NOLLYWOOD FILM INDUSTRY:
INFORMAL FILM PRACTICES AND
THEIR CULTURAL FORMATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In the 1960s, a significant number of African nations gained their independence from European colonial rule. Since then, the examination of African Cinema as a postcolonial phenomenon has become a central and critical framework for conceptualizing cinemas made in/by Africa. From Francophone West African national art cinemas, which were at their most prominent from the1960s to the early 1990s, to the more contemporary video-film industries of Ghana and Nigeria, postcolonialism theories have been helpful in our understanding of the African cinema identity as a complex and hybridized one.

Nonetheless, the African identity is not restricted to a postcolonial one. Such notions as culture, tradition, indigeneity and commerce exert a unique identity on African cinemas in non-postcolonial ways. A more in-depth and expansive study of African cinemas continues to benefit from attempts to bring African cinemas in dialogue with other non-postcolonial theoretical frameworks.

Employing a combination of ethnographic and discourse Analysis methodologies, this dissertation examines the non-postcolonial character of Nollywood, the Nigerian contemporary video film industry that began in 1992. In addition to identifying the limitations of confining a cinema like Nollywood within a postcolonial theoretical framework, this dissertation analyzes Nollywood through the lens of Miriam Hansen's (2000) concept of "vernacular modernism", Media Industry Studies, and transnationalism—in the context of film festivals.

It is my hope that this project contributes to scholarship that look at African Cinema as an ever-evolving, complex and dynamic phenomenon, one which continues to (re)negotiate its identity in response to an equally complex and dynamic world.

Dedicated to my family

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PREFACE

One cannot overstate the value of the works that have explored Nollywood's non-conformist, liberal and democratic market and production systems. Yet, I have often at many points, been confronted with the seeming in attention other areas in Nollywood suffer from, due to an overwhelming scholarly interest in the industry's informality. I would not completely rule out my subjectivity, since as a Nigerian, I do not only seek to add critical value to the study of Nollywood, but also flinch at the common underlying suggestion of an absence of artistic depth, finesse and culturally-informed practices that the concept of informality evokes about Nollywood, useful a frame as it is. Dismissing the validity of arguments that have successfully drawn direct relationships between Nollywood, informality and economics would be an exercise in error. My contention, nonetheless, is to question the extent to which informality has been unyieldingly linked to economics and profit-making when it comes to Nollywood. Could informal practices also arise from larger cultural and traditional practices outside of its economic definition? While unrelated to Nollywood, I had an experience in Nigeria in 2019 I imagine speaks directly to the notion of informality responding to things other than economics, or vice-versa: I needed to barb my hair, and my brother had sent his barber over to where I was staying. In my mind, I struggled with how much I should tip him, after he named the fee for his service, which I also imagined would be an overcharge, seeing that he knew I was from Canada. After he was done, I proceeded to ask him how much he wanted for his service (negotiating payment after service is rendered is an informal approach in itself), to which he responded, much to my surprise, "I barbed your hair free of charge. I have been your brother's barber for a longtime, and finally meeting you is more than the money I'll collect from you". Now, knocked off my pedestal, and driven by humility to insist on payment, I urged him, "What if I'd asked you for the

going rate, and paid you ahead of the service?", to which he smiled and added, "I was hoping you wouldn't ask until after, sir". Here is a case where informality in transactions is exploited by the one who is positioned to make a profit to ensure he made no such profit. For him, in this instance, informality was an agent for placing more value on relationships and community than monetary renumeration. It is cultural practices as this that convince me informality in Nollywood cannot only be perceived in economic terms. In addition, the widespread idea that Nollywood was conceived only as a cash cow, and for that reason, has thrived largely because filmmakers exploit informality for economic and profit reasons, at the same time, tends to deny the industry a lens through which to rigorously conceptualize it as a non-economic, artistic phenomenon with deeper roots in tradition, culture and African philosophies. Now, recognizing that I am a subjective player in this research, who is motivated by an interest to contend assumptions reducing Nollywood's informality to matters of economics, I caution to not attribute too much of my ability to identify occasions justifying my argument to my being a Nigerian. If that were the case, after all, many notable Nigerian scholars before me have traversed this terrain exhaustively, with whom I share, to a great degree, the same subjectivities. They would have made these connections much sooner than I. That said, I can also confirm my familiarity with, and knowledge of, Nigerian cultures contribute to my ability to perceive other elements of its cinema that seem trapped right under the surface, where informality exists independent of economics.

This sentiment regarding Nollywood's informality and its relationship to non-economic forces remains with me and was fundamental to my thought process as I approached my thesis. I continue to ask the question: what other potential conceptual frames exist outside of the traditional and established ones through which we have understood Nollywood's informal practices? Are there other aspects of the construction of Nollywood's film form that could reveal

an interrelationship between informality and cultural identity? Another major thing that informed both my project interest and its methodology is that sometime, in the second year of my PhD programme, I observed I was also developing a growing interest in indigenous knowledge forms—particularly African. I became increasingly curious about the politics of legitimacy in relation to formal (Western) and informal (non-Western, indigenous) ways of knowing. For me, as for others who have been engaged with these thoughts much longer than I, the urgency to more deliberately invite indigenous and non-Western thoughts into Western-framed discourses became very compelling. Questions such as: what, if any, are the possible knowledge forms existing in other societies and cultures, that may have run parallel, but can now bring their perspectives, to the Western-informed ones dominating academia and research processes? Such questions have continued to call on my attention. In researching my thesis question on Nollywood and its deeper integration into its local cultures and traditional creative practices, I found in ethnography a relevant methodology for inviting indigenous understanding among Nigerian film practitioner into a study that has lopsidedly thrived on Western formal, theoretical approaches. Conducting field work research to respond to my inquiry regarding Nollywood vis-à-vis non-economic cultural and traditional practices allowed me the luxury to integrate direct and practical film knowledge among Nollywood practitioners in my research. It was my early assumption that seeing my participants as repositories, practitioners and purveyors of culture, they would be a relevant source for tracing the interrelatedness between culture, creative motivation, and Nollywood informality as a collective industrial practice.

However, upon my arrival in Nigeria, and the commencement of interviews with Nollywood practitioners, these participants' responses very quickly began to question the thrust of my research. No less excited that their responses were bearing out the benefits of legitimizing

indigenous and informal knowledge, my participants were painting an industry to me that I frequently found inconsistent with a significant part of existing research on Nollywood. This was what I was hoping for, even if I could not go as far as I expected. Yet, the extent to which my participants' accounts and expositions sometimes diverged from canonical works on Nollywood were considerable enough to warrant re-articulations of some of the arguments around Nollywood. Certainly, some of these 'discoveries' have gone unaccounted for overtime as a result of long-term omissions; some appeared to have been misunderstood, while others appeared to have fallen prey to inaccurate assumptions. While my ethnographic research was limited to information I gathered from the eleven Nollywood practitioners who, one must acknowledge, are subjective, and unrepresentative of the entire industry, their exposition was all I had to go on, and I was not unaware of such limitations at the preparation phase. Besides, this was the nature of the vernacular, local perspectives I had hoped to gather, and was intent on checking against critical positions that have formed the core of studies on Nollywood. Even so, since not one single person can claim exclusivity of knowledge, their accounts are deemed no less valid, and if anything, contribute to the collage of subjective stories constituting the fuller picture that is Nollywood.

At this point, I concluded I was faced with two choices: I could barrel on with the inquiries I set out to find answers to, which were solely reliant on scholarly works. Or, as it is common with fieldwork research, I could set much of what I have learned to the side and allow my interviewees lead me into their understanding of their film industry, whether or not their ideas aligned or contradicted available research.

My second choice, while I internally wrestled against it, because it necessitated recalibrating the entire project, was: I could shelve my initial critical pursuit, and instead, attempt

a more modest research project, focusing on interpretations of the founding of Nollywood and looking at key problematics such as the extra-economic character of informality as a Nollywood phenomenon. Seeing that it would be somewhat foolhardy to go on with the former option in any case, I committed my research to the latter. It is my belief that the richer and more detailed our foundational understanding of Nollywood is, the more robust the building blocks we can set upon it. As a result, my fieldwork morphed very rapidly into an attempt to help fill in some of the gaps in our study of Nollywood with information that presented themselves during my fieldwork. Having said that, I was not completely inattentive to areas where I possessed sufficient information to proceed with finding elements that anchor Nollywood's informality to Nigerian cultures and traditions, and where possible, I did just that.

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INTRODUCTION

Africa's postcolonial identity has provoked the examination of African Cinema as a postcolonial phenomenon. The complicated relationship between formally colonized African nations and colonial Europe continues to necessitate the application of a rich selection of postcolonial theories to how we may understand African Cinema. That said, African nations and their cinemas are more complex than their postcolonial character.

Postcolonialism as a frame is too broad and far-reaching for this thesis to attempt to focus on all of its approaches and forms. Just among its major pioneering minds, it ranges from Edward Said's (1978) 'orientalism', which sets the West and the Orient (East) as binaries, where the West has, through a combination of power and knowledge, projected its unfavourable stereotypical ideas of the East on the East in order to rationalize its exploitation of the East; to Gayatri Spivak's (1988) critique of imperialism, which challenges the non-representation or obfuscation of the non-Eurocentric subject, who is perceived of as the subaltern, the other; to Homi Bhabha's (1994) 'hybridity' and 'mimicry' concepts among others, which are a critique of cultural imperialism and the colonial subjection of the colonized, who has taken on a colonial identity due to mixing and hybridization. At its very broadest, postcolonialism can be defined as examining the social, economic, political and cultural responses to colonial legacies, and how these relations help to sustain colonialism and neocolonialism. Postcolonialism as a theoretical framework has impacted many disciplines, including anthropology, history, political science, geography, economics, philosophy and so on. Other times, when used with a hyphen (-), as in post-colonialism, it is employed as a marker of the time and systems that come after colonialism; post-colonialism provides a theoretical frame for grappling with the realities of/in post

independent colonies, including the recovery and/or reinvention of indigenous cultures. In the field of film studies, post(-)colonialism has been instrumental in investigating exilic, diasporic, feminist, world, transnational, and third cinemas. Having all of these in mind, it would be impossible to explore postcolonialism theories and approaches in any extensive detail. Therefore, my focus on post-colonialism frameworks in this thesis is in no way an attempt to suggest it is an exhaustive one. Rather it is very narrow, and it serves only as a basis for exploring one way postcolonialism is read into national cinemas, and as an off-ramp to re-directing my attention to non-postcolonialism frameworks, which is where I want to place my focus.

In this project, therefore, my reference to postcolonial cinema comes from Frantz Fanon's prescriptive postcolonialism framework in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Following the gaining of independence by many formally colonized nations by the 1960s, there emerged a fervent clamour among colonized peoples to break from the legacies of colonialism. One of the leading voices around this time was Fanon, who mapped something of a postcolonial path for formally colonized peoples. Fanon articulated the postcolonial mind must, first and foremost, be a revolutionary one engaged in the struggle for freedom and the rejection of oppression; the postcolonial African mind seeks to liberate itself from colonial domination, finding its identity in its own intellectualism, culture and way of life (Orlando 2017). In *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (1982), Teshome Gabriel would use Fanon to theorize postcolonial African Cinema in relation to Third Cinema.[1] While Gabriel would later revise his reading of Third Cinema into a concept that is more dynamic and no longer only relevant at a national level, most readings of Third Cinema into African films have taken on the Fanonian approach. Given this context, my reference to Africa's postcolonial cinema in this thesis is in its

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capacity as a cinema that rejects and opposes colonialism in all its ramifications, while also promoting the African identity as a counter to colonial perpetuations of Western superiority.

Nonetheless, a more thorough understanding of African cinema must take greater advantage of other conceptual frames and employ them to better reveal the African cinema identity in all its complexities. In my thesis, I focus on Nollywood, Nigeria's contemporary national cinema, as a case study for exploring—in addition to postcolonial approaches—other theoretical frameworks that may broaden our understanding of African Cinema. Ethnography and Discourse Analysis are my primary methodologies for carrying out my research.

Research Question

In addition to the pivotal works of such writers as Haynes, Onokome, Jedlowski, Adesokan, McCall, Larkin, Lobato and Onozuilike, my thesis investigates the notion of film among Nollywood practitioners who impact and are impacted by their film industry. I attempt to articulate a conceptual understanding based on how Nollywood practitioners perceive of the camera medium and cinema as a system of visual experience. While many ofthese practitioners are educated, many others are not; many are illiterates. Many have never been exposed to film theories, nor texts about film debates and criticisms. Nonetheless, these practitioners have upheld and sustained their industry by their indigenous knowledge and know-how. It is valuable to invite their form of knowledge in national cinema discourses.

The overarching theme that defines the history of African Cinema is inseparable from the colonial history that shaped it (Ukadike 1994). As a postcolonial cinema, Nollywood both conforms to, and rejects, certain characteristics that scholars like Diawara (1992) and Ukadike (1994) have identified or presumed to be generally common among postcolonial African

Cinema. For example, the history of postcolonial cinema studies, as previously mentioned, centres the homogenizing perception that a postcolonial cinema musttake, one way or another, a political and ideological anti-Western stance.

The role of informality in Nollywood cannot be overstated. In many ways, it influences most of the conditions that inform the unique identity of Nollywood. Since it will also be a recurrent theme in my thesis, I articulate how I use it below:

In general economic terms, informality involves market-related systems and practices that operate outside of official, legitimate and institutional structures. Informality centres issues of entrepreneurial resourcefulness and resilience within an unregulated or improvisatory economic system. In my thesis, I take a broader approach to informality, one that acknowledges the definition above, while extending informality beyond how capitalism limits its role to a response to economic precariousness. This is because the above approachtends to imagine informality only as a response to formality. In my thesis, I emphasize the concept of informality not only as an economic response for circumventing legitimate structures. I use informality also as a system rooted in precolonial, long-standing communal relations, incorporating kinship and community networks, and alternative methods of exchange, which include trades by barter, gifts and favours. Also, I look at informality as a system of practices that are guided by communal agreed-upon moral and ethical codes.

These codes are not motivated by capitalist interests, yet they can be seen to suggest ideas of fair-dealing.

Here I look to informal knowledge that comes directly from Nigerian filmmakers, who are both postcolonial and at the same time, products of precolonial, indigenous, local and vernacular histories and experiences. Therefore, within my participants are existing tensions which animate

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a large swath of the knowledge and philosophy they bring to film. In many ways, industry, creative and philosophical knowledge among Nollywood filmmakers do notmirror the anti-Western motivations many postcolonial approaches read into African cinema.

I am interested in industry knowledge that resides in those who sustain the industry. I seek to identify ways their contributions can further help reveal an industry that is, at best, still only partly conceptualized. Related to this, for the purpose of theorization, I pursue a stronger integration and centralization of their local and indigenous knowledges in the body of African cinema scholarship. I also apply other non-postcolonial theoretical frameworks to analyze these local knowledges to better understand their origins, characteristics and functions. These are the kind of indigeneity, vernacularism and postcolonialism-related inquiries that guide my research, and they form the central frame upon which I build the entirety of this project.

That said, another equally central contribution this project hopes to make is the issue of methodology, and the potential alternative ideas that might arise on account of a researcher's choice of methodology. The nature of some of my research inquiries lend them to an ethnographic approach, and I expect that as one of my key methodologies, ethnography proves the more useful for obtaining answers to these questions.

At its current state, the conceptualization of Nollywood continues to benefit from critical works carried out by academics, who have laid out fundamental ways for interrogating Nollywood. As my literature review reveals, most of the concepts that have been developed, and the frames through which Nollywood has been examined are arrived atthrough historical and formalist approaches to postcolonial national cinema studies.

Invaluable as these approaches and works are, it was my suspicion also as a Nigerian, that they may not adequately capture shifting, evolving vernacular and local film ideas and

philosophies resident in Nigerian practitioners. The unpacking of Nigeria's national cinema(s) and their industry systems during interviews and observations present an organic dissemination of knowledge that other methods and frames struggle to capture.

This is not to suggest ethnographic research has never been carried out in and on Nollywood. Researchers like Jonathan Haynes, Onokome Okome, Karin Barber and Brian Larkin were primarily ethnographic in their methodologies; they were often in Nigeria, conducting interviews, observing and participating within Nollywood and the arts and performance industries in general. While Karin Barber was a lecturer at the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) from 1977 to 1984, for example, she joined the Oyin Adejobi troupe and regularly featured on *Kootu Asipa,* a National Television Authority TV series in the early eighties. Her works would come to significantly inform Nollywood scholarship. Broadly, this work follows in the footsteps of these Nollywood scholars by using ethnography to find a more nuanced way to utilize and discuss the role of interviews in gathering local industry knowledge for the purpose of enriching African cinema theorizations and conceptualizations. What distinguishes my research is its use of ethnography to draw out a system of film practice that is not only indigenous but contributesto forming a framework for a film philosophy and understanding among diverse Nigerian filmmakers in relation to what part of their culture that has survived colonialism. In addition, it brings together ideas from not only film directors and actors, but film crew, producers, scriptwriters and marketers to map out a more finely articulated definition of the industry.

The motivation to foreground Nollywood's vernacular film knowledge arises from an interest in how the industry is perceived by those who practice within the industry. For the most part, these industry practitioners are unfamiliar with the film theories, frames, philosophies and

conceptualizations that tend to inform how academics have understood Nollywood. It is my hope

that the direct invitation of Nollywood practitioners' understandings of the industry into

academic discourses would further our study of this cinema.

Methodology

In 2014, Nick Redfern (2014) gave a lecture at the University of Glasgow, where he

bemoaned how restrictive film and media methodologies have become. Redfern advised against

our unwillingness to disrupt or upend the methods with which we traditionally studyfilm.

According to him,

> In my opinion, the first step is to abandon film studies as an academic subject or
> discipline and to ask 'what do I need to do to understand the cinema?' Let's move the
> emphasis away from the subject and/or discipline and back on to the object we want to
> understand. After all, students study film not film studies" (2-3)

Redfern goes on to challenge film scholars to resist the constraining walls of the

discipline and to encourage the exploration of non-traditional methods that unearth new and

fresh ideas that help us better understand films. Redfern proposes that other understandings of

film exist outside of available conceptualizations and unearthing them would require the absence

of methodological restrictions.

My thesis aligns with Redfern and incorporates both ethnographic and discourse analysis

methodologies to engage Nollywood's practitioners' local and vernacular understandings of the

industry as a system of economic, creative, government-influenced practices.

As a Canadian-Nigerian, my knowledge of, and familiarity with, the cultures and peoples

of Nigeria (together with my fluency in the Yoruba language and pidgin) set my research up to

greatly benefit from an ethnographic approach. I interviewed Nigerian practitioners whose works

are closely reliant on Nollywood's informal industry. These practitioners include Nollywood veterans like Okey Ogunjiofor (actor, producer, director), Nobert Ajaegbo (Chairman of the Film and Video Producers, Marketers Association of Nigeria), Ekpenyong Bassey Inyang (actor, producer), Tarry West (Actor, producer, writer) and Dan Chris Ebie (actor, producer). I also interviewed second-generation Nollywood practitioners such as Akin-Tijani Balogun (director), Chukwu Mark (actor), Oyo Obalesi (director, cinematographer, editor) and Thomas Tille (cinematographer, editor). Finally, I interviewed post-2010 practitioners whose films, using a number of metrics, fall under New Nollywood: Ema Edosio (director) and Abba Makama (director).

My project benefitted from a participant-observation method, an ethnographic method which enables a researcher gain access into a given group of people in their cultural environment, through direct and physical involvement with the group. Data collecting methods in participant observation included direct observation, interviews (structured and unstructured) and my participation in the everyday life of this group of local film practitioners. I patterned my ethnographic model after the participant observation structure outlined in Sherry Ortner's production studies article "Studying Sideways: Ethnographic Access in Hollywood (2009)". Ortner's ethnographic approach follows in the tradition of Hortense Powdermaker's (1966) participant observation method, which elaborates on certain methodological processes. Ortner recognizes direct-observation and interviews as overlapping, complementary and equally legitimate ways of gaining access to the informant(in this case, the filmmaker). Ortner proposes that while the informant is likely to manage the image he or she presents in public spaces like at a film festival or Q&A sessions, the informant still provides moment of honesty and sincerity, because, as she quotes John Cadwell, "…people in this context always reveal more than they

intend…" (181). For Ortner, mitigating discrepancies and inaccuracies in an informant's

narrative is not necessarily dependent on whether the research is observational or interview-

based. Instead, it is more a matter of the ethnographer's perceptivity as to the suggested

meanings behind body language, what is said or left unsaid, and the rituals these filmmakers

perform (181). My close relationship with these Nigerian cultures offered me access into these

other cues. That said, Ortner also highlights the role of the ethnographer-practitioner who, by

having a knowledge of how the informant's industry works, may fall into projecting his or her

subjectivity on both the informant and their information. Ortner advises that the ethnographer-

practitioner stands to benefit from minimizing attention to their practitioner status, so that the

informant senses no need to grow defensive, uncooperative or deceptive, or perceiving the

ethnographer as a form of threat (184-185). As a filmmaker, I found this very useful.

Furthermore, Ortner advises that the ethnographer not settle on filmmakers and films he or she is

interested in, as this is highly subjective. All filmmakers and films reveal something about the

culture they live in (186), and it is not the ethnographer's job to base his or her selection on

personal narrative or genre preference. In line with Ortner, the selection of the above listed

filmmakers was completely based on whom my contacts in Nigeria had access to. I did not have

a personal relationship with the filmmakers, and priorto the suggestions of their names, I was

unfamiliar with the works of a number of them.

  To analyze collected data, I employ Hans-Georg Gadamer's modern hermeneutics

(Regan, 2012), which proposes an interpretative framework, and prioritizes the role of

experiential familiarity and knowledge in the interpretation of a text as a socio-historical

material. Gadamer deems this kind of understanding necessary for drawing relationships between

such concepts as written, verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, "pre-supposition (bias,

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fore-structure), intersubjectivity, authenticity (being reflective), temporality (time affecting understanding/emotion), tradition and history (culture)" (289). As with the collection of data, my familiarity with Nigerian cultures affords me the wherewithal to derive all of literary, interpretative and connotative forms of meanings fromthe data toward the drawing of qualitative conclusions.

Significance/Contribution of Project to Nollywood Scholarship

As I already acknowledged, this project does not suggest, in any way, that ethnographic methods in the forms of interviews have not been employed in the past to interrogate Nollywood. Okome's *The Message is Reaching a Lot of People* (2007) and Ryan's "Nollywood and the Limits of Informality" (2014) are based on interviews, and theycome to mind. However, these works share certain key commonalities from which this project distinguishes itself: for one, interview-based works on Nollywood have engaged almost exclusively with film directors, and to a lesser extent, producers, actors. On many occasions, the participant who is interviewed operates within all three spaces. Secondly, participants' accounts and elaborations have typically been, for all intents and purposes, treated as isolated units, where each interview remains the siloed insight of the interviewee.We benefit from it, but it is not brought in dialogue with insights from others. Thus, it is inadequate to identify and articulate potential concepts and philosophies shared among Nollywood practitioners. I choose the less common approach of bringing all my data together to potentially generate some form of collective indigenous understanding to filmmaking among Nigerians, the kind which transgresses the individual participant and prioritizes the comparative and dialogic integration of individual experiences.

Furthermore, and where possible, I use the data from my interviews to strengthen, re-imagine and test some of the ways Nollywood has been conceptualized.

In addition to interviewing directors, producers and actors, this project includes perspectives from cinematographers, editors and a marketer; as at the time of writing, the marketer still oversaw the largest body of Nollywood marketers. My broad and more diverse pool of Nollywood practitioners enriches the indigenous narrative this project pursues.

Limitations of Project's Research Method

Certain limitations come with the choices I make regarding my research approach and methodology. Eleven participants volunteered to be interviewed, and under no circumstance can this selection be thought of as representative of the Nigerian film industry.While every attempt was made to diversify the participants, and interview them separately, at best, this project offers a microcosmic view of the film industry, and a much larger pool of participants may alter or re-organize the permutations and conclusions arrived at in this work. Another primary limitation of my approach is one that typically arises in matters around ethnographic research: the question of legitimacy and objectivity. This project is heavily reliant on its participants' understanding and interpretation, which are subjective, and in many cases, unverifiable beyond confirmations by other participants or witnesses. That said, according to Eisikovits (2012), subjective truth is a kind of truth, "documented positions expressed by informants are accepted as "legitimate"; the ethnographer's role is toattempt to understand or interpret them within their own cultural context" (8).

For this reason, the data collected, and the entire project is a supplement to the scholarly works before it; to a certain degree, my research is rooted in representing and exploring distinct

points-of-view, which forms another rich layer of the complexities aroundan industry like Nollywood. As a result, my project serves to offer another perspective against which we can test more established ideas and concepts on Nollywood, and in the process, broaden and deepen our understanding of the Nigerian film industry.

I also encountered a number of logistical challenges on the field, which affected my sample size, character and diversity. First, due to the limited time (one month) I had to conduct my research in Nigeria, and the difficulty in securing interviews with potential participants, many of whom reneged on their commitment to seat for an interview, I was only able to interview twelve participants. The significant portion of potential participants who did not turn up for the interviews were women, and while I have not been able to determine why this was the case, this imbalance left me with two women out of a sample size of twelve. As a consequence, the research does not have the degree of gender diversity that I had hoped for. Secondly, before leaving Canada, I had secured interviews with over eighteen Nollywood practitioners who reside outside of Lagos. Upon my arrival in Lagos, however, I quickly learned that it was unsafe for me to travel outside of Lagos to conduct my interviews. On one occasion, one of my potential participants in Jos called me to tell me he had been advised not to grant me audience for my own safety. For this reason, my research was constrained within Lagos. This unfavourable circumstance contributed to the smallness of my sample size.

The idea of 'class' as another direction to take this thesis occurred to me. However, much as we may perceive of Nollywood as heterogeneity and eclectic, in general, the industry appeared to be wholly supported by the working class. Granted its actors come from diverse backgrounds, some having studied or lived abroad, while some others come from wealthy families, their percentage is negligible. Consequently, Nollywood is overwhelmingly an industry

of the working class. This conclusion gave me no reason to take my study in the direction of class as a primary focus. That said, there exists an undercurrent in this thesis that will always refer to the idea of class as both an economic and social phenomenon within the Nollywood industry.

In Chapter 1, I provide a literature review on the key concepts and positions in national, African and Nigerian (Nollywood) cinemas. In Chapter 2, I test the limits of the major postcolonial frameworks we have used in our conceptualization of African Cinema.

Primarily, I focus on the origin stories of Nollywood (Igbo and Yoruba) and Kannywood (Hausa) to identify where they align and reject postcolonial readings of African cinema. In Chapter 3, I examine how Nollywood responds to Miriam Hansen's concept of Vernacular Modernism as a different framework from postcolonial approaches. In Chapter 4, I apply key media Industry and production theories to Nollywood. This chapter focuses on analyzing Nollywood's identity in the context of industrial, economic and corporatizedsystems and practices. In Chapter 5, the final one, I employ transnationalism as my framework, which I particularize to address the unique needs of what we have come to understand as New Nollywood, a post-2010 sub-category of Nigeria's national cinema.

Following is the literature review, which covers the key theoretical positions in National, African and Nigerian Cinemas.

CHAPTER 1:
NATIONAL CINEMA: LITERATURE REVIEW

In *Imagined Communities* (1983)*,* Benedict Anderson conceptualized the nation as imagined; the collective belief by a people that they share the same identity through such cultural elements as language. Furthermore, Anderson argued that print-capitalism (media) accounted for one of the central reasons behind the formation of European nations in the 18th-century. He added that the printing press served to establish and reinforce a sense of national belonging among peoples who spoke the same/similar languages or vernacular (46-48). It is upon the realization of the nation, that nationalism gains essence. While this condition is culturally formed, the nation-state is the fusing of the political system of a stateto the culturally imagined nation. As a result, the nation-state is imagined as possessing boundaries and limits, and its sovereignty is exerted and protected in order that it may exercise political and cultural autonomy (14-16). In one sense, Anderson's concept of the nation as a people united by a shared language aligns with the idea of Nigeria as a unified nation within its own sovereign boundaries. However, in this instance, Anderson did not account for such scenarios as when the unifying language is an adopted colonial language seemingly superimposed over diverse indigenous, local languages within that nation.

Approaching the idea of the nation differently in *Nation and Nationalism* (1983)*,* Ernest Gellner theorized the nation is born out of nationalism, not the other way round. For him, the advent of industrialization in Europe necessitated that for the industrial system to function effortlessly, it required cultural homogeneity ('high culture') through standardized education. Gellner held that the nation is a purely political construct, orchestrated by the elite for the purpose of industry, a position with Marxist underpinnings. In *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology,*

History (2001), Anthony Smith, instead, emphasized the centrality of shared, yet unique memories and history as foundational to nation-forming. That a shared historical account may be a myth, according to Smith, is inconsequential; it would have fulfilled its purpose if it engenders nationalism among a people through their identification with it. Smith, like Gellner, draws a relationship between the motivations for nationalism and the desires of the elite class which, through education for example, determines the histories and memories that must be selected in order to foist nationalism and nationhood onthe people. Yet, Gellner and Smith's approaches are not without their own problems. They do not adequately tackle the complexities that arise when competing memories and historiesvie for dominance within the (sub)nation and nation state simultaneously; or how (post)colonialism theories may challenge indigenous and local histories and memories within a homogenous, postcolonial people. That said, the above positions by Anderson, Gellner and Smith continue to be central to understandings of the nation in national cinema studies.

National cinema studies originated in the West (primarily Europe) in the late 1930s, with the works of Siegfried Kracauer (Germany) and Lewis Jacobs (USA) (2-3). In the early stage, national cinema studies, as a discipline, was limited largely on account of its restriction to a European concept of the nation, and national cinemas were read within the European context of the nation. According to Stephen Crofts in "Concepts of a National Cinema" (1998), these writers, together with other national cinema theorists in the first decades of the 20th century, "adopted common-sense notions", in which a national cinema was assumed to articulate a culturally united, pure and exclusive national identity (385).

Hence, a national cinema was defined by its employment of national specificities toestablish a distinct identity for itself, and as a means to differentiate and identify other national

cinemas as the 'other' (385). Contrary to theorists like Kracauer and Lewis, Crofts(1998) argued

that the idea of national exclusivity in national cinema is problematic, since national boundaries

are porous to the effects of globalizing capitalist systems. Croft's position is reflective of the

time he was writing in, with the decline of Communism and theinterconnectedness that defined

nations that broke away from the USSR. He is also useful for examining diverse national

cinemas that are, nonetheless, united under the postcolonial experience.

Between the 1950s and 70s, Third Cinema was conceptualized (Crofts, 385), when

former colonies in Latin America gained independence, and vehemently sought nationhood

through the establishment of independent nation-states. Solanas and Getino's film, *The Hour of

the Furnaces* (1968) is central to the foundations of Third Cinema, a postcolonial cinema unified

by the ideology of revolutionary militancy as the means by which the proletariat/colonized

obtains liberation from the oppressor/colonizer. Third Cinema filmmakers were hugely

influenced by Frantz Fanon (1963), who admonished non-western peoples to, "…let us not pay

tribute to Europe by creating states, institutions and societies inwhich we draw their inspiration

from her" (315). In their manifesto, "Towards a Third Cinema" (1970), Solanas and Getino

theorized Third Cinema as solely grounded in the extent to which it generates a political

(re)action within its audience. They placed emphasis on ideology/effect, not style/art (53). Thus,

they identified Third Cinema against First and Second Cinemas, which are Hollywood's

commercial studio-system and European cinema'sauteur and high-culture film modes

respectively, both of which are more reliant on aesthetics and conventions (Getino 2011, 41).

Ironically, even while its ideology is grounded in anti-colonial/imperial motivations, its theorists

partly conceptualized it according to the national cinema paradigm fostered in post-WWII

Europe: defining Third Cinema by how it is different from Western cinemas (other). However,

the applicability of Solanas and Getino's Third Cinema frame was limited, since it was exclusive to South America and its geo-politics. In *Third Cinema in the Third World* (1982), Teshome Gabriel detached Third Cinema from its Latin American geo-political origins (Buchsbaum 2001, 153), and extended it to African postcolonial cinema. Gabriel privileged style over content. His conclusion derived from the Marxist understanding that "style must be understood as ideologically determined…ideology as the 'base' of society, and style is "the superstructure, autonomous, but linked symbiotically with ideology" (Gabriel 1982, 54). For Gabriel, it is not what a film says, but how it says it (style), that determines its ideological persuasions (51-55). Gabriel looked at how aesthetics and filmic conventions, both products of style, are deployed in some Latin Third Cinema films, to highlight ways they transgress or reject traditional and western film conventions (32-33). Deriving his argument from Frantz Fanon's prescription of the postcolonial mind as one engaged in the fight for liberation and an African identity, Gabriel also argued that the employment of film for political activism was not Solanas and Getino's creation alone (22). Using Fanon, Gabriel asserts the postcolonial cultural producer goes through three phases before they finally locate their critical place in the postcolonial experience: In the First Phase, formally colonized peoples are solely motivated by liberation. Therefore, "foreign images are impressed in an alienating fashion on the audience" to emphasize their foreignness (31). In the Second Phase, there was a "recognition of "consciousness of oneself" [which] serves as the essential antecedentsfor national and, more significantly, international consciousness" (31); films in this phase highlight the tensions between the rural and the urban, traditional and modern value systems(32). In the third and final phase, postcolonial cinema's combativeness is directed at Africannation-states; postcolonial filmmakers were using their films to critique their own governments and insisting "on viewing film in its ideological ramifications" (34). Gabriel's

analysis of postcolonial cinema is invaluable for tracking differences in how postcolonialism plays out in different African cinemas. That said, the theme of film as a tool or medium for militancy and staking oppositional positions is still key to this analysis.

Paul Willemen and other organizers of the Edinburgh Film Festival on Third Cinema in 1986 related Third Cinema to cinemas outside South America. Gabriel's focus on aesthetics, noted Willemen, did away with the restriction of Third Cinema to Latin America (Willemen 2013, 95). Supporting Gabriel, Willemen identified Third Cinema ideology in the aesthetics of 1920s Soviet Union political avant-garde, drawing relationships between Third Cinema and Brecht and Bakhtin (12). For Latin theorists like Solanas and Getina, Third Cinema aesthetics were only necessary for realizing ideological and political goals.

Critics like Gabriel and Willemen, however, camped around its aesthetic theme, centralizingit as a means to interrogate other non-western national cinemas. Gabriel universalized Third Cinema theory via its aesthetics, positioning it as a way to extend its concept to other cinemas within nation-states that aesthetically engage in subverting or opposing national, hegemonic and oppressive systems. Crofts (1993) will later take this approach to Black British cinema as a form of resistance to a coherent national British identity in his essay "Reconceptualising National Cinema/s" (54). One central downside to this approach is that it easily falls prey to the error of homogenizing diverse national cinemas so long as they all reject Western notions of cinema. In essence, distinctions between Brazilian Cinema and Nollywood may be overlooked as their oppositionality to Western Cinema is prioritized.

Gabriel later revisited the notion of Third Cinema, arguing for a more dynamic cinema that evolves over time, and should not only be limited to its capacity as a national cinema of opposition: "the binary opposition of "us" and "them" (2). Gabriel extended Third Cinema to

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becoming "not an alternative to Hollywood or capitalism, but merely its mirror, its other" (2). In so doing, Gabriel gave Third Cinema more room to express resistance in non-binary, non-nationalist terms. It has also become heterogenous (Third Cinemas) and mixed, different versions of it existing and responding to the cultural and social uniqueness of its respective localities (3). Now, Gabriel asserts, Third Cinema has "spread, crossing oceans and national boundaries, moving to new places, adapting new conditions. Hence, it is no longer just a phenomenon of the Third World: it has moved "into the First World, into white' and other 'privileged' areas, where it has combined with other cultural forms, becoming increasing hyphenated, intermixed, composite. Third Cinemas are precisely a matter of these multiple, nomadic, diasporic forms and identities" (4). Gabriel's revision ensures Third Cinema as a theoretical framework continues to remain relevant today.

In 1989, the seismic collapse of Communism in Europe, and the consequent breakaway of East European nation-states from the USSR, provoked newer and immediate anxieties about the meaning of a homogenous European consciousness (Livi 2007, 1). Hamid Naficy (2001), for example, noted that massive migration from former European colonies, and from Eastern Europe to Western Europe, problematized previous notions of 'nationness' (17). The recognition of migrant communities, which at once imagined shared cultural commonalities and identity but lacked sovereign, nation-state status within their host-nations, questioned the homogeneity (even if the homogeneity was more myth than reality) that previously provided the platform upon which European Cinemawas conceptualized. No longer was Anderson's conceptualization of the nation as a homogenizing cultural process with limited and sovereign boundaries going to suffice, and national cinema studies responded accordingly.

Andrew Higson's groundbreaking essay, "The Concept of National Cinema" (1989) problematized Anderson in a number of ways. Higson acknowledged the inadequacy of defining a national cinema in terms of otherness, an approach that must adopt some level of Anderson's imagined homogeneity within a nation-state. His point was that national boundaries are neither impervious, nor able to provide and maintain national exclusivity in matters of culture, economics and human mobility across geographical areas (41).

Therefore, the nation cannot be imagined as culturally homogenous and exclusive. For Higson, much as shared culture informs national cinema, it also has an economic component to it, as it seeks the economic support to produce, distribute and exhibit from the nation. It also invites non-local and international participants, and as such, the nation (and its cinema) can also be determined in economic and non-exclusive terms. Higson stated another way to conceptualize national cinema would be to look inward and use the socio- cultural and political dynamics within a nation state as national cinema determinant (42). Citing Britain as an example, Higson referenced the entrenchment of Hollywood's distribution system in the country, and how Hollywood films play a substantial role in (in)forming the British culture (42); he referred to the non-monolithic nature of the racially, regionally and economically diverse British audience (44), which complicates the assumption that a media material has the ability to articulate the narrative of the collective, while also shaping the reach and boundaries of the nation. For Higson, all of these complexities, while sometimes in conflict, help to define the internal workings of a nation, and as a consequence, its cinema. Higson's argument against national purity, exclusivity and cultural unity provides a highly productive framework to explore the cultural, economic and transnational character of Nollywood film; it highlights the importance of addressing national cinemas in relation to diversity, sub-national groupings and messy assemblages. Likewise, in

"Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s" (1993), Stephen Crofts also examined national cinemas in terms of economics and politics. Crofts, like Higson, posited that global spread of capital disrupts the conceptualization of national cinemas as exclusive to a nation/state, and that they are also determined by their relationship with Hollywood. However, where Higson regarded Hollywood as an inevitable player in the formation of culture in other nation-states, Crofts held Hollywood up as a culturally imperialistic force, which must be repelled with the support of the state. For Crofts, therefore, a national cinema engages in cultural and national-state preservation, but it is only equipped to do so because of its governments' economic and political backing. One limitation to Crofts' framing of national cinema, however, is that his account does not involve situations where a commercial national cinema develops entirely outside of state support. Focusing on national cinema productions (together with distribution and exhibition), Crofts developed seven models of national cinema, and the different ways they attempt to gain a foothold and repel Hollywood within their nation-states. Crofts indicated that nationalism could arise among a people with a shared political and economic identity, and not necessarily culture. Thus, he validated sub-national cinemas within a nation state (54). This point is particularly relevant to my study given that what is considered Nollywood can be divided into subnational units, taking cultural and ethnic diversities into account. For example, the Edos, Hausas, Ibibios, Igbso, Ijaws, Yorubas are all ethnic groups that may be thought of as having their own sub-national cinemas under Nollywood.

