute movies anywhere anytime (Harvell 2012: 8). These factors in the democratization of the digital revolution have enabled flooding of the market thereby creating an overabundance of content which potentially forces the price down to zero. This inevitable phenomenon could lead to the end of the film industry without a pre-emptive strategy. Online content creation will not disappear and the human need for entertainment will not disappear. It is up to the filmmakers to adapt to this new environment and manage the problem of monetizing films online where piracy is rampant. Good films are expensive to make and require extreme effort to produce. If feature films are to continue to exist in their current form and be a worthwhile

endeavour for filmmakers to engage in, we must prefigure a reasonable value chain in the new system of proletariat entertainment.

Filmmakers in Nollywood have long since harnessed the tools of the digital revolution to make inexpensive films distributed via domestic distribution systems using the home as a central infrastructure to share films. Hollywood on the other hand makes big blockbuster films which require mammoth funding, infrastructure and distribution. Will Hollywood survive the digital revolution? This is the crux of New Nollywood, a theory from the global south. New Nollywood has pre-figured the crisis in filmmaking d/evolving into online content creation by imagining itself already adept and adapted for the digital revolution.

Nollywood is experiencing a sharp upward trajectory in relation to Bollywood and Hollywood. A cursory comparative glance at the three major film industries globally shows us that Nollywood is doing remarkably well considering it began in 1992, which is 21 years ago. Bollywood began producing 200 films annually by 1930, which is 83 years ago (Kabir 2001:2). Hollywood has the longest history, beginning in 1910, now 103 years ago. Regardless of repudiated canonisation, given another 50 years there is little doubt that Nollywood will produce an abundance of cinematic treasures which champion the voice of the global south and place the African world view centre stage. In this research, the vernacular theorists have opened up a dialogue through praxis, aided by the methodology of aetoethnography thus allowing the three realms of cinema studies, cultural studies and technological innovation to negotiate the future of filmmaking in Africa.

New Nollywood is an example of film, culture and technology converging at a nexus of development which points to the postmodern potential of future filmmaking in Africa. By opening up dialogue and asking for a more open ended discussion, which should lead to canonisation, we can collectively strive to invert the northern gaze of film theory in Africa thereby privileging 'Afromodernity' and allowing the global south to construct a vision of the future full of postmodern prospect (Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 19). After all, the *'celebration of difference is, of course one of the democratising impulses of postmodernism'* (Tomaselli 2006: 26).'

NEW NOLLYWOOD IS NEW THEORY FROM THE SOUTH

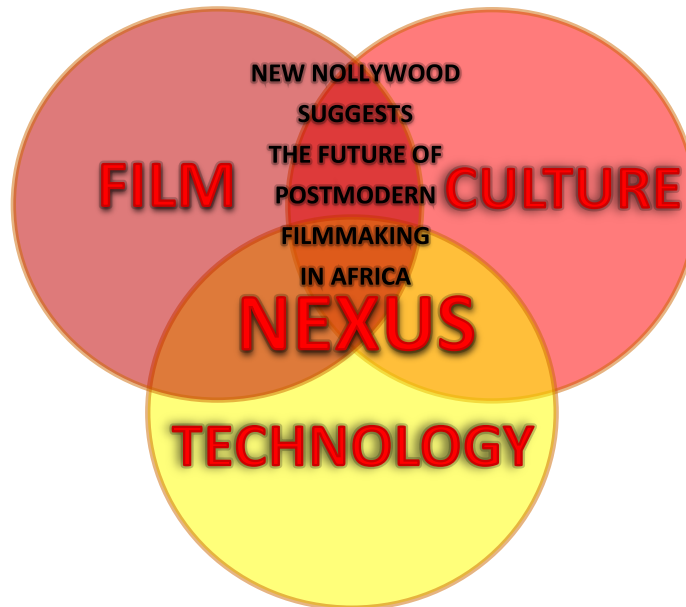


Figure 54: The Future of Postmodern Filmmaking in Africa. The evolution of Nollywood over the last 20 years has seen a postmodern shift take place in the larger context of pan-African filmmaking on the African continent. As the modern takes the place of the traditional, new technologies superseded old technologies. The melding and appropriation of identity, ethnicity, technology and narrative are forged in the furnace of the new. New Nollywood has opened the door to the nexus of 21st century filmmaking in Africa.