In "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema" (2000), Higson continued to problematize Anderson's concept of national/state congruency and cultural homogeneity. He stated the experiences that people share within national boundaries are not necessarily national. A shared experience within the nation can also be transnational- as in the case of Britain's

cultural identity shaped by widely received American films in Britain. Identities within communities and nation-state are contingent and fluid, and individuals move in and out of identity groups, depending on the situation and condition (61). For Higson, Anderson's approach fails to adequately accommodate these cultural dynamisms within a nation state; neither does it consider the identities of geographically dispersed communitieslike diasporic and exilic peoples within discourses of the nation. Even though Anderson's theory points to the media as one of the key elements necessary for nationalizing a community into a boundaried, sovereign entity, media also foster transnational cultural engagements (66). Since borders are porous, transnational engagements are a constant. Higson states transnational practices become an everyday phenomenon between and amongidentity groups within and without the nation-state. Thus, a nation, at its purest, is a hybrid of a plurality of nations (61). This is particularly the case also in postcolonial nations, for example Nigeria, Republic of Benin and Togo, where colonial Europe insensitively superimposed national-state boundaries over and across existing ethnic groups, separating people of the same ethnicity under different nation-states. Thus, even when we study African cinema as a postcolonial cinema, we ought to pay attention to existing distinctions between such cinemas as British-colonized Yorubas in Nigeria and French-colonized Yorubas in the Republic of Benin and Togo. The same approach may be applied to the cinemas of the Hausas, who cut across the northern regions of these same countries.

In *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (2014), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam repurposed the role Anderson ascribed to media in the formation of the nation. For them, the colonial First World, through colonial and imperial structures, instituted a global communication infrastructure that established the First World as the transmitter of culture, and the Third world, its receiver (30). They presented Metz' psychoanalytic 'cinema-apparatus', which Metz argued to subject an

audience to ideology through audience positioning and identification, as inherently Eurocentric

(103-104). Therefore, while film, like Anderson's novel, helps to articulate shared identity, its

result is not necessarily an articulation of exclusivity and sovereignty along nation/state

boundaries. Rather, the cinematic medium is complicit in the imposition of hierarchies of culture,

economics, race and politics; it is the Trojan horse, which penetrates the national and cultural

autonomies of former colonies, reinforcing the hegemonic dominance, influence and superiority

of the colonizer over the colonized (104). Thus, in imperialistic terms, cinema's function is more

transnational than national.

> At the same time that Europe was facing challenges to its former
> understandings of the nation, the reality of an even far greater, and
> immediate phenomenon was asserting itself on the world: the reality
> of globalization (1). 'Post-nation' became a term signaling, on the
> transnational side, "the decline of the nation-state on account…of
> international corporations and trade… transnational migration and
> travel" (3), and on the other, the "sub-nation, as opposed to supra-
> nation…made up of those who do not feel allegiance to the nation-
> state in the first place, because they are immigrants, refugees or
> asylum seekers…" (118).

While Nollywood is considered a commercial cinema, unlike the 1960s-90s art cinemas

of Francophone African nations, which were directly reliant and influenced by European

largesse, Nollywood is not altogether insulated from contemporary pressures from the West,

either. For one, the global film industry is controlled by the major economies, many of which are

in the Global North. The conditions for participating in the global film industry are largely

determined by these major economies.

Dudley Andrews (1995) argued that transnationalism is the constant, stating that

economically, there exists no such thing as a national cinema aside from Hollywood, and the

world is its nation (84). Though reductionist, Andrew's removal of national boundaries all

together, even if only to make a theoretical argument in order to unify the world under one cinema and one economy, holds within it every form of transnational relationship that can exist among nations. For Andrew, national cinema, even at its most national, cannot beimagined in purist terms, but must be thought of as a hybrid indebted to Hollywood's imperialistic and global influence. If transnationality is then a constant, according to Andrew, one of the key ways to go forward with examining national cinema in the age of globalization is to look at the different and complex ways Hollywood can be read into national cinemas like Nollywood, both as a commercial and art industry. By contrast, Higson (1989) refuses to centre Hollywood as the hegemonic cinema with the ability to one-directionally and exploitatively influences other cinemas. He highlights the role of national boundaries, only so that he may emphasize the transgression of such boundaries. In outlining the main approaches with which film studies has engaged with transnationalism, Higson's position suggests there is as much Hollywood influence in other cinemas as there are other cinema influences in Hollywood. Higbee and Hwee Lim (2010) also do not centre Hollywood: one of their approaches privileges matters of production, distribution and exhibition. They agree with Higson that transnationalism concerns itself with the movementof films and filmmakers across national boundary lines, and how films are received by audiences outside of their site of production. Noting cultural groups and economic formations are not always perfectly contained within boundaries imposed by nation-states (60-61). In the doing so, Higson, Higbee and Hwee identified the ramifications of a culturally homogenous people, like the Hausa's in northern Nigeria, extending across and beyond nation-state boundaries. On the one hand, these approaches concentrate on the multi-directional transaction and exchange occurring among different peoples across national boundaries; on the other hand, they also point

to the interactivity among peoplesunited in cultures and traditions on either side of national boundaries.

Another of Higbee and Hwee Lee's approach emphasizes, "…power relations between centre/margin, insider/outsider…global and local" (9). This power dynamic plays out in recent forays into Nollywood by platforms such as Netflix, and its power to influencelocal and indigenous filmmaking in Nigeria. Hamid Naficy extended Higbee and Hwee Lee's argument in *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (2001), examining transnational cinema as at once sub-national and transnational; he theorized diasporic and exilic filmmakers and audiences (sub-national groups) in relation to their relocation and displacement across nation-state boundaries (transnationalism). For Naficy, diasporic and exilic filmmakers borrow from both the cultures of their place of residence and birth, while not quite belonging to either. Additionally, Peter Bloom (2006) examined transnational cinema as a space for postcolonial contention and resistance between the formerly colonizedand the colonizer, between the disadvantaged/disenfranchised and the state, between second-generation North African migrants called *Beurs*, trying to reconcile their dislocation experience from their home country and the metropolitan French culture into which they arefighting to integrate (131). Bloom also found transnationality in the fact that while Beur Cinema shared Third Worldist filmmaking ethics in its resistance of what it deemed French segregationist policies, it nonetheless employed post New-Wave French aesthetics (135). Assuch, Bloom also looked at transnationality in terms of style and aesthetics. Both Naficy and Bloom articulated a framework for studying how diasporic Africans (re)negotiate their identities within their host nations, and how these on-going negotiations reflect on postcolonial relations.

Largely, our approaches to understanding national cinemas continue to effectively employ these theories. However, given that the conceptual identity of the nation is neither static norcomplete, it is safe to imagine why the evolving character of nationhood will continue to encourage constant reconceptualization of what national cinema is to different nations, in different cultures and scenarios.

1.1 African Cinema Literature Review: Nation as a Colonial Construct

In general, Pan-Africanism arose from a longstanding anti-African slavery, liberationist and self-determinist consciousness and movement among Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, one which unites peoples of African descent in solidarity, and the notion of a shared African destiny (Austin 2007; Makalani 2011). Pan-Africanism has been one of the most central currents to inform our understanding of African Cinema. In the interest of articulating a sort of unified African identity (Diawara 1992), national individuality and uniqueness are typically minimized by pan-Africanists in their search for cinema that presents a somewhat homogeneous African Experience. In the context of postcolonial cinema, that homogeneity comes in the form of colonial resistance (Fanon 1963; Gabriel 1982). Yet, numerous scholars have argued against notions of exclusivity and homogeneity; that the nation, let alone the continent, is a stratification of convergent and divergent forces that make generalizations impractical. In addition, the postcolonial African identity problematizes certain notions of pan-Africanism. Andrew Higson (1989), Susan Hayward (2000), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2014) argue that a national identity, even at its purest, is a hybrid, constitutive of a plurality of nations. All of these constitutive parts are not always in harmony with each other, toward something akin to a grand, unifying ideology, movement or identity.

Notwithstanding, one of the farthest and deepest reaching historical experience that have resulted in the hybridization and pluralization of the African identity is colonialism. By default, the search for a decolonized Africa, therefore, takes Fanon's path of rejecting colonial influences while promoting pan-Africanism. It must be noted that many of the African/African Diaspora scholars who pioneered the conceptualization of African Cinema are, themselves, products of the same form of hybridization. For one, most—if not all—of these scholars come from formally colonized regions. Secondly, most of these scholars are also hybridized through Western migration and education. Thus, it is understandable that even for these scholars, locating an 'authentic' Africa is primarily about rejecting colonial influences. In *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (1992), Manthia Diawara, Malian-born and educated in France and the US, charted the evolution of sub-Saharan African cinema from the introduction of cinema to Africa in the 1930s, to the immediate decades after African colonies gained independence in the 1960s. In the forming of a postcolonial AfricanCinema identity, one which was at once African and Western, Diawara's political and economic approach recognized colonial systems of film production, distribution and exhibition as responsible for how Western influences are locatable in African Cinema.

Diawara recognized that defining African Cinema in terms of its opposition to the West problematizes its identity, because this approach must always take Western Cinema into account when defining African Cinema. That cinema was introduced to Africa when the continent was already under colonial rule meant that African Cinema was fated to cultural hybridity between Africa and the colonial West. As such, African Cinema perpetually seeksan identity increasingly stripped of the colonial influences on its character. Diawara's approach examined how Africa and colonial Europe came to primarily constitute the heterogeneous identity of African Cinema

in terms of the politics of production, exhibition and distribution. While Diawara acknowledged the Africanization of African Cinema by its general subscription to Third Cinema aesthetics of (neo)colonial resistance, particularly in Francophone Africa, he also identified Europe's overwhelming control of finance and the means of production and distribution which determine which African stories are told on screen and receive distribution. In *African Cinema: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (2010), Diawara differentiated the approaches, and degrees of colonial influence and success in the dichotomization of African Cinema along Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone, and Belgian Congo lines. For example, post-independence, France continued to be heavily involved in Francophone African Cinema through the politics of production and finance (32-33). On the other hand, colonial Britain largely influenced Anglophone African Cinema's narrative style in the form of documentary, realist filmmaking. Post- independence, Britain was not as involved as France in the cinemas of its former African colonies (3). According to Diawara, in the instance of Anglophone Africa, the absence of colonial support after independence, which effectively grounded its cinema to insignificance for decades, in its own unique way, redefined Anglophone African cinema vis-a-vis British influence (9). While Diawara's argument centres around production, distribution and exhibition as sources for hybridizing the African/Western identity, an argument which does not hold as strongly in the case of Nollywood, we must still recognize the reliance of Nollywood on global cinema institutions.

Likewise, in *Black African Cinema* (1994), Nwachukwu Ukadike, a Nigerian who also received his education both in the UK and US, agrees with Diawara's notion of African cinema duality. African cinema is inseparable from the colonial history that shaped it. According to him, until the 1960s when many African nations gained their independence,African cinema was entirely controlled by Europeans (1). That said, he recognized neocolonialism succeeded colonialism in Africa, and postcolonial

African national cinemasremained, to varying degrees, under the economic, production and distribution control of Europe for several decades (1). For this reason, African Cinema discourses continue to centre around issues of a dichotomous identity (Murphy 2000).

Since the 1960s, when many African countries gained their independence from Europe, the more common and widespread approach to studying Western-inflected African (particularly, Francophone African) cinema is in its relationship to Third Cinema, a cinema characterized by its resistance and rejection of colonial influences and systems. According to Gambian émigré to the US, Mbye Cham's (1996), to a large extent, the relationship drawn between African Cinema and Third Cinema, "was born in the era of heady nationalism and nationalist anticolonial and anti-neocolonial struggle" (1). For this reason, and because of its timing which corresponded with Third Cinema practices in Latin America, postcolonial African Cinema was subjected to Third Cinema's political and socialreadings of resistance and opposition. This appears to account for why many African Cinema theorists had more interest in the ideological, political and aesthetic functions of African cinema, and less in it as an artistic phenomenon which underwent creative processes. Born in Ethiopia, and then migrating to the US, Teshome Gabriel saw Sembene'sinterplay of images in *Xala* as pushing "consciousness another step, closer to action" (26), astatement which relates Third Cinema's militant ideology to African Cinema. Yet, Nigeria is a postcolonial African cinema; but it is a commercial film industry, and it is not driven by liberationist politics. Nor is it resistant to Western Cinema in the same way postcolonial Francophone West African art cinemas were from the 1960s to the 80s. Similarly, born in France, and of Alsatian and Guadeloupean origin, Francoise Pfaff, in *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembene* (1984), also acknowledged the duality of the African/Western identity inAfrican Cinema. Pfaff's position aligns with how Fanon (1963) and Gabriel (1982) describethe Second Phase in the search for a postcolonial African identity, which emphasized tensions between

tradition/rural and modernity/urbanity. Pfaff focused on Sembene's films first as products of Africa, its traditions and culture. Rather than the reading of Third Cinema into Sembene, Pfaff prioritized the identification of the 'African' in Sembene's films, by making connections between Sembene's narratives, film style and structure, and precolonial African oral traditions (39). Pfaff did not disregard the relevance of Sembene to Third Cinema readings of African cinema. Instead, she identified how, for example, the role of the African griot (storyteller) and the linearity of African tales, which is found in his films, are adapted to support the didacticism with which his films presented colonial, social,economic and class concerns (36). By so doing, Pfaff examined the African traditional practices that informed how Sembene employed film narrative and aesthetics to articulate anideological, anti-(neo)colonial film language. Also, Sembene's film, *Mandabi* (1968), was the first to be made in Wolof, an African language, a choice which was at once a rejection of France and a validation of African people as central to their own stories (Murphy 2000, 66). Acknowledging early on that, while her focus was on Francophone African countries, her approach is applicable to the continent in general. Pfaff, as many others have done, usedSembene as the Father of African Cinema, in order to establish a link between subsequent African filmmakers and Sembene, whose film language will help herald and define post- independence African Cinema.

Unlike Gabriel who focused on aesthetics in his initial analysis of Third Cinema, and sharing similarities with Pfaff, Keyan Tomaselli, Arnold Shepperson and Maureen Eke, in "Towards a Theory of Orality in African Cinema" (1995), propose African Cinema's adaptation of oral storytelling to film is another way to reject Western Cinema. identified film narrative as another area of film that can be subjected to Third Cinema readings. Their approach prioritizes the examination of African Cinema narrative(s) as local and indigenous, transgressive of

Hollywood and European Cinema styles. In this sense, orality as a common denominator among West African traditional societies, enables the reading of Nollywood as a Third Cinema rejection of Western film practices. Although, questions must still be asked as to the motivations and deliberateness behind the use of oral storytelling style in cinemas like Nollywood as calculatedly oppositional, which is what Third Cinema is largely about.

Like Pfaff, Ukadike (1994) examined the interaction of African culture and traditional practice with colonial influences (72). However, Ukadike differs from Pfaff, finding hybridity in Africa's film form and style. In the case of Hondo's *Soleil O* (1969), Ukadike located the Africa/Europe dichotomy in African Cinema: the film's implication of imperialism in the history of slavery as an African theme, and told in an avant-gardist style (80), which as writers like Thomas Elsaesser (2000) have noted, originated in Europe in the1930s, and became associated with European high-culture/art, and by extension, cinema (2,12). With the reading of Nollywood as imitating Hollywood (Tsika 2015), Ukadike opens another avenue for understanding how a postcolonial African cinema may adopt film elements from commercial, popular cinemas in the West, while holding on to its African identity. Furthermore, Ukadike acknowledged Ghana and Nigeria's economic upheaval in the 70s and 80s led to filmmakers seeking collaboration with Europe and America (129), a situation necessitating Nigerian and Ghanaian filmmakers jettisoning Third Worldist, anti- colonial ideologies for styles Western markets found more familiar and accessible. For Ukadike, this accounts in part, for why proportionally, early migration from film as a socio-political endeavour to film as a commercial, popular entertainment occurred in greater numbers in Ghana and Nigeria, than in Francophone African countries (129). Ukadike's position proposed that much as colonialism in the form of technology and funding may problematize African Cinema identity, the bringing together of Western and

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African elements within a film, in complementary and contentious ways, may be one way to define African Cinema's unique identity.

British scholar, Roy Armes's historical analysis of the identity of African cinema in *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (2006) examined cinemas of North Africa: Egypt and the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) as cultural products. Armes identified themes of contrasts and paradoxes as central to these cinemas in early postcolonial era (12). But for Egypt, Armes stated other major North African cinemas were unified not only by their colonial French heritage, but by Islam. For Armes, where Islam drew filmmakers and films toward conservatism, Western ideology encouraged progressivism and liberalism (12-13). Similar dynamics exist in Hausa Cinema in northern Nigeria, where Islam holds a central cultural and religious position in the everyday life of the Hausa society. The contradictions between Hausa religio-traditional system and globalizing Western ideologies mirror some of the contrasts Armes identified as agrarian/urban and village/city systems in Maghreb cinemas (13). That said, Armes still recognized that a central theme of contrast or paradox in Egyptian films is the threat to self from the colonialist other, and the opposing move to mitigate that threat (30). Yet, while thismight suggest shared ideologies with Third Cinemas, Egyptian Cinema broke from Third Cinema by embracing Western sensationalism in place of Third Cinema's realist and didactic style (30). Post-1980, Armes saw cinemas of the Maghreb as increasingly movingfrom a religion-informed opposition to France's liberalism; a move from narratives articulated through religious themes of the collective and the national, to focusing on the individual, the personal, and the intimate (88-89). This degree of movement from religiousconservativism has not been noticed yet in Hausa Cinema.

Given the global interconnected between societies and institutions, Diawara revisitedthe notion of hybridity in cultural, economic and stylistic forms in *African Cinema: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (2010). He examined contemporary African filmmakers (and their films), whom he called 'New Wave African directors (74), in terms of the liminal space they occupy, bridging between the national and international, the African and the Western, the local and the global. Diawara problematized arguments of authenticity by noting these filmmakers are influenced by such elements as their geographical location (native and diasporic), politics of production (transnational capital, commerce), intended audiences (local, diasporic, international), festivals and distributions (market) (97). Diawaraacknowledged these filmmakers "create their own style, not so much in oppositional terms, like Sembène, but by appropriating what they consider the best both in Sembène and in contemporary world cinema (95). While they are pan-Africanist in their narratives, stated Diawara, they now prioritize form or film language over content, which is a Hollywoodian approach to filmmaking (96). Identifying contemporary filmmakers from across Africa, andhighlighting diverse ways their films reflect hybridity, Diawara posited one of the things that make these films African is the inability to box them into a category; it is the complexity and diversity with which they represent Africa (99). Nollywood's contemporary character, its videofilm industry, and its significant approach to film as a commodity areseveral ways Nollywood exemplifies the hybridity Diawara identifies.

There are two main thrusts evident in the discourse of postcolonial African Cinema outlined above. One is the attempt to unify African Cinema under a pan-African identity, where African cinemas can be homogenously characterized—even if they do it slightly differently—as guided by an anti-colonial, pro-African ideology. The postcolonialism critiques above recognize that differences exist between African nations (in culture, governments, and even colonial

affiliations, for example). However, their emphasis is on theharmonizing of postcolonial African cinemas behind an anti-colonial, pro-African motivation. The second theme is around African Cinema as a hybrid that is neither exclusively African, nor exclusively Western, but are a complex combination of both, on account of Africa's colonial experience. Nonetheless, these approaches do not adequately engage Nollywood's film industry, which is constitutive of sub-nations within the nation, and whose cinema industry interests are not necessarily motivated by matters of postcolonialism. In addition, Nollywood's engagement with technology, its informal market system, its thematic focus on the occult, all require other frames for more broadly conceptualizing Nigeria's contemporary cinema.

1.2 Nigerian Cinema: Literature Review

One of the most central distinctions regarding how Nollywood is studied is the shift from the more typical postcolonialism framework used to study the art films from Senegal, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, to one that examines Nollywood as a commercial and popular video film industry.

Before I go any further, I acknowledge that the term 'Nollywood' is problematic in its use as a cinema category. For Akin Adesokan (2006), Nollywood serves as an umbrella term encompassing all the film industries in Nigeria (911). Others like Jonathan Hayes (1995) see Nollywood as arising from the confluence of economic and technical conditions in Nigeria in the 1990s, and is, therefore, an outgrowth of the older national cinema which came into existence upon Nigeria's independence in 1960. Even as a post-1980s phenomenon, scholars like Brian Larkin (2008, 168-169), distinguish the cinema of Northern Nigeria from Nollywood, an umbrella name Larkin defines as constitutive only of Igbo and Yoruba cinemas (Southern

Nigeria). Here, I use the term as individual scholars useit, careful to register its distinctive usage whenever necessary.

In one of the earliest articles written on Nollywood, "Nigerian Cinema: Structural Adjustments" (1995), Jonathan Haynes, an American scholar, used the distinctive production modes in Nigerian Cinema, prior to Nollywood's establishment, to problematize the notion of national identity as a homogeneous concept. Having drawn distinctions in Nigeria's production modes along sub-national/cultural lines, Haynes focused on the cinemaof the Yoruba peoples. According to him, when Nigeria gained her independence in 1960s, the abandonment of Nigeria's nascent cinema by the British gave rise to an isolation conducive for the development of a uniquely Nigerian cinema (98). That said, he went on tofurther break Nigeria into sub-cultures and nations (Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa), highlighting how Nigeria's cinema in the 70s and 80s was more a coming together of three sub-national cinemas than a nationally homogenous one. He examined Yoruba cinema as an autonomousentity that derives from the Yoruba Traveling Theatre, borrowing its theatrical mode of expression to create a cinematic form (101). Haynes used the works of notable pre-Nollywood Yoruba artists like Hubert Ogunde, Baba Sala, among others, to articulate a uniquely Yoruba mode of cinematic expression, for example, the stationary camera that presented film like a stage-play. In addition, he credits Yoruba cinema with a unique, personalized distribution system, locally developed at a time when travelling theatre artistswere introduced to cinema and learned to make film versions of their theatre presentations, which they also screened as they traveled from town to town: "The producer," Haynes notes, "became his own distributor and realizes at a more or less artisanal level the vertical integration typical of capitalist successes in the cinema industry" (101). Haynes,

however, makes no mention of Hausa Cinema, Kannywood, which at the time, was sufficiently established enough to have merited some attention.

Following in the same tradition earlier laid out by Haynes (1995), Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome, a Nigerian-Canadian scholar, apply the same methodology to pre-Nollywood Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa films in "Evolving Popular Media: Nigerian Video Film" (1998). By looking at Nollywood at the sub-national level, Haynes and Okome provided a platform for analyzing Nollywood as heterogeneously constituted, and they differentiate film philosophies within Nigeria's national cinema. Textually, Haynes and Okome draw on Karin Barber's highly regarded work on the Yoruba travelling theatres in "Radical Conservatism in Yoruba Popular Plays" (1986) to conceptualize Yoruba cinemaas having a social mandate. Barber, a British Yoruba-speaking scholar who lectured in Nigeria for seven years, makes the connection between the Yoruba peoples, social change, and popular art. She notes that, in general, Yoruba cinema's representation of the masses as social subjects is reflected in its films' preoccupation with city and status mobility, and withthe migration of characters from rural settlements to metropolitan ones (23). As an industry also defined by economic factors, Haynes and Okome (1998) identify an industrial practice among Yoruba theatre troupes that integrated stage productions, film, television, records, and photo-play magazines as a way of maximizing economic returns (108). Examining Igbocinema, another major sub-nation category in Nigeria, Haynes and Okome identify a more capital and commercially oriented film production system (107), one sharing similarities with Hollywood's capital-oriented cinema. Haynes and Okome credit Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) and its financial success as marking the beginning of Nollywood as a fully commercial endeavour (115). This economic approach, as Haynes and Okome note for example, influenced the choice of language use in Igbo films, with

English language taking the dominant position in the bid to appeal to the widest groups of audiences(115). In addition, unlike Yoruba cinema in the 70s and 80s, which survived on the economic resources and know-how of the theatre director/owner, the 1990s Igbo film industry integrated a structure whereby financial investment came from Igbo merchants who doubled as marketers (114). The result is a system which put the power of decision making in the hands of the financier, and not necessarily the film director -a condition that trivialized artistry, while esteeming film as a commercial product (115). As a commercial product, the Igbo film was mass-produced on videocassettes and distributed through organized networks as home videos, differentiating itself from Yoruba cinema, which, according to Haynes and Okome, favoured theatrical screening. As such, Igbo filmmakers where the first to understand the extent to which piracy would be a factor in the commercialization of its cinematic form. For Northern Nigeria's Hausa cinema, Haynes and Okome draw heavily on American Anthropologist and Media Ecologist Brian Larkin's work: "Hausa Dramas and the Rise of Video Culture in Nigeria" (1997). The Hausa people share a uniquely religio-cultural identity, one strongly inflected by Islamic conservatism (223). Larkin outlines the dominance of Indian films among Hausas, arguing that Hausas borrow substantially from Indian, particularly, Hindi film aesthetics and themes. Larkin writes that one of the appeals of Indian films for Hausas is the cultural alternative it offers tothe hegemonic West and its Christian and political ideologies (224). Thematically, Hausa films, like Indian films, are steeped in melodrama and romance (232), a choice informed to some extent, as Larkin claims, by the fact that both cultures deal with tensions surrounding such issues as arranged marriages (232). That said, according to Larkin, Hausa films also engage in the re-appropriations, albeit to lesser degrees, of Yoruba and Igbo films (233). For example, there is the common depiction of extravagance and wealth in Hausa films, which Larkin associates with

films from Southern Nigeria (235). Hausas' re-appropriation of Indian and Southern Nigerian films is informed by the need to filter these influences through the conservative culture of the Hausas (236). Here, Larkin complicates the idea of national identity as exclusive and homogeneous, recognizing an identification based on transcultural similarities between two different nation-states.

Historically, Haynes (1995), Larkin (1997), and Haynes and Okome (1998) appear to mirror the shifting positions of national cinema studies in the early-1990s, from one grounded in national identity to newer modes of national cinema re-imaginings. Their works incorporate issues of national identity on one side, while exploring production and economics as sub/trans-national identifiers as well. First in "Nollywood Confidential: The Unlikely Rise of Nollywood Video Film" (2004), and then, expounding on it in "The pan- Africanism We Have: Nollywood's Invention of Africa" (2007), American African Film scholar, John McCall, did a comparison between Nollywood and postcolonial Francophone African Cinema, a cinema typically viewed through the Third Cinema lens. By studying distribution systems and audiences in Africa, McCall identified areas where these cinemas share overlapping and distinguishing qualities. McCall reiterated Nollywood does not share Third Cinema's political and militant ideology. However, he added that pan-Africanism, which was what Ousmane Sembene and his cohorts set as a goal (but failed to achieve because their films were largely inaccessible on the content) was finally achieved by Nollywood upon the cheap supply of media technologies in the 1990s. Due in large parts to the cost of shooting on 35mm and 16mm celluloid, and its distribution through institutionalized European networks (2-3), McCall acknowledged one of the shortcomings of Third Cinema African filmmakers is their films' inaccessibility to most Africans (98).

The cost of producing, distributing and exhibiting celluloid films made their circulation challenging. Whereas, Nollywood video films benefited from low-cost production, and early Nollywood filmmakers could more easily by-pass formal networks, thus creating a shadow economy. As a result, McCall pinned Nollywood's popularity to its ability to collapse economic and social barriers among African audiences (100). Thus, McCall positedNollywood succeeds at articulating an African narrative because it successfully permeates African cultures, boundaries and economies on macro and micro levels—an achievement he believes Third Cinema filmmakers in Africa found elusive. For McCall, Nollywood is a complexity, which by undertaking unique economic and market measures for its own viability, and by-passing institutional influences, finds itself laying the grounds for a trans- cultural/national, economic and technological identity in African cinema. One of the strong points of McCall's argument is its framing of Nollywood's industrial and informal practices in more agreeable light, legitimizing these practices as potentially new ways Africa may assert itself within the global cinema industry. While McCall's analysis appears to move away from a postcolonialism critique, by placing emphasis on cheap media technologies as Nollywood's way of countering traditional Western Cinema's use of celluloid, his argumentstill echoes Fanon and Gabriel. He is ultimately arguing for a Nollywood cinema that servesas a template for an Africa that is near homogenized by a determination to oppose the hegemonic West.

In like manner, in "Creative Industries and Informal Economies" (2010), Australian digital ethnographer, Ramon Lobato makes the case for the legitimization of informal market economies, and their incorporation into formal, institutional, and global economies. To do this, Lobato employs Nollywood's informal industry as a case-study. He approaches Nigerian cinema as an industry, which has not only created its own informal economic structure on account of the

availability of cheap video technologies and a shadow market, but because of its success, inflects on the debates around such institutional terms as piracy and copyright. Lobato acknowledges Nollywood's loosely regulated industrial system is theresult of autonomous, democratic and liberal self-regulation (340). He cites a unique unstandardized production process which begins from minimal scripting, shooting on cheapVHS, and minimal post-production before films are quickly pushed out into the market (340). These films by-pass theatrical screenings, getting into circulation via unregulated, informal networks managed by small, local, but well-integrated marketers. These market systems, according to Lobato, grew out from pre-existing pirate networks that had, until then, trafficked in pirated Hollywood, Indian and Hong Kong films (340). Using Brian Larkin's (2004; 2008) concept of pirate infrastructure in the earlier days of Nollywood, Lobato describes Nollywood's unique economy as premised on the absence of copyright laws, while emphasizing distribution and reach (346). Its economic system survived on thecontroversial calculation of market oversaturation, ahead of the arrival of pirated copies. This way, Nollywood filmmakers were more likely to recoup some cost, while piracy at once, threatened investments, and in an odd and ironic role, also helped increase accessibility to these films. Because of its economic sustainability within a floundering national economy, Lobato suggests the use of Nollywood's informal market model as a viable template, and as an asset when developing nations negotiate their integration into global economic networks (338). By the characterization of Nollywood's industrial system as one which operates across national borders, even though it does so outside of institutionalglobal markets, Lobato conceptualizes Nollywood through the lens of transnationalism, economics and technology. Lobato's work, however, also fails to read Nollywood's informality beyond matters of economics, inadvertently reducing it to how Nollywood may assert itself within a global economic system. Like McCall, Lobato is

partly looking at Nollywood through the lens of postcolonialism. He associates informality with Africa, and formality with Western capitalist nations. By setting up these binaries, and suggesting that informality could become Africa's legitimized way of participating in global markets, Lobato is referencing a potentially monolithic Africa that is asserting itself as an opposition to the West.

In 2007, Jonathan Hayes, argues in *Nollywood in Lagos, Lagos in Nollywood Films*, that the factors positioning Nollywood as an alternative cinema arose as a matter of necessity, necessities intricately and inexorably tied to the city of Lagos. Lagos serves as thebedrock for the formation of Nollywood (134), a city which defies Western expectations of a cinema city like Hollywood or London; a city which ultimately helps define the production, distribution, exhibition, narrative and aesthetic systems of Nollywood (134). Haynes begins by laying out the unique characteristics of Lagos, which among other things include pronounced economic stratification, which gives rise to a forced co-mingling between the wealthy and poor within a small space; the inconvenient existence of manic industriousness and ingenuity within an environment that is largely lacking in urban planning and reliable and supportive infrastructures (132). With a twenty-three million strong population, Haynes describes Lagos as an ".anarchic urban catastrophe, environmental destruction, and human misery" (131). Yet, he says all of that to place emphasis on Lagos as a city in which its population develops coping mechanisms and creativity, "whose ability to survive contradicts ordinary common sense" (123). To explain how Nollywood is a response to the nature of Lagos, and how Lagos helps determine the nature of Nollywood, Haynes suggests Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992), which officially launched Nollywood, was an endeavor born out of economic survival and ingenuity. Nollywood was launched out of a man's desperation to sell imported, empty video cassettes in Lagos'

informal market (134). Following Nnebue's success, the cheap cost of video technology invited overwhelming participation from low-income, (semi) literate, illiterate, low-skilled Nigerians. Furthermore, Haynes points out low-budget filmmaking in Nollywood was necessitated, on one side, by the absence of corporate investments, and on the other, the rampant nature of piracy. The potential risk of financial loss was therefore mitigated by keeping budgets low, ensuring some level of sustainability (134). The absence of studios or designated film spaces, according to Haynes, resulted in the use of Lagos as Nollywood's film space -together with its everyday inadequacies, limitations and energy, a dynamic which provides Nollywood with the kind of realism, even if sometimes unappealing, sought by its immediate audiences (136). As such, both the film locations that show up on screen, and the shadow-market supporting Nollywood's unstandardized industry share the same city space (136), a case of the stage and the backroom lumped into one. Haynes also suggests that Nollywood appeared satisfied with making sub-quality films in its early days, because these films were intended to be experienced within domestic spaces as home videos. The reason being that the climbing crime-rate in 1990s Lagos, and the imagined danger and risk entailed in going to cinema houses after dark, necessitated provisions for home video watching (143). It must be acknowledged, however, that much as the city's socio-economic conditions engendered a home video-viewing market, the industry's ability to take advantage of that market was tied to the cheap and available media technologies which made Nollywood possible in the 1990sin first place. Haynes also related Nollywood's aesthetics to the prevalent economic conditions in Lagos, and the ingenuity of on-the-fly, ad-hoc arrangements. For example, instead of the more internationally standardized shot-reverse-shot, he cites the common choice of prolonged static medium shot as the most economic and quick way to capture a scene, when a film must be shot within a few days, with a small crew, while

nursing location-related anxieties (139). For Haynes, therefore, Nollywood is defined in terms of theinteractions existing between Lagos' human and spatial geographies, and the economic and social necessities arising from these interactions. Similar to Lobato's appreciation of informality, informality for Haynes is a phenomenon that has grown out of Lagos' largely unregulated and unsupervised market system. Haynes associates Nollywood's informality tothe near-absence of functional, official economic institutions in Lagos. Haynes, however, also fails to broaden his definition and role of Nollywood's informality by not examininginformality beyond or outside of its economic identity.

Other writers have looked at Nollywood's hybridization at the transnational level, examining the implications of the industry's commercial and popular thrust as an African Cinema. In "Nollywood: Nigerian Videofilms as a Cultural and Technological Hybridity"(2009), Uchenna Onuzulike characterized Nollywood as a hybrid cinema, because of its transnational, transcultural, and techno-cultural nature. Drawing on Marwan Kraidy's (2005) definition of hybridity, which places emphasis on the fusion of relatively distinct forms (Onuzuilike, 182), Onuzulike posited the many ways Nollywood is hybridized, not forgetting to indicate that central to the need for hybridity, is Nollywood's search for economic viability (177). He holds, for example, that Nollywood informs other African cultures, while it is in turn, influenced by these other cultures (179). To this, he also ties collaborations between Nollywood and other cinemas and filmmakers in Africa (179).

Hybridity, which arises from Nollywood's transnationalism is reflected in the industry's global reach, with strong filmmaking and viewing cultures in countries with sizable populations of diasporic Nigerians -and Africans, such as the UK and US (Krings and Okome 2013; Tsika 2015). Tanzania (Krings 2013), Uganda (Dipio 2014) and South Africa(Onyenankeya,

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Onyenankeye and Osunkunle 2017) are also examples of the extent of Nollywood's penetration in Nigeria. Other times, transnationalism occurs at the level of Nollywood's co-production with other cinema industries in Africa, Europe, North America and Asia. As Larkin (1997) elaborates, cultural transnationalism exists in how the Hausas ofNigeria adopt Hindi film aesthetic and narrative styles to communicate their own conservative traditional practices. As a result, transnational hybridity in Nollywood holds acentral position in our understanding of the industry.

On another level, Onuzulike (2009) identifies hybridity that occurs within nation-state boundaries as well, acknowledging Western religio-cultural influences like Christianityand Nigerian traditional religious practices have become well embedded in Nigerian media, producing a hybridized structure for Nollywood narratives and themes (180). Having, therefore, established that the culture within which Nollywood films are made is actually multi-cultural, even at its most basic, Onuzulike goes on to use postcolonial theory to look at Nollywood as a hybrid of culture and technology. As Onuzulike notes, cheap video and digital technologies from the colonizer (or West) played a significant role in the birth of Nollywood in Nigeria (colonized) (183-184). These digital technologies are mastered by technical personnel within Nigerian cultures; their films find their way back into African diasporic communities in the neocolonial West (180). Consequently, the exposure of first- generation children born in the West (of immigrant parents) to these films constantly renegotiates the cultural landscape of the host country through these children (180). Given these numerous areas of hybridization, Onuzulike presents a Nollywood whose identity is defined by a potpourri of technologies and transnational cultures and influences.

Like Onuzulike, Alessandro Jedlowski's *Small Screen Cinema* (2012) also looks at

Nollywood as a hybrid cinema. Where Onuzulike brings Nollywood's multicultural identity and

technology together to arrives at its hybridity, Jedlowski finds Nollywood's hybridity in the new

and previously non-existent space Nollywood creates and occupies between established national

cinema forms. For example, Jedlowski reads Nollywood as straddling the local and the regional,

the nation and the international, the cinema and the television, where it is more comfortable

connecting one to the other, than being either. As such, Jedlowski ascribes Nollywood's

originality to the new space it has created for itself between established positions. Using Jay

Bolter and Richard Grusin's new-media theory of remediation, which in its broad sense

postulates that digital technologies are not divorced from earlier media forms (432), but are

productions emerging from the refashioning of earlier media, Jedlowski holds that Nollywood's

hybridity is the product of the refashioning of the more established modes of media production

preceding it (432). As well, Jedlowski places emphasis on the informality of Nollywood's

industrial structure as partly responsiblefor the hybrid space Nollywood occupies. He makes sure

to define 'informality' not in derogatory terms, but as ways of production and distribution which

transgress traditionalist expectations of institutional market structures. As an example, Jedlowski

points to the fact that Nollywood's straight-to-video approach to filmmaking in the 1990s

positioned Nollywood between cinema and television, while it was neither (437). He cites the

screening of video films to small groups of paying audiences (437) as sharing an identity with

theatrical screenings in that screening is paid for by the audience, but unlike with theatrical

releases, the locations are nothing like the traditional theatre. On the other hand, the venues are

located in or around domestic spaces, which associates this form of viewing with home-video

viewing. Yet, unlike home-viewing, Nollywood screenings involve monetary exchanges between the unlicensed screening agent and audience (438).

Nollywood, by occupying the new spaces it creates between established cinematic positions, problematizes traditional cinema industry categorizations. For Jedlowski, Nollywood's hybridity centers around its fluidity between binary positions, where technology and distribution serve as its economic drivers. While Jedlowski's reading of Nollywood's informality has a positive view, there is still the presumption that informality in Nollywood is nothing more than an economic phenomenon for circumventing formal market systems. An extension of Nollywood's informality to Africa's precolonial, pre-capitalist system of communal relations may have further complicated the extent to which he centralized the roles of technology, production and distribution as economics-related factors.

Taking a different direction to make similar arguments, Noah Tsika, in *Nollywood Stars* (2015) identifies Nollywood's transnational imitation of Hollywood's star system. Tsika placed Nollywood star actors at the center of Nollywood marketing, an outlook which privileges commercialism over artistry. He writes that Nollywood relies heavily on its star actors for film sales, which sets Nollywood at variance with the political (Gabriel 1982) and Marxist (Armes 1987) lenses through which non-Western cinemas are typically conceptualized. Tsika believes the relationship between Nollywood and its stars is significantly explained by Nigeria's early foray into international co-productions with African-American Hollywood actors like Ossie Davis in the 1970s (4). Tsika proposes Nollywood does not only seek commercial benefits like Hollywood, but by commonly choosing to include western brands like Beyonce and Rihanna (60) in its titles, it indicates a willingness to align with certain Hollywood practices. Tsika's analysis, is however, unable to separate itself from the writer's perception of informality, which

sees Nollywood's informal practices as a complication to the maturing of the industry's star-system. For Tsika, if informality has fostered distribution and exhibition networks, it has also reversed much of the economic gains its star-system may have potentially acquired (48). Nollywood is seen by Tsika, not necessarily as imitating Hollywood film style, but imitating a number of its approaches to film marketing. As such, Nollywood's marketing structure reveals a cinema whose concerns have more to do with economics than culture.

The above approaches indicate key positions taken by scholars in their examination of Nigerian cinema as a national commercial and popular cinema. These positions examine Nollywood's industrial character: production, exhibition, technology, trans-cultural/nationaland global identity through the lens of informality, which these scholars have largely restricted to its economic phenomenon. In another sense, their reduction of informality and formality to their Western, capitalist significations, sets up the informal as opposed to the formal, where the former can be associated with Africa and the latter, with the West.

1.3 A Literature Review: Nollywood's Thematic and Formal Qualities

Examinations of Nollywood's film forms and themes have also benefited greatly from scholarly interest. Over time, ideas in these areas have coalesced around an aesthetic that primarily utilizes two general concepts: themes of wealth (and power, whether political or arising from the possession of wealth) and spirituality (witchcraft, the occult, traditional religions, Christianity and Islam). These themes have been commonly looked at in their relation to Nollywood's film narrative and form, and for perspective, they are not unconnected with the economic notion of informality with which Nollywood has been widely conceptualized. Onookome Okome (2012) pointedly highlights this connection when he identifies what Jean and

John Comaroff[2] call the "occult economy", which like the Nollywood industry, thrives only within informal systems (173). Therefore, both the absence of a regulated structure in the Nollywood industry, and what appears to be Nollywood's obsession with wealth and the occult in its films are consequences and responses to the informality underlying the country's economy. In essence, a symbiotic relationship exists between the occult economy and informality, and while they are not always interchangeable, occasions arise where one is the shadow-image of the other. Below,I focus on the spiritual (witchcraft, occult, etc.) in Nollywood as a pointer, and in some instances, a stand in, for the informality that supports it.

To better understand Nollywood's informality as a phenomenon with elements thatpre-exist colonialism and capital market forces in Africa, and are more strongly in touch with indigenous cultures and traditions, it is helpful to study the contexts within which the Nollywood industry was established.

Loosely using Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) as a sort of thematic and formal blueprint for Nollywood, Jonathan Haynes, in "What Is To Be Done?" (2010), approaches the above themes through the concept of genre. He draws affinities between the prevalence of the supernatural in Nollywood with what Tobias Wendl categorizes as the horror film genre in Nollywood (19). Haynes also makes a comparison between Nollywood horror film conventions and American occult horror films, making the argument that the Nollywood occult horror film is more natural and unsurprising because it is more at home within, say, Yoruba cosmology. The cosmos in Yoruba traditional religion, Haynes notes, "is full of supernatural beings and forces that constantly penetrate the human world" (20). Whereas, headds, American occult films appear

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[2] For more on the 'occult economy', which broadly refers to a system where magic and sorcery, real or imagined, are generated and transacted for political and material profit within market economies, consult Jean and John Comaroff's "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstractions" (1999).

to pitch 'Black Magic' against 'White Science'. This dynamic, Haynes notes of Hollywood, genders black magic by signaling that women are commonly the portals for occult horror, since Hollywood has a classical tradition of associating women with the irrational (20). For this reason, Haynes argues the prevalence ofthe supernatural in Nollywood is grounded in Nigerian cultures and traditions, and it is morenatural and unpretentious in Nollywood than in Hollywood. Much as Haynes here identifiesa Nollywood-specific thematic characteristic, his reference fails to make connections between the supernatural (or occult) and the informal economic system the Comaroffs (1999) theorize about. Such a connection may have extended informality beyond its economic context, to examine the rootedness of Nollywood's spiritual and informal elements in precolonial, African way of life.

In "The Return of the Mercedes Benz: From Ousmane Sembene to Kenneth Nnebue" (2010), Lindsey Green-Simms sees Nollywood's seeming pre-occupation with wealth and the supernatural differently from Haynes. She looks at it through a postcolonial lens, examining the relationship between Western capitalism and technology, as symbolizedby the Mercedes Benz, and the African narrative in postcolonial African films. Green- Simms observes that where African 35mm and 16mm films of the seventies and eighties refused to celebrate the luxury car as a show of their rejection of Western consumer culture, Nollywood, while acknowledging the breakdown of the postcolonial state, utilizes the Mercedes Benz to symbolize African modernity; it is employed as a visual image that announces the African's participation in a global consumer society, and with similar tastes as the Western consumer (214). That said, Green-Simms suggests the aversion many have for Nollywood's unrelenting depiction of flashy cars and wealth as thematic elements and film conventions probably come from Nollywood's sacrifice of existing class, geopolitical and neocolonial tensions for a desire to present a global, modern society (214).

Furthermore, she identifies another Nollywood distinction by repurposing the role of the automobile in Nollywood films. While the automobile may call attention to Western technology in American films, it is almost exclusively a representation of wealth and power in Nollywood. According to Green-Simms, wherever you find wealth and power in Nollywood, chances are the occult is equally present (215). In so doing, Green-Simms suggests if a film's narrative must include the kind of wealth Nigerian society, a struggling postcolonial state, cannot realistically provide through legitimate labour, the depiction of the occult as thematic and formal elements in Nigerian films becomes the only available option. In essence, while Hollywood turns to crime to obtain that kind of wealth, Nollywood calls on the occult to achieve the same purpose. In any case, Haynes and Green-Simms justify the reason for the inclusion of the supernatural and occult in Nollywood. For them, Nigeria's largely informal economic system is the foundation for Nollywood's preoccupations with forces that work outside of formal systems. In "Toward a Morality of the African Film" (2014), A.G.A Bellois not as approving as Green-Simms and Haynes. He imagines Nollywood as a producer of culture, and as a socially-minded industry that must contribute to the maintenance of high morality standards among its local audience. For Bello, Nollywood's enamoured relationship with depictions of wealth and the occult is the product of creative shallowness and a cheap form of audience exploitation. His cynicism, in this regard, is articulated thus: Nollywood produces films "…that merely entertain, or ostentatiously display wealth or opulence, or promiscuously or obscenely ignore the reality of the African condition, and that extent, act irresponsibly" (326). Bello analyzes Nollywood films in their capacity to morally impact contemporary Nigerian society -the modern, capitalist one that strives to emulate other formal economies. He limits his argument to an indifference to any sense of moral virtue and a desire for profit among Nollywood filmmakers, but fails to explore whether

the profuse involvement of the spiritual in human lives has its origins in precolonialNigerian cultures and informal systems. In "Blood Money, Big Men and Zombies" (2012), Carmela Garritano, as well, focuses on the relationship between morality and Nollywood's seeming fascination with excessive wealth and ritualistic practices. However, unlike Bello, Garritano argues Nollywood sets up these themes in order to discredit them and dissuade theaudience from them. First, she argues against ideas that the unhealthy and excessive relianceon ritualistic practices by Nigerians (and Africans in general) originates from "remnants of "traditional" or "primitive" beliefs, but as a dynamic, modern discourse that reflects and attempts to make sense of contemporary capitalist forces" (54). For Garritano, the use of the occult and rituals to obtain wealth in Nollywood films is, indeed, a resistance and an opposition to Africa's forced initiation into capitalism and its structures as the only means for acquiring wealth (54). Garritano invites discourses of neo-colonialism, neoliberalism and global inequalities to draw parallels between the violence against bodies that global capitalism attempts to conceal, and nations (together with their cinemas) marginalized by global agencies like the IMF. Film aesthetics like Nollywood's, by trafficking in counter- capitalist approaches to wealth, according to Garritano, are expressing their acute discontentwith the global, neoliberal distribution of wealth (54). Having established a reason for the prevalence of themes of wealth and the occult in Nollywood, she, nonetheless, registers the message of caution, hesitation and perhaps aversion, with which Nollywood presents it to itsaudiences: "Urban occult movies speak out against the erosion of humanity and social relations brought about by wealth, reinventing tropes common to older African discourses about witchcraft and other forms of immoral accumulation… [i]n urban occult movies, wealth is always destructive and dangerous, and once ensnared in its net, protagonists cannot break free" (55). The portrait Garritano paints, therefore, is a national cinema straddled with the

responsibility of mounting an effective resistance against global capitalistforces, even when it must employ a sometimes-controversial aesthetic, with which it is not completely enamored. In a sense, Garritano is setting up the supernatural in Nollywood as arejection and opposition to the formal, capitalist systems that Nollywood contends with. In so doing, we can see the supernatural in Nollywood as originating in a precolonial, informal system—somewhat the opposite of its formal, capitalist version. A deeper look into the relationship between both the supernatural and the informal in Nollywood may have called more attention to function of informality beyond its function within capitalist economics.

In his book, *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* (2016), Jonathan Haynes revisits the concept of the supernatural/occult and wealth as both thematic and formal elements. Unlike his 2010 article, and somewhat like Bello (2014), Haynes sets up binaries in which morality and the emphasis on wealth and the occult are in tension with each other. Nonetheless, he again, attempts to find the reasons behind the emergence of these narrative elements in Nollywood. This time, he honed in on consumerism, which he attributes to the "neoliberal capitalist triumphalism after the collapse of communism, experienced in Africa as general distress and instability because of structural adjustment, accompanied (because of deregulation) by a flood of imported consumer goods available only to a privileged few and a flood of images of consumer goods…" (44). Through this lens, Haynes offers an alternative reading to his earlier position that the convenient call on the occult as a potential provider and guarantor of wealth finds its origins in the widespread belief in many Nigerian traditional religions. Here, he traces Nollywood's fascination with acquiring wealth through the spiritual/occult to the consumer culture that originates in the capitalist systems of the West and was imported to Africa after the collapse of communism. As a result, like Green-Simms, these thematic and formal elements exist

in Nollywood to enable the Nollywood character to participate in the global consumer culture. Pointing out that "consumer desire, which motivates shots and whole sequences…" (44), Haynes is of the impression that depictions of the occult and wealth influence the form of the Nollywood film, determining choices made about interior shots, close-ups and locations. Again, indirectly, Haynes takes on the dichotomous relationship between informality and formality,in the form of Nigeria's occult economy on the one hand and globalizing capitalist, consumer economy on the other. However, like his earlier works, he would have further benefited from also exploring the supernatural in non-economic ways, therefore, seeing informality as going beyond a response to formality.

The occult economy as a Nollywood narrative characteristic has also been looked at in terms of gender. Okome (2012) argues that the motivations for a Nollywood aesthetic characterized by the occult and wealth is more complex than to assume any sense of homogeneity among Nollywood filmmakers. Okome insists different filmmakers employ them for different reasons, and to different ends. To make his argument, he contrasts the roles the occult and wealth play in *Living in Bondage* (1992) with another film, *Domitilla: The Story of a Prostitute* (1997), directed by Zeb Ejiro. *Domitilla* is about women, who in search of livelihood become involved in prostitution to survive in a city like Lagos. The pursuit of economic comfort leads them into the dark side of the city and the world of the occult. Okomo posits that while some films are looking to highlight and discourage a pervasive greed for wealth that has become endemic in Nigeria's 'lottery economy', which is what *Living in Bondage* does (179), *Domitilla* uses its narrative to particularize the political, economic and social barriers and struggles experienced by the female body in cityspaces like Lagos (170). Hence, where the former film is moralistic and somewhat didactic, the latter is after exposing a reality; it exposes the

disadvantages faced by a significant number of the female populace in Lagos. The contrast between these two films is a reason for which Okome argues there is not one motivation or intended result behind Nollywood'sunceasing depictions of wealth and the occult. Likewise, James Tar Tsaaior (2017) examines the relationship between the female and witchcraft within the patriarchal system presented in Nollywood films, which has its roots in the Nigerian society. The female body, for Tsaaior, is closely associated with witchcraft and the occult in Nollywood, where the female is likely the access into, medium for, and reason for consulting, the occult. Tsaaior's feminist lens presents the female (and witchcraft) as a counter-hegemonic force against patriarchy (32), which oversees and controls the levers of social, financial and political powers within the Nigerian society. Tsaaior sees witchcraft in Nollywood as playing an activist and militant role, a medium for providing a voice for the marginalized and underprivileged. In so doing, Tsaaior draws a relationship in Nollywood between progressivism, feminism and the occult, even though the occult is more commonly examined in the context of conservatism, traditional religions and 'backwardness'. In some ways, Tsaaior's article takes the occult as an informal phenomenon outside of the more common capitalist and economic context within which it is measured against formality. However, in setting the occult up in feminist terms and as a counter to successive male-dominated governments, he is also bringing back informality as a response to formality.

A final sub-theme that manifests the interrelationship between the spiritual, wealth (and power) is that of Christianity –and particularly, Pentecostalism. The most prevalent use of Christianity in Nollywood is as a counter-measure to the perception of 'darkness' with which is how a massive percentage of Nollywood's audiences view occultism. Tori Arthur embodies this position well in "Reimagining the 'Blockbuster' for Nigerian Cinema" (2014). Arthur describes

the contentious relationship between Nollywood's Christian audiences and the traditional

African religions they hold in strong suspicion. The writer adds that it is a common belief in

Christian circles that the challenges Nigeria continues to face, the most severe of which is

economic, have their origins in the spiritual world, and theblame can be laid at the feet of

traditional religions (107). Christianity is thus offered as a better, more effective, alternative to

the imagined dark powers traditional religions in Nigeria are perceived to traffic in. For her,

Christian themes provide a sense of hope, help, comfort and certainty during Nigeria's dire times

(107). Set up as binaries which must rejecteach other, Christianity becomes triumphant in the

contention for souls in films such as Mount Zion's *Lost Forever* (1991), *The Ultimate Power*

Part 1 (1994) and *Captives of the Mighty* (2001), to name a few. She argues that in addition to

the belief among Christians that their faith has within it powers that can overcome evil, it also

promises redemption and forgiveness (108). According to her, the optimistic view that the

Nigerian audience is not doomed but can get up every morning having their hope restored

through faith, is a strongly inviting one. It is Christianity's teachings of redemption and salvation

that Arthur reads intofilms like *Living in Bondage* (Nnebue, 1992). Ade Adesokan (2004) takes a

different position, even though he also believes Pentecostalism in Nollywood provides answers

to theNigerian experience. He refrains from setting up Christianity and Nigerian traditional

religious practices as forces that must go against, and triumph over each other; he also

vehemently criticizes those who accuse Nollywood of fetishizing witchcraft (49). As a matter of

fact, Adesokan views Pentecostalism, together with traditional religious practices in Nigeria, as

religious and spiritual spheres jointly engaged in anchoring the Nollywood film to a sense of

morality. He refuses to associate evil with Nigerian traditional religions as Arthur does (49).

Instead, Adesokan considers good and evil as separate phenomena, both of which exist outside

of Christianity and Nigerian traditional religions. It is, therefore, the inherent responsibility of both Pentecostalism and traditional religions in Nigeria to triumphover whatever they deem evil in their own unique ways (49). Adesokan argues that the infusion of Pentecostal themes into Nollywood stories aligns with the Yoruba belief that thespiritual realm is actively involved in the physical, natural one, and that the former is perpetually intervening in the affairs of the latter. For Adesokan, both Christianity and traditional religions in Nigerian films stand guard over the moral beliefs of the Nigerian people; their purpose and value in Nollywood films relate to their capacity to caution the Nigerian who might be consumed by an unhealthy desire for wealth and power.

As this literature review reveals, postcolonial approaches remain dominant in our examination of African cinemas. Yet, in the instance of Nollywood, postcolonialism frameworks are inadequate to fully conceptualize its identity. Largely, approaches to conceptualizing Nollywood have revolved around two key areas: the cinema's informal industrial practices and the characterization of its themes and form in terms of the spiritual (occult, traditional religions and Christianity), wealth and power. As we learned, these are not unconnected, since the occult economy, like Nollywood, thrives under informal systems.

Informality is therefore a central theme in the conceptualization of Nollywood. It isas present in the industry's practices as it is an influence on Nollywood's aesthetic, visual and narrative character. For this reason, informality as a Nollywood phenomenon requires further exploration. The near-complete reduction of Nollywood's informality to an economic, capitalist phenomenon, and as a convenient dumping ground for everything that is opposed to formality and legitimacy has denied research the extent to which the study of Nollywood's informality may further enrich the cinema's conceptualization. Broadening theconcept of informality for the

study of Nollywood informs the structure and direction of mythesis, forming the general

backdrop of this project.

CHAPTER 2:
NIGERIAN CINEMAS' ORIGIN STORY:
POSTCOLONIAL AND THIRD CINEMA AS A
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I examine the unique character of Nollywood against the more general national cinema conceptualizations of Postcolonial and Third Cinemas, which are two of the main theoretical approaches for understanding African Cinema. I also look at Nollywood in more detail to identify the role of informality in its 'birthing' phase.

2.1 The Postcolonial Framework in African Cinema Studies

Unlike traditional Third Cinema's Marxism-informed sense of oppositionality, that is, opposition to (neo)colonial, capitalist and oppressive systems, pan-Africanism is characterised by its pro-African preoccupations (McCall 2007). For authors such as Pfaff (1984) and Ukadike (1994), pan-Africanism is also animated by a political and aesthetic mandate in support of an independent Africa, in addition to its opposition to (neo)colonial powers. Of course, in many areas, pan-Africanist approaches overlap with Third Cinema theories when it comes to situating African Cinema as a rejection of Western, neo-colonial ideologies. However, the efforts of pan-Africanists have primarily tended toward unifying Africa in solidarity of an African collective consciousness (Becker 2013, 182). For example, Ukadike (1994) homogenizes cultural and ethnic differences under a unifying colonial identity, finding distinctions only along colonial lines. This is evident when he notes Britain's pragmatic policies in Anglophone Africa minimized direct postcolonial British involvement in the former colonies and encouraged documentary films. Whereas France promoted feature films and was more directly involved in the production,

distribution and exhibition of films from its West African colonies (109-110). In both cases, Ukadike employs generalizations in order to group diverse African nations under their colonial affiliations.

Certain global geo-political events in the late 1980s and into the 1990s intensified interests in concepts of national identity, differences and specificities. The seismic collapseof the Soviet Union and international communism in 1989, and the consequent breakaway of East European nation-states from the USSR, provoked newer and more immediate anxieties about the meaning of national homogeneity; as well, postmodernism and its exacerbated attack on grand theories and narratives opened up spaces for contesting universalizing theories. As a heterogenous and complex postcolonial cinema, Nollywood, can be productively read through new theoretical accounts of post-national cinemas. Like any other cinema, it can be understood as complex: sometime, postcolonial, Marxist and/orpan-Africanist, and other times pro-Western and capitalist.

2.2 Nollywood's Origin Story: Context

From the outset, I must acknowledge the beginning of Nollywood is not as clear-cut; neither is its historiography definitive concerning its beginning. For one, Kenneth Nnebue, who is widely believed to have begun Nollywood with his financing of *Living in Bondage* (1992) had, prior to then, invested in Yoruba films (Haynes and Okome 1998, 113). While Nigeria's celluloid film era, which preceded Nollywood, is regarded as separate from Nollywood, largely because of its format, strong arguments have been made to contest claims that *Living in Bondage* is the beginning of Nollywood. These arguments insist many of Nollywood's video film practices were borrowed from the celluloid era, including film practitioners who migrated from

celluloid filmmaking into Nollywood (Barber 2000, 247; Olayiwola 2011, 189). Celluloid and television era practitioners like Dayo Akinpelu (*Alabi Yellow*) and Lere Paimo (*Eda Onile Ola*) transitioned into Nollywood filmmaking. Celluloid filmmaker, Ade Love, who directed *Ajani Ogun* (1976) and *Taxi Driver* (1983) was the father of Kunle Afolayan, who I will later talk about in my final chapter. Jedlowski (2012) called Nollywood the descendant of celluloid filmmaking (432) on account of certain overlapping technological and technical overlaps. Still, others like Ukadike (1994) date the beginnings of Nigerian cinema to Colonial Mobile Cinema, which was designed to take instructional films into the hinterlands (106); furthermore, Ukadike explores the colonial structures left behind for Nigeria's post-colonial filmmaking in the first decades after national independence, all the way through to the heydays of television series programming in the 1980s and 1990s.

Also, while we may not suggest that widespread audience interest in Hollywood, Bollywood, Hong-Kong Kung-Fu films in pre-Nollywood Nigeria constitute other Nigerian national cinema regimes, we must recognize interests in these foreign films reference pre-Nollywood cinematic cultures, because of the extent of their domination of African screens in the decades preceding Nollywood (Ukadike 2000, 245).

All of these complicate assumptions that Nollywood's beginning is traceable to one particular point in time.

What is my rationale then for identifying 1992's *Living in Bondage* as my marker for Nollywood's beginning and origin story? While all the arguments made above are duly taken into account, my decision on 1992's *Living in Bondage* as the birth of Nollywood is premised on the informal distribution model that Nnebue put in place to market the film, and which went on to become the industry model adopted by Nollywood. Similarly, and for related reasons, the

recording on, and distribution of the video film format in Nigeria began with Nnebue's *Living in Bondage*, and the portability and accessibility of this format made his distribution model practicable, ensuring the survival of the nascent film industry. These key distinguishing factors were definitive to the Nollywood industry. In my research, these unique industrial characteristics are central enough to inform my decision on Nollywood as beginning with *Living in Bondage* in 1992.

If we look at the historical evolution of Nollywood as each successive phase growing out of the one before it, then a clearer and more nuanced understanding of how itsformation continues to influence the industry presents itself. Whatever building blocks we add, whatever new research produced, the trajectory of ongoing scholarship on Nollywood cannot be disentangled from the extent to which we have grasped the complexities surrounding its foundation. Therefore, there exist benefits to returning to Nollywood's beginnings in order to better fine-tune the critical positions we continue to take, which informs our understanding going forward.

Nollywood has been upheld as a contemporary African cinema that breaks from the postcolonial narratives and aesthetics as we see in studies of Francophone African art cinemas like Senegal's in the 1970s and 1980s (Akudinobi 2015). Nollywood's capital- driven informal industry has been cheered for its redefinition of African cinema, and as a case of African cinema's more contemporary identity (Haynes and Okome 1998). However, these categorizations are best not seen as complete breakaways from how postcolonialism theorists have analysed Francophone art cinemas. While elevating valid arguments for Nollywood's capitalist structure and contemporaneity, I point out below that there are conditions under which these arguments are held in tension with Postcolonial and Third Cinema persuasions.

The term, Nollywood, does not quite describe the entirety of Nigeria's contemporary cinema which, while commonly employed as a catch-all name for all post-1992 films in Nigeria (Adesokan 2006), is very much constitutive of ethnic and regional differences: Igboand Yoruba (Haynes 1998) and Hausa's Kannywood (Larkin 2008). More recently, increased interests have emerged in the further fragmentation of Nigeria's Cinema in order to accommodate equally legitimate cinemas of minority ethnic groups. For example, Omoera's (2015) look at Benin cinema as a unique cinema comes to mind. My use here of the term 'Nollywood', therefore, is not to reduce Nigeria's contemporary cinema to a single identity, or even to three main cultural identities. Rather, I use it to reflect its general 'street'use in Nigeria, which I must acknowledge homogenizes filmmaking in Nigeria.

In this chapter, my exploration of Nigerian cinema's origin story stresses heterogeneity. It focuses on two parallel regional cinemas under the banner of Nollywood, which have different origin stories: the Igbo and Yoruba cinemas (which, as a matter of function and qualification, fall under the Nollywood designation) that dominate the countrysouth of Rivers Niger and Benue. The second major sub-national cinema, Kannywood, was developed by the Hausas in Northern Nigeria. For these two cinemas, I focus on thecontributions of two key participants in Nollywood and Kannywood's origin storiesrespectively: Okey Ogunjiofor and Abdalla Adamu.

2.3 Nollywood: Igbo and Yoruba Cinemas

Nollywood's origins form an essential part of how and why Nigeria's contemporary cinema Nollywood has been characterized as unique, and as a potential blueprint for how marginalised economies can assert themselves in a global economic system (Lobato, 2010). Furthermore, Nollywood's unique character reinforces arguments that call for the use of other

theoretical frameworks than postcolonialism, or through a lens that sees African Cinema as homogenous in its militancy against oppression and in the fight for liberation. Fanon and Gabriel's (1982) positions, because they generalize the postcolonial African identity,tend to overlook internal fragmentations within the continent. Sub-nations and cultures within a region like Africa are constantly pursuing uniquely local goals, which are not always in harmony with each other, and cannot always be read in the frame of postcolonialism (Crofts 1993; Higson 2000).

To a considerable degree, Nollywood's story is one of an African national cinema whose pursuits are not always in alignment with Fanon and Teshome. Most commentators place the origin of Nollywood in 1992, when Kenneth Nnebue, an Igbo marketer of consumer electronics in Lagos, decided to experiment with shooting a film on empty VHS cassettes, thereby introducing Nigeria to a vibrant, democratized, liberal and informal film industry (for example, see Haynes 1995; 1998; Larkin 2008). Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) has since been widely accepted as the video-film that officially launched Nollywood. Consequently, the acknowledgment of Nnebue is commonly a staple in Nollywood scholarship. Aside from Haynes and Larkin, other notable writers like Akin Adesokan (2006), Onookome Okome (2010) and Alessandro Jedlowski (2012) among many more have reiterated the significance of Nnebue's role in the birth of the Nollywood film and industry. The dominant account is that Kenneth Nnebue had imported thousands of blank video cassettes with the hopes of re-selling them in Nigeria. However, the anticipated demand he imagined Nigerians would have for video cassettes failed to materialise. The prospects of turning a profit looked dire, and it increasingly appeared his only option was tocut his losses. In a last ditch effort to minimize his financial losses, Nnebue decided to record a film on these cassettes and attempt to sell them (Haynes and Okome 1998).

His experiment was successful, and he awoke a Nigerian mass audience, many of whom had been raised on Western, Indian and Chinese films (Husseini and Sunday 2019, 37). Nnebue introduced the cheaply and quickly made home video film that could reach every living room in Nigeria with a VHS player. Nnebue produced and moved his film through an unregulated, non-standardized production and distribution system, employing networks of stalls and marketers in Lagos and Onitsha. This informal system, which has become central to Nollywood's industrial system, has intrigued many a scholar ever since. Without any government involvement or intervention, Nollywood developed from Nnebue into the juggernaut it became by the late 1990s, growing into the third largest national cinema in terms of production output in the world (Mistry and Ellapen 2013, 66). This is the general account of how Nollywood came into existence, and among scholars, most attempts to understand Nigeria's contemporary cinema have their roots in this view.

Here, my interest is seeing if there exist alternative narratives regarding Nollywood's widely accepted origin story as predominantly articulated in its scholarship. If not necessarily alternative, I was interested in having the accounts come directly from Nollywood practitioners who midwifed the establishment of Nollywood. In listening to, and working with them, I register different nuances and inflections that shed more light on our conventional Nollywood understandings.

2.3A Okechukwu (Okey) Ogunjiofor

Very briefly, *Living in Bondage*[3] is a film about a middle-class Nigerian, Andy Okeke, who loses his job and is drawn into desiring his friend's wealthy lifestyle.

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[3] *Living in Bondage* will be more fully analyzed in the next chapter.

Eventually, by the time he learns of the shady source of the friend's riches, it is too late. Hehas already committed himself to obtaining wealth through dark means, and Okeke has to deal with the consequences of his choices and actions.

If *Living in Bondage* can be argued to be the first local film shot on video and mass-produced as the first Nollywood film, then, Okey Ogunjiofor, who was both the writer and creative mind behind the story deserves to be more strongly integrated into Nollywood's historical narrative. I must add that Ogunjiofor also acted in the film. He played the role of Paul, Andy Okeke's friend. It is inexplicable why Ogunjiofor's presence and influence in the study of Nollywood has been curiously minimal. Yet, in an informal industry seeminglyunconcerned with structure and formal documentation -particularly in its early years, one can imagine how a name or an individual may be easily removed or omitted from Nollywood's historical account. In Haynes' (2016) historical work on Nollywood's genre films, Ogunjiofor's name comes up every now and then. Onuzulike (2015) more strongly situates him in the centre of Nollywood's founding by crediting him as the producer of *Living in Bondage* (237), while Kenneth Nnebue was the executive producer (financier andmarketer). Okey as writer/producer, clearly played a pivotal role. Unfortunately, his role inthe formation of Nollywood has received inadequate attention.

When I was finally able to reach Okey (as he is commonly called) by email in 2019 to see if he was interested in an interview, I sensed from his response that he was a very disciplined and professional person, who nonetheless, had quite a few things he would like to say. I was right: three times, he called me on the day of the interview to make sure I was on my way to our agreed-upon rendezvous, and to ensure I was on time. He would later tell me he makes it a habit to arrive at a meeting an hour early. Okey is not a big man, perhaps standing 5'5/5'6. Yet, he

carries himself with purpose and a strong sense of worth that allows him to appear imposing. He

is energetic, yet even-tempered; he is sagacious, and if I may say, quick on the draw. As the

creative brains behind *Living in Bondage* and the one whose vision birthed Nollywood, my

initial sense of him struggled to align with the kind of chaos and improvisation that have been

used to characterize Nollywood's early beginnings (Haynes 2007). In essence, if I was looking to

see Okey in Nollywood and vice-versa, I wasquite mistaken. Early Nollywood, as largely

described in both popular and academic works,was not a reflection of the man sitting across from

me.

Before I go any further, I should stress, my prioritizing of Okey's accounts over other

equally legitimate accounts that have been written about and researched, is not to disqualify

those other voices. It simply means, having played a very pivotal role, Okey Ogunjiofor's

perspective deserves more attention than it has received, and his voice further enriches the

discourse. It must be stressed that the argument of when Nollywood began is nowhere near

settled.[4] There is, nonetheless, a consensus around when the era of video filmsin Nigeria began,

and *Living in Bondage* is credited for being responsible for that. So, even if we must narrow

Okey Ogunjiofor's brainchild to the launch of Nigeria's video film industry, the idea that the

origins of a whole post-1990 film industry can be traced to him, deserves some critical attention.

Okey introduces himself:

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[4] For one, when I interviewed Tari West, the veteran actor and director who claims to have singlehandedly
written the constitution for the umbrella Actors Guild of Nigeria in 1995, she vehemently disagreed with
suggestions that Nollywood began after *Living in Bondage.* For her, Nollywood is the Nigerian film industry,
which dates back to 1957, when *Freedom*, a play performed by an African cast was recorded on film in Nigeria,
and with the same title: *Freedom* (Dir. V. Messenger, 1957). Due to its strong anti-colonialism and Africanist
theme, *Freedom* is promoted as a 'truly' African film. While it featured an all-African cast (including Ifoghale
Amata, the father of one of Nollywood's pioneering actor and producer, Fred Amata), theentire crew, technical
production and funding were European. For West, 1992 only ushered in a different andnew technical medium,
the video film, within an industry that dates back to the 1950s.

My name is Okechukwu Ogunjiofor. People call me Okey for short.
But in the film, *Living in Bondage*, I'm known as Paulo. *Living in
Bondage* was a film that we made in 1992. My role was simple. I am
the producer of that movie which brought the blueprint for the business
model everyone is now practicing. Take people out of the cinemas and
take cinemas to their homes.

Okey began our interview by providing an overview of Nollywood's origin story, which

does not always comport with the one writers like Haynes (1995), Haynes and Okome (1998),

McCall (2004), Adesokan (2006) have articulated. For context, the general consensus, according

to the above writers and many others, is that Nollywood is a product of happenstance or accident,

following Kenneth Nnebue's inability to sell empty video cassettes he had imported. Ernest-

Samuel and Uduma (2019) recognize Nollywood as an accident which occurred as a by-product

of Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Program in the1990s (55). Others like Mbakwe (2017)

conclude that, owing to the absence of a working production and distribution structure, coupled

with the improvisational character of its filmpractice, the birth of Nollywood was accidental

(277). To Okey, and contrary to general consensus on the matter, Nollywood was not accidental.

Okey says:

As of that moment there was nothing like a cinema-going culture. So,
what we did was to try to recreate the industry in such a way that the
younger folks could get involved; you know, also liberalize filmmaking
to what it is today -a pocket friendly industry where everybody can
play, using even on their mobile phones. What I did was to gather
professionals like me, and then I got a referral to a filmmarketer called
Kenneth Nnebue. I sold the idea for making and recreating the film
industry, which was almost non-existent at the time, so that instead of
waiting to make films on celluloid, we can then make films using
handheld cameras. It was a small proposal, something that would cost
about 150,000 Naira. He [Nnebue] volunteered to give that money and
then we made the movie. I wrote it, played in it, produced it, and then
here today we have a global industry that everybody has recognized.
That is how we have Nollywood today.

Okey prides himself in how deliberate he was about his categorical response to the vacuum presented by the death of 35mm and 16mm filmmaking in Nigeria in the eighties. According to him, his vision centered around a sustainable, but alternative approach to filmmaking that broke from Nigerian celluloid film traditions. He imagined an industry that would continually be populated by young Nigerians. These thoughts provide insight into thevery foundations upon which the model for making and marketing *Living in Bondage* wouldbe laid. Okey not only perceived sustainability was a necessary concern, he recalled the financial and technical difficulties posed by 35mm and 16mm filmmaking; these challengesserved as an existential guide for steering the prospective cinema industry in a different direction, away from the potential repetition of financial and technical mistakes associated with the capital-intensive model of African art or Hollywood filmmaking. Drawing from Okey's account, we are presented with a thorough and well-calculated thought-process that provisionally mitigated anticipated challenges even before making the video film that wouldofficially launch Nigeria's Nollywood.

In most scholarly works on Nollywood, the most significant explanation for what precipitated the emergence of Nollywood is the collapse of the Nigerian economy in the 1990s when the government introduced the Structural Adjustment Plan, and devalued the local currency, Naira (Ernest-Samuel and Uduma, 2019, 55; Miller 2018, 13).[5] While thispoint has been extensively presented, the transfer of the colonial film system in Nigeria, from the British to local hands hardly ever gets mentioned. Okey revitalizes this occasion,identifying its relevance to the history of Nollywood's formation:

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[5] The other explanation is the affordability of, and accessibility to, new video film and digital technologies.For more on the impact of SAP on Nigeria's 35mm and 16mm film industry, look at Jade Miller's (2016) *Nollywood Central: The Nigerian Videofilm Industry.*

What caused it was simply that as far back as 1972/75, the Obasanjo-Murtala Mohammed regime promulgated a decree called "Indigenization decree". The decree transferred ownership of foreign conglomerates and domiciled them into the hands of Nigerians. Film making was one of those…When they were leaving, because of the Indigenization decree, there was nobody to run companies like film making. The big five film makers in the US: Sony, MGM, Warner Bros and all supported cinemas here so they could showcase their own content. But the moment you took away this industry from them,they could no longer guarantee their rights of ownership, since there was no way they could control the business to the final consumer.

What this meant was that there was a vacuum left when they departed. So, our people, the Ogundes, Ola Baloguns, Adeogboma'sand some others tried to do everything to create content to fill up so many cinemas that were scattered all over the country. And the morethey tried, the more it was impossible…

It appears it was to the same matter to which Diawara (1992) refers (however, without providing Okey's Nigerian context) when he characterizes the closing of the Colonial Film Unit by Great Britain in the newly independent Anglophone former colonies as an abandonment (9). Olayiwola (2007) also alludes to the same period of the seventies and eighties by noting Nigerian 16mm and 35mm filmmakers as deficient in their understanding of the celluloid film medium, which resulted in the death of the celluloid era (189). Unlike Francophone African filmmakers who received direct financial and technical support from France in the 1970s and 1980s (Diawara 2010, 32-33), Nigerian filmmakers ofthe eighties were only fighting to keep alive an industry for which they were unskilled, ill- trained and ill-prepared to take into their custody. Taking this into account is of no little consequence, because as Okey believes, "it only was a matter of time before the industry nosedived and finally died". This suggests an unsustainable industry that would have likely ground to a halt in any case, not only on account of Nigeria's economic collapse in the eighties, but also because local filmmakers, insufficient in numbers, were also technically challenged in celluloid filmmaking.