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IMAGES

COVER PAGE COLLAGE:

1. *Ije* (2010) Movie Poster. Chineze Anyaena
2. *Man On Ground* (2012) Movie Poster. Akin Omotoso
3. *Arugba* (2008) Movie Poster. Tunde Kelani
4. *Nollywood Hustlers* (2012) Movie Poster. Uche Jombo
5. *The Figurine* (2009) Movie Poster. Kunle Afolayan
6. *Reloaded* (2009) Movie Poster. Emem Isong
7. *Phone Swap* (2012) Movie Poster. Kunle Afolayan
8. *Thunderbolt* (2001) Movie Poster. Tunde Kelani
9. *Irapada* (2007) Movie Poster. Kunle Afolayan

- Figure 1 *Nollywood DVD/VCD entrepreneur in Shasha Egbeda, Lagos (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).
- Figure 2 *Nollywood DVDs for sale on the streets of (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 3 *The Classy Nollywood DVD shop in Shasha, Lagos (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 4 *Nollywood movies for sale at Mobil fuel station and Mr Biggs fast food restaurant in Maryland, Lagos (2013).* (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 5 *Produced in Lagos - the nexus of Nollywood (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 6 *The malevolent role played by oil in the collapse and decay of nation states (2013).* (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 7 *Nigeria exports 2.4 million barrels of Bonny light crude oil a day (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 8 *VHS art work for Living in Bondage 1 & 2 (1992)*
(Producer: Kenneth Nnebue)
- Figure 9 *Filmmaker Wale Adebayo fills the generator to run household appliances in Shasha, Lagos (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure 10 *Yan dada (gasoline hawkers) patrol the streets selling black market generator fuel (2013).* (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)
- Figure11 *Nollywood films for sale at fuel stations in Lagos (2013).*
(Photographs: Shmerah Passchier)

- Figure 12 *The 12 Stages of The Hero's Journey (2007)*
Illustration (Vogler 2007:9)
- Figure 13 *Nollywood narrative pattern conforms to the 12 stages of the Hero's Journey (Vogler 2007:9). (Illustration: Shmerah Passchier)*
- Figure 14 *Ogun illustration. (nd) (Illustration: James C. Lewis)*
- Figure 15 *The Passion of the Christ (2004) (Movie poster: Mel Gibson)*
- Figure 16 *Film, Culture and Technology (2013). (Illustration: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 17 *Stronger than Pain (2007) Tchidi Chikere (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure18 *Festival of Fire (2002) Chico Ejiro (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 19 *The once thriving Nigerian Film Market in Surulere is now in decline (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 20 *Ngozi Igwe who works at Grand Touch Pictures in Surulere, Lagos. (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 21 *A selection of Old Nollywood movies known colloquially as 'Two Day films' purchased from Grand Touch Pictures. (2013). (Scanned DVD covers)*
- Figure 22 *Nollywood Hustlers (2009) Uche Jombo (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 23 *Lagos traders line the streets (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 24 *The 'informal economy' everywhere on the streets of Lagos (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 25 *Lagos street on Victoria Island (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 26 *Nollywood DVD entrepreneur (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 27 *The criss-crossing electricity power lines in Lagos (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 28 *Buying cassava in the market with Oghomwen Edward, Shasha, Egbeda, Lagos (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*

- Figure 29 *Enterprising Lagosians engaged in trade (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 30 *Dele Fadahunsi at his workstation in Maryland (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 31 *Trawling the streets of Lagos with Dele (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 32 *The informal economy at work on the streets of Lagos (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 33 *A young boy sells 'foo-foo' (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 34 *Nollywood films can be purchased in the markets that lines the streets of Lagos along with tomatoes, peppers and moin-moin (bean curd cakes) (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 35 *Nollywood movies for sale on a car bonnet outside Daystar Christian Church (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 36 *Morning devotions with Yinka, Oghomwen and Wale (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 37 *Shopping with Oghomwen Edward for Nollywood movies in Shasha Egbeda, Lagos. (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 38 *Archive photographs from the documentary Soyinka: Child of The Forest (2009) directed by Akin Omotoso for M-Net (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 39 *Stills from the film Magun (2000) produced and directed by Tunde Kelani (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 40 *Universal patterns in screenwriting theory (2013) (Illustration: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 41 *Stills from the opening scene in the feature film Arugba (2008) produced and directed by Tunde Kelani (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 42 *Stills from the documentary Arugba (1998) directed and produced by Tunde Kelani. (Screen grabs from DVD)*

- Figure 43 *Stills from the opening scene in the feature film Arugba (2008) produced and directed by Tunde Kelani (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 44 *Kunle Afolayan, director, producer and actor (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 45 *The Figureine (2009) produced, directed and starring Kunle Afolayan.*
- Figure 46 *Silverbird Cinema at Ikeja shopping mall in Lagos shows Hollywood and Nollywood films. (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 47 *Still frames from the motion picture Phone Swap (2012) produced and directed by Kunle Afolayan. (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 48 *Still frames from the motion picture God is African (2002) written, produced and directed by Akin Omotoso.*
- Figure 49 *Wole Soyinka in the documentary Child of The Forest (2009) directed by Akin Omotoso. (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 50 *Interview with Lancelot Immaseun at the Nigerian Television Association. (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 51 *Still frames from the motion picture Ije, The Journey (2010) produced and directed by Chineze Anyaene and starring Genevieve Nnaji. (Screen grabs from DVD)*
- Figure 52 *Kunle Afolayan directing on-set. (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 53 *Cinematographer Yinka Edward shooting on the Red Epic camera (2013). (Photographs: Shmerah Passchier).*
- Figure 54 *The Future of Postmodern Filmmaking in Africa (2013). (Illustration: Shmerah Passchier).*

INTERVIEWS

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