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Regarding the conditions that precipitated the founding of Nollywood, Okey and a number of the pioneer filmmakers I interviewed suggest the emergence of Nollywood was not only contingent upon the availability of digital technology in Nigeria and a floundering economy. These early Nollywood film practitioners associated their training to an initiativeby Nigeria's government owned television network, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Along with Okey, veteran actor and producer, Keppy Ekpeyong, who co-produced the second film to come out of Nollywood, *The Unforgiven Sin* (1993) confirms: a "…reason I'll also proffer is that NTA has been like the biggest training school in Africa and don't forget that we were in NTA when we first started out. We started on celluloid, so broadcasting was on celluloid, it was very expensive. Over time, we dropped, so to speak, from celluloid down to VHS". Similarly, Nollywood veterans Tari West (writer of the constitution for Nollywood's Actors Guild) and Dan Ebie respectively added, "We are professionals…most of us were trained in NTA" and "NTA for us, back then, was where weall looked up to. We all were trained there; I went through that same structure. When *Living in Bondage* came up, it threw up a lot of professionals from NTA coming into Nollywood - I was also part of that". So, there is a strong argument to be made that NTA's television soaps, which gained ascendancy in the late-eighties and nineties were more than a precursorto Nollywood, in that they introduced Nigerians to local TV dramas and supplied Nollywood with its first crop of actors. NTA appears to have responded to the celluloid era challenges by raising indigenous filmmakers who were trained to utilize available technologies to transfer from celluloid filmmaking to the video film format in the 1990s.

This is contrary to the position taken by many scholarly works. The suspicion here is research on Tunde Kelani, who is the most widely and commonly studied individual in Nollywood, has often called attention to his film-schooling in the UK (Haynes 1995; Afolabi &

Oyero 2017). These works have focused less on Kelani's training at NTA, and NTA fails to receive adequate credit for its role in training early Nollywood filmmakers. Granted, on occasion it comes up, such as Haynes (2016) acknowledgment that Tunde Kelani, apprenticed as a cameraman at NTA. However, even here, Hayne's emphasis is onKelani's actual film education in London (116).

For these local filmmakers, locally obtained filmmaking expertise is central to the history of the industry's formation. According to Okey, receiving training was also not a case of individual pursuits and plights, which would have been more random, disjointed andinconsistent at best. Rather, a generation of video filmmakers was raised under the supervision of NTA. All of these accounts by veteran Nollywood practitioners reflect somedegree of intentionality and coordination, which put into question the impression that Nollywood was largely an accidental occurrence resulting from a video-cassette marketer's fear of running at a loss. Most arguments that support the 'accidental' narrative seem to analyze Nnebue's entry into filmmaking in isolation, not adequately considering his production's strong reliance on practitioners who migrated to video-film from television.

Another commonly made argument is that the Nollywood model is fundamentally one that succeeds, not in spite of, but because of a primarily energetic, but illiterate and semi-illiterate practitioners (Nova 2012, 8; Ernest-Samuel & Uduma 2019, 46). This argument stands on the fact that the film industry's liberal and informal practices made itselfconducive to interested Nigerians, irrespective of the relevance of their background in filmmaking. In other words, had the industry been imposed upon with regulations and standards at that very early stage, it would have likely collapsed under the insurmountable burden of creative, technical and personnel inadequacies and insufficiencies. In fact, this has become one of the celebratory

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hallmarks with which Nollywood is distinguished from most other national cinemas (de Villiers 2019, 50). It is partly responsible for why Nollywood has been suggested to be the first authentic pan-Africanist cinema industry (McCall 2007, 2-3), and presented as a model for how Africa legitimizes itsinformal economies within the global economy (Lobato 2010, 340). These ideas are the reasons why the industry remains articulated as alternative, radical and non-conformist. Admittedly, it is an inviting proposition. Yet, these unique characteristics only continue to go unchallenged as long as we exclude Okey from Nollywood's history, and associate the conceptualization of the industry with Kenneth Nnebue, the uneducated businessman who funded *Living in Bondage*. Most certainly, educated or not, is not the issue here, and Nnebue's ingenuity, particularly because of no formal education, must be lauded. The concern here, though, is that Okey was a graduate, and a graduate of a film and television program at that. The implications of this is that Nollywood was envisioned, and its model outlined, by a person formally trained in film and filmmaking. Indeed, overtime, Nollywood evolved into a more bungling industry, one resigned to a trial-and-error approach by economic opportunists (Olayiwola 2007, 56). Yet, at the level of vision, at least, Nollywoodwas anything but erratic or arbitrary. It is my conclusion, therefore, that conceptions by Nollywood practitioners and scholars, which imagine Nollywood to have been built upon impulsivity, would likely be the result of the industry's association with Nnebue, not Okey. It is arguable that the identification of Nollywood with a high degree of arbitrariness comes from attributions of Nollywood's foundation to Nnebue, whose industrial model survived on informal practices. Afterall, Nebue lacked any relevant film knowledge (aside from pirating imported video films), yet he was able to get into filmmaking and turn a huge profit. I dare suggest this was the persuasion of the immediate filmmakers that would come after him. It was a case of: if Nnebue

can do it without any knowledge of filmmaking practices, I can, too, and this approach evolved into the industry's modus-operandi.

Yet, Okey, was not only a visionary; he was not only schooled in film practice. As he notes above, he approached the idea of developing a local cinema with a good degree of sophistication and awareness of self and environment. One of the more contemporary concerns in the decolonization of academia centre around the indigenization of universalized Western education for the local landscape (Redfern 2014; Akande 2020). The adaptation of Western-styled film education to suit one's environment is an approach that is more than ever before, currently animating African film scholars (see Irobi 2014; Redfern 2014; Chambers 2018).[6] These writers acknowledge film studies as a discipline was developed in the hegemonic West, and its mode of teaching satisfies Western institutional, educational and pedagogic expectations. Therefore, the film studies scholar, by default, possesses knowledge organized around Western ideologies, theories and concepts. Okey can be argued to have been ahead of his time in the early 1990s, adapting his learning to his local conditions:

> You see. I didn't go to school to study film alone, there were other people who went to school. But you see the ability to take what you studied in school and look at the environment where you are practicing and see the things that are not existent and adapt that global technology to suit the local need is what Nollywood is all about. There were VHS cameras before that time, but what we wereusing them to do was just cover weddings and burials…It was so cheap, you could rent one for a day for N1500. You just rent one.

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[6] For more on contemporary interests on de-colonizing and de-westernizing the film studies discipline, Irobi (2014) explores the idea of 'theory-making' in film studies as politically-weighted to favour the West's formal research structure. Irobi asks why theory must play the same role in African film studies as it does in the West. For Redfern, traditional film studies methodologies are no longer sufficient, and new and diverse methods must be sort to open new vistas in the understanding of film. Chambers questions approaches to filmstudies that universalize understandings of films without considering diversities in geographies, cultures and local traditions.

And there was something they taught me in school, the story telling quality of picture is the same, irrespective of the quality. So, if I show you a picture that is snapped with an iPhone and I show you another snapped with a cheap phone, they both can take a picture. Irrespective of the fact that the pixels are far apart, when you look at the picture, you're still going to get the same story. If one is crying here, and one is crying there, you will see that two of them are crying. So, the story is the same, but the format and the quality may be different. So, having that at the back of my mind, I said to myself,this camera tells stories. It covers events, and then gathers news and people understand it. So why can't I use it to make a film instead of waiting for that ultimate almighty celluloid, that ordinarily, is no longer consumed in the country. So, there was a difference, it was this format that became what everybody now began to use.

In the early 1990s, Okey and other NTA stakeholders were responding to the question of vernacularizing Western film knowledge and practice so as to be suitable for theNigeria terrain. One might say, to the extent that we can make predictions, that had this pragmatic crop of filmmakers not succeeded in re-imagining the filmmaking process to respond to Nigeria's unique challenges, we may today not have a Nollywood to talk about. One such approach for the nascent cinema is what I call, from Okey's description, a philosophy of austere production. According to Okey, this approach to filmmaking is influenced by economics. Owing to the lean access to funding, this filmmaking strips film of some of the technical processes commonly appreciated in the major film industries in the West; it prioritizes the telling of a story over technological emphasis. For Nigeria to have a cinema, Okey imagines its filmmakers would need to focus on telling a story, and nothing more. He de-emphasizes the role of technical standardizations and rejects attempts to universalize film conventions as these threatened to pull filmmaking out of the reach of Nigerian practitioners. To burden Nollywood's filmmaking with technical purity will be to truncate, or in the least, further complicate the process and the means to achieve it. The implication of this philosophy, again, speaks to the commonly and slightly misguided causal relationship imagined to exist between poor technical film quality and quacks and amateurs who

possess neither the training nor, perhaps, the desire to match more technically advanced cinemas (Makhubu 2018). Ultimately, and comparably, Nollywood's visual and technical qualities are clearly (and more so in the 1990s) not anywhere near Hollywood's highly capital-intensive film production standards, but Okey's quote makes distinctions: there is a difference between assumed technical skill incapacity, which results in poor film quality, and a philosophy that finds it convenient to ignore costly technical expertise, while prioritizing the telling of the story. It is this ideology that Okey references above, and whichcontinues below, together with the anti-colonialist/imperialist motivations behind his approach that prompts him to say:

> What are we really talking about? Who cares about this almighty celluloid? Who cares about the quality? In as much as we know, the quality will only enhance the story telling abilities of people, and the patronage of those who watch it. Back then, when we didn't have the opportunity to, one would be considering the quality, and the academic education that we have. So, we needed to adapt that academic knowledge to something that we can use in Nigeria, and probably sustain over a period of time… So, while we were doing that, we discovered a format, we discovered an industry. And for the first time in history of filmmaking, we had an "in", given to us by the international community. It was somebody from the Times international that wrote and teased: "this is nothing near the Wood". So why are we proud of it? Because, for the first time, the only two film making nations that had a name, were Bollywood and Hollywood. Now somehow, in an attempt to rubbish what we made, they [West] have given us Nollywood. No other country except this three has 'wood', in filmmaking attached to them, so we stuck to it. And we held onto it, it was supposed to be derogatory, but for us we know how to turn bad situations around to become good for us. Just like we turned the gap in filmmaking and adapted it to Nollywood, we are turning the name to something that is positive for us. And here we are, an industry is born, over time they kicked against it fromall over the world, and nobody wanted to believe in it.

McCall (2007) argues that the pan-Africanism of Ousmane Sembene, which was nonetheless elusive -because of the challenges of widespread accessibility of their films inAfrica -was achieved by Nollywood's approach to filmmaking and distribution (2-3). McCall's position,

which echoes Emmanuel Sama's essay, titled "African Films areForeigners in Their Own Countries" aligns with the vision Okey lays out above.

Many writers have identified Norimitsu Onishi, a Japanese Canadian reporter for *New York Times* as having coined the term Nollywood in 2002 (Adamu 2011, 224; Haynes 2016, XXIII; Kabanda 2018, 84). Beyond this, it is hard to come by any reference to what motivated Onishi to come up with the term 'Nollywood'. Some, like McCain (2013) suggestOnishi's term, 'Nollywood', was intended to associate the Nigerian nascent industry with Hollywood, even though others resisted the sense of cultural imperialism such an association conjures (31). Without establishing a motive, others like Haynes (2007) suggest the coinage was positively received by many, and quickly, too. If we are to go by two articles written by Onishi himself: "Step Aside, L.A and Bombay, for Nollywood" (Onishi, 2002) where he refers to the nascent cinema as 'Nollywood' for the first time, and "Nollywood is Letting Africans Put Themselves in the Picture" (2016), the consensus, I presume, will be that Onishi saw a number of reasons to see the cinema as promising. Okey, however, sees things differently. He believes the term 'Nollywood' was derived from 'nothing near the Wood [or Hollywood], connoting a cinema that widely perceived to fall short of Hollywood's standards. This anti-imperialist idea in the early years of Nollywood reflects the perception among some of the industry's pioneers that the West was looking to blunt the growth of Nollywood. The 'Nollywood' name was, therefore, evidence of a failed attempt by the West to 'rubbish' the emerging African cinema, provoking an underlying suspicion of the West. Not only does Okey imagine Nigeria turned the West's onslaughtaround, he boasts of how Nigeria altered the course of cinema-making around the globe:

This was even before *Oyinbos* [Whites, the West] began to make filmwith handheld cameras. Up to that moment in 92 and early 90's, they were still making film with celluloid. Today, I'm not sure how many of them want to make films on celluloid. Why they were fighting against it all that while was because they knew that the huge investment they had in equipment, and in materials for filmmaking needed to be sustained. If it slipped away from them, into digital filmmaking, they knew they'd lose. That is why they kicked against itall over the world. Until when it became obvious that this change will sweep them away, then they began to adapt. Some of them beganto make cameras now for digital filmmaking. I don't want to mentiontheir names, but that is how it came about. It all started here in this Nigeria, in this Africa, by our little experiment that God gave us. AndI give him all the glory. Anybody in the world will not sing our praise, they will want to take the glory that it started with [George] Lucas or started with this guy or started with that guy.

Okey's assertion here is, at least, partially inaccurate, since, for one, the French New Wave was distinctly using the handheld camera style in the 1960s (Neupert 2007, 40); so was the cinema verité documentary tradition popularized in the 1960s and 1970s (Hall 1991; Thompson 2007). Also, there is no evidence that Nollywood precipitated the global use and mainstreaming of digital video format in narrative/fiction filmmaking. Nonetheless, according to Kemp (2019) for example, we know "…every cinematic film seen up until the early 2000s was shot on celluloid film…" (6). While we can only conclude Kemp's reference is to mainstream films made in the West, and remain unable to assert Nollywood'scausal role in global digital filmmaking, the history Kemp lays out proves Nollywood preceded major Western cinemas in the use of digital video for narrative/ fiction filmmaking. In the history of national cinema, and its conceptualization as a rejection of the universalizing reach of mainstream Western (spearheaded by Hollywood), capitalist and imperialist cinema ideologies (Gabriel 1982; Willemen 2013), Okey's vision engages thesame struggle in unique, and Nigeria-relevant ways.

Still making his argument against contrary readings that the West, personified in characters like Onishi, was benevolent to Nollywood, or that Nollywood's fixation on wealth,

opulence and extravagance is a cheap form of audience exploitation (Bello 2014),Okey describes

a calculated purpose behind Nollywood's aesthetic choices:

> [Nollywood] is able to breakdown and neutralize all the negative
> prejudices the West has had against us. We don't live in trees; we livein
> mansions. Sometimes they are not better than us, and when they look at
> these films they wonder! Are these peoples' homes? Are thesecostumes
> real? They keep imagining this…That's what made *Living in Bondage* a
> phenomenon. Here, Okey again presents a well-thoughtout rationale
> behind an aesthetic choice commonly poorly and unfavourably
> critiqued., which I shall later look at in greater detail.

2.3B: Challenging the (Mis)understandings of Nollywood's Improvisional Character, and the Origin of these (Mis)understandings

The pervasive idea that Nollywood is founded on economic informality, where the

conditions of production, distribution and exhibition are unregulated and unstandardized is

central to how Nollywood has been understood. This position holds fast that informality wasnot

only responsible for the birth of Nollywood, but perhaps, Nollywood emerged, because of it.

Jade Miller (2016), for example, traces the informal practices in Nollywood directly to the

economy of Lagos, leaving no room for any disruption or intervention in the transfer of

informality from the underlying economy of Lagos into the industry of Nollywood.

Likewise, Jedlowski (2010) argues for the causal relationship between the broader

informalmedia economy and conditions that would enable the emergence of Nollywood (27).

Doubtless, there is merit to these positions, and the role of informality in Nollywood's

economic practices is not under contention. Yet, one of the consequences of limiting

Nollywood's informality to its capitalist, economic characteristic, as evidenced by Nollywood

scholarship, is the over-emphasis on Nollywood's industrial aspect (production,distribution and

exhibition) at the expense of the Nollywood film philosophy and form (andthe determinant technical factors responsible for them).

2.3C <u>Passing on Okey Ogunjiofor's Vision</u>

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested a disconnect between Okey's vision of Nollywood and the industry that would rapidly blossom beyond any one person's control. The question is: to what extent did Okey's vision become the industry's vision? Absent a manifesto to serve as an on-going guideline for artistic, creative and industrial practices, likethose put together in the early years of Third Cinema,[7] it is valuable to search for evidence that *Living in Bondage* became the aesthetic and creative foundation for Nollywood.

Creative people associated with NTA developed a fiery interest in the new film industry, following the success of *Living in Bondage.* Important among them is Keppy Ekpenyong, the producer of *Unforgiven Sin* (1993), the second film in Nollywood after *Living in Bondage.* Keppy elaborates here on the after-effects of *Living in Bondage* on the local Nigerian media market. From both his interview and the film, *Unforgiven Sin*, we can surmise that while Okey's aesthetic vision might have passed on to Keppy, the process seems to have been less than deliberate. It appears it was a simple case of *Living in Bondage*being the only aesthetic sample available to Keppy to work from. On account of the absence of an Okey Manifesto of some sort, Okey's vision, being more of an intangible service, andbecause of the difficulty in measuring his thoughts for the purpose of study, slipped into oblivion. Writers like Bowen (1990) and Trimarchi (2009) have looked at what it means to value intangible services like creativity and ideas, identifying the challenges encountered when the attempt is made to transfer and quantify

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[7] For more on Third Cinema Manifestos, read Solanas and Getino's manifesto, *Toward a Third Cinema* (1970).

them. The immaterial conditions of creativity made the study of Okey's contribution to Nollywood more challenging. While itstechnically minimalist, story-driven, and class/wealth related elements are heavily noticeable in the aesthetics of subsequent Nollywood films, the challenges to studying and preserving his intangible creative ideas have strongly marginalized his contribution.

Conversely, it appears the visibility, quantifiability and concreteness of Nnebue's model of informal production and distribution provided scholars with something more readily available to work with, and it became inevitable that the history of Nollywood would begin with Nnebue for this reason. Even though Okey's vision on aesthetic look -as informed by technical minimalism- is evident in Keppy's film, the latter's prioritizing of Nnebue over Okey is a strong indication of how Nnebue's role takes a central position in the formation of Nollywood:

> I produced the second film in Nollywood – *The Unforgiven Sin* [1993]. This is shortly after *Living In Bondage. ...* Somehow, we justheard off-the-cuff that *Living in Bondage* had hit the street, and millions were rolling in. And then, we wondered: why Chief Nnebue, who we considered a marketer?…we were graduates at the time and so we were wondering: 'why would this happen to him and not us?' Our approach to film at that time was not business-like, because we had not been exposed to the strict kind of [film] business required at that time…But the people before us who were already Marketers…they exploded! It was huge, it was unbelievable.

One of the more curious things about Keppy's introduction is there is no mention of Okey Ogunjiofor's name as he maps the Nollywood terrain in its early days, even though hereferences *Living in Bondage* and Kenneth Nnebue. But for one of my eleven interviewees, only one made a connection between Okey and the nascent cinema of the 1990s.[8] Whereas, without any

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[8] The only other interviewer to mention Okey Ogunjiofor's name in reference to his pivotal role in theformation of Nollywood is Norbert Ajaegbo, the current Chairman of the Film and Video Producers Marketers Association of Nigeria. Ajaegbo's interview comes up in Chapter 2.

prompting, Kenneth Nnebue's name was central to every of my interviewees' account of Nollywood's origin story, signifying the association of everything about Nollywood's beginning with Kenneth Nnebue, and not Okey.

In hindsight, it appears because Keppy and successive Nollywood filmmakers were evidently aware of Nnebue's marketing practices, they held fast to them, concluding that Nnebue's marketing strategy for *Living in Bondage* was something of an industry standard. After all, Nnebue's profitable marketing structure convinced them the industry worked just fine as it was. Perhaps, the industry's satisfaction with *Living in Bondage's* visual aesthetics, even if it was not deliberately borrowed, may also explain why Nollywood subsequently appeared reluctant to change anything in its creative and industrial practices inthe years following Nnebue's film. Eventually, the reluctance to formalize the industry caused an overproduction and necessitated a stall. This led to Nollywood becoming "mired in a go-slow of its own" (McCall 2004, 106), a colloquial term in Nigeria for traffic-congestion. McCall attributed the stagnation to an overabundance of filmmakers, invariablyleading to an oversupply of films to the market. As a point of reference, Tsika (2015) notes Nollywood has consistently released over a thousand films annually (146). Looked at differently, an industry perceived to require little or no technical changes or deviations from Nnebue's *Living in Bondage*, but remained very profitable, activated an endless swarm of economic prospectors that ended up choking it. Similar reasons might explain the lingeringand commonly shared opinion that Nollywood is to be praised, in large part, for succeedingthis long, because of its characteristic rudimentary practices dating back to its beginning (Haynes 2007; Tsika 2017).

Economically, there was an upside to launching Nollywood with a low-cost, low-production format, sometimes as low as $8000 (Evuleocha 2008, 409). As earlier discussed,it

produced an industry that was less exclusive. However, this might also have turned out tobe a downside, in that filmmakers were more inclined to go it alone, re-inventing that same wheel that Keppy re-invented without a clear-cut model transfer from Okey. In 2004, *Tell Magazine*, a business magazine in Nigeria, noted that the average unsuccessful Nollywood film still grossed around N5 million (US$ 13,000) (46). For these filmmakers, the ability to shrug off a minimally successful low-budget film, in economic terms, meant that there was less pressure to get the production absolutely right, which in turn minimized any urgency toseek to know everything it took to make the first Nollywood film, including Okey's philosophies around film production. A consequence of that is described by Miller (2016): "One mid-level producer I spoke with, for instance, runs a production company. The in- house editor at this company is the producer's former barber… Most in Nollywood seem tohave got their start in this way as opposed to coming into the industry already trained" (44).I suggest that because Nnebue's distribution model was as visible and adoptable as it was successful, it was accepted early as the industry's modus-operandi.

Okey's vision for Nollywood altogether failed to permeate the young industry as a concrete model for a Nigerian film aesthetics -even if traces of it, by default, emerged in subsequent Nollywood films. Hence, today, we are largely left with centering Nnebue's production model in our scholarly interest in Nollywood's informality. For this same reason, Okey's fervency against conforming to Western cinema expectations has been successfully clouded by common arguments that contradict his position in this regard. These arguments have gone on to tout Nollywood as an example of an African cinema unencumbered by the politics of imperialism and colonialism, lauding it for its independence from global cinema practices (Akudinobi 2015; Iwowo 2020). While these writers acknowledge Nollywood's independence

from, and defiance of, global film practices largely defined by the West, they argue Nollywood's

motivation has ultimately been the desire for profit. Okey reveals it is more complex than that,

situating the discourse more deeply than is common, within issues of postcolonialism and

imperialism. Moments like this are a reference to how relevant and far-reaching postcolonialism

frames are, even when they prove inadequate for a more expansive conceptualization of

postcolonial African Cinema. The sentiment that the Nollywood production system should

maintain an anti-colonial posture, even if subtle, is notunique to Okey. Keppy also strongly

contends against Nollywood's adoption of Western universalizing film practices:

> Sometimes, we make that mistake to think that the closer we are to the
> West, the better we are. So, we try to leave our own standards and
> begin to want to match Hollywood's standard… we think that'sthe
> Eldorado of film making… They want to see what we have.
> Nollywood grew because we started off by telling our stories our way.
> We created our standard…They want to see what we got. Nollywood
> grew because we started off by telling our stories our way. We created
> our standard. The influence of this medium is so powerful that
> everybody begins to think that because it's foreign, then it is better. I
> don't belong to that school. I'm sounding more radical. I believe we
> have our home-grown export which we can manage, we can fine tune,
> and we can still find a niche for ourselves.

According to Okey and Keppy, an anti-colonial motivation was one of Nollywood's

major drivers in its very early stage. Nonetheless, the near-erasure of Okey's aesthetics and

philosophical contribution has minimized the study of Nollywood using postcolonialism frames.

Instead, Nnebue, a businessman, has provided reasons for studying Nollywood as acapital-

oriented cinema, and as a way to differentiate it from the 1960s-80s postcolonial artcinemas of

Francophone West Africa.

2.3D <u>Re-Situating Piracy within the Nollywood Discourse</u>

The origin and role of piracy in Nollywood is consistently at the centre of Nollywood discourses around its informal distribution and exhibition practices. Piracy has largely defined the industry's economy and continues to have an existential impact on the industry's growth. As Keppy reiterates, you cannot verify "…the number of people who watched DVDs though, because DVDs are still pirated... So there's no guarantee, there's noaccountability". Conventionally, because sufficient attempt has not been made to trace piracy to exactly where and how it began in Nollywood, it is simply taken, in fact, that piracy injected itself into the industry through the hands of marketers greedy to profit from producers' losses.[9] Certainly, this argument is not inaccurate. However, it mighthelp to try to identify exactly how it began—in relation to Nollywood's history.

Okey talks about his referral to businessman, Kenneth Nnebue, who would bankrolland distribute Nollywood's first commercial success, *Living in Bondage.* Jonathan Haynes (2016) is one of the few writers who have gone as far as associating Nnebue with the cultureof piracy, stating "… an infrastructure of piracy (Larkin 2004) was created by businessmen like Kenneth Nnebue to service these VCRs, importing blank cassettes…" (11). The more widespread account appears to favour the obfuscation of Nnebue's business' darker side, limiting his business to the selling of electronics. The history of Nollywood generally says Nnebue determined that rather than run at a loss, he would record a film on the VHS cassettes he had imported into the country, but was unable to sell (Miller 2016, 15; Abah 2008). This account seems to be revisionist, a deliberate attempt to valorize Nnebue as a clean businessman with strong intuition, foresight and

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[9] For more on the extent and effects of piracy, See Alessandro Jedlowski's *From Nollywood to Nollyworld: Processes of Transnationalization in the Nigerian Video Film Industry* (2013); Noah Tsika's *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and Diaspora* (2015); Jude Akudinobi's *Nollywood: Prisms andParadigms* (2015).

grit; it usually fails to identify the motivation behind Nnebue's importation of VHS cassettes in the first place; it also fails in calling attention to the informal film duplication industry that pre-existed Nollywood, whichNnebue was involved in. Like Haynes, Okey sheds more light on this less talked about side to Nnebue's business:

> If Chief Kenneth Nnebue were to be candid, like so many other friends or businessmen like him that came into film industry immediately after 'Living in Bondage', they were all merchants who dealt with electronics, VHS machines and the cassettes that play on them. They also traded with VHS cameras and the cassettes that you will use to record events, weddings or burials. That was what he was doing in Oshodi market before someone sent me to him. He actually imported 40 feet containers of VHS cassettes. Most of these cassettes imported, were used to record pirated foreign films. That's what they were all doing…

Furthermore, Okey refutes the prevailing, and widely accepted historiography ofhow Nnebue came to put his empty VHS cassettes to use:

> It's not that he[Nnebue] couldn't sell them [VHS cassettes]. That[piracy] was the business all of them were doing…What you read online is as a result of noise and distortion of facts in communication. Over the years, people have given various versions of what actually happened. It was not as if he couldn't sell these cassettes. I went to him and said if we could produce this film and dub it on these blank tapes, instead of selling them for N120/N150 you could now sell it for N300 after recording the locally produced film. The agreement we had was that we will split the profit after thefilm was produced, but he never gave me my own fair share.

Okey deliberately points out the inaccuracy—or perhaps, the incompleteness—of the widely circulating account that Nnebue's decision to produce a film on VHS cassettes was simply the result of his inability to sell empty cassettes he imported. Keppy characterizes Nnebue's business similarly:

> Now, the reason why *Living in Bondage* was such a huge success, to
> me, I would always say, is a combination of several factors. One, there
> was the ban on pornographic materials on VHS by the then
> administration of Buhari and General Idiagbon. So, because of that,
> Nnebue and other marketers had loads and loads of unused VHS tapes
> intended for piracy. That eased the burden they had, otherwise,what
> would they have done with them?

There is a crucial re-imagining of the relationship between Nollywood, Nnebue and piracy that Okey, Keppy and Haynes provoke. If the entry of piracy into Nollywood did notoccur post-*Living in Bondage* as many writers suggest, including Nnebue himself (Haynes 2016), but was present in the very foundation upon which Nnebue introduced his film to theworld, piracy takes on an even more complex place in Nollywood. Haynes notes Nnebue had claimed to fear the potential entry of piracy into the industry in the wake of *Living in Bondage*, with Nnebue later writing "…piracy is our AIDS" (12). Another time, according to Haynes (2016), Nnebue, in trying to renege from deals he made with filmmakers on *Living in Bondage*, told Haynes, "there were no profits because the film had almost immediately been pirated, most of the pirating done by the distributors to whom he had entrusted the film" (29). The insinuation by Nnebue is that piracy originated in the marketing system that emerged post *Living in Bondage*. To register Nnebue's pre-*Living in Bondage* complicity in piracy, and to examine it as the system Nnebue adopted, is to furthercentre piracy in the very formations of Nollywood. It becomes an incomplete account whenwe stigmatize piracy as an economic, shady practice that marketers introduced into the young industry to financially exploit and ravage the industry (Onuzilike 2016; Abiola 2016). Piracy must also be conceptualized as partly responsible for the actual birth of Nollywood. Given this frame, piracy is as much the potential death of Nollywood as it is partly responsible for the conditions of its creation.

Having led this chapter so far with Okey's account of Nollywood's origin story, a glaring absence presents itself: the absence of the role of informality in Okey's account. Even though, I prioritize Okey's point-of-view I must also acknowledge that his determination to portray himself as a well-calculated, focused, and intentional Nollywood pioneer appeared to leave no room for how informality might have played a role in his considerations back then. While he associated informality with Nnebue, Okey, who presented himself very formally for the interview, wearing a jacket, shirt, tie, and dress pants, did no such thing regarding his own contributions. He was determined to show he was educated, sophisticated and formal, descriptions hardly ever used in defining Nollywood. With informality typically frowned at, particularly because of its negative connotations when viewed only as a set of practices intended for circumventing formal, capitalist structures, Okey might have perceived his introduction into our conversation of the role of informality would likely be an unfavourable distraction to the image he was presenting. At a point, he mentioned his austere film aesthetic as being a response to Hollywood's capital-heavy film production system. However, he refused to go down that path, and explore the informal market system and its lack of standardization, which proved advantageous to his ambition to make a non-Hollywood kind of film. Therefore, Okey had also fallen into the trap of perceiving informality only as an economic phenomenon. For someone who chose to write *Living in Bondage* in the Igbo language, because he wanted to make a film "indigenous to Nigeria", he would likely have identified with informality if he perceived it as supporting precolonial African communal social systems.

As Nollywood progresses from its formation years and into the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of the key ideas around Nollywood's economic and market practices increasingly gained enormous attention. Today, thirty years later, these frames continue to

dominate our conceptualization of Nollywood. In the next chapters, I look at the evolution of Nollywood into the 2000s and beyond.

For now, though, I transition to the origin story of Hausa Cinema, which also dates back to the 1990s. As earlier touched upon, much as Nollywood can be employed as an umbrella term for Nigeria's contemporary national cinema, enough distinctions exist along cultural and regional lines to recognize the heterogeneity and diversity that characterize Nigerian cinema. That said, some cultural and regional identities, together with their film practices, do overlap.

As I elaborate upon below, the case of Hausa Cinema's origin story in northern Nigeria is another complex example of a sub-national cinema that is both separatefrom, and intertwined with, the cinema in the south of Nigeria (Nollywood). [10]

2.4 Hausa Cinema: Kannywood

Historically, the Hausas belong to the Chadic ethnic group that is native to the Sahel region in Africa; they are local to the areas between Northern Nigeria and the Republic of Niger, and extend across West Africa, roughly along the same latitude (Idrissa 2017). With a long history of Trans-Saharan caravan trade, precolonial, pagan Hausa Kingdoms in the 14th century came into contact with Islam through the Arabs. In addition, an earlier exposureto Islam through their much larger and more powerful neighbour to the west, the Songhai Empire, suggested a sense of inevitability to Hausas Islamatization. However, it was not until 1804, when the Uthman dan Fodio led jihad extended the geographical reach of Islam and established theocratic caliphate systems in the area that would become the northern partof Nigeria upon its British colonization

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[10] Having broadly introduced the fact that general distinctions exist between Nollywood and Kannywood (Hausa Cinema), unless otherwise stated, from hereon, any reference to Nollywood suggests the cinema in thesouthern part of Nigeria, which is predominantly Igbo and Yoruba.

in 1900 (Uchendu 2011, 39). Hausa ambivalence to British colonization and Christianity led northern Nigeria, united under Islam, to marshal a strong resistance to colonial intrusions (Korieh 2005, 113). Although the British were eventually able to triumph over the Hausa state, the colonizer found it wise to cooperate with the Caliphate, and preserve its structure, "including the Islamic legal system, [which was] retained and incorporated into the colonial bureaucracy" (Korieh, 113). Hausa culture was able to hold on to its religio-conservative Islamic character which strongly distinguished its identity from the Yorubas, Igbos and other minor ethnic groups south of the River Niger, all of which were comparatively more Christianized through colonial occupation. These distinctions between the Hausas in Northern Nigeria and the ethnic groups in the south of Nigeria have produced differences in the identities of many of theirreligious, and cultural productions.

Indeed, if we seek evidence of heterogeneity in Nigerian cinema, we need look no further than the unique historical, formalist and economic qualities that distinguish the cinema of the Hausa peoples of northern Nigeria from the Igbo and Yoruba cinemas that have come to be categorized as Nollywood. In comparison to Nollywood, a relatively smaller body of scholarship exists on Kannywood, which has become the more popular termfor Hausa cinema. The most central works on Kannywood are more or less limited to the likes of Larkin (2000; 2002), McCain (2012; 2013), Krings (2015), Ibrahim (2017; 2018) and Adamu (2006; 2007).

I must, at this point, introduce Abdallah Adamu. Adamu is an acclaimed academic; he is currently the Vice Chancellor of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), and heholds a professorship in Science Education. He is also involved in the Hausa film industry as a consultant to Hausa filmmakers. For instance, twelve Hausa films have been shot in his house (Adamu 2019, 63). It is in his capacity as a practitioner and a Kannywood insider that I engage

him in this project. Nevertheless, the volume of research work he has conducted on Hausa cultural production is significant, and it would be impossible to disentangle our conversation from 'Adamu the academic'. In essence, the information I gather from interviewing him is sometimes an elaboration of some of the ideas he has already published,thoughts he is still just mulling, and/or he has posted on his website, a point I shall be getting to since it impacts his account of Kannywood's origin story.

2.3A <u>How Adamu's Perception of Western Research Processes as Hegemonic and Neo-Colonial</u>
 <u>Relates to this Project's Valuation of Indigenous, Informal Knowledge</u>

There exists a strong intersectionality between Adamu's experience as an academic, the formal gathering of knowledge for research, and the exclusionary impact of standardized Western-informed methodologies that may facilitate the marginalization of certain kinds of knowledge. Unfamiliar with many of the theories, frames and approaches central to film studies, because of his background in the Sciences, converting his experiential knowledge ofHausa cinema to scholarly materials has constantly met with roadblocks. While widely published in other areas of study, a significant amount of Adamu's experiential knowledge of the Hausa film industry has remained outside of the scholarly space. He has blamed this on the insistence of academic journals, most of which are Western, that his research is not viable unless it incorporates standard procedures of scholarly reference. Again, the issue of informality raises its head, for in a sense, Adamu's scholarly rejection in this area is associated with his inability to meet the formal requirements put in place by these journals. Adamu passionately reiterates:

I am an embedded ethnographer; I live inside the film industry. At one stage, I was the Chairman of many of their committees and I also headed about five awards in the film industry. I settle a lot of quarrels between them; I have done a lot of things for them. So, I am embedded in the process. I get irritated when I write a paper either to America or the UK and someone keeps asking me, 'where is your reference?', 'where is your literature review? I say, there is no literature review, there is no reference, I am the reference because I live inside the film industry. I know them [local Hausa oral historians] and they know me. Because they know that I am more or less objective, I am not trying to pass judgment, they freely talk to me. I have information that Mathias and Carmen would never have; they would never give it to them but they would give it to me. And therefore, I am in the process of doing ethnographic work. It is not in all cases that ethnographers have to cite references. That research hasnot been done; you are the person doing the research. You are the person doing the film. You started and documented it, and since you are documenting it, there is nobody to refer to.

Adamu's use of the term 'ethnographer' is a reference to how he is now able to see himself after many years in which certain areas of his Kannywood research was impeded. This by no means suggests Adamu has no published works on cinema in Nigeria (one of hisarticles is cited above). In addition, he has published many more, including chapters like "Transgressing Boundaries: Reinterpretation of Nollywood Films in Muslim Northern Nigeria" (2013). However, whenever he struggles to find scholarly citations and references on which he can present or advance indigenous film knowledge that has so far escaped critical interrogation, his work is frowned upon by the academic publishing world. He adds:

My colleagues and I wrote a book that documented the Hausa film industry, but they refuse to publish because it's written by Africans… Some of the chapters were written by practitioners themselves. Cambridge, Oxford, Sage, Routledge, Wiley International and Blackwell publishers prefer to publish white authors who come here to write about the industry… But we who live here, who are intellectual enough to be objective in what we are reporting, don't getour works published… I have got a lot of other books that I am working on. In fact, at one stage, Ohio University Press Centre wanted to publish it. I quickly finished it, but they changed their mind. But I am glad they didn't.

This, according to Adamu, has consequently led to the desperate measure of self-publishing some of these books, including *Hausa Home Videos* (2004), a book he co-editedwith two other local university professors. As a consequence, Adamu maintains a wealth ofhistorical and philosophical knowledge, which are denied legitimization through/by peer-review. Following Redfern's (2014) call to reject methodologies and theories when they impose limitations on us in our pursuit of film understanding, but seek understanding however way it comes, Adamu's experience, and this project (in part), can be seen as a response to Redfern's call. A primary reason behind my prioritization of acquired vernacular knowledge systems among Nollywood practitioners, which have struggled to find their way into mainstream scholarship can be attributed to Adamu's point here. It is also for this reason that many of Adamu's works on Hausa cinema are posted on his private blog, and not on peer-reviewed platforms. As the case may be, they have become, for me, semi-informal knowledge that deserves to be included in this project. To further contextualize Adamu's perspective, he takes a degree of umbrage at the centralization in Nollywood studies of Western scholars whose works have been "prioritized" at the expense of local Hausa scholars in the forming of a Hausa cinema studies canon: for example, "There was Mathias Kring from Germany, he even appeared in some of the films, wrote oneor two papers and then disappeared. There was Carmen McCain. She came in and appeared in about 9 films and she was even dancing and singing like they do in Indian and Hausa films. Then she realized her real focus was not on Kannywood but on African English Literature. So, she left". I must point out that, for Adamu, even though McCain grew up in Nigeria, and taught at the Kwara State University, the complex issue of identity, in this case, that she is Caucasian, becomes central to the degree of access to local knowledge she is ableto have. Adamu argues that her inability to access certain local knowledge about Kannywood stems

from the colour of McCain's skin, which visibly defines her as an 'outsider' among the locals, who would only bestow absolute trust in researchers that "look like them". Such views, thus, inform why Adamu asserts that the Western researcher is prioritized over local researchers with experiential knowledge. This view will be evident inboth the tone and content of his account.

2.4C <u>Hausa Cinema Origin Story</u>

A significant number of Nollywood scholars, like Austen and Saul (2010), believe both Hausa cinema and its acquired name, 'Kannywood', emerged after Nollywood (2). Many more like Miller (2016) and Ibrahim (2019) have referred to their contemporaneity, while shying from identifying which is the older cinema. The more general consensus, largely due to Nollywood's industry size, economic size and reach, is that Nollywood precedes Kannywood, with Iyorza (2017) stating, "Nollywood has naturally diversified along ethnic dimensions including the Hausa movies (Kannywood) in the North..." (37). Among others, a consequence of imagining Kannywood as deriving from Nollywood is anurge to want to define certain Kannywood characteristics by Nollywood, even if both cinemas have been separated along cultural and stylistic distinctions (Adamu 2007; Larkin1997). Yet, even Larkin (1997) who strictly separates Kannywood from Nollywood still ends up falling into the temptation of deriving Kannywood from Nollywood at certain points. He believes the common depiction of extravagance and wealth in Hausa films is a definitive Nollywood characteristic that Kannywood adopted (235).

Adamu disrupts these perceptions. He argues that both the Hausa film industry andits later adoption of the name 'Kannywood' pre-date Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992) and the embrace of the name 'Nollywood' in southern Nigeria (68). He insists,

Kannywood film industry is locked up to southern Nigeria and to the world because it is in the Hausa language. Nobody knows what is going on. People tend to get surprised when I say the use of the term ''wood' to express a film industry in Africa was first created by the Hausa film Industry in 1999. We first called it Kannywood in 1999. That was before this New York reporter wrote the article, 'Step aside LA for Nollywood'; that was 2001 or 2002. We were the first... So, when they start writing about the film Industry in Nigeria, they don't even look at the Hausa language.

Indeed, it is documented that Norimitsu Onishi of *The New York Times* coined the term 'Nollywood in 2002 (Haynes 2016, XXIII). Adamu also emphasizes Hausas producedthe first video film "two years before *Living in Bondage*, and that first film was called *Turmin Danya* by Ibrahim Mandawari. It would not be the last time Adamu would bring upthis film during the interview. In analyzing the relationship between Hausa films and Indianfilms in his chapter in Saul and Austen (eds.) book, *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-First Century* (2010), Adamu again acknowledges the making of *Turmin Danya* in 1990 (68).

This proposition is significant, in that it compels a re-imagining of Kenneth Nnebue's role in contemporary film production in relation to Hausa cinema—something that has, so far, not been done. The potential relationship as one of causality, from Kannywood to Nollywood - or, at least, correlation between the two—becomes all the more relevant upon Adamu's elaboration on early Hausa filmmakers' distribution network.

For Adamu, even *Turmin danya* cannot claim to be the first locally made production. It was, however, one of the very first films that would begin to establish an informal distribution system. The award for the first indigenously made Hausa film dates back to thelate 1970s, when, according to Adamu:

> ...someone went to the hajj. The Haj is the pilgrimage that Muslims
> perform once in a lifetime. So, someone bought a recorder. In Mecca,he
> called some people to do some incantation and they did. They recorded
> it and that was around 1979. He returned to Nigeria and
> called a group of people to start a movie, without a script. They
> started filming a stage drama where they performed on stage and
> recorded it. From there, the video technology got much better and
> that's how the industry started.

Here, Adamu does not provide more specifics about the filmmaker's name, nor thefilm title. However, Ali (2004) confirms Adamu's account that semi-coordinated Hausa filmmaking began with drama groups, with one of their first films, *Hukuma Maganin Yan Banza*, which was a Hausa adaptation of a Chinese film (30). Larkin (2004) may also havebeen referencing the same hajj event when he noted the filming of the Sardauna of Sokoto,Sir Ahmadu Bello, while performing stately activities in the 1960s, including making the hajj (50). This is, nonetheless, a speculation at this point. At the time of writing, it had not been confirmed that Adamu and Larkin were referencing the same occasion.

Distribution in early Hausa film industry is not without its own unique story. Adamu acknowledges a pre-*Living in Bondage* informal, piracy-driven film industry existed in Northern Nigeria:

> What they had at the beginning was that the distribution was done by
> Nigeriens, those who came from Niger and resided in Northern
> Nigeria. They were selling pirated Hong Kong films and had access to
> the blank tapes. Our Hausa film directors had to go to them to buythe
> blank tapes, record their films on them and take them to these film
> merchants to sell.

Here, we see a similar informal industrial practice emerging as it did in southern Nigerian cinema (Nollywood). A distinction is noticeable, nonetheless. The first filmmakersof what would become Kannywood were artists who were uninvolved in piracy and film marketing, so that they

had to seek the services of those who did. On the other hand, Nnebue himself was a marketer and was involved in piracy. As such, Nnebue was at onceboth the producer and distributor/marketer of *Living in Bondage.*

As a result of early Hausa cinema's stark separation into producers/directors and marketers, the necessary negotiations between early Hausa filmmakers and the largely Nigerien-controlled piracy network in the north became fraught with roadblocks. In Nnebue's case, he was not only the executive producer of *Living in Bondage*, he was also his own marketer/ distributor, which took care of the crippling obstacles that may arose between Hausa filmmakers and their Nigerien distributors. This increased fluidity between Nnebue's model of combining film production and distribution may also partly account for Nollywood's unrivaled rapid growth and spread in Nigeria and beyond. While Nnebue's model presented an opportunity to transfer film from production to distribution more seamlessly, Adamu asserts,

> The [Nigerien] merchants were reluctant to sell these films because according to them, Hausa visual contents were available for free on television. So, it was up to the filmmakers to advertise their film on radio and tell the listeners where the films could be purchased.

According to Adamu, early Hausa filmmakers paid in advance for mass-production and distribution services provided by the Nigerian marketers. The early distributor in the north was, invariably, only a mass-copier of films and a sales point for interested film enthusiasts in the community. Animasaun's (2004) work on Hausa cinema supports Adamu's account: "While other movies are self-advertised because of the posters that oftencome along with them or sent ahead before they were released, Hausa movies don't always have posters, so the audience had to rely on the verbal advertisement they are able to make when the movies arrive" (202). Consequently, in an industry where the distributor was without any financial commitment to the

film, and therefore, nursed no anxiety of financial loss, one in which the filmmaker was solely responsible for promoting his or her own film, many times by word-of-mouth, it is imaginable that such a cinema would experience nothing like the explosive growth of Nollywood's -as triggered by *Living in Bondage.* One can imagine that a financially committed marketer will also be a more aggressive marketer.It is very probable, therefore, that early film marketers' hands-off approach in the north contributed to Kannywood's more sluggish growth within and outside Nigeria, as opposed to suggestions by Adamu himself and others that Kannywood's growth beyond northern Nigeria is challenged almost exclusively by issues of Islam, language and culture (Ibrahim 2013,176; McCain 2013). In any case, Nollywood's quick ascension to one of the top three world cinemas in production quantity, and the swift interest it precipitated both in academicand non-academic circles does not erase the fact that it began two years after Hausa video film productions, if we stayed with Adamu's claim.

Then, consequently, the question of ingenuity arises regarding Nnebue: if pioneering Hausa filmmakers were employing informal distribution systems developed by pirating marketers by 1990, can an argument be made against claims that Nollywood's informal distribution system originated with Nnebue? Or is it probable that in the very earlydays of Hausa video film production, as someone who also pirated imported films, Nnebue might have learned of what was going on up north, and proceeded to replicate the same practice in southern Nigeria? Rather than the transference of certain industrial practices from Nollywood to Kannywood, as Larkin suggests, could it be the other way around? While this calculation remains in the realm of hypothesis, the chronology Adamu lays out raises convincing reasons to pursue viable potential connections between Nnebue's informal distribution of *Living in Bondage* and the informal Hausa video film distribution practicesthat preceded Nnebue's film in the south.

According to Adamu, by the mid- to late-1990s, the relationship between the early Hausa filmmaker and their marketers will be disrupted, because "When people started buying the films, the marketers realized there was a lot of money to be made in this business. The marketers soon became producers and actors and, eventually, they took over the film industry". Here, as we shall see in Chapter 2, this evolution of Kannywood to a marketer-controlled industry will become similar to the already prevailing industrial cinemapractices in Southern Nigeria (Nollywood) by the mid-1990s. By this time, the ranks of Nollywood had grown with filmmakers, who unlike Nnebue, had no prior experience in piracy or distribution. Like Hausa filmmakers at the time, they were reliant on the expertiseof distributors of pirated imported films.

2.4D Kannywood: The Film Philosophies of the Hausa Peoples

As it is with any commercially motivated cinema, Kannywood cannot escape its conceptualization within the frames of economics and profit. This is one of the most centralsites of inquiry with regards to Nollywood (Haynes and Okome, 1995; Larkin 2004; Lobato2010), and the commercial nature of Nollywood has widely informed how Kannywood is understood. There is no denying a viable reason for this approach exists. Abubakar and Dauda (2019) call Kannywood profit-driven (176); Ibrahim (2017) identifies the Hausa filmmaker's primary motivation to be profit (98). Adamu does not disagree with these writers, adding:

> ...people are buying them [Hausa films]. So, it is commercial, it's just
> that it's not bought outside the north. The producers, the directors,
> the actors are very rich... The films tell them about stories about real
> life...This increased their popularity and made them commercially
> successful. However, their [Hausa filmmakers] success and popularity
> are restricted to the north, but they don't care. So long as the money
> keeps rolling in, they don't mind.

Justifiably so, a popular cinema would expectedly be geared toward commercialism.

However, what Adamu does, in addition, is to complicate attempts to reduce the purpose of

Hausa filmmakers to the singular matter of economics. There exist other weighty social factors

that continue to be in tension with the drive for profit. Essentially, by extending the study of

Kannywood beyond matters of profit, Adamu is also providing another avenue for looking at

informality as going beyond its association with modern capitalism. Adamu identifies a

prevailing desire for the preservation of Hausa culture, and the use of film as a medium for

achieving this goal:

> [Hausa filmmakers] prefer to do it in their language; not because they
> are not very good in English but because of cultural preservation.
> Cultural preservation is very important to the northerner. They don't
> want to look American; they don't want to look British, and they don't
> want to send their children to London or Canada to study. Theyprefer
> them to stay right here in Nigeria. If they had to send them somewhere,
> they would send them to Cotonou in Benin Republic, which is close by.

The Hausas predominantly practice Islam, and their culture and society strongly respond

to their faith accordingly. Larkin (1997) and Miller (2016) have argued that Hausa cinema's

adoption of Hindi cinema's narrative and stylistic elements can be traced to no other reason than

shared conservative values, born of a strong adherence to religion, and theinterpretation of these

values on screen. Ibrahim and Yusuf (2020) examine the power and influence of Islam at the

institutional level in northern Nigeria, and the formation of a strict censorship board in Kano,

Kano State Censorship Board (KSCB), upon the introduction of Sharia Law (165). 'Kannywood'

derives from Kano. Therefore, the relationship between Hausa cinema, their exposure to Indian

cinema and Islam is central to the study of Kannywood. At the core of this relationship,

according to writers like Larkin (2004), it boilsdown thus: Hausa cinema, finding a sort of

kinship with Indian cinema, on account of similarities in their religious and cultural value

systems, has found a blueprint by which to make a 'safe', yet, profit-generating film. Typically underlying these arguments is still a subtle focus on profit as the reason for which the Hausa filmmaker conforms to the requirements of the religious and conservative stakeholders and society. Adamu supplies some nuance to this argument:

> Popular culture in the north is determined by this idea of preservation, and to be honest, they really don't care about global audiences. All they care about is their own popular culture: films, music, literature, performing arts. They produce for local consumption and that is why they produce in their local Hausa language. That is why it is locked up.

Adamu redirects the typical focus on profit to one on the collective desire for cultural preservation. While the former is motivated by economics, the latter tempers economics with altruism and social-mindedness. In essence, this implies a highly prioritizedcollective interest in cultural preservation, one that even Hausa filmmakers are committed to, and are unwilling to sacrifice in exchange for profit. In this respect, Adamu contrasts Hausa cinema to Nollywood, highlighting how a difference in philosophy and motivation directly informs the character, aesthetic and production outcomes of these cinemas:

> We want everybody to preserve their own language and their culture. But not Nollywood. Nollywood is American, Nollywood wants to appeal to the world and to the entire planet so that people will say the Nigerian film industry is fantastic. I mean look at *Lion Heart*. I have watched *Lion Heart*; it is a fantastic film, but it was rejected for academy awards because it was in English... Hausa indigenous film industry is about conveying indigenous cultures; Nollywood is not an indigenous film industry...They want to impress the world. They want to show the world the effect of colonialism. Just like the literature of Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka; they are not about Africa; they want to show the world they can speak good English.

> Indigenous language popular culture is communicating to the locals.
> We really do not care whether our novels and films are seen in London,
> in America. But we know that people are studying them in Los
> Angeles, in Germany, all over the place. They are studying themas
> aspects of cultural representation. Maybe they will not be showingthem
> at local cinemas, but nobody cares about that. What we care about is
> that we are doing something that is driving our culture …

Adamu has left no room for nuances in this instance. He endeavours to make generalizations in order to make his point. For one, anyone familiar with Nollywood, including Adamu himself, knows that Nollywood cannot be homogenized under a language.Furthermore, the assumption that writers like Achebe and Soyinka have produced literature for the sole purpose of showcasing their English language competency can only be seen as nothing more than assumptions and reductive. Finally, one only has to take a quick look at the works of the above writers to conclude much of their work addresses the African experience. Having said that, one can also understand grounds for aggregating the characterof Nollywood under a single language, when considered in relation to Kannywood, which almost never produces a film in the English language. Hence, while we must be willing to question the veracity of Adamu's claims, to the extent that we can, we ought not lose sight of the argument he makes, that Kannywood's inflexible commitment to the preservation of the Hausa culture is behind its insistence on the Hausa language.

In any event, Adamu outlines a cultural preservation backdrop for which everythingelse in film exists to support. A philosophy that perceives the film industry's priority as firsta medium for re-affirming and preserving culture is completely different from one founded on commercialism. When Kannywood is imagined to emerge only after Nollywood, and is therefore framed by Nollywood, understandings of Kannywood have largely circled aroundits commercialization, even when it is looked at through the lens of culture, religion, and

transnationalism. That Adamu's Hausa cinema is unrelentingly socially minded means that both the end-product, which is the film, and the process of its making, deserve to be re- imagined. For example, piracy appears to carry different implications between the two cinemas: while piracy has been the bane of Nollywood in southern Nigeria, the argument can be made that there exists some tolerance for piracy in the north, if it ensures that fewer members of the community are denied access to culturally preserving and homogenizing media product.

2.4E <u>Kannywood and the Question of the 'Nation'</u>

When Kannywood is not conceptualized as integrated within a national cinema, its study has primarily been in the context of the (sub-)nation. Larkin (2004) McCain (2013) and Ibrahim (2019), for example, imagine Nigeria as culturally, ethnically and geographically complex and heterogeneous. These writers, along with many others, imaginethe Hausas of the north as a sub-nation. For them, however, Kannywood is regional but contained within the finite boundaries of Nigeria. When transnationalism is examined in relation to Kannywood, it has been restricted to the influence of Hindi films on Kannywood's cultural, narrative and aesthetic elements (Larkin 1997; Ibrahim 2017). Even Adamu (2019) takes the same approach in "The Political Economy of the Hausa Popular Cultural Industries". This approach takes for granted that the Hausa people of Nigeria are a sub-nation confined and limited within Nigeria. In my interview with him, Adamu further problematizes the concept of the (sub-) nation and assumptions of a Kannywood locked within Nigeria's national boundaries, where its only major influence comes from India. As Andrew Higson points out in "The Concept of National Cinema*"* (1989), national boundaries are neither impervious, nor in practice, provide and maintain national exclusivityin matters of culture, economics and human mobility across geographical areas. In fact, Adamu identifies a transnational Hausa cinema that transgresses several West African nation-state boundaries. In

addition to his claim that the early marketers of Hausa films were from the Niger Republic,

Adamu elaborates:

> ...people in the Niger Republic are fifty-four percent Hausa. Fifty-
> four percent of Nigeriens speak Hausa. They came to Kano in
> northern Nigeria for inspiration. They asked some directors in Kanoto
> go to Niger Republic and help them record their own films. That was
> around 1994 or 1995. By 2000, the Nigeriens had started producing
> their own films in Hausa language.

As Adamu adds, the Hausa ethnic group spans a number of Anglophone and Francophonenations

in West Africa:

> After that, we had a group of Hausa people from Cameroon who also
> made a film that was independent of ours. So, when I received their
> film, I converted into an MP4. That was more than fifteen years ago.I
> don't think they even have an existing copy anymore. One of these
> days, I could upload it. They had a CD, but the biggest hub of film
> production outside northern Nigeria was Ghana, particularly the area
> called 'Zango'. Lots of Hausa film makers from Ghana are from
> Zango, which means settlement. One of the things that the Hausas of
> Ghana and Nigeria are proud of is that one of the most famous
> Ghanaian actresses, Nadia Buari is Hausa.

Further research revealed that, indeed, an actress of the same name exists, born of

Ghanaian Hausa and Lebanese parentage, who while Hausa, has prominently featured in

Nollywood and Ghallywood (Ghanaian cinema).

On the one hand, Kannywood may be called Hausa Cinema's Nigerian variety, which is

doubtless subject to Nigerian-government instituted policies within Nigeria (Barau2008; Ibrahim

2013). However, while it may employ local narratives and production structures, its

conceptualization as solely a Nigerian/ nation-state cinema potentially overlooks inherent

transnational cultural qualities and its affiliation with Hindi Cinema for example. Nigerian

Cinema scholarship benefits from our transnationalization reading of Hausa. Doing so allows us

to review Gabriel's (1982) general approach to postcolonial African cinema studies, which does not take transnational sub-nations into account.

Furthermore, Adamu identifies certain distinctions within Hausa cinema as onetravels from one West African nation to another, stating for example:

> ...the Hausa of Niger is slightly different from that of Nigeria. Their films were not accepted here [Nigeria] because they were too didactic; that is basically the nature of all Hausa films. Hausa films, whether in Niger or anywhere, are didactic. The filmmakers are teachers and socially minded. The Hausa in Ghana produces films which are, in my view, much more interpretative of life than the Hausa in northern Nigeria. The Hausa of northern Nigeria focuses only on love relationships. They cling to the Indians, but the Hausas in Ghana are true artists because they look at the human condition and life and make films about it. They made about ten of them. It wasscarce. When they brought them here, the northern marketers [in Nigeria] saw how superior they were in terms of story lines, narratives, directing and even the packaging. They did not market them here; They [Hausa's from Ghana] became discouraged. One of the best producers I know is Tanko. He was in Nigeria for some time to create partnerships and collaborations with Nigerian Film Makers in the north. Sadly, the marketers were not interested; so he returnedto Ghana.

The flow across national boundaries of ideas, aesthetic and narrative influences, and practices within the broader Hausa filmmaking community means its national variety in Nigeria, for example, may exhibit characteristics that originate from, and are products of itsinteractions with, other West African nations, peoples and cultures. Therefore, if we can name India as its major transnational influence, how about The Republic of Benin? Or Cameroon? Or Togo, or any other African country with a significant Hausa population? This exchange goes beyond the natural, un-orchestrated flow of influences across national boundaries, which can be expected among peoples and cultures which interact. There is alsoa strong deliberateness to the process of Hausa cinema interconnectedness across national borders, with Adamu attesting:

> ...there are other Hausa film professionals in Ghana, Niger and
> Cameroon. They were thinking of doing a similar thing [transference of
> digital filmmaking knowledge] in Burkina Faso. We have a lot of Hausa
> people living in Ouagadougou, we are all networked. We oftenmeet
> about once or twice in 3 years in the US and exchange ideas.

The transnational identity Adamu presents of Hausa cinema sets forth grounds for exploring what in Kannywood might be traceable to the cultures, peoples and government policies of neighbouring West African nation-states and their specificities. That Hausa filmmakers meet in the US may also impact their deliberations and the degree of their transnationality. This area of research is vastly understudied, and while it echoes pan-Africanist concerns, it recognizes cultural homogeneities and heterogeneities, much morethan Gabriel's (1982) approach does.

Secondly, even among the Hausas, enough diversities exist to complicate argumentsof cultural homogeneity. Adamu questions the common assumptions of cultural oneness of all northern Nigerian filmmakers under the Hausa sub-national identity. Cultural distinctions within the Hausa filmmaking community in Nigeria have scarcely ever been made. Problematizations of perceptions of national homogeneity have typically ended at thepoint of the sub-nation. Larkin (1997; 2004), Abubakar and Dauda (2019) and many others assume a cultural oneness among the Hausas in northern Nigeria when they relate Kannywood's narrative and aesthetic qualities to Hindi films. Adamu dismisses this universalizing category, rejecting assumptions of any significant degree of cultural, linguistic and religious purity among the Hausa filmmaking peoples of Nigeria. In a revealing moment, Adamu questions the degree to which many Hausa film practitioners areactually Hausa in all its ramifications, noting "[i]ronically, the vast majority of the successful Hausa film practitioners are not even Hausa. When I say they are not Hausa, I mean, they do not share the same mind-set, the same cultural orientation as the mainstream

Hausa people. Mainstream Hausa people tend to be very conservative in their lives. But these guys came up with new attitudes about modernity that the mainstream Hausa do not accept, and that is why they are always criticized". In their generalization, Iyorza (2017), Ibrahim (2019), and Abubakar and Dauda (2019) consider prominent Nigerian actor, Ali Nuhu to be Hausa, but Adamu insists:

> Ali Nuhu is not Hausa at all. Nothing makes him Hausa except the fact that he speaks the Hausa language. But you know, people in southern Nigeria have this weird view that anybody from above river Niger is Hausa. We have a lot of tribes there. We have more tribes in northern Nigeria than the tribes in southern Nigeria. Yobe alone has almost ten to twelve different languages and they are all called Hausa.And that is not true! They have their own identities.

Indeed, a little more research revealed Ali Nuhu, who has been referred to as the 'King of Kannywood'[11] is from Borno State in north-eastern Nigeria. The people of Borno, much as the average Nigerian south of the River Niger might tend to casually refer to them as Hausas, are actually Kanuri. While the Hausas and Kanuris share many similarities, the distinction Adamu draws regarding Ali Nuhu is accurate. But, as one can see, Adamu's interpretation of the Hausa identity exceeds issues of birthplace or place of origin, lineage orparentage. Here, Adamu also draws distinctions along moral and liberal/conservative lines, insisting:

> Ali Nuhu is not Hausa at all. He speaks the language, but he does not have the mindset of a classical Muslim Hausa. So, based on that, he appears in Nollywood films, hugs and kisses women, although he says he has stopped that. There is no way a mainstream Hausa like some of the 'made' ones would actually do what hedoes.

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[11] The Guardian Newspaper, a Nigerian publication references the informal title 'King of Kannywood' when reporting the signing on of Ali Nuhu as a Brand Ambassador for Cherie Noodles: https://guardian.ng/features/cherie-noodles-unveils-ali-nuhu-aishat-aliyu-tsamiya-as-brand-ambassadors/

In other words, 'authentic' Hausa identity defines, forms the essence of, and is locked within, an actor's performativity and actor-philosophy. With another example, itappears even an indigenous Hausa actor may be denied citizenship on account of their violation of certain agreed-upon conditions of performance.

In a telling account of a female Hausa actor's predicament in Kannywood, Adamu confirms the non-negotiable conditions under which the film industry enforces cultural and religious conformity:

> For instance, a book is coming out soon called 'Muslims in the Movies' and I have a chapter that talks about an actress, a film makercalled *Rahamasadau*, who was banned by the film industry because she hugged somebody in a musical video clip. She is a Muslim, and he is a Christian. She was not supposed to hug him. Secondly, she isn't supposed to hug anybody who is not her *Muharram*. A Muharram is someone with whom there will be no marriage, like a father, a blood brother, or an uncle. He is not her Muharam, so she should not have hugged him. So, the Islamic environment in Nigeria was very upset about this and banned her from the film industry completely. Suddenly, she became popular in Nollywood! Suddenly, she became popular in Hollywood because Akon, the Senegalese – American rapper sent her an invitation. She had become a victim; then everybody wanted her. So, she decided to be a rebel. She was going everywhere, wearing skimpy dresses and so on. As a result of this, the Hausa film industry ignored her. She was indifferent becauseshe felt she was famous in Nollywood. Nollywood wanted her, not because she was an excellent actress but because she was a rebel.
>
> Prior to that, not many Hausa female Muslim women were interested in acting...When she behaved that way and the northern establishment banned her, she became a heroine. Then, she moved down to southern Nigeria...She had to apologize to everyone for behaving thatway but the main film industries practitioners in northern Nigeria did not forgive her for that act.

It is not altogether clear where Adamu stands regarding the seemingly draconian measures put in place in order to protect and preserve the very conservative Hausa culture,since in the same breath, he appears to encourage social disruption, stating:

Right now, the coronavirus pandemic has created a new fashion design... We have videos of *mullahs* singing about the virus. This is a guy, who is an old man, who was a Muslim teacher, he is now singing. Just a couple of years ago, he was one of the people condemning singers. We also have Hausa Muslim women, who appear on YouTube videos, talking about sex, vivid wild sex. Talkingabout how to satisfy their husband and themselves. They talk about lesbian relationships. I am telling you that no Hausa video will cover that. They are all scared, but I am not! I am left alone on the field.

In conclusion, what Adamu leaves us with when it comes to the question of Kannywood as a national cinema is the inadequacy of the assumptions of the nation as a homogenous and exclusive concept. One way or another, writers like Teshome Gabriel (1982), Andrew Higson (1989), Stephen Crofts (1993) and Susan Hayward (2005) have grappled with these complexities around issues of postcolonialism and national homogeneity. Kannywood, according to Adamu, reinforces the strength of these arguments.

2.5 The Nollywood Audience: Local and Diasporan

In the absence of anything one could call a functioning film industry in the first decade of Nollywood, a great number economic prospectors took advantage of the prevailing informal film terrain, and a system of film screenings or "street sites", that is the exhibition of films on street corners, in beer palours, shops and so on became commonplace(Okome 2007, 6). According to Okome, these street sites are without the comforts one would expect from a traditional cinema house; the audience stand up for the duration of the film as they "literarily "suffer" through the experience of viewing…" (7). In the early phaseof Nollywood, this distribution and exhibition mode developed an audience type on the onehand, and on the other, a unique kind of audience experience.

Both the nature and structure of these street sites meant that their potential patrons were to be found among people on the street, many of whom perform in informal and irregular work activities; they were flexible enough to commit to a film they had, otherwise,walked in on, unanticipated. They largely belonged to the lower-class, people whose existence were closely reliant on the informal street market system: "[t]he symbolic temporary conversion of "street corners" into social of engagement with the visual world ofthe video film is only one of the markers of the economic poverty of this group of consumers" (Okome, 7). This dynamic is reminiscent of the early years of American cinema, when the American working class was drawn en-masse to Nickelodeon set-ups, many of which exhibited out of storefronts (Grieveson 2004). In Nollywood, these early- phase audiences would later balloon to incorporate the more affluent working and middle class audiences with domestic video viewing capabilities. Ismail and Ibrahim's (2019) analysis of Nollywood's gender demographic reveals that while female audiences were allbut absent in the very early days of Kannywood and Nollywood, they have massively exceeded their male counterpart in number -both in Nigeria and in the diaspora (6).

Furthermore, the writers more narrowly categorize married women as Nollywood's largestfemale audience demographic (8). Jedlowski (2013) reduces Nollywood's audience pool to housewives and unemployed youths (29), Ajibade (2013) adds that the Nollywood film is targeted at the Nigerian housewife who, while in the kitchen, can have the film playing on the video/TV in the living room with the audio turned up (267-268).

 Due to its public form, Nollywood street screening began as a shared, communal experience. Shared, because the audience saw that these films represented them, and theycould more easily identity with the characters, their experiences and their environments (Okome 2017). Uwah (2010) puts it strongly:

> The films provide [the] audience with different views of their identity
> construction. The portrayals of the people's cultures not only connect
> them to richer meanings and larger forces operating but also continental
> and ecologicals ymbiosis towards realizing the ideological mission
> creating the vision of pan-Africanism (113).

Sharing was, however, not restricted to audience identification with the film narrative. Neither was it necessarily tied to viewing. Street screening was also a social experience that involved audience interactions, debates and discussions, which were not always about the actual film they were watching. Some writers have gone as far as suggesting, for these audiences, it was more about the social experience (Esan 2008). Nollywood street-screening sites became where people caught up on current affairs, local stories, sports and gossip.

Tsaaior (2017) calls the Nollywood film a communal property (9). For the most part, this level of community and sharing has remained a strong component of the Nollywood experience in Nigeria. Among those with personal VHS/VCD/DVD players, this tradition and practice are kept up by their invitation of family, friends and neighbours to watch thesefilms in their domestic space (African Communication Research 2008, 90).

Similarly, diasporic[12] audiences continue to carry this tradition on, albeit an adaptation of it:

> For Nigerians in North America and Europe, the films provide
> images of home and a means of maintaining their cultural identity
> within their domestic space, passing that identity on to the next
> generation, and sharing it with friends (Bob, Haynes, Pickard,
> Keenan, Couldry 2008, 206).

Much the same way the Nollywood audience in Nigeria is drawn to these films, because of their inherent ability to represent the experiences of their audience, which they remember with nostalgia. To a degree, these films are able to offer the diasporic audience a temporary mental return to Nigeria while they are thousands of miles away in their host nation. In this sense, there is a sharing of the Nigerian experience with other diasporic Nigerians and with Nigerians back at home.

In addition, Dekie, Meers, Winkel, Bauwel, Smets (2015) identity that among diasporic Nigerian and African communities, the communal aspect of Nollywood emerges in the social interactions that take place in Nigerian shops which rent out Nollywood films, while a Nollywood film may be playing on the store's television in the background. In these spaces, the sense of community is animated. The writers also make the point that DVD exchanges among members of a diasporic community is a very common practice (305). This practice of exchange of Nollywood DVDs among diasporic Nigerians, according to the same writers, is an adoption of

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[12] By 'diasporic', the general reference is to people of Nigerian (and African) descent residing in Europe and North America, who continue to identify and have strong ties with their country of origin. Indeed, the term is a lot broader than that. It includes Nigerians living anywhere in the world other than in Nigeria, and also peoples of African descent dispersed globally during and as a result of the Transatlantic Slave Trades (TST). Here, my focus is limited to Europe and America, because of the starker disparities in economics, technological access and social structures between these groups of Nigerian audiences. These disparities enable me to examine Nollywood's reception in two very different societies.

both the sharing and communal qualities that have made Nollywood viewing a social experience (306).

For the Nollywood audience, whether at home or abroad, experiencing the Nollywood film is not only a visual experience. It is also a social experience, which dates back to the very beginnings of the cinema, when Nollywood films were informally screened on street- corners, in shops and under awnings for a minuscule fee. The social element to Nollywood'sviewing has been a transnational practice, which is shared by Nollywood's diasporic audiences who create a sense of community around Nollywood. In the era of digital streaming and distribution, which I will later look at, Nollywood's audiences will go through an evolution.

This chapter's examination of Nollywood and Kannywood's origin stories revealsthat Nigeria's contemporary cinema is, indeed, a postcolonial phenomenon. Having said that, it also reveals that Nigerian cinema can be further understood by complementing postcolonialism with other theoretical frames. Gabriel's (1982) pioneering work on postcolonial African Cinema as a Third Cinema is inadequate for our understanding ofNollywood, which is not always a cinema on a mission for political and ideological liberation.

In The Next Chapter:

In the next chapter, therefore, I examine Nigerian cinema in particular (and African cinema in general) through the lens of Miriam Hansen's concept of vernacular modernism. Rather than postcolonialism, Hansen's framework centers modernity and modernism in understanding how a national cinema like Nollywood may locate its identity somewhere between the local/traditional and global/modern.

CHAPTER 3:
OLD NOLLYWOOD FROM 1990s TO LATE-2000s:
A NARRATIVE FILM FORM AND
MIRIAM HANSEN'S VERNACULAR MODERNISM

In this chapter, I do four things: I explore what I call Nollywood's escapist film style in pre-2010 Nollywood. This is a convention I have observed in Nollywood films that strives to provide a form of illusory hope to mitigate the challenging human conditions of its audience. Secondly, I examine the origin of this escapist film style in *Living in Bondage*, by Kenneth Nnebue in 1992. Thirdly, I analyze Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* and Nollywood's escapist style in relation to Miriam Hansen's concept of vernacular modernism, a theory about localized modernity. Finally, I look at Nollywood as a popular culture industry, and in light of Hansen's vernacular modernism.

3.1 Defining Old Nollywood

After about two decades since the official inception of Nollywood in 1992, a new film look and production mode began to emerge in Nollywood around 2010 that markedly deviated from its pre-2010 production practices (Ezepue 2020). It is these evident changes that have convincingly demarcated Nollywood into Old and New Nollywood, which is why we may today examine Old Nollywood as a semi-distinct cinema. The distinctions between the two eras, as many writers indicate, are evident in a number of areas and levels. For Adejunmobi (2015) New Nollywood, which began around 2010, is different from Old Nollywood in its emergent, more complex and layered narrative. Santorri Chamley (2012) recognizes New Nollywood as the new approach to film budgeting and financing that took hold in late-2010 Nollywood, where film

budgets ballooned, because filmmakers were looking to exceed existing creative and production standards. Other writers like Haynes (2014), Ryan (2015) and Lande (2015) use the marketing, distribution and exhibition in post-2010 Nollywood to separate New Nollywood from its pre-2010 forebearer. They identify the integration of online distribution and screening platforms into the industry, and the re-introduction of cineplexes. Yet, in more particular terms, writers like McCall (2004) and Lobato (2009) also frame the era of Old Nollywood with the period when the industry almost completely relied on the markets at Idunmota (Lagos) and Asaba (Delta State) for itsproduction of films, and their distribution via VHS and VCD formats. This frame would also include the era within which piracy most flourished. Of course, characterizing Nollywood into sub-categorizes of 'New' and 'Old' is not without its challenges. For one, we are still left with a fair degree of ambiguity, since demarcations like this are porous, andreveal the extent and limitations of signifiers like 'Old' and 'New'. For example, numerous actors from the VHS/VCD era continue to feature in post-2010 New Nollywood (Akande 2020). That said, one only need look at films like *Taxi Drive: Oko Ashewo* (Oriahi 2015)*, and 76* (Ojukwu 2016) to agree there is a lot of merit to arguments recognizing a demarcative shift in Nollywood around 2010. For the purpose of this project, I take the leadof the above writers, even if identifiers like ''Old' and 'New' are, by and large, for descriptive purposes. Additionally, one must caution that not every post-2010 Nollywood film falls under the banner of New Nollywood, using these metrics. Asaba DVD distributionand this unique narrative form and production characteristics still continue to flourish alongside the post-2010 films that legitimize reasons for a New Nollywood.

In this chapter, and in keeping with the approach of examining Nollywood from different theoretical approaches, I centre the attention here on the escapist style in Nollywood as a way to understand Nollywood's reaction to modernity-related aspirations. These areas of focus provided

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me with most of the consequential information I wasprivileged to obtain, and which have so far been little explored.

3.2 Old Nollywood: Escapist Narrative Form and the Nigerian Audience

In interviewing Nigeria-based Nollywood film practitioners, I gradually became aware of a loosely shared film philosophy among these practitioners that has inflected upon the near three decades of Nollywood's existence. However, the expressions of this philosophy appear to take on different forms in Old and New Nollywood, and these differences inform another way by which we may argue for the Old/New Nollywood sub-categorization. A perception among my interviewees is the consideration and interpretation of film as a social agent, responsible for helping to alleviate the immediate social, economicand environmental challenges the Nigerian, mainly working-class audiences, face. This philosophy does not align with the political nature of militancy, or Western cinema rejectionor opposition that has commonly defined postcolonial African cinema. Nollywood's escapist style connotes the attempt to, in Nigerian specific ways, temporarily suspend the audience's reality while presenting them with a film-world where their economic desires arerealized.

Until recently, before the re-emergence of cineplexes in Nigeria, Nollywood's escapist style has traditionally integrated itself immediately into its local audiences' sphere through the DVD format. This is simply because the style is as old as Nollywood, beginning—somewhat— with *Living in Bondage.* As revealed by some of my interviewees, who developed their craft and expertise between early 1990s and 2010, the philosophy behindtheir escapist motivations insists on entertainment, without the abdication of social responsibilities, and it echoes Krings' (2010) position that contemporary African films can be "[g]eared towards thrills and pleasures…

[while] deeply rooted in the wider political andsocial context of its time of production" (80). In this sense, these filmmakers suddenly take on a remedial role in the psyche of the Nigerian people than has been more commonlyacknowledged.

Both Nobert Ajaegbo (the current Chairman of the Film and Video Producers Marketers Association of Nigeria), and prolific director, Akin-Tijani Balogun, reveal anunderlying philosophy behind a desire to employ film as a mitigatory phenomenon.

Nollywood's escapist style has historically dominated Nollywood's Asaba straight-to-VHS/VCD/DVD filmmaking since the 1990s. Asaba is the capital city of Delta State in South-South Nigeria, and alongside Lagos, became a dominant hub for Nollywood DVD film production and distribution (Haynes 2016). In its mode of address, Nollywood's escapist style strives to distance the audience from their immediate, less pleasant reality byproviding them with a mental outlet that encourages their momentary suspension of reality:it sets the gaze of the audience on an imaginary world that promises respite, a hope in/for abetter future.

Haynes (2016) calls attention to audience/film narrative relationship when he identifies: Nigerians "...like entertainment that shows their aspirations, not their realities" (70). As presented in Chapter 1: Literature Review, one of the key ways Nollywood is conceptualized is by its perpetual fascination with the spiritual, power and wealth. As revealed in the literature review, these concepts have been primarily examined in the context of informality and the occult economy. In addition, writers have sought to identifywhether these concepts' emergence in Nollywood are broadly motivated by culture, tradition and religion, or economics. What has remained less prolific is the attempt to incorporate these concepts in a broader socially motivated Nollywood film-philosophy -asoutlined by my interviewees.

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Ajaegbo and Balogun reveal Nollywood's seeming obsession with wealth, power, extravagance and excess (Green-Simms 2010; Haynes 2016) derives, in part, from the instinctive inclination to fabricate for its audience an imaginary future experience devoid ofstruggle and lack.

In the least, Nollywood's escapist style considers its local audiences and their life conditions, and attempts to co-opt concepts/images of wealth, opulence and power as affective means for temporarily luring them away from their more challenging reality.

Ajaegbo asserts: "…the country in itself, the economy in itself, is so serious that Nigerian people don't want to sit down and watch something serious. They want to see something comic (comedic). So, you find, most times, that comedy is selling… When you see something that can spur Nigerians to laughter, they will laugh, sit and enjoy it. That filmwill make it in Nigeria". Here, where comedy serves as a conduit for channeling an affective narrative, the narrative itself emerges, even if subconsciously, from a collective drive to involve itself in its audiences' everyday struggles. Curiously, Balogun also calls it a"distraction from reality". Furthermore, he identifies audiences according to economic groupings, reinforcing arguments that those to whom DVD/Asaba films are targeted are of the lower-income class, which constitutes the most widespread economic class in the country:

> We have two broad classes of audiences. We have the elites, and we have the non-elites. A typical movie that will go to cinema, and the elites will appreciate and be willing, happy and joyous to pay N2000, N2500 or N3000 to watch… If you brought that film to TV and say, "okay, let's forget the money, let's just put it on NTA, AIT or any DSTV platform", trust me, the non-elites who sit in their homes, whocan pay for Go TV subscription, or DSTV, will watch the film for probably like ten minutes and then flick the channel. I have taken time to do that research…the non-elites simply want to unwind; feel-good drama …my movie then was being sold to DVD, which is the platform that feeds the non-elites. They're the ones that go to the video renter to rent a CD/DVD…

Balogun's assertion that Nigeria's low-income/working class was the primary target for Nollywood in the VHS and DVD era is confirmed by Haynes (2000) and Adesanya (2000), both of whom reference widespread dissemination and accessibility in examining itspenetration among Nigerians.

Balogun here makes a distinction not only between audience types, but also conditions of exhibition. He associates distinctive form and narrative qualities to films that go straight to DVD and those going to the theatres. He suggests a more critical engagement occurs between the cinema film and its elite audience, who, in theory, he perceives as more educated and critical than the working-class or non-elite (depending of course on the fluid metrics he employs). The DVD audience, on the other hand, seek Nollywood partly for its socially aware and mitigatory quality. In reality, the lines of demarcation are less defined; they are more complex and blurred, and sizeable overlaps allow for these narrative form andstyles to travel across diverse distribution modes (Miller 2012, 2). Nonetheless, Balogun's reduction of these forms into clear-cut binaries is a useful generalization he makes to simplify a perception widely shared in the industry. Shortly after, Balogun leans further intothe argument that the typical Nigerian audience's motivation to watch Nollywood films is partly informed by his or her search for some mental and emotional respite from theireveryday experiences. He poignantly added:

> … The mindset of the audience goes a long way too… My lecturer, late Professor Adelugba, even said it back then in school that the African terrain is already full of chaos … Take for instance: look at the traffic issues in Lagos. Whether you're driving or not, you are part of a traffic problem. If you are going by public transport -the busconductor, the driver, your fellow passenger! It is stressful already.
>
> My lecturer would always say, phenomenally, most African theatreor film entrepreneurs started by making people feel good. The likes of Ogunde, Baba Sala. That's why they predominantly did comedy. Filmmakers just need to feed the subconscious of the country…

In its use of wealth, opulence, extravagance and magic as thematic elements (see pivotal films as *Living in Bondage* (1992) and *Unforgiven Sin* (1993)), Nollywood's escapist style, appears to encourage its audience to interrupt their reality and vicariously livethrough the characters on screen. When I further pursued this angle with Ajaegbo, he tied it to the fact that Nigeria is a developing country "… where citizens live with very low incomeper capita". The citizenry, therefore, face daily economic struggle to keep their heads above water. This economic pressure puts a lot of stress and demand on Nigerians. The resultant absence of necessities makes daily living extremely difficult. In their everyday reality,the Nigerian audience replaces their anxieties around social and economic challenges with fantasies of comfort projected on screen; they temporarily exchange agitations about powerlessness and lack of agency for the seemingly boundless power that magic may promise, toward the imaginary ability to dominate and subdue their trying everyday experiences. From prolific uses of mansions and expensive cars, to characters' lavish costumes, and the integration of international travels in the storyline, these motifs reference a certain level of success and achievements in the Nigerian society that is coveted by a significant amount of Nollywood audiences. According to Balogun, the Nollywood film "…serves a therapeutic purpose. This happens when the viewer can identify with the character(s) or issues treated… This gives a glimmer of hope that perhaps it might happento the viewer too. For some, it is simply a form of emotional release. The fact that someone is speaking out for them is enough".

It ought not be taken for granted that, because mental respite is a significant goal, the process for acquiring wealth and power can be perceived as inherently amoral or morally inconsequential. In Nollywood, money/power-hungry characters are not immune from punitive measures for their shady endeavours. For example, in *Nneka, The Pretty Serpent* (Dir. Ejiro,

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1994), Nneka, a spirit woman with supernatural powers, enchants a wealthy married man to separate from his wife and marry her. While things work out for her for a while, she would eventually be humiliated and forced out by the wealthy man. In *My Own Share 2* (Dir. Ebere, 2004), a man falsifies his brother's will, takes full ownership of the family business, leaving his nephew in poverty. In the end, the nephew is presented his father's actual will, which prompts him to take his uncle's life. Similarly, Nollywood's preoccupation with escapism is also not to say deprived settings and poverty in its many ramifications are completely avoided in these films. Unsavory conditions are common in Nollywood films. Yet, for the most part, they are representations of a challenge or curse the character must surmount, toward a climactic narrative finale. Their presence is there as something to be dispelled for the introduction of the pleasures of plenty, wealth and power. Even though Andy Okeke's life ends in ruin in *Living in Bondage* (1992), his search for the powers of the occult to escape poverty is not an unfamiliar story among Nigerians. Okeke's path from rags-to-riches is one the hopeful audience imagines the course of their own life might mimic in the general sense. Even if the pursuit of dark powers for wealth is more commonly frowned at, the life Lagos promises Okeke does not go unnoticed. The non-city audience, for example, who anticipate a migratory move to the city in hopes of a better financial future suddenly gains access into what this future life, with all its materiality and presumed comfort, could look like; it is the image of power, agency, and access to choicesand society that the youth in underprivileged communities hold on to as their vision for thefuture. For example, films like *Deadly Affair* (Dir. Ejiro, 1995), *Most Wanted* (Dir. Bamishigbin, 1998), and *N150 Million* (Dir. Olanrewaju, 2003), among countless others,depict luxury with their use of mansions and expensive automobiles.

Haynes (2016) identifies a causal relationship between preoccupations with wealth in Nollywood films and the birth of Nollywood at a time when the Nigerian society groanedunder severe national economic austerity (Structural Adjustment Program) in the late-1980s: "Nollywood was born out of this situation and expressed it. The leading theme of the first video films was 'get-rich-quick' – the scramble for wealth in an anomic environment, shadowed by terror of being thrown out of one's position in the crumbling social order" (60). To take this further, Nollywood's themes of wealth and power is believed in many of Nigerian traditional religions to be humanistic attributes derivable from the power of magic.This traditional perception precedes Nollywood, its origins dating back to Nigerian travelingtheatre traditions and their regular utilization of Yoruba cosmology (Adesokan, 2004, 190-191). In addition, social mindedness as a prerequisite for influencing society for good is oneidentifiable characteristic also found in the Yoruba traveling theatre, arguably the progenitorof Nollywood (Haynes and Okome, 1998). On numerous occasions in her extensive study of Oyin Adejobi's theatre group, Karin Barber (2000) mentions the traveling theatre's commitment to social causes, primarily charging admission fees to raise money for unions, Education, Benevolent, War Relief Funds. In the following decades, a similar fixation on elevating the mass audience above their daily experience seemed to have found its way intoNollywood from theatre, only this time, also in the form of magic or witchcraft—phenomena that, even if only for the duration of the film, suggest the boundlessness of the supernatural as antidote to the natural. As Oloruntoba-Oju (2013) aptly puts it, "A central theme in the drama of these early practitioners was the attainment of cosmic harmony through a mutual struggle of man and god. The characters in their plays traverse the world beyond in the play's search for resolution to ostensibly earth-bound conflicts" (401).

According to Droogers (2006, 33), the main purpose of Yoruba cosmology is problem-solving on earth. In other words, in times of physical, material, and existential challenges, practitioners of Yoruba religions have historically consulted the supernatural for material, physical solutions. In which case, Nollywood's seeming fixation on the supernatural or magic (for example, *The Mark of the Beast* (Dir. Amenechi, 1999) and *Full Moon 2* (Dir. Ejiro, 1998), could be read as harkening back to pre-Nollywood theatre conventions which employed notions of the supernatural. Only this time, Nollywood appropriates these conventions to meet contemporary economic, social and environmental challenges of the 1990s and beyond. The prevalence of Pentecostalist themes in Nollywood films is not removed from these very aspirations. Ojo (2017) acknowledges that beyond the contemporaneous emergence of Nollywood and Pentecostalism in Nigeria in the 1990s, oneof Pentecostalism's central appeal for Nollywood is its shared belief with many Nigerian traditional religious systems that the spiritual and supernatural can profoundly impact the turn of events in the natural, material world (322). Pentecostalism comes handy, "… when the government will not listen, the police will frame you, the courts will take bribes and deliver justice to whoever can pay…" (Adesokan, 2004, 49). Whether it is through the audiences' familiarity with traditional religious practices or the widespread integration of Pentecostalism in Nigeria, Nollywood filmmakers can be understood to employ these beliefsystems in service of the same remedial pursuit. Equally interesting is Tsaaior's (2017) reading of witchcraft in Nollywood films through a feminist lens, since its practice is overwhelmingly associated with the Female. She suggests the prevalence of witchcraft in Nollywood films might be read as a transgressive, counter-hegemonic force against patriarchy (32). In the context of an overwhelming system that engenders the challenging realities of its citizens, the Female as a symbol for witchcraft, can be read as push back against

successive male-dominated Nigerian governments that have overseen the oppressivesystem. For Tsaaior, witchcraft and the occult in general in film, can be agents of activism and militancy against institutionalized social and economic oppression and repression.

Haynes also observes that there appears an existing tension between the supernaturaland Nollywood's focus on wealth and social status, noting the higher the social class (and/orwealth, presumably) of the central characters, the more peripheral the supernatural becomes in relation to the story (Haynes 2016, 104). Haynes reinforces arguments that these themes, for the audience, are ultimately directed at creating a film world in which the audience can imagine himself/herself hovering over their less friendly realities, remaining untouched by them, or the ability to alter their realities to their taste. After all, if the end-goal is a temporary, mental travel to some form of *Shangri- La*, imaginably, one or the other suffices to take them there. The supernatural (in the form of magic or witchcraft), and wealth are equal but different paths to obtaining such abilities. Thus, the use of the supernatural may negate the need for a commensurate use of wealth and power, and vice-versa. For example, a character may seek supernatural powers from a *juju man* in order to ward off animosity from his co-workers. In another film, the same goal is achieved by the character's purchase of affection with money. A relevant example of comparable films to employ different sides of this same coin would be the classics, *Nneka: The Pretty Serpent* (Dir. Ejiro 1994) and *Glamour Girls 1* (Dir. Onukwufor 1994). These two films are driven by female characters and would be read as akin to femme-fatales, were we to subject them to Western genre theories. In *Nneka*, which is already briefly summarized above, Nneka heavily leans on the spiritual to lure gullible powerful men in her plight to gain access to power. Nneka's reliance on her supernatural powers makes it unnecessary for her to be wealthy in order to find herself in the same circles as her wealthy preys. She has the spiritual power to bewitch them. Eventually, her

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desire for wealth and power becomes her undoing. Similarly, *Glamour Girls* follows the story of a number of female protagonists who are sex workers. These characters have control of their bodies which they put in the service of acquiring wealth and power. Among them is Jane, who would go on to murder a wealthy politician who connived to defraud her of wealth she had come into when she married her first husband. Jane ends up in prison as a consequence. In this instance, while pursuing relativelythe same goal as Nneke in *Nnkeka*, the female characters in *Glamour Girls* acquire access towealth and power by the commodification of their bodies. We can conclude *Glamour Girls*, like *Nneka*, is about the female pursuit of wealth, only both films take different paths to achieve this goal. Here, as earlier noted, this is not to suggest any level of indifference on the part of the films regarding moral caution. As we can see in both *Glamour Girls* and *Nnkeka*, extreme penalties exist for characters whose pursuit of wealth leads them downunsavory paths. However, the films appear to prioritize the life and experience of the wealthy, over how the protagonists attempt to acquire wealth; they celebrate luxury and extravagance without/while playing down the value of honest work.

That said, Nollywood's escapist style sometimes finds itself a victim of its own mission, as it could appear to dangle—if not taunt the audience with- an imaginary, escapistexperience considerably unattainable in reality. However, ultimately, while power, wealth and the supernatural undeniably continue to locate themselves within the heart of the Nollywood narrative, they intuitively function more as a means to an end, where that end isan imagined comfort-place, a utopian world in which the audience may temporarily reside, away from his or her realities. In very concrete ways, both Ajaegbo and Tijani-Balogun make the connection between film and the need to soften the everyday blows life throws atthe average Nigerian. If nothing more can be added to the observation that Nollywood is supposedly obsessed with

wealth, extravagance and magic, one may be able to infer that these depictions extend beyond a mere filmmaker's desire to exotify their films to interest and attract the uninitiated audience. Rather, magic/ traditional religious practices, wealth and power are all inter-connected in building culturally and locally familiar story-plots for their audiences.

Even though escapism in cinema is largely universal, certain specificities explain how and why Nollywood's approach to escapism is unique. Looking at the effects of Hollywood's dream factory on its audience for example, Marsh (1992) identifies that the myth of the American Dream (also as perpetuated in Hollywood) is central to the invitationto 'dream'. This myth conjures the concept of equal possibility among all Americans to achieve social mobility, enhanced class status and wealth through individual effort.[13] By contrast, Nollywood's attempt to temporarily separate its audiences from their realities sincethe 1990s is, in some ways, a rejection of nationalizing concepts as the national government,for which the Nigerian people were increasingly expressing apathy, resignation and displeasure (Olukotun 2002). In other words, Nollywood's escapism is neither grounded norinformed by an idea of hope or myth associated with a sense of the dream of the nation.

Rather, what we can call Nollywood's dream factory is the filmmaker's non-systematic attempt to alleviate the challenges of fellow-Nigerians, who already perceive their government to

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[13] For more on the relationship between Hollywood/dream factory and escapism in Hollywood classical studio films, see Samuel (2012) in *The American Dream: A Cultural History*, where he spends some time looking at a documentary titled *Hollywoodism*, which reflects on the relationship between Hollywood films and the American Dream. According to Samuel, the documentary attributes escapism to the hope key Jewish producers in early 20th-Century Hollywood who had escaped the pogroms in Eastern Europe had in the American Dream.

Similarly, Cantor (2019), who examines films like *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Dir. Minghella, 1999) and *Being John Malkovich* (Dir. Jonze, 1999), and how they are stand-ins for ideations of achieving the American success story. After all, America is "the land where every youngster can dream of being of president someday. *The Talented Mr. Ripley, Boys Don't Cry,* and *Being John Malkovich deal* with what it is to live in this kind of democratic world, in which all boundaries -economic, social, sexual- begin to look fluid and no longer set limits to human desire…For one thing, this desire inevitably leads to some form of fraud or imposture or acting a part, thereby linking it to Hollywood and its escapist fantasies" (32-33).

be willfully negligent. This film philosophy is a recognition of the lower-income class, from which the filmmaker also typically hails, many of whom live with under $2 a day (Jedlowski 2015, 78). As a filmmaking tradition, Nollywood's escapist narrative form attends to issues that are rawer and immediate. In this regard, the informal natureof Nollywood's industrial system deserves attention, because not only it makes itself widelyaccessible outside of formal structures, but because it also conveys an unrelenting doggedness to meet disadvantaged Nigerians where they are, the Nigerian whose economic circumstance has barricaded them within the informal system. Both Nollywood industry practices and narratives are unequivocal as to who their audience is. Nollywood's situation outside of formal, government systems can therefore be seen as a continued identification with Nigerians, many of whom have been neglected by the government; many of whom also exist within the informal economic space.

Beyond the unique informal and grassroot character of Nollywood's film industry, and its expression of disgruntlement toward successive federal governments, Nollywood also employs uniquely Africa-informed concepts to generate escapist conventions. The massive circulation and success of Nollywood in African countries like Tanzania (Krings 2013) and South Africa (Onyenankeya, Onyenankeye and Osunkunle 2017), and the undying interest of its primary audiences in the films it produces can also be attributed to itscommon reliance on African societies' familiarity with notions of wealth production by spiritual means. Green-Simms (2010) identifies this unique distinction by suggesting if a film's narrative must include the kind of wealth a struggling postcolonial state like Nigeria cannot realistically provide through legitimate labour, the depiction of the occult as thematicand formal elements in Nigerian films becomes the only available option (215). In essence, where Hollywood may turn to crime as a twisted and dark version of the American Dream, Nollywood's escapism typically calls on the occult to

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achieve similar dreams of wealth acquisition.

The uniqueness of Nollywood's escapist narrative form is traceable to the industry's official first film, *Living in Bondage*, which I next look at. One of the key benefits to examining *Living in Bondage* is its crucial situation in history in relation to the on-going economic and political instabilities in Nigeria at the time of its production. It is this

relationship that enables its study as a Nigerian film that generates its own unique andlocally relevant escapism conventions.

In addition, *Living in Bondage* helps us to better nuance and determine theevolutionary trajectory of Nollywood's escapist conventions over time.

3.3 *Living in Bondage* (1992)

Much of *Living in Bondage* was shot in the city of Lagos, with consistent exterior shots of modern city buildings. Similarly, the narrative is unyielding in its reference to automobiles as an indication and representation of wealth. The characters are generally situated within a modern society system, which serves as the source of the protagonist's modernity-related anxieties. While it must be acknowledged that technical limitations and inaccessibility to fancier equipment likely accounts for the film's unwavering use of the eye-level camera angle, film theorists have argued positioning the camera at eye-level encourages audience identification with the characters on screen (Elsaesser and Hagener 2010; 80). Consequently, even if due to technological constraints, *Living in Bondage* tells astory about wealth, while ensuring its does not lose the primary audience to which the film is directed.

The film begins with the protagonist, Andy Okeke, receiving his termination letter at home. He begins to lament the hand that fate has dealt him, while his wife, Merit, reassures him peace and contentment are more important things than the pursuit of riches. While Merit's calming countenance seems to have had a good effect on Andy's mood, his unhealthy desire for wealth will drive the arc of the film. Shortly after, Andy runs into Paul, an old school friend who has come into an inordinate amount of money, Andy bares hisheart to Paul, who in turn offers to make Andy rich.

At a party for Ichie Millionaire, Paul points out his wealthy friends to Andy, who all belong to the Millionaire's Club; we will also soon find out they belong to a cult. For the first time, we also meet Caro and Ego at the party, who are presented as modern women, refusing to conform to traditional female stereotypes. They are the opposite of Merit, who is depicted as a domestic character and a support for her husband. Caro and Ego trade sex for money, and their ultimate goal is to seduce men and gain access to their pockets. Within minutes, we see that Andy is enchanted by them and get a sense of how the story will unfold.

On Andy's home front, Merit, his wife, is finding things quite challenging, too. We find out she is also a secretary and her male boss is sexually harassing her; each time she resists his advances, however. Yet, Andy is not making life any easier for her. When she raises N20,000 from her parents in the village, with the hopes of Andy investing it in a business, Andy, injudiciously, hands the money to another friend whose business quickly fails. Merit is dissatisfied with Andy's choices and lifestyle but she is committed to her traditional wife role. Andy, however, is unrestrained: he visits Paul at his house where he isofficially introduced to Ego, one of the women at the party. Meanwhile, we see Merit, again, refusing her boss's sexual advances; this time she fights him off and quits her job.

The scene cuts again to Andy dancing with Ego in Paul's living room which culminates in aprotracted kiss upon which the scene fades to black. We assume they become intimate. We are taken back to Merit, who in despair, awaits her philandering husband's return home.

Paul finally introduces and initiates Andy into the dark cult he and his wealthy friends belong to. In an interior scene resplendent with red, black, and white fabric, Andy swears, "…in the name of our Lord Lucifer" to hold sacred and secret whatever is revealedto him. He is too preoccupied with the idea of coming into riches that he mindlessly falls for a trick to offer his wife, Merit, as oblation for wealth. Realizing the dilemma he has walked into, he devises to replace Merit with a drugged sex-worker but the ritual is disrupted when the sex worker screams, "Jesus", after which she is kicked out. Andy is mercifully given another chance to redeem himself—or die. This time, he hands Merit overto the cult where her life is taken and sacrificed.

Now wealthy, Andy returns to the village to inform his parents their financial problems are over and he is marrying Ego who would take good care of them. To Andy's surprise, his parents and sister vehemently reject everything he stands for and refuse to haveanything to do with his wedding. Against, this backdrop, Andy goes ahead and marries Ego.In a final twist, at the wedding's after party, Merit's ghost appears to Andy, who falls unconscious to the floor. The film ends with uncertainties as to what actually becomes of Andy.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Andy became a representation of the Nigerian middle-class, many of whom had become economic victims of Nigerian government's policies, mismanagements and corruption (Adejumobi and Momoh 1995, 181). What did modernity mean to most Nigerians at this time? This period in Nigeria's history is marked by state efforts to further globalize (which can also be seen as modernizing) its economy in order to better integrate itself and participate in the rapidly neo-liberalizing global systems. As a single-resource

extraction petro-state reliant on the International Monetary Fund, the IMF's insistence that Nigeria deregulate the value of the Naira significantly accounts for the country's economic woes in the 80s and 90s (Akinola 2018). Coupled with poor internal governance, notions of globalization and modernization left most Nigerians in desperate economic situations. The ensuing frustrations with the government among a large section of the Nigerian populace drove up an interest in the occult and lottery economies (Jean and John Comaroff 1998) propagated by corrupt government officials and the elites who benefited from them. Nowhere in Nigeria were the effects and glamorization of corruption felt than in Lagos, the country's financial centre and seat of government up until 1991(Oluwaniyi 2009). Lagos as a modern city represented an alluring place of illusory hope and dark pursuits where shady and unlawful practices generally went unpunished as long as one remained in the favour of the government (Gire 1999). This is the context in which *Living in Bondage* was made. Given this context, Nollywood's escapist style appears to have begun with *Living in Bondage* as a way to offer a cautionary message, one that signals its understanding of the advantages of wealth, while also embodying the morals against ill-gotten gains.

The reservations held by *Living in Bondage* (and as acknowledged earlier: *Nneka* and *Glamour Girls*) reflect the tensions existing in the 1980s and 1990s Nigeria, between the more traditional beliefs in hard and honest work and the occult/informal economy that began to take hold on the back of Nigeria's economic uncertainties around the same time.

A correlation can be drawn between the deepening and protracted economic difficulties that decimated Nigeria's middle and lower classes in the 1980s and 1990s, and an increasing evolution of Nollywood film toward depictions of wealth as an overall good. The further and longer Nigeria's economy sank into widespread corruption, the more Nollywood's filmmakers

appeared to isolate the role of wealth and power from the moral inclinations *Living in Bondage* and other early Nollywood films attached to it. In very shortorder, Nollywood films were focusing on the visual—many times, excessive—display of material wealth (Haynes 2010; Green-Simms 2010), even at the cost of a cohesive, engaging and meaningful narrative. On occasions where some moral counterbalance is narrativized, its evidence is minimal, overwhelmed by an inordinate interest in visually showcasing extravagance. To list a few, such films as *Diamond Ring* (Dir. Ogidan 1998), *The Richest Man* (Dir. Okoli, 2003) and *The Kingmaker* (Dir. Amata 203) are preoccupied with the display of wealth, the camera panning across a line-up of flashy cars parked in a long garage, and the owner, whose problem is deciding which car to go out in. Yet, it soonbecomes evident this sequence is neither justified by, nor consequential to, the narrative.

Closely connected to Nollywood's widespread use of capitalist pursuits as visual conventions for escapism is the relationship these pursuits have with notions of modernity, and how modernity is locally performed. Significantly, Nollywood's appreciation for wealth is inseparable from the fact that wealth is primarily intended for the empowerment of the individual to fully participate as a consumer in the modern world. As such, bringing Nollywood's pre-occupation with wealth in dialogue with modernism/modernity theories is another way to complement postcolonialism theorists. In the following section, I examine Nollywood through Miriam Hansen's vernacular modernism.

3.4 Miriam Hansen's Vernacular Modernism and The Aesthetic of the Imaginary in *Living in Bondage* (Nnebue, 1992)

Modernity in Africa is inseparable from the continent's colonial history (Taiwo 2010), and the invention by colonial Europe that Africa is on the other side of everything modern and civilized set up a schema of oppositionality. Therefore, (Western) modernity was commonly perceived as incongruous with African cultural and local experiences. Furthermore, by projecting its claimed superiority, the West universalized its modernity to position itself as the hegemonic and global definition of modernity (Wagner 2012). It is in this context that Nollywood's narrative forms and stylistic conventions are spaces where thevernacular (local) and modern (global) come into contention with each other. Certainly, we can no more dissociate film invention and technology from modernity than we can separate them from their significantly Western origins. In other words, film and cinema are children of Western modernity. That said, non-Western cultures reorganize cinema and filmmaking for their own local use by applying their local and indigenous identity to them.

In "The Mass Production of the senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism" (2000), Miriam Hansen reads classical Hollywood cinema between the 1920s and 1950s as the first 'global vernacular' (69). On the one hand, Hansen argues classical Hollywood responded to modernism and modernity -urbanization, industrialization and newsocial economies of gender, equality, and equity by Americanizing them to its national, local audience. On the other hand, according to Hansen, the cosmopolitan character of and diversity in Hollywood (and in general, American cities) forged "a mass market out of an ethnically and culturally heterogenous society (68). She extends this notion of multiculturalism and diversity in representation, and argues these factors play a part in othercultures' acceptance and appropriation of Americanism and American

modernism, while forging their own local modernities (67). The result, according to Hansen, is that Hollywood becomes a mediator between "competing cultural discourses on modernity and modernization" (68), which compels a re-imagination of classical Hollywood films to suit the diverse cultures within which it is consumed.

In the arts, Nigeria's postcolonial modernity emerges in the employment of indigenous means, styles, resources and narratives to vernacularize colonial, Western modernist art forms like film (Okeke-Agulu 2010). In a triangulated love dynamic reminiscent of F.W Murnau's *Sunrise: A Song of Two Humans* (1927), Merit and Ego can be interpreted as respectively representing the binaries between tradition (village) and modernity (city), and the tensions existing between them. *Sunrise* deserves a mention here because it is one of the most extensively analyzed films with regards to Western anxieties around modernity at the turn of the 20th century (for example, see: Fischer 2002; Sperb 2007). In Fischer's description of *Sunrise's* key theme, the similarities between the characters in the 1927 film and Merit, Ego and Andy vis-à-vis contradictions between tradition and modernity is uncanny: "One of the major contrasts discussed in the literature on *Sunrise* is that of the farm girl versus the City Woman. The former is a familiar figure ofsupreme good and is associated with melodrama, whereas the latter is a nebulous figure tiedto modernity" (79). Similarly, in *Living in Bondage*, Merit keeps returning to the village which for her is her source of financial and emotional succour and replenishment. She is dedicated to her husband and fights to preserve the sanctity of her marriage; she rejects invitations to transgress both her marriage and domestication. However, her ultimate rewardfor these choices is death at the hands of her husband. Whereas in *Sunrise*, resolution comesin the form of The Man returning to his wife (The Wife) and rejecting the allure of the City Woman, Ego succeeds in destroying Andy and Merit's marriage. Ego is the city woman who spends most

of her screen time at parties and flirting with rich men; she has no compunction about destroying Andy and Merit's marriage. As a matter of fact, she relishesthe idea.

In *Living in Bondage*, actors' costumes also seem to be implicated in the tensions between tradition and modernity in relation to how the film perceives of wealth. Among themale characters, Andy, who is jobless and frustrated, wears formal, western clothes in the first half of the film: jacket, shirt, dress-pants and a tie. Wealthy characters like Paul and hisfriends dress in traditional Nigerian attire. Andy's western attire associates him with colonial and western modernity, but if he once had any sense of security and hope in them, that way of life has ended in joblessness. Andy would only begin to wear traditional clothesin the scene where he convinces Paul of his determination to get rich at any cost, and Paul finally commits to introducing him to unimaginable wealth.

Image 1: Andy (in Western attire) runs into his friend, Paul (in Nigerian attire). Film: *Living in Bondage*

From the moment he sacrifices his wife and comes into riches, Andy will perpetually wear traditional clothes. Similarly, Ego and Caro wear western clothes throughout the film. Their characters, who are significantly defined by their promiscuity, are also allied with the West and foreign influences through their western costumes. Merit, on the other hand, dresses traditionally at home but at work she wears western clothes. We also know these occasions at work are when her commitment to her marriage and traditionalist way of life are tested by her boss's sexual advances. Essentially, adopting western modernity (as represented by her western-styled clothing at work) ushers Merit into Caro and Ego's world, associating her with them or, perhaps, signaling the inevitability of moral compromise for the woman who must earn a living. It is arguable the film suggests that a woman's engagement with the modern capitalist society is a prerequisite for stepping outside of the sanctity and peace traditional ways of life promise and provide. Much as this might be an assertion the film makes, in reality we know this is a case of romanticizing the village and traditional ways, since violence of whatever kind against the woman is neither exclusive nor confined within only one of these spaces.

Living in Bondage also offers an opportunity to analyze the relationship between feminism, tradition and modernity, much as Hansen does in "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film as Vernacular Modernism" (2000). Hansen looks at how cinemas of China and Japan in the 1920s and 1930s engaged with feminism in their vernacular modernity, which was already strongly influenced by Hollywood's articulation of Americanism. Hansen asserts these nations responded "to the pressures of modernity in their thematic concerns, through particular oppositions and contradictions that structure the narrative and inform the constellations of characters. Prominent among these is the "city/country antithesis"" (14). Hansen then identifies how Chinese and Japanese films of the 1920s and 1930s renegotiated the

contradictions within the character of the Woman. She points out women characters in these films were constitutive of qualities that at once subscribed to local Chinese and Japanese traditions and also a local modernity that was significantly influenced by globalized Western modernity (16). In *Living in Bondage*, Chief Omego is a modern man; he resides in the modern city of Lagos and his business operationsare transnational. Nevertheless, his conception of marriage fails to align with that of a traditionally Western Christian type. In the second scene, we are invited into Chief Omego's polygamous home and we are introduced to the tensions existing among Omego'sthree wives, each of whom is fighting for his attention and times of intimacy with him.

When Chief Omego is confronted by the two older wives, Obiaku and Obidiya, he is surprised and momentarily taken aback by the challenge to his power. He promptly re-asserts himself, demanding the respect he deserves as a man and the head of the house. Obidiya, the first wife, who is the most traditional of them, cowers and retreats. Obiaku, however, is defiant; she stands her ground and pushes back on her husband's self-praise, insisting he is a fake chief, and walks out on him. Equating polygamy and monogamy withtradition and modernity, respectively (Ware 1979; Ikuenobe 2018), Omego's traditional marriage union within Lagos' modern society exemplifies the complexities and contradictions inherent when tradition and modernity interact. Such a contradiction is also evident in *Living in Bondage's* representation of its female characters. An example is when the film positions us to empathize with Obiaku, who refuses to back down but confronts patriarchy within the traditional marriage institution. Obiaku is no longer powerless; her agency is restored as she walks out of the marriage. In this instance, the film appears to look upon modernity favourably. In the context of the film, Obiaku is both an embodimentand a bridge between Merit and Ego (together with Caro). On the one hand, like

Merit, she is a wife: she is situated within the domestic space and is traditionally answerable to her husband, whose love and appreciation she still seeks in order to feel complete. On the other hand, like Caro and Ego, her exertion of agency and establishment of independence, whereby she is unabashed about pursuing what she wants—including walking out on her husband—stamps her with a liberated identity.

Image 2: Obiaku (right) challenges her husband, Chief Omego (left) while new wife looks on. Film: *Living in Bondage.*

Yet, as the first 'global vernacular', classical Hollywood is also reflexive, and its articulation of the destruction and loss, to which earlier Hansen refers, reflects modernity's traumatic effects, its rejection, and disavowal of what was before it (69); it also responded to "modernity and its failed promises" (72). *Living in Bondage* reflects similar anxieties, setting up a tension between traditional ways of life and modernism in Nigeria. The film tackles the concept of modernity by positioning it against traditional culture (the village) and presents

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modernity (the city) with a good degree of cynicism. First of all, the film's mode of address, that is, the fact that the film's dialogue is exclusively done in the Igbo language, while situating most of the scenes within modern, cosmopolitan and Westernized Lagos (a city that gets its name from the Portuguese, whereby reinforcing its colonial-modernity signification). That the film insists on the Igbo dialogue while it is set in a 'Europeanized' modern, cosmopolitan city, suggests a pull back toward the elevation of thelocal and traditional where Lagos represents the Western and the global. In addition, in the film, the village is thematically and metaphorically a place characterized by honesty and integrity, where wealth is the product of hard work. We see this representation whenever Merit has to return to the village to solicit her parents for financial support and Andy's rejection by his parents and sister when he later visits them in the village to inform them ofhis plans to marry Ego. Andy assures his parents their financial problems are over and he ismarrying another woman who would take care of them. To Andy's surprise, his father interjects forcefully: "Our character has always been unimpeachable. How many months ago did your wife die that you are planning another marriage? Andy, counsel yourself. Merit! I doubt if I'll ever forget her death, her compassion… if you want to marry, go ahead. I and your mother will not be part of it!" Subsequently, Andy's sister will also decline Andy's proposition to take her back with him to Lagos to "enter a proper school andleave your village ways behind". Furthermore, they turn down the N20,000 he offers them for their upkeep, and he returns to the city without any support from the village. By contrast, modern city life in *Living in Bondage* prioritizes riches over integrity and honesty, where riches must be possessed at all cost, including the sacrificing of a loved one.

Hansen theorized that at the turn of the 20th century, Hollywood cinema as a vernacular cinema reflected anxieties around the perceived failure of modernity. A similarkind of anxiety

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can be read into Andy's eventual marriage to Ego in *Living in Bondage*. Driven by his heady

passion for Ego and his desire for modernity's capitalist pleasures, Andy sacrifices Merit's life

(local and tradition). However, after Andy marries Ego, the union terminates in Andy's shameful

death. The film thus suggests a possible lingering anxiety about Nigeria's colonially induced

modernity and its successful encroachment on traditional life in postcolonial Nigeria. If Andy's

love relationships are to be taken as a metaphor for tradition on the one side, and on the other, a

modernity inseparable from its colonial origins, the perception, according to *Living in Bondage*,

is that modernity possessesa dark side that overwhelms local ways of life in Nigeria. Yet,

demarcations between how modernity is perceived in relation to local and vernacular ways of life

in *Living in Bondage* are more complex, less articulate, blurry, and sometimes confused.

According to Hansen, vernacular modernism in film depicts contradictions between the

vernacular (traditional andlocal) and the modern (modernist style); they present how the former

modifies the latter, and how the interrelationship between the vernacular and modern is

perceived and internalized by the local audience (304). In *Living in Bondage*, we frequently find

conflicting themes, or the same characters representing the traditional way of life, while equally

questioning it, or expressing their appreciation for Western ways of thinking. For example, Paul,

the traditionally dressed wealthy character whose religious system involves traditional, ritualistic

practices, in a moment of levity, rejects the compulsion to get married,as it is traditionally

expected. He determinedly insists to Andy he would rather stay single forever. In this moment,

Paul is a modern man, who can celebrate his liberty to do as he wishes, while defying pressures

of tradition. This is what Hansen (2000) is speaking to when she posits Hollywood was able to

sell its modernity to the world, because "…we have to understand the material, sensory

conditions under which American mass culture, including Hollywood, was received and could

have functioned as a powerful matrix for modernity's liberatory impulses--its moments of abundance, play, and radical possibility…"(69). In addition, looking at the frequency with which *Living in Bondage* centres the ritual of wine-drinking in social life and practice, one can quickly read its use in the film as exceeding issues of narrative, and becoming a symbolic participation in Western modern and cultural life. The film is, on this account, employing a common social trope typically found, in particular, in American and European films, and in more general terms, in films where modernity, the city and city life, are key to the story. While this assertion is not made in absolute terms, since innumerable films set in pre-modern eras can be seen to also utilize social drinking, we also cannot ignore the proliferation of the practice in James Bond films, for example, or shows like *Mad Men.* In these two latter examples, drinking as a social practice cannot escape its added signification of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Thus, complexities exist which highlight both the conflicting anxieties and admiration the film has for Western modernity.

In conclusion, employing Hansen's vernacular modernism in this chapter, I particularize the same question Morgan (2014) asks of the theory: how does *Living in Bondage* respond "…to its own national context, to the features of its local modernity…" (78). Modernism, in the Nigerian context, is inseparable from the country's (post-) colonial history. Hansen provides another frame for exploring Nollywood's escapist narrative form, which expresses existing underlying tensions between Nigerian traditional way of life and the desire to participate in modern, capitalist consumerism. Modernity in Nigeria has its origin in the country's colonial experience, and the largely derailed modernization of the Nigerian economy in the 1980s and 1990s provoked anxieties about modernity among manyNigerians. Hansen's vernacular modernism reveals how an African cinema industry may equally express contradictions and

anxieties about the very modernity it desires. As a framework, it allows the study of Nollywood as a space for examining how modernity is localized, and how traditional ways of life in Nigeria engage with modern and global influences.

3.5 Nollywood as a Vernacular Popular Culture Industry

Since the birth of Nollywood in 1992, the contemporary Nigerian cinema has gaineda mass audience within Nigeria, in African countries like Ghana (Tsika 2015), Tanzania (Bohme 2013), and in African diasporic communities across the globe (Krings and Okome 2013). By 2008, before the emergence of subscription streaming platforms like Netflix[14], Evuleocha's (2008) conservative estimation was that Nollywood had a global audience-size of twenty million (411). In the same year, the report by the "New Partnership for Africa Development" (2008) put the numbers at around 200 million (98). Even though piracy upends any attempt at statistical accuracy, the transnational popularity and distribution of Nollywood is evidently far-reaching. This analysis prompts my examination of the cinema as a popular culture industry (Adejunmobi 2002; Bisschoff 2012). I highlight areas where Nollywood agrees with notions of popular culture as a universal phenomenon, and where it differs as it responds to Nigerian local and vernacular specificities.

Using the key metrics for categorizing an artefact under popular or mass culture, Nollywood fulfills the general definitions that qualify it as such. Much as a clear definition of "popular culture" is itself elusive (Browne 2006; Parker 2011, Hall 2018), theorists generally agree on what it looks like. Potter Stewart, an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court, is

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[14] As of 2019, the number of Nigerian Netflix subscribers remain under 50,000:
https://techpoint.africa/2019/09/24/netflix-subscribers-nigeria/

quoted as putting it thus: "we may not be able to define it, but we know itwhen we see it (Parker 2011, 147). One of the general areas of consensus among academicsand non-academics alike is around popular culture's method of dissemination. While Stuart Hall (2018) acknowledges existing challenges in what qualifies as popular, and how these qualifications change geographically, in the nature of their distribution, and over time (931), he agrees that according to Browne (2006), elements that are not sophisticated enough to beconsidered Elite culture, which are less than "mass", and are distributed through media, "…that is such things as the smaller magazines and newspapers, the less widely distributed books, museums…and the like are called in the narrow sense of the term "popular" …"(18). Furthermore, when Nye (2006) brings in Marshall MacLuhan's famous phrase: the mediumis the message (25) into this context of distribution, he places intrinsic value in distribution as both a mechanism and marker of popular culture. Using this measure, the Nollywood film is both a popular and mass culture artefact, with distribution and exhibition systems reaching audiences spanning across Africa and diasporic groups all over the world. As I would subsequently look at in my final chapter, Nollywood has also begun making a presence in notable international film festivals, and these distribution and exhibition circuitscan be read as belonging at once both to elite and popular cultures, even if these dichotomies are not always as clear-cut or oppositional (Nye, 26). Still in the area of distribution, Nollywood's popularity can also be understood in the extent of its distribution in DVD format, and online via free platforms like Youtube and subscription-based streaming platforms like Netflix. For example, on a YouTube channel called Nollywood Love, a single Nollywood film was generating hundreds of thousands of views within months (Tsika 2015, 148).

Another way that Nollywood falls under the category of popular culture is the reading of it as a cinema that fails to invite intellectual engagement. On account of its entertainment factor, it is conceptualized as a cinema that appeals to a broad swath of audiences, many of whom are considered (semi)illiterate. Okome (2010) cites one of the more common complaint about Nollywood as its lack of appeal to 'serious-minded' intellectual critics (36). Aside from the nature of how widely they are distributed, another key definition of popular and mass culture artefacts is that they consist of "elements of life which are not narrowly intellectual or creatively elitist…" (Nye 2006, 21). To contrast with elite culture, which is argued to embrace artistry, uniqueness and intellectuality; or folk culture, which is explained as a harkening to tradition, the past, the indigenous and the local (Strinati 2004, 9), popular culture is associated with cultural practices that prioritize content as entertainment; it emphasizes commercialization and profit; it promotes formulaic/generic structures for easier media reproducibility (Strinati, 2). Using Nye and Strinati, Nollywood'smass-appeal, together with Tijani Balogun and Nobert Ajaegbo's remarks, among others, that Nollywood draws on the comedic while economical on the critical, qualify the cinema as a popular culture industry. In comparison to elite or high culture, popular culture is deemed "inferior" (Strinati, 2), a term that many have also used in describing Nollywood (Musa 2019, 62; Ajibade 2013, 282) in relation to the art cinemas of postcolonial Francophone West Africa. Even Nollywood's seeming fascination with the supernatural and fantastical (occult, witchcraft, Pentecostalism) is not exempt, as writers like Hoppenstand (2016) have called the sub-genre of fantasy "a staple of popular fiction" (115).

On the one hand, these characterizations reveal the universal nature of popular and mass cultures as phenomena for understanding relations between culture production and consumption. They also highlight areas where African cinemas like Nollywood can be understood as universal,

sharing the same identity of the 'popular' with other cinemas of theworld. On the other hand, and having Hansen's vernacular modernism in mind, Nigeria's popular cinema also possesses unique and sometimes contradictory meanings to the more universal definitions above. These peculiar differences, mostly attributable to matters of thelocal, significantly explain the reasons behind Nollywood's massive success among its primary audience, while it continues to appear inaccessible to audiences unfamiliar with these local dynamics.

Karin Barber's extensive work, *A History of African Popular Culture* (2018) provides a good degree of insight into African interpretations and conceptualizations of popular culture. As examined above, popular culture is argued in oppositional terms to eliteculture. It is similarly compared to folk culture, only in the case of folk culture, popular culture is read more as different, than as oppositional. Popular culture's analysis centre's issues of popularity, distribution; its artefacts are deemed uncritical enough as to be broadlyaccessible. In the case of the popular in Africa, elite and folk cultures, for Barber, are not existing as backdrops for defining what popular culture is not. In African societies, Barber identifies an opposition between popular and elite cultures as well—but, for different reasons. However, before we look at the nature of the opposition Barber suggests, it is necessary to first examine where she locates the roots of the popular among Nigerian peoples. First and foremost, the popular in Nigerian cultures predates the arrival of colonial Europe on the shores of Africa; it originates:

> …on the ground, in the creativity of everyday life -the quotidian,
> often unremarked creativity of people going about their business,
> improvising, shifting for themselves and producing commentaries ofall
> kinds on the situations in which they find themselves (14)

Throughout this book, Barber keeps returning to her argument that the notion of popular culture in Africa was not introduced to Africa by the West; neither does it originate from the

same conditions under which its Western, capitalist version is deemed to have emerged. Barber centralizes precolonial, traditional and indigenous ways of life in the formation of what can be considered Nigeria's and Africa's vernacular form of the popular. That this part of African cultures has received disproportionately minimal attention, becauseof its oral nature (and, therefore, lack of adequate documentation) does not mean it has not always been there (Barber, 13). Drawing from Barber, Newell and Okome (2014), describe African popular culture thus: "social experiences are foregrounded in different art forms, especially the experiences of the class of people we might refer to as the "common people of the streets"" (3). Abah (2009) puts it in equally definitive terms:

> "Popular" is used, not solely in the sense of the most common Western
> use of the term, in which it denotes a separation of the elite from the
> common folk, but more in the sense of what is popular in the African
> context. This usage connotes a combination of that whichfunctions in the
> interest of the masses as used by Ngugi wa Thiong'o(1997).(732-733)

In Nigeria, as it is in most of Africa, the popular is exhibited in local languages, for example, which when used to express new experiences, may take on a tone of humour, wittiness, sarcasm and so on, that is now shared among the people as they go about their everyday life (Barber, 14). This is exemplified in Haynes' (2003) article, "Mobilising Yoruba Popular Culture: Babangida Must Go", in which he analyses Gbenga Adewusi's film, *Maradona* (1993) (film also known as *Babangida Must Go*). In Nigeria, the name 'Maradona' was the informal name given to General Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's militarydictator from 1985-1993. Named after Argentinian soccer dribbler, Diego Maradona, Babangida acquired the name on account of his alleged deviousness. Both the name, Maradona, and the phrase, 'Babangida must go' entered into Nigeria's popular culture veryquickly upon Nigerians suspicion of, and dissatisfaction with,

Babangida's tyrannical rule. Both Maradona and 'Babangida must go' originated, and was popularized, on the street by everyday people living their everyday lives. This is one way the popular is organically generated in Africa. As Barber emphasizes, unlike the reading of popular culture in the highly capitalist societies of the Global North as a system for the commodification of culture, traditionally, popular culture in Africa did not grow out of a systemic desire by an elite group to direct and control culture for profit.

Owing to Africa's oral traditions and the informality with which these popular elements have been traditionally transmitted, Barber assumes the African popular culture artefact has been very transient; never fully formed, and always in progress (16). Here, theargument can be made that the longevity of popular artefacts in more capitalist societies may be a result of theorists - particularly Marxist ones -who centre their debate on popular culture as an orchestrated, artificial construct. These theorists insist that popular culture is the deliberate organization of peoples' desire to fetishize commodity (Adorno 1991).

According to Bottomore (1989), commodity fetishism serves as the basis for theorizing cultural forms as a way to maintain the domination of capitalism through economics politics and ideology. Given the Marxist[15] argument that popular culture is a construct of which the elite/ruling class is the ultimate beneficiary, one can understand how and why theissue of longevity may factor into the lifespan of the popular artefact. Aside from Nollywood's informal structure, which enables the over-production and over-supply of films for profit reasons, Barber's reference to transiency as an attribute of Nigeria's popularculture may also play a part

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[15] A more extensive examination of (neo)Marxist approaches to mass-media and media industry studies takes place in the next chapter.

in the ease with which Nollywood films are constantly displayed and then replaced in stalls, for example.

Before he walked away from Marxism, Dwight MacDonald's (1953) famously stated mass culture is imposed from above, while folk culture grew from below. As mentioned above, MacDonald and members of the Frankfurt School viewed popular cultureas not originating from among the people, even if it appears like it does. This is not how Barber understands Nigeria and Africa's popular culture, which has its roots in the everydaylife of the local people. If anything, Barber's position suggests Nigeria's vernacular version of the popular derives from folk culture, and perhaps, never quite separates from it. She adds:

> [People] develop perspectives on topics that people themselves feel are interesting, attractive or important. They do so in a manner felt tobe appropriate and adequate to the topic. A joke at a bus stop or a proverb quoted over a beer may encapsulate a vast hinterland of shared experience (17)

Unlike MacDonald's definition, popular culture as an African phenomenon is muchmore organic: it begins among ordinary people living their everyday life, and gains resonance, and becomes popular. Barber highlights how the popular is born out of shared experiences. In essence, it is difficult for something to become popular in the African context if it does not come from an experience shared by many. One of the curiosities of many Nollywood scholars has been Nollywood's ability to amass the staggering number ofardent audiences over a short period (Gobo 2020). Drawing from Barber's emphasis on shared experience, Nollywood's strength among its audiences can be attributed, in part, to its depiction of images its audiences can identify and relate to at the most basic, everyday level, which they have been unable to find in other cinemas. These connections go beyond the realism of the locations, or general storylines and actor familiarity; they could also include shared local mannerisms, body gestures, and

phrases and slangs that have organically emerged among certain groups of people and entered into popular use. Typically, should these artefacts emerge in Nollywood films, they do so as materials thathave, or are currently circulating among the Nigerian people as a shared experience.

Another area where Barber's (2018) analysis of African popular culture vis-a-vis elite culture differs from neo-Marxist approaches is when she somewhat pitches the oral foundations of African popular culture against literate and documenting traditions. Barber identifies orality with African precolonial traditions. Literacy and documentation, she argues, are associated with colonialism and the crop of elites who have achieved their modern elite status through Western formal education, literacy and access (21). For her, even in these modern and contemporary times, oral popular culture traditions refuse to cederelevance in the face of attempts to reduce African popular culture to what is been documented (21). In this sense, popular culture is not handed down from the elite class as Marxists argue.[16] Rather, African popular culture serves to resist colonialism. With Barber, because of its origin, modern elite culture in Africa is the culture imposed from above, notpopular culture (according to the Frankfurt School). Hence, African popular culture is firstof all grassroots and of the people, while elite culture is colonial and unoriginal to Africa; elite culture is the culture against which popular culture must continue to contend.

The more universalizing conceptualization of popular culture as a mass culture that fundamentally exists in service of capitalism finds relevance across diverse nations and societies.

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[16] In the following chapter, I do a more nuanced and thorough analysis of Marxist approach to Media Studies, complicating the relations between elite control and the peoples' agency and desires.

However, Hansen's vernacular modernism also helps differentiate popular culturein Nigeria by setting it up against Africa's colonialism-initiated modernity.

In this chapter, Miriam Hansen's vernacular modernism has allowed us another wayto understand how Nollywood is both local and traditional on the one hand, and global and modern on the other. From Nigeria's form of modernity and how it impacts Nollywood's depiction of the city/village dichotomy, and from how it locally grapples with feminist and economic discourses, to how Nollywood tries to appeal to local, transnational and global audiences, Hansen's vernacular modern reveals some of the ways Nollywood negotiates its identity.

In The Next Chapter:

In the following chapter, I examine Nigeria's informal film industry through the lensof media industry theories, a sub-category under the culture industry framework. This approach originates in Marxist reading of the commercialization of culture in capitalist societies. The approach has, however, been contested and revised to accommodate situations and conditions that are not necessarily exclusive to Western, capitalist societies. It is in this sense that I use media industry studies to look at Nollywood's industrial system within the context of informality.

CHAPTER 4:
NOLLYWOOD AND INFORMALITY

4.1 Reconsidering Nollywood's Informality: A Media Industry Studies Approach

Having looked at Hansen's vernacular modernism as a framework for understanding Nollywood's re-appropriation of modernity to reflect a specifically Nigerian identity, I similarly use Media Industry Studies to see how Nollywood is as much an industry as it is local. In this chapter, I centre the notion that Nollywood is in part cultural, artistic, and industrial. I also look at the non-corporatized ownership model, and the albeit minimal role government policies play in the industry. This approach affords an opportunity to further examine the industry outside of postcolonialism frames, while foregrounding its industrial elements as complex, and originating from diverse motivations and for different reasons. I examine the extent to which Nollywood may be argued to be in service of capitalist interestsand, what role -if any- the concentration of media ownership plays in Nollywood. I look at how arguments and theories in media industry studies hold up against an industry characterized by informality.

The particulars of media industry studies, and its political economy of media approach, presume an existing interrelatedness between media ownership and concentration,corporate ideologies, capitalist, market and labour forces, and cultural processes (Havens, Lotz and Tinic 2009, 235), all of which complicate the character of media products, both as artifacts and as commodities. According to these writers, at the centre of this relationship is the operations of power in the control of capital and labour on a macro scale, and the cultural factors that animate the agency of workers on a micro scale (246).

The Marxist position that popular culture is a commodification of culture in order to uniformize, conform and control the people was first espoused by the Frankfurt School theorists, Adorno and Horkheimer (1975; originally published in 1947). Since then, as I shall also look at, Adorno and Horkheimer's Marxist theory has received a significant number of critiques that apply greater sensitivity to the complexities inherent in the interaction between media products and the consumer.

As I have argued, Nollywood's film style as a strong escapist constituent. Nonetheless, unlike the escapist character of cinemas like classical Hollywood which, for good reasons, is called a 'dream factory' (Springer 2000, 16; Segrave 2013, 149), I also argued Nollywood's escapism represents a vernacularized response to local conditions in Nigeria. While generally, film is by nature distractive and escapist, Nollywood's use of the escapist form comes from a uniquely Nigeria-specific motivation, and its address is to an equally unique end. In Nollywood, the escapist style does not share what has been analysed in Hollywood to be a lose system of organized and concerted ideologies subtly intended to influence its consumers. Indeed, critiques of the Marxist approach to culture industry identify its limitations by citing the absence of non-capitalist societies in its analysis (Jarvis1998). Others insist Adorno and Horkheimer cannot justify their presumption that capitalistideologies dominate and control the consumer fully, if they are also Freudians (Whitebook 2004; Zuidervaart 2011) who believe humans are neither blank nor a neutral space (Dainow2014). Similarly, Buckland (2000) argues that film is an inherently complex product, which utilizes non-natural conventions that it has taught its audiences to understand; yet these conventions enter into reflective dialogue with audiences who are diverse, and with different experiences and expectations (Silverman 1983; Lucy 2001). Rather than a complete rejection of Adorno and Horkheimer, however, these counterarguments

manifest more as push backs, highlighting areas that challenge Adorno and Horkheimer's presumption of absoluteness and universality across geo-political regions, economic/market systems, diverse peoples and practices. Doubtless that the consumer has agency and actively negotiates meaning when interacting with the escapist Hollywood film, the notion that mass media is "organized around consumption… ensnar[ing] the masses into the capitalist system through the creation of "false needs" (Grieve 2008, 5) still informs analysis. Scholars like Ian Bogost (2008) are still writing on the insertion of capitalist ideologies into video games by their manufacturers, in such a way that the uncritical gamer is unaware their 'play' space perpetuates these capitalist ideologies. It is this idea that continues to underlie Hollywood's consideration as a dream-factory. Contrary to this reading of Hollywood, the Nollywood industry came about, primarily, because of the absence of any organized government/institutional system or the elite (Ajibade 2013, 277) who nursed any ideas of pushing dominant ideologies to the audience. In Nollywood, the motivation and desire to temporarily distract audiences from their material reality originates from among people largely without access to anything resembling concerted or corporatized power. Most of the labour that flow into Nollywood come from the working class, individuals whose fantasies and dreams are typically no different from those of their audiences. Similarly, Nollywood's escapism has no connections to a concerted, subconscious desire to articulate any idea of a dominant thought, like the nationalizing theme of the American Dream, which, over time, has almost completely been co-opted by capitalism. Nollywood filmmakers tend to create escapist narratives for their audiences from their own disparate, personal and similar experiences. Hence, escapism in the Nollywood film is not toward any form of conformity in service of an ideology -to the extent that we can make an argument for Adorno and

Horkheimer. Rather, Nollywood's escapist narrative functions more as a recognition of its audience's lived experience, and as temporary provision of respite to mitigate that experience.

Another distinguishing character in Nollywood's production system comes by way of Alvin Toffler's (1980) prediction of the rise of the 'prosumer' who is, in part, both a producer and consumer of media. Curran (2004) later uses the concept of the 'prosumer' to problematize Adorno and Horkheimer, seeing that the Marxist approach clearly assumes that a clear difference exists between the producer and the consumer. Curran cites YouTube videos, for example, as prosumer products; it is a platform built to encourage the ease with which its users can at once be both a producer and consumer of media. Likewise, Nollywood's informality ensures that there are very few rigid barriers to discourage consumers from participating in the industry, thereby denying those within the industry anysense of exclusivity. Stam, Porton and Goldsmith (2015) identify the emergence of new forms of relations between producers and consumers upon the entry of portable prosumer technologies into filmmaking. They acknowledge the degree to which cinemas like Nollywood relied on these technologies. Furthermore, these writers note the disruptions occasioned by these technologies, and how they flatten the terrain, doing away with traditional emphases on authority, institutionality and professionalism (278). In the American film industry, for example, the term 'independent filmmaker' is suggestive of the Hollywood outsider who is unaffiliated with a studio.

Even though erroneous, this independent filmmaker is traditionally imagined to be one who is not as mainstream, professional and skillful as their blockbuster-making studio counterparts.[17] In other instances, the independent filmmaker is imagined to be one whose lack of connection to a studio enables them access to a freer creative space to engage in art, avant-gardist, and non- commercial films. Nollywood's informal and prosumer model problematize this insider/outsider dynamic. Granted that the penetration of platforms like Netflix provide a minuscule number of Nollywood filmmakers with some sense of exclusivity and institutional backing, the average Nollywood practitioner is still an independent one, and Nollywood continues to be an industry consisting of hundreds of thousands of one- man/woman operations. A fierce independence and disparateness exist in Nollywood, and it is articulated by one of my interviewees, the actor and producer, Dan: "We have the guild structure, which is supposed to be the working structure for the industry. Unfortunately, we speak in different voices". As a consequence, the conditions of Nollywood's informality andprosumer model set up an individualized system, rather than Hollywood's corporatized approach to its industry.

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[17] Yannis Tzioumakis' (ed.) book, *Hollywood's Indies: Classical Divisions, Speciality Labels and the American Film Market* (2012) extensively analyzes independence productions in the US. The book emphasizes that while the perception of independent filmmaking' in the US is one of the outsider and non- Hollywood production, in reality, these distinctions are more complicated and less clear. For example,Hollywood Studios are known to fund/distribute independent films. In addition, digital platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime have further dispelled the perception that theindependent filmmaker automatically ranks lower than those well integrated within studio production networks (Smiths 2019).

4.2 Examining Informality Through Media Industry Studies

The economics of informality is foundational to the structures underlying the Nigerian society. As a corporate concept, Intellectual property (IP) is inseparable from its capitalist beginnings. According to Perelman (2003), American corporations embraced the idea of IP during the depression of the 1870s, in order to monopolize the markets and evade The Sherman Antitrust Act. It is understandable then that any attempts to corporatize media industries will also naturally provoke the emergence of IP in that industry. Given its background, the concept of IP is functionally antithetical to informality. Since the bedrock of Nigeria's domestic economy is the unregulated, unstandardized street economy that drives daily market activities, IP finds itself alien to the Nollywood phenomenon. Indeed, the reading of informality into Nollywood, and Nigeria more generally, is not unique. Informality is much bigger than that, and as one would imagine, indigenized variations of informal practices can be found in informal economies the world-over. However, I limit thisstudy to how our general reading of informality may be too preoccupied with holding on toits Western capitalist understanding, while ignoring its relations to precolonial African traditions and cultures.

Nollywood's industrial and economic practices, particularly from 1992 to the late 2000s, offer yet more details and nuances than are typically articulated in our understandingof its industry. Nollywood's industrial and economic practices are crucial to the conceptualization of Nollywood in relation to informality. In this context, informality in Nollywood generally refers to an indiscriminate direct-to-video production system where the absence of strong supervision allows for hurried, sloppy and negligent work (Diang'a 2020, 211); an unregulated shadow distribution system that involves piracy and networks ofunregistered individual marketers (Jedlowski 2013); and unauthorised and unmanageable exhibition (Okome 2007).

A significant number of writers on Nollywood have read, or at least, focused on informality as primarily an economic function in Nollywood. This approach can be reductive, confining informality in Nollywood within an economic frame, whereas it is a concept that richly exceeds matters of economics. Miller (2016) for example, suggests Nollywood marketers institute informal practices "… to resist formal investment and interference (foreign and domestic) in their dominance of the industry" (7). Similarly, in looking at copyrights in emerging creative industries, Pager (2019) notes that overall, Nollywood filmmakers are put at an economic disadvantage because of the industry's informal distribution system, even if informality has been credited for the widespread and far-reaching distribution of Nollywood films (588). Yet, McCall (2012) identifies that Nollywood practitioners primarily transact in social and cultural capital and not financial capital, thus concluding "Nollywood is not capitalist (11). Haynes (2019) makes the same argument to point out why Nollywood is not a corporatized industry (254). Therefore, theselatter scholars provide a rationale for extending our study of Nollywood's informality beyond matters of economics. Disentangling informality from its economic mooring in its application to Nollywood reveals a more complex relationship between the industry and thecultural and traditional practices that have historically sustained Nigerian peoples.

4.3 Contracts and Intellectual Property: A Case for Nollywood's Informal Structure

Ajaegbo sheds some light on some of the internal practices that have allowed for thenon-standardization and universalization of Nollywood's industrial practice:

> I had told you that the guilds are not very strong. If for instance a guild should put a law in place, they do not have anywhere to derive that power from. There is no legislature empowering them to do it. If I had not subscribed as a member of that particular guild, their rules will not affect me. Not every writeris a member of the Screen Writers' Guild of Nigeria. That means, if they are making any rules, they are making it for their members. I, as a person, can sit inmy office and write anything outside whatever rule they've put in place and it will fly. There is nothing stopping me!

Ajaegbo signals the absence of standardizing measures within which the entire industry can exist and practice. In the absence of such measures, where myriad independentguilds and groups, like the Actors Guild of Nigeria, Association of Nollywood Core Producers, and Nigerian Society of Cinematographers (Abiola 2016, 212) co-exist within the same space, operating under different rules and regulations, one can see one of the engendering conditions for the thriving of informality.

Economists have deliberately drawn a causal relationship between capitalist modernity and formal economies, with de Soto (2001) insisting, "[c]apitalism stands alone as the only feasible way rationally to organize a modern economy" (1). Others have decriedsuch a dualism that esteems the West, while downplaying the Global South (Varley 2013). Yet, Structuralists like Portes, Castells and Benton (1989) argue both informal and formal economies are related and connected. Yet, when it is all said and done, we can sum it up using Routh (2014):

The idea of informality has come to be associated with adversity—
characterized by less productivity, precarious conditions of work,
regulatory avoidance, and stealthy ways of operation...[o]ver the
course of time informality came to be identified with undesirable
economic transactions and exploitative employment conditions" (21).

While coining the term 'informality' did not create informality, for the practice of

informality pre-dates its coinage, restricting its understanding within capitalist modernity and the

economic frame imposed upon it by Western minds is easily reductive. In the caseof Nollywood,

it narrows and compels our conceptualization of Nollywood to satisfy Western ethnocentric

assumptions. To concede to Western capitalist understanding of informality is to reinforce the

still lingering, deep-seated, and subconscious imperialist expectation within us. Hence,

Nollywood's seeming failure to conform to it, even when weconsider the failure one of its

leading de-Westernizing attributes, is still interpreted as an effort to evade formal systems and

the supposed standardization, integrity and fair play associated with modern economies.

According to Williams et. al. (2012), "it is common to define the informal economy in terms of

what is absent from or insufficient about it relativeto the formal economy, and there exists a

strong consensus over what is absent or missing" (114). We perceive informality with a certain

politic that empties it of an innocence of spirit, that inherently canvases it as a signifier of the

absence of order, uncivility, and an under-developed economic system. Thus, we who seek to

decolonize inadvertently becomethe very proxies for imperialist ideas at a deeper level, helping

to perpetually subjugate our objects of decolonization to Western interests.

4.3A Intellectual Property in the Context of Nollywood's Informal Economy

At the intersection of informality and Nollywood's capitalist economy is the discourse around Intellectual Property. On account of the general tone of scholarly works that have related informality to Nollywood, Nollywood has become that cinema industry wecelebrate (particularly in the pre-digital era of platforms like Netflix) for its ability to remainoutside of formal structures, successfully cobbling together an existence for itself within a web of unregulated production conditions. In media industry studies, this is what Havens et al (2009) count as a *tactic*, which is "the way in which cultural workers seek to negotiate, and at times, perhaps subvert, the constraints imposed by institutional interests to their own purpose" (247). Indeed, the focus of the writers' address is somewhat different, since their study is more about the corporatized Western media system and the assertion of workers' agency within it. Yet, similar calculations typically inform our perceptions of Nollywood asan industry insistent and defiant against a formal global cinema industry led by corporatized Hollywood. This would be like the mythological *Robin Hood* who was praised for his magnanimity among the poor. Nonetheless, his identity, as mandated by the powers that be,continued unchanged: he was a thief, an outlaw, who lived in the shadows of the forest.

What this tells us is that informality, even if it is a distinguishing characteristic, and has provided the industry with a good degree of self-reliance and fighting chance, is nonethelessa reflection of economic underdevelopment and unrealized modernity.

4.3B <u>Informality in Precolonial African Societies</u>

Prior to the restructuring of African colonial economies for their assimilation into global markets for the primary advancement of Euro-American agendas in the 20th century,precolonial African societies engaged in economic transactional practices. If these practiceswere informal, it was not in the sense that there was a better, more civilized 'formal' *other* to which they should aspire. Neither were the informal social and economic structures in precolonial Africa a bedlam of activities. Indeed, economic informality does not refer to anabsence of regulations. Rather, it is an alternative economic structure that exists outside of state-instituted and sanctioned frameworks (Meagher 2005). Bryan Roberts' (1994) description of informality is relevant for this analysis:

> The issue is not one of regulation *per se* but of the form of regulation.
> All markets are regulated . so the issue is the balance between
> formal regulation based, ultimately, on the state, and informal
> regulation based on personal relations such as those of kinship,
> friendship or co-ethnicity (8).

Precolonial African social and economic systems were regulated. For example, these societies had guilds that supervised marketplace operations (Raji and Abejide 2013). Informality in Nigeria's precolonial economic systems refers to organically developed practices that respond to the social institutions it emanated from. It was informality in that it was neither regulated by the state, nor by other powerful modern capitalist forces. It is in this context that I put the question of informal agreements like the absence of contracts in Nollywood to Ayo Obalesi, who elaborates on it:

> Basically, a lot of people don't care about contract in Nollywood. But
> there are organizations that care about it. So, such organizations will
> print contract forms for both crew and for artistes. Then, they will sign
> them. But whether or not…at the end of the day, is the deal binding?"
> He shrugs, then continues "But I don't personally know of a situation
> where someone has breached, I mean after signing a contract. But there
> have been breaches… Like you know, Nollywoodhas been largely
> informal. It's just surviving on its own…

Obalesi is cautious, reluctant to appear as though reinforcing a negative perception of Nollywood that is had by many, on account of its informality. This perception is perpetuated by the notion that informal agreements are without merit when compared to formal ones. It stems from the idea that written/signed contracts are the only legitimate forms of agreement, and that these are synonymous with, and perhaps exclusive to, legal, formal economies. Obalesi appears torn between protecting the reputation of the industry and articulating its reality. That said, he is willing enough to indicate that contract-signing is not a frequent procedure in Nollywood. Neither is cinematographer and editor, Thomas Tille, eager to make these assertions in absolute terms:

> After a while, they gave you jobs without contracts and I did not seeor
> hear anybody asking to sign a contract. Probably, the main stars.
> But younger ones just collected the job and went away. After a while,
> it was reintroduced, though I have no idea who did. This is probably
> because things are different now from how it was in the past, so people
> request for contacts to sign… Some are binding and some are not.
> Some contracts are just a way to clarify expenditure, while to some, it
> is the real deal – 'You sign the document, give me my copy and take
> yours'. The contract may entail bringing in a thirdparty if some parts of
> the agreement are not clear to one or both parties. Sometimes, they
> need to re-negotiate and the contract is re-written.

One may arguably conclude Obalesi and Tille also view informality in Nollywood asan economic function and a characteristic only attributable to unsophisticated, rudimentary, underdeveloped societies, hence their exercise of restrain and caution. They imagine

informality in Nollywood supposedly reflects badly on Nigeria's economic system.

Actor Chuckwu Mark takes a similar position regarding dealings between actors and producers, and his account sounds less contrived:

> It depends. Most of the time, in Nigeria, 60% of producers don't really sign that contract because we feel the money is small and that is why we have AGN (Actors Guild of Nigeria), they are the umbrella body that covers the actors. So, if you work for a producer and you are not paid, you can take the case to the AGN. Or if you areon set, and they treat you badly as an actor, in the sense that you are not given your welfare or you are not taken good care of, you can contact your guild and they can fight for you as a member...

Among AGN actors, Mark believes the absence of a need for contracts arises from the availability of an umbrella body committed to fighting on behalf of the actor. Upon myinquiry as to the Guild's success rate, Mark responds: "Hundred percent!". However, one must doubt his assertion if the absence of a contract also likely signifies the absence of any written down, agreed-upon figures against which to measure the degree of adherence. Film director Balogun chooses to be less defensive:

> Okay, this question now brings me to another angle; you just mentioned 'contract signed.' What you should have asked me is how many jobs did I shoot as a director where I signed a contract?...
>
> Remember I started by talking about structure? This is the part of the structure that I know we are lacking, because under normal circumstances, we are actually supposed to go through this process, so that everybody knows the rules; everybody knows I can't overstepthis boundary – this is my jurisdiction; I can't play beyond this. But we don't usually have that.

For actor, producer and director, Dan Ebie, "there are no government policies…no laws to scare people into signing a contract to abide by. Signing a contract is not the issue but having the enabling laws to protect the producer, the actor and the creative artist". The clear

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perception of these practitioners is that the indifference to contract-signing in Nollywood is not altogether a welcome practice. From those unwilling to definitively admitit, to those less reserved in expressing their opinion, a general consensus appears to reflect the tenuous conditions the absence of binding contract imposes on Nollwood. It is curious,therefore, to imagine why this culture is allowed to perpetuate within the industry. On the surface, the conclusion, as some have made, is that Nollywood's informality is allowed to fester because it benefits investors who profit by it (Ernest-Samuel and Uduma, 2019).[18] Yet, the question lingers: why would the Nigerian government, a reluctant participant in thenation's film industry in the 1990s and 2000s (55) exhibit a similar indifference to the concept of contracts and copyrights? Ajaegbo laments, "[f]irst and foremost, the people in power may ask the question if they understand. But I think copyright commission initiated an amendment process, but the people in the National Assembly need to be convinced on why it should be amended." By choice, the Nigerian government's direct participation in theindustry has been minimal. One can therefore strongly argue that the government's indifference to Nollywood's informality is not particularly motivated by a foreseen potentialto profit from this informality. If not gaining from informality, what might explain the government's apathy to Nollywood's industrial system? An argument can be made, however, that informality in African societies are legitimate precolonial market practices that continue to assert themselves. To bring more nuance to his point, Ajaegbo adds:

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[18] Ernest-Samuel and Uduma (2019) employ a distribution outfit, RemmyJes Productions, as a case-study for analyzing documented hard-figures in units sold and profits made (58). In an industry as Nollywood, the rarity of such access into internal calculations makes their work very important.

When the copyright law was made, there was no revolution in the entertainment industry. There was nobody who was worried about who producer or who an executive producer was… It will be the understanding and concept of the draftsmen as of when that law was made. To them, the law was very strange. When it comes to cinematographic films, the copyright resides with the producer who is responsible for putting together the funds for the production. So, ifyou look at that provision, you will see that to them, the producer is the person responsible for putting together the production. Little provision was made for the executive producer who will be responsible for putting together the finance for the movie. Little did they also know that an artist who would have played in the film will need to retire on something? If I go by the provisions of the law, people will watch movies for decades and at the end, the artists will get nothing much in return. So, these things were not provided for inthe law and not thought out. It wasn't in the minds of the draftsmen.

Before analyzing this curious situation, it is good to take into account how Dan Ebie

(actor, producer, director) sees things differently. For Ebie,

Until we get to that point, I won't blame the government because government is probably waiting to hear from us. We need to have a united front so that we have something to present to the government to say - 'This is an industry. This is how we want the industry to be structured. This is how we feel you, as a government agency can structure us…. It is an internal problem and I'm hoping that with some of the new players we have in the industry, we would be able tohave the right people to lead. When we have the right leadership in different guilds, we would be able to change a whole lot of things… You can imagine what a football match will be without a referee.

According to Ajaegbo, an attempt at instituting some legal structure in Nollywood by the

government signals an understanding, even if suspiciously vague, of a requirement tocommit to

writing agreed-upon transactional terms. However, the gesture also seems to reflect an interest in

satisfying global, conventional practices that film industries expectedlythrive on, rather than

something conceived as engendering meaningful and relevant structure at the local and grassroot

levels. It must be acknowledged there are government institutions enabled with powers to

oversee issues of Intellectual Property in Nigeria, such as The Copyright Commission in Nigeria

(TCCN). The problem, however, according to Ajaegbo, is agencies like TCCN exists only in name, and not in function. On his part, Ebie equally acknowledges government's relative inactivity in instituting effective contract and copyright laws in Nigeria. That said, he states that neither has the industry proven itself willing and ready to accommodate potential government intervention. The extent to which these concepts appear unnatural to the Nigerian government is highlighted when Ajaegbo reflects, "the key thing in our copyright law was that the producer is the copyright owner.

The executive producer who has funded the movie will have no place in the film other than the struggle to recover his investment. After this, the model changed by making the marketer to be the executive producer, the producer and marketer". A clear understanding ofthe role of Intellectual Property, as legally constituted by its Western originators seemed elusive to the Nigerian government. Seeing that the producer was not necessarily always theexecutive producer, director or writer, the government's unconditional attribution of rights to the producer questions the degree to which Intellectual Property is at home within Nigerian cultures, and this will be looked at in further details shortly.

From both Ajaegbo and Ebie, a fuller picture emerges where the responsibility for formalizing transactional practices falls on both the government and the industry, and the blame for its absence is shared also by both. On the one hand, there is the inability to completely breakaway from notions of film as a commodity underlined by economic currents, a notion adopted from hegemonic cinemas like Hollywood (Tsika, 2015).[19] On theother hand, it is arguable that Nollywood's slow adoption of enforceable contract and copyright laws are not necessarily profit-motivated but deriving from culture as well.

According to many scholars, in precolonial African cultures, the idea of protecting the rights of an individual was inseparable from the perception of the individual as belonging to, and being part of, the community as a whole (Nmehielle, 2001).[20] This of course, is not to suggest the absence of law and order in these societies. As Ncube (2018) identifies, customary laws, a system of organic, evolving laws set up by the community to maintain harmony within the community, formed the basis for resolving disagreements in African societies (411). One unique quality of customary systems of laws, thus, is their look toward the protection of the individual by maintaining harmony between the individual and the community. In essence, the reputation of the individual was not ascertained by putting it into writing or contract. Rather, it was contingent upon the community's impression of the individual, a relationship which ultimately also

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[19] Noah Tsika, in *Nollywood Stars* (2015) identifies Nollywood with Hollywood's star system. Tsika writes that Nollywood relies heavily on its star actors for film sales, which sets Nollywood at variance with the political[19] and Marxist[19] lenses through which non-Western cinemas are typically read. Tsika believes the relationship between Nollywood and its stars is significantly explained by Nigeria's early foray into international co-productions with African-American Hollywood actors like Ossie Davis in the 1970s. Tsika proposes Nollywood does not only seek commercial benefits like Hollywood, but by commonly choosing to include western brands like Beyonce and Rihanna[19], and Lady Gaga[19] in its titles, it indicates a willingness toalign with certain Hollywood practices.

[20] Vincent Nmehielle, in *The African Human Rights System* (2001), insists on the concept of human rights in precolonial Africa. He identifies a different concept to what Capitalist Western societies have and distinguishes them partly on account of the non-capitalist formations of precolonial African human rights.

involved the community's reputation. Thus, parties to an agreement looked to the community as the guarantor of the agreement, not a formal, signed contract. Actor Mark's reference to the AGN as the overall enforcer of agreements, in the place of signed contracts, is testament to a practice originating in precolonial Africa. Similarly, intellectual property, with all its connotations of political and capitalist characteristics, was alien to African cultures. According to Shizha (2016), "Prior to colonization, intellectual and cultural property rights were not an issue at all [in Africa]. It went without question that communities had a right to their cultural property. The arts, thetools and the knowledge that was utilized in designing the tools needed for daily living and creating arts belonged to the people" (57). In many African precolonial societies, while creativity manifested through the individual, it belonged to, and originated from, the community, since the individual was inseparable from his or her community. Oblivious to ideas of individualizing and protecting creative and intellectual properties, African cultures imagined them as "community ownership or common property" (Shizha, 57). Consequently,performers of the Masque theatre, the ancestral parent of what will become the Yoruba Traveling Theatre in the 20th century among the Yorubas[21], saw their performances as a form of service to the community, not one to be commodified for the enrichment of the individual. As recently as in the Yoruba Traveling Theatre traditions that reached its heights between the 1960s and the early 1980s in Nigeria, and which has been widely argued to be Nollywood's progenitor, we still see an indifference to employing binding contracts in theprotection of the actor and intellectual property. Of course, it must also be noted that a performance regime that thrived on largely

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[21] For more information on the Yoruba Masque Theatre, see Joel Adedeji's expansive works on the history of performance arts among the Yorubas in Nigeria: *The Origin and Form of the Yoruba Masque Theatre* (1972),and *The Poetry of the Yoruba Masque Theatre* (1978).

unwritten and evolving scripts[22] problematizes the rigidity necessary for the application and effectiveness of Intellectual Property laws.

It appears, then, that Nigeria's film industry is a unique site where centuries-old ways of perceiving intellectuality and creativity as first belonging to, and in the service of, the community is confronted by a colonial, Western technological art-form that prioritizes individual ownership of intellectual property, and for which they must receive a financial recompense. Where these tensions exist, the struggle to institute laws enforcing contractualagreements and protecting intellectual properties in Nigeria can be understood as not only motivated by undue profit-making, but cultural practices pre-dating colonialism in Africa, and by which these indigenous societies thrived in the past.

4.4 Oral Traditions of the Griot: An Embodiment of Informal Practices

Another traditional African performance art form that provides insight into the place of informality in precolonial Nigeria and in Nollywood today, is found in the griot caste- system, where the calling to be a griot is passed on from parent to children. The African griot is a curious interstitial character that exists in that space between respect and appreciation on the one hand, and ambivalence on the other (Hale 1997, 249). The role of the griot in traditional African societies as the source of oral history and genealogy, as the voice of reason, caution, and ethics (Leymarie-Ortiz 1979, 187) informs why the African filmmaker is seen as a griot. The griot is also found in Nigeria (Leymarie, 184) and Diawara (1988) draws a relationship between the art of filmmaking and the griot, arguing that the African filmmaker, consciously or unconsciously, is influenced by the griot's narrative techniques and style.

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[22] Karin Barber, *Literacy, Improvisation, and the Virtual Script in Yoruba Popular Theatre,* 2004.

Using the griot, a media study of Nollywood's informality and its precolonial mooring leads us to borrow from the seeming loose form with which this character operateshis or her industry: Henrich (2001) posits, the griot's performance includes an "…aspect ofthe communication setting and the possibilities for improvisation. A griot can arrange their materials as they please and add new twists to a well-known plot. The determinants are the context of the performance and the inspiration and skill of the performer" (25). At a basic and general level, modern-capitalist informality can be interpreted as antithetical to structure, and a non-compliance to any established sense of conformity. Consequently, the Nollywood filmmaker's rather flexible and imprecise approach to filmmaking (in editing, scriptwriting and dialogue for example) can be seen also as channeling precolonial traditional griot performance artforms. This understanding provides a different frame from one that largely reduces the purpose of informality to one of market exploitation and the evasion of formal supervision. The former position echoes Murphy's (2000) whole argument that African cinemas ought not always be perceived as Marxist, or a rejection of the West and capitalist tendencies; that individual African filmmakers do not always have the West on their minds when making a film and are not always pursuing a collective political identity and agenda: they are simply making films as they are informed by their phenomenological connection with their locale, culture, tradition and history.

Secondly, in much the same way the study of media industries examines labour relations in the context of modern capitalism and corporatization, Nollywood labour relations can be partly understood through the social and cultural griot model. The origin and nature of Nollywood's informal payment and profit structure can potentially be traced to the griot renumeration or reward system.

In precolonial West African societies, inflexible caste systems existed, and they furthered inequalities by endowing aristocrats with power, access and moral values by virtue of their birth. According to these traditions:

> [persons] of lower strata, the griots more so than others, received gifts and did not have to reciprocate… The receivers of gifts, while inan apparently enviable economic position, were in fact subordinated to their patrons, upon whom they depended for their livelihood" (Leymarie-Ortiz 1979, 186).

Leymarie-Ortiz notes members of these African aristocracies, who were responsiblefor organizing political structures and agendas, and were in charge of the courts, were required to be generous to griots as a way to maintain and justify their status (185): Curiously, however, the griot who was at the mercy of the aristocrats they entertained, "… enjoyed particular economic privileges: aside from the gifts they received for singing praises and performing certain tasks, they could plunder the *ger* [aristocracy] without beingchastised" (186). A system which accorded griots the right to plunder their economically and socially powerful patrons not only paints an anarchic picture that confounds our sense of order; it also runs contrary to everything modern capitalist societies and their corporatized media industries imagine as acceptable. It is also worthwhile to note that the legitimization of 'plunder' as a griot 'right', contradicts the notion of informality as a capitalist phenomenon, since in capitalism, informality is antithetical to concepts oflegitimization and rights—which is what the griot has in this instance.

On the surface, and without a deeper grasp of these traditional societies, these practices appear to promote disorder, and the absence of any form of regulations. Thus, if the African filmmaker is (a kind of) griot, an argument can be made that these same griot privilege, in a renegotiated form, has together with the griot's performance style, carried over into cinemas like Nollywood. Essentially, correlations appear to exist between Nollywood's informal remunerative

processes and the permissiveness that empowered traditional griot's with rights to 'access' their patrons' resources. So, on the one hand, Kenneth Nnebue's reasoning behind *Living in Bondage's* informal marketing model may have been intended for profit-making, achieved through the evasion of government regulations and lethargic celluloid distribution system. However, it is also arguable that Nnebue's historical exposure to these unique griot practices may have helped condition howhe came to settle on this marketing mode as the one of choice.

Another related aspect of the griot performance system may shed still more light on Nollywood's informal practices as an evolved industrial system from precolonial traditions.Even when the griot was rewarded for his/her performance, the absence of any regularity and uniformity in the mode of material exchange smacks of what could easily be perceived by formal market systems as informal. First, griots were paid both in money and/or gifts (Dorsch 2013); furthermore, according to Hale (1997), "West Africans at home and abroad give them [griots] gifts ranging from money to automobiles, houses, air tickets to Mecca, and, if they have nothing else, the clothing off their own backs…". The pluralistic approachto griot renumeration, and the challenges inherent in non-monetary transactions, such as ones of reducibility, compels the basing of renumeration more on patron magnanimity. In different ways, this tradition continues to persist strongly in local markets in Africa. For example, it is not uncommon in a typical market in Nigeria, to haggle with a petty trader who concludes the negotiation by imploring you to "give me whatever you have". As a result, the absence of uniformity in how value is measured contends against the principles offormal economics. In the least, embedding what is considered informality in the Nigerian film industry within precolonial African performance arts allows us to frame the industry less as one intent on employing informality solely as a means of navigating the challenges of modern capitalist market forces. Rather, it re-directs research to engage with

Nollywood's informal practices as a loose re-animation of traditional practices as they responded to their long-standing social systems. Following modern capitalism's relentless re-definition of societies, and our perception of everything within them, these traditional African practices appear to have suffered a decontextualization and disengagement from their precolonial social essence. Instead, even though they lack any conformity to modern capitalist economic expectations, their definition is nonetheless confined and seen throughthe lens of capitalism.

4.5 Informality and the Producer: A unique office in Nollywood filmmaking

Informality in Nollywood's production structure also helps to test the assumptions of universalized definitiveness around crew/personnel roles and responsibilities. An exhaustive search proved that there is no scholarship focusing on Nollywood's film crew system and hierarchies, and how these individual technical units engage with each other as they conduct the tasks they are assigned. From my interviewees, this area promises a significant amount of insight and knowledge. Here, I highlight the uniquely Nigerian job description of the Nollywood producer, and its lack of congruence with its more universal Western cinema version. Sometimes, it is the absence of more definitive boundaries with regards to the office that engenders a sense of poor organization and informality. Yet, one wonders if it isfair for individual nations to redefine film crew roles and responsibilities for their own use,even if the redefinition suggests the appearance of a less defined office.

Earlier, Ajaegbo touched on the centrality of the Nollywood producer (one unrivaledby its Western counterpart) to the industry's filmmaking when he identifies the unconditional ascription of all copyrights to the producer by the Nigerian government. Here,I further explore the characteristics within Nollywood's film practice that reinforce the very argument Ajaegbo

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makes. I must note that my examination of the producer, here, is largely limited to the straight-to-DVD Nollywood industry that continues to survive till today.

Haynes (2019), for example, acknowledges, in post-2010 (New) Nollywood, VCD production and market practices from the 1990s continue to hold their own against more diversified platforms like iROKO, a digital, online distribution platform: "Old-school marketers have reacted to the crisis of profitability in the disc market by doing what they best know how to do…the broad middle range of Nollywood films, between Asaba films and New Nollywood productions, still exists (261).

Obalesi (Cinematographer and Editor) talks of a system that uniquely places the final and ultimate authority in the film production process in the hands of the producer. Granted the traditional role of the producer in Hollywood and most other similarly structured cinemas imbue the producer with a great degree of authority, defined areas of jurisdiction typically restrict the producer's authority to the non-creative, administrative part of filmmaking. Ortner (2013) puts it this way: "Since at least the 1960s, the standard view has been that the most important figure in making a film is the director… the producers [arethe] the individuals whose job is to create and sustain the conditions for a filmmaker to make a film" (147). The conventional producer, according to cinemas like Hollywood, employs his/her authority in coordinating and organizing resources in support of the director, who maintains authority of the creative process. This is not the case in Nigeria, where according to Obalesi, Tijani-Balogun and Ajaegbo below, the director is completely under the authority of the producer, deferring to the producer concerning creative choices, all the way to minutia details on set. In Nollywood, the director is hired to fulfil the dictates of the producer. For this reason, Obalesi reveals:

> You know I told you earlier that, in most cases, the producer is the
> owner of the film. The producer probably commissions the writer to
> write the story. The story is probably the producer's story.
> Sometimes they may not have signed off on a script to insist that thisis
> what they want it to look like. Other times, it could be that during the
> actual filming, the film didn't go the way it ought to have gone –things
> may change. Only the producer is allowed to alter the sequence,
> because the producer owns it.

The model Obalesi elaborates is emphatically different and unique. One cannot

dissociate this arrangement, however, from the historical evolution of the office of the producer

from that of the marketer, who was also the financier of film production.[23] The office of the

producer has historically obtained its authority from the concept of 'producer as financier'.

Since whoever holds the purse holds the power, the hierarchy is maintained that the Nollywood

film is the producer's film, not the director's. Film director, Tijani- Balogun echoes Obalesi, but

adds another layer to it:

> Marketers have a stronger say in the structure of the movie even more
> than the producer. The producer will not sell it her/himself; it's the
> marketer that will do that. So, if the marketer says: "Put this person's
> face in there", you better put it. So, the same thing now goes for the
> producer and the editor, because most times, the way it works in our
> environment is: the average producer has what I would call 'the
> makeshift production company.' They might not have any office
> anywhere but they are the ones hiring everybody. So, it's more like the
> director and editor answers to them directly. He's deliberately
> responsible—the film goes back to the Producer.

Tijani-Balogun distinguishes between the marketer and the producer and identifies the

residency of all authority in the marketer, the one who funds the filmmaking, and takes on its

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[23] It should be noted that the idea of 'Executive Producer' is not as well integrated into the Nollywood
filmmaking process as it is elsewhere, particularly in the West. The Executive Producer and Producer have been
collapsed into one office over time. As earlier examined, the Marketer, who was the executive producer,also
inserted himself/herself into every aspect of filmmaking. Thus, references to 'producer' also includes 'executive
producer' within it.

distribution. The demarcation Tijani-Balogun draws is not unnecessary, as it picks at the process in finer detail. Notwithstanding, in an industry where the marketer and producerare commonly embodied in one person, one can see how the producer manifests sole authority in film production. One of the particular reasons why Tijani-Balogun's quote is included here is to highlight how even among Nollywood practitioners, these same issues and topics are perceived differently, largely because informality leaves the terrain open to interpretations.

When I asked Tijani-Balogun if his experience as a director includes hissubordination by the marketer/producer, his categorical response was:

> Yes, it has happened to me—I'm a victim; not once, not twice. But this one was the extreme. I saw the footage just before post- production, and I said: "Ok, do it this way". When I saw the final cut, I discovered that "Ah, they removed a lot of essential thing!" and the editor said "Na producer talk am." [the producer commanded it] …I tried to call the editor asking if I could come and have the first cut, and the next thing was I saw it was on the screen already. It wasn't as if it was a bad job, but there were a couple of shots that I would have loved to correct, based on the way I shot it. There were a couple of things I would have loved to adjust…

While debates continue between who should have the final say between director (focusing on film aesthetic and as an art form) and producer (film as a commodity intendedfor maximizing financial returns) (Schleier 2015), these contentions are inadequately researched in the study of Nollywood. I pressed Obalesi further on this topic, to which he added Nollywood directors:

> …don't even know what happens after the shoot. They get paid and they walk away. The film is left with the Producer, because usually and especially here, the Producer is always the owner of the film. So,the film is left with the Producer and it's between the Producer and the Editor. Even the Producer makes input only after the Editor has done what he has to do, and then he sees it and makes certain inputs. But the Director doesn't even remember that he made a film.

Another sense one gets from these practitioners is a film industry that distinguishes itself from Hollywood and other major cinemas by its somewhat evocation of creativity as awage-earning labour, in the way that conventional unit of labour is contractually exchangedfor hourly, weekly or monthly wage. In a manner similar to a division-of-labour system, each hired personnel has a role to play, but has no duty to the film beyond that for which they are paid while on set. Once their service and labour are provided, they are without any stake in the film, like cogs in a production process. If this is not altogether different from Hollywood, it has arguably taken the model further than Hollywood. This is deducible from actor Mark's account of his own experience in the industry. He was unable to list thenumber of films he has acted in that made it to the screen:

> Yes, about 30 films I've been in that I know of. There are some that have not… that I don't know if they are out or not. They don't have the kind of money for a premiere, you know… they just take it to the market, and they sell it. And it's aired. So, once we shoot, everybody just goes back to their home and the producer doesn't bother telling the actors that your film is out. There was a job I did about three years ago. Okay, so I played a corporate guy, right? The lady who played my mom, I met her on the set. Later, I met her again on another set, and she asked: 'do you know our job is out?' I said, 'No'.She said that a friend of hers who stays in the UK was watching the film online… So, many of them come out and you don't know. You don't know they're out.

In a different way, director Balogun makes the same claim:

> As I'm sitting down now, my phone might beep. It might be a message…Today is what? Whatever day of the week it is, and then,the question may be: "Bro, are you free on Friday? I want to start a shoot. We're shooting for five days" They just give you the quick logistics: 'we're shooting for five days, and I've not seen the script yet… I'm being frank and real. I have done jobs where I got a call today and I started shooting the next day. And that's when people ask: 'how did you do it?' Because they see the job when it comes outand when you tell them I shot this in X-number of days, and I didn't even have enough time to prepare for it, they cannot understand how it happened…

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Mark's participation in the production process fails to carry beyond the film-shoot. Actually, in a number of ways, he may not have any greater claim in the film he acted in than the audience who would later see it. Likewise, for Balogun, the invitation to a film project a day before filming gets underway signals the producer's indifference to Balogun contribution at the pre-production stage.

Furthermore, one more curious thing I noticed with Mark and Balogun is their reference to film, at least once each, as a 'job', a term synonymous with the employment of labour, than that of creativity or talent. While they may not speak for the industry, their perception of their creative roles in the making of a film as employed labour further reinforces the notion of a film industry where talent, artistry and creativity translate differently. Mark and Balogun are workers, and like with traditional workers, they are each one unit of labour in a production constituting of multiple workers. While I refrain from further examining this concept in Marxist terms, since the outcome of such an exploration will likely produce nothing new, the breakdown of film crew and cast as suppliers of labourdepicts Nollywood's perception of film production more as labour-driven than it is talent/creativity driven. Using Mark and Balogun, the Nollywood creative appears to be conditioned to produce on command, and not as one who counts on bursts of creativity and bursts of inspiration, as is commonly expected of an artist. As such, labour, which is a specialized service a worker can acquire through learning and/or practice, is what is paid for in Nollywood; whereas, like Kemper (2010) suggests, the idea of long-term contracts in Hollywood stems from film production studios' desire for the acquisition of, and commitment of talent for extended periods of time (126).

If I may add, indeed, I was present to witness Balogun's assertion firsthand: as we concluded the interview, true to his word, a call came through, asking Balogun if he couldbe on

set on Sunday to begin shooting a film. Our interview was on the Thursday, and the script would be given to him sometime between Thursday and Sunday. After the conversation on the phone, he hung up, and smiled at me: "that's the way we do it here".

Again, this provokes the longstanding debates around film as a commodity of trade, or an aesthetic object that privileges art. That Nollywood can be looked at in this context further problematizes the conceptualization of African national cinema as homogenously post/anti-colonial in the latter half of the 20th century, when theorists like Teshome Gabriel (1982), for example, employed Third Cinema as a frame for examining African cinema. In the debates around perceptions or prioritization of film as commodity or art, these complexities still exist, individualizing national cinema pursuits in Africa. For one, while early African filmmakers (particularly of Francophone Africa) rejected the reading of their art films as the product of a solitary creator -the auteur (Gabara 2016, 46), a study of their artistry indisputably reveals Ousmane Sembène and his contemporaries as auteurs (Sanogo 2015; Sinha and McSweeney 2011). Unlike the emphasis on the artistry of Francophone African postcolonial cinema, Nollywood, as earlier discussed, has benefited enormously from an economic reading of the industry. A breakdown of Nollywood's production units and their hierarchical arrangements is a further reinforcement of Nollywood's conceptualization in the tradition of film as commodity.

4.6 Censorship Boards and Informality

Crucial to our understanding of Nollywood in the context of informality is a closer examination of what is widely accepted as an industry which, from its early days, is argued to have completely existed outside of government systems and controls. Broadly speaking, maintaining that Nollywood existed outside of government purview is an accurate position. Yet, as one would

expect, nuances exist to this position, some of which Ajaegbo highlights:

> …we have to distinguish between control and the business itself – control in substance and control in form. There had never been any time in Nigeria the government ceased to be in control of what goes on…as at 1991, it was the military government that was in place. They were so interested in knowing what you produce, what you bring out as film, what you exhibit, what you show, and the elements in it. If someone should even wear a military uniform in a film, the film won't fly. They had that control in substance but they never had control in form because they were not interested in your business, how you wanted to do the business of your filming. They were in control of what you bring out. If you had come into Nollywood ever since, even before the 1992, we had had government agencies in place… In fact, at a point they were actually dictating what the end product of the film will be – remove blood, remove what that man said, go and conclude the story. In fact, this has no lesson to teach, goand make it teach lessons. It was that bad …and most them were not even trained film makers. It even affected the output of the film. At a point, it was like Nigerian films were only meant to teach lessons - asif the primary aim of film is to teach lessons.

The bumbling practice of censorship in Nollywood brings a tighter focus on the relationship between Nigeria's successive governments and the propagation of informality in Nollywood. Despite the fact that Nollywood has thrived "against all odds, in the midst of a devasting economic collapse and without the financial support of their government…" (Johnson and Culverson 2016, 121), particularly in its first decades[24], there exist a number of areas where the government has helped foster Nollywood's informal resource base. First,in very general terms, much as informality in Nollywood signals an environment that is designed by its practitioners to cater to their need for structural permissiveness, informality is not a Nollywood economic construct. As an economic system, informality pre-exists and is bigger than Nollywood; it was there for Nollywood to take advantage of, and it was therebecause, as Roy

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[24] In 2010, the Nigerian government created a $200M film-fund (Haynes 2016, 304)

(2005) states, "informality must be understood not as the object of state regulation but rather as produced by the state itself" (149). Whether it is encouraged to foster a conducive environment for corruption, whether its presence is due to its resilient connection to precolonial traditional practices, or a combination of both, informality in Nigeria's economy is one of its government's most fundamental gift to Nollywood. Arewa (2012) disabuses the preconceived notion of informality broadly held when examined in thecontext of economics. She highlights historical examples where nations like Germany, the United States, and some in Asia have all weakened regulatory measures at some point to engender internal industrial growth (23-24). Similarly, she adds:

> [a]s an emerging industry sector in the earliest years of its development,
> Nollywood likely benefited from widespread unauthorized distribution
> of Nollywood productions. Widespread unauthorized distribution
> enabled viewers to sample Nollywood filmsand helped solidify
> recognition of Nollywood products among a widenetwork of Africans
> on the continent and in the diaspora (24)

Essentially, the widespread penetration of Nollywood films' sampling and acceptance across Nigeria and globally took place, not without the informal structure that made them easily accessible (Miller 121). Beyond this, the Nigerian government formed The National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) in 1993 as a regulatory agency for the nation's film and video industry (Arewa 2012, 22). However, as outlined in the board'spolicy, what seems like a deliberate attempt to confuse the extent of the board's participatory role opens up a space which encourages Nollywood's practice of informality.For example, in Part VI, Section 25 of NFVCB's Act, the Degree states, [a]s from the commencement of this Act, no person shall carry on the business of distributing or exhibiting a film or video work, unless he is a holder of a license granted by the Board under this Act" (National Film and Video Censors Board Act,

1993). One can conclude from this Act that the agency is bestowed with the powers to control and regulate Nollywood's systems of distribution and exhibition. Yet, in another part where it introducesits distribution policy, it backtracks by hedging: "All the commercial elements of a distribution contract, including freedom of choices within it, remain the independent decisions of the industry" (National Film and Video Censors Board, 2006). The result is a system knowingly projecting an active and participatory presence, while in practice, it is deliberately undermining its own ability to help reverse Nollywood's informal practices.

Again, as argued above, this is an instance where the NFVCB appears to exist to satisfy theeconomic requirement one would expect of a modern society that is part of the global economy while a lingering disinterest in formalizing the industry persists.

Even more influential is the Kano State Censorship Board (KSCB), which was founded in 2001 for the enforcement of a Sharia legal system, and therefore, as an extra layer of regulation for Kannywood. Due to the institutionalization of Islam across Northern Nigeria and in all levels of governance, KSCB becomes the ultra-conservative authority on the regulation and control of cinematographic works and exhibition (Ibrahim 2013, 171- 172). In Chapter 2, I briefly examined the power of KSCB over Kannywood to restrict actorperformativity and spearhead the excommunication of actors who appear to violate Islamic ethics. Having established the fulsome reach of KSCB's authority in Northern Nigeria's filmmaking, one that makes it, for all intent and purposes, the agency responsible for much of Kannywood's narrative and artistic conservatism, it becomes equally important to examine its relationship with informality. As a related matter to censorship, the curtailment of production, distribution and exhibition on account of a film's violation of Islamic moral values falls under KSCB. Included in the functions of KSCB, found in Part II and III of its Board Law, KSCB is charged, among other

things, with the authority to "refuse approval for production, distribution, sale or exhibition of any film, pornographic books or publications in the State, where in the opinion of the Board it is offensive to public morality and decency"; also, "The Board may grant license in respect of cinematography or other similar projection apparatus under paragraph (b) of section 10 to such persons as it thinks fit…". Yet, it appears the board, while aggressive on the issue of moral and religious conservatism and conformity, is a lot more conducive to, and even participative in, the informal industrial practices that undergird Kannywood. This is a contradiction, as one would expect otherwise from a conservative government agency whose moral bearing arcs toward fairness, 'rightness', and the regulation of its society. Under the board's watch, "Kannywood film industry languishes in the hands of unprofessional personnel, which results in poorly-made films with broken marketing strategies and shoddy English subtitles, among other many ills" (Ibrahim 2019, 84). During my interview with Umar Gombe, who has acted and produced many Kannywood films, including *Lissafi* (2009), *Noor* (2012)*, Dadin Kowa* and *Al'Qibla* (2020), I focused on KSCB and its role in Kannywood's informalsystem. Gombe bemoaned KSCB's participation in the film industry's informality:

> Here in Kannywood, during the CD/DVD era, as soon as a movie is
> released, the pirates come at 10% of the original price. Even
> marketers do the same with the carelessness of the government...
> Sadly, piracy has killed the CD/DVD market here completely even
> with Kano State Censorship Board that seems to be above the law.
> Today, very few producers produce for cinemas, many switched to
> YouTube due to piracy.

Gombe identifies a tier-system in cinema and theatrical distribution, which KSCB supervises, and utilizes to its own advantage:

There are hundreds of low-level cinemas showing football. There are very few A level cinemas in Nigeria, with less than seven here -only Filmhouse Kano is active... As long as the low-level cinemas are registered with the Censorship Board, they can pirate foreign films and show them. But they ignore ours.

According to Gombe, with the consent of the KSCB, lower-tiered cinema houses pirate foreign films and exhibit them, while staying away from locally made films. For thesecinemas, screening pirated foreign films is a smarter business model, because it does not entail dealing with 'troublesome' local producers who will understandably insist on the remittance of profit. Pirated foreign films present no such entanglements, and that makes it more appealing to these exhibitors, who only have to be registered with the Censorship Board to obtain their legitimacy badge. Gombe goes on to suggest Youtube contents are also pirated and distributed in these cinemas by downloaders registered with the KSCB, adding again: "[t]here are a thousand-plus low-level cinemas in Kano, and Kano is as big as Lagos, so you won't know if they legitimately obtained the film they are showing. And as a producer you are unable to find out".

Informal industry practices like piracy provides solid grounds for 'shady' activities. Yet, while under its jurisdiction, KSCB fails to relate the question of piracy to morality, a hallmark of its conservatism. That a practice so economically deviant as piracy (at least, as amodern capitalist phenomenon) is treated with indifference by an agency that prides itself inits unyielding appreciation for a religion-informed morality suggests certain things: you can be involved in piracy and still be perceived as religiously moral. This argument appears rational if we consider that film in Hausaland hails from an arts tradition whose primary purpose is for solidifying and preserving culture (referencing Adamu's interview). In pre- modern Hausaland, art was also not commodified in the capitalist sense we have come to understand the term today (Adamu 2019, 4). Therefore, one can argue a seeming underlyingindifference to piracy by KSCB

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reflects a value system that has historically viewed art as a means for indiscriminately spreading culture and tradition. This may explain the non- contradictory co-existence of piracy and morality among conservative Hausas. It also outlines a unique media production system that deserves to be studied outside of traditional approaches to exploring corporatized media industries, many of which are found in highly capitalist societies.

Having made this argument, I make no attempt to diminish the fact that informal practices in Kannywood, as with Nollywood, still remain a viable model for these agencies to assert themselves and exploit the industries they oversee. Neither can the heuristic connection made between Kannywood's appreciation for piracy and indigenous Hausa understanding of the utility of art be imagined as universal and without contestation. For one, my interviewer, Umar Gome, is Hausa and so, shares the same performance arts historyas KSCB's members. Yet, his point is exactly to reject KSCB's accommodation of piracy.

Arguable, however, the typical tensions within a society as it transitions over time from its indigenous system to a 'modern', capitalist system may explain KSCB's vis-a-vis Gombe's respective contradictory positions. The argument here is that while informality may be the structure of choice for turning an unregulated economic profit in Nollywood and Kannywood, informality in Nigeria's film industries is neither necessarily nor exclusively born out of a desire to make economic profit. Rather, in analyzing Nigeria's media industries, what appears as informality today may also be seen as an integral non-economic constituent of many precolonial African indigenous cultures and performance art practices. As such, they maynot always be economically motivated. In a media industry study of Nollywood, there are other unique and interesting localpractices that define the character of the industry beside the notion of informality and its influence on the. Some of these industrial practices include a re-arrangement and re-

definition of film industry roles and offices to accommodate Nigerian specificities. These other practices merit an examination.

For one, historically, the role of the Nollywood marketer (who was typically also the producer in Nollywood early video film era) was a significant and central one that many writers recognized quickly. Writers acknowledge one of the leading characteristics of the Nollywood marketer has been the strangle-hold with which the marker commandeered the industry, and their relationship with piracy (Novia 2012, 11; Haynes 2016, 216; Miller 2016, 38). Some of my interviewees (Norbert Ajaegbo, Akin-Tijani Balogun and Chuckwu Mark) shed more light on the influence that the Nollywood marketer/producer wields than has been previously revealed, particularly in the video film heyday. Equally important for this project is the examination of this dynamic from a nation-specific, de-Westernized lens. As Haynes and Okome (1998) acknowledge, the commercialization of Nollywood took place in the hands of the Igbos, with Kenneth Nnebue initiating the process in the earlydays and facilitating its ongoing commodification via new formats such as DVD. Initially inNigeria, the video film was not seen primarily as an item of trade or for the generation of economic value until Nnebue's *Living in* (Okome 1998, 107). Norbert Ajaegbo echoes these writers, but elaborates on the conditions that instigated the perception of film as acommercial product:

> The peculiarity of Nollywood is such that even the marketers and distributors to a large extent are investors and have vested interest in the production of the type of film. I don't think there is any wise investor that won't consider their return on investment. So, the involvement starts from scripting, making sure that the concept in the script is a viable one and that the return on investment will be guaranteed in the first instance. That's where they start getting involved in the film. Even though, most don't have the educational know-how required to get involved with scripting, to a large extent they can actually fathom a concept that will be marketable and that will appeal to the audience…

To start with, big cinema industries like Hollywood are founded on capitalist principles of profit-making, and thus curtail participation in the industry by imposing restrictive and standardizing measures. In *The Coming of Sound: A History* (2005), Douglas Gomery examines how Hollywood's introduction of sound in the late-1920s was perceived by Hollywood's major studios as both a technological and economic benefit, since refitting the theatres with the new technology was going to serve as a deterrent to competitors. In more contemporary times, Hollywood continues to restrict and deny access to independent filmmakers by, for example, buying out independent outlets in the hopes of cornering the film market (Segaloff 2017). Ajaegbo's assertion suggests an industrial system that operated differently in the 1990s where rather than denying access to the newcomer filmmaker, Nollywood marketers involved themselves very early in independent productions originating outside of their known circles. In contrast to the more common practice in the West of distributors or studios remaining aloof and removed from independently made films, only to enjoy the luxury of picking and choosing these films at film festivals (Wong 2011, 5; King 2016), the Nollywood marketer appeared in the 1990s to have taken a more active role in the production of films. This is a contrary position to the widely-accepted view by writers like Miller (2016, 59) and Musa (2019, 16) that a kind of homogeneity existed in the industry at the time, where marketers were the only ones privileged to initiating film projects as they controlled the purse and sought to control all areas of production. It appears the journey for Nollywood films from pre-production to distribution in the 1990s and 2000s was more complex, and it failed to follow any definitive or agreed upon path. It was more a mixed-bag of practices that defies any sort of pattern, with marketers as interested in initiating a film project as they were in getting involved mid-way in a promising one. One can also imagine, given the informality with which the industry is strongly defined, that the absence

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of studios and an overall definitive structure, may have encouraged the blurring of lines that invited marketers into pre-production. One impact this has on Nollywood scholarship is the problematization of arguments that centre on the industry's complete take-over by marketers untrained in filmmaking. These marketers have been blamed for the loss of professionalization, and the generally poor film quality in much of the first two decades of Nollywood (Udomisor and Sonuga 2012; Alabi 2019). At best, the arrangement meant that creativity and artistry were not exclusively in the custody of marketers. As a consequence, other areas should be looked at as well for what may have accounted for Old Nollywood's poor-quality productions, beside its near-absolute attribution to opportunistic, profit-hungry, untrained marketers. Beyond this point, this was a system whereby marketers were on the prowl for ongoing productions to insert themselvesin as investors, since as distributors, they could guarantee distribution. This dynamic paints a model where nearly every video film was guaranteed distribution from the moment the filmmaker decides on making it. This might also account for the proliferation of films by the late-1990s, which would culminate in a glut in the industry (Ayakoroma 2014, 101; Haynes 2016, 287). Johnson and Culverson (2016) (quoting Kevin Kelly) for example, put the yearly numbers at about 2000 films during this time (129). For more context to explain the glut, Ajaegbo expressed how, in the early years of Nollywood, marketers were typicallyuninterested in film production, and were comfortable funding film projects and awaiting the master-copy for mass-production and distribution. According to him, marketers cared less what the script and film were about.

However, these marketers,

> Found out that producers will take high sums of money from the
> marketers to produce a film and they, the marketers, will not have good
> returns. I mean the film produced won't justify the money collected.
> Also, on the other hand, for some of us producers, we became
> marketers when we realized that when you use your funds toproduce a
> movie and give it to a marketer to sell, they gave preference to
> marketing their own movie at the detriment of yours.

> They won't want to release yours or if they eventually do, they won't
> give it the type of attention they give to their own movies. As a result,
> independent producers decided to become marketers as well. So, there
> is actually a thin line in Nollywood between who you call amarketer, a
> director or producer. You can't find that precision that you find in
> Hollywood, Bollywood and other western film making countries.

Essentially, in the beginning at least, the involvement of marketers in the filmmaking
process was by way of investment, and rarely anything more. They sought producers to bankroll,
while staying away from the creative aspect of filmmaking. However,the conditions under which
Nollywood operated in the 1990s compelled an organic re- organization of the relationship
between marketers and producers, and Ajaegbo gives an account of one of the events that
triggered these renegotiations:

> As a result, the marketers started going on locations and began making
> direct disbursements to the film crew. The release of *Taboo* in 1994
> marked the turning point, when the marketers contributed 90% of the
> resources in that movie, and they had an agreement with the producer
> on how the return on investment must be shared. The person at the
> center [producer] collected a large chunk of the money and made away
> with it. It was the turning point with that initial arrangement. People
> realized that 20-30 million naira could be made on a movie and one
> person will go away with it and we [marketers] won't be able to get our
> own share. After that incident, the attitude changed, and marketers now
> started to give the money to independentproducers. After the film was
> made, the producers returned it to the marketers…

This quote comes after Ajaegbo explains the production and distribution model as laid down by Kenneth Nnebue, following his success with *Living in Bondage.* Right after *Living in Bondage*, having funded and distributed the film, Nnebue's model was promptly adopted by successive practitioners. Looking to minimize potential losses, funding films became dispersed among multiple financiers, most of whom considered themselves marketers and producers. Among the group, a candidate would rise and volunteer to produce the film. This model posed its own unique challenges: According to Ajaegbo, the would-be producer was equally involved in the financing and marketing, while being in charge of the production process as well. In Nollywood's unregulated informal industry, thearrangement afforded the producer near limitless access and advantage. It was not long before the advantage was exploited and abused, and the Nnebue model was jettisoned for hiring or partnering with an independent producer who remained shut out from the businessend of the filmmaking process. The producer worked under the supervision of the marketer(s). While the producer managed the film production, the marketer(s) maintained their control over the areas of distribution and marketing.

That said, Ajaegbo notes, marketers' involvement in filmmaking, while supportive to independent producers and directors, reflected (in the DVD market, and still continues to reflect) growing suspicions between the marketer/financier and producer. As long as the system was informally structured, it provided no guidelines to mark jurisdictions in areas ofprofession and practice. Nollywood practitioners remained left to transact business on trust,or the absence of it. While caution is taken to refrain from ascribing any value judgment onthe informal transactional practice as a traditional and communal exercise, according to Ajaegbo, the merging of the offices of marketing, producing and directing arose when marketers lost confidence in the producer to whom they committed their investment.

Understandably, in the absence of agreed-upon metrics and deadlines, expectations betweenthe marketer who funded the production, and the producer responsible for executing production were commonly misaligned. Tari (actor, producer, director) confirms:

> The way most of us go about it, is not encouraging. A man who gives Tony, for instance, 10 million naira to shoot and Tony cannot give back, is discouraged to give another—that's a zero for us. When we take this money is when we remember we need to change apartments,cars etc. Say, a film that would probably cost about 30 million naira. You buy a car or rent or buy a house. You buy other things. Then you're left with 10 million naira. We are not thinking! Those things can still be bought after shooting - from the profit, depending on your bargaining power. Shoot your movie, go to cinema, make profit, the man takes his capital and you share profit.

For this reason, marketers then took on film production. Similarly, producers couldno longer count on their marketer's enthusiasm in selling the films they, producers, handed to them, since the same marketer may have invested much more elsewhere and may have committed accordingly. This consolidation of expertise and collapse of the vertical production chain produced complexities and contradictions in how the merging of these offices benefit the industry. These tensions are evident in Ajaegbo's contradictory positions below:

> There is actually a thin line in Nollywood between who you call a marketer, a director or producer. You can't find that precision that you find in Hollywood, Bollywood and other western film making countries. The disadvantages are that people who don't have any training or technical knowhow participate in the production of film, which is not so good. Most of these movies churned out in Nollywood do not conform to standards, and globally acceptable structures. The reason for this is that most of the people in the industry have no thorough qualifications and training in film production.

Then, he quickly adds:

> Another visible advantage is that it gave encouragement to investors because they could actually say how their money was utilized—good or bad. The risk bearers were able to justify their investment. Even if they lost, they accepted it as good losses and moved on. They were able to live with this than allowing someone to make away with their money without producing a quality film. No one could mess them up, so there was a high business confidence with this type of model. That's another visible advantage I can tell you.

Contradictions as this signal the unique relationship Nollywood practitioners have with the industry, which on the one hand clings to Nollywood's informal structure as a means by which to differentiate and celebrate its success from more established Western cinemas; but on the other, they are unable to ignore the challenges Nollywood's informalityposes to the industry, and they find themselves looking to conventional Western industry practices for answers.

4.7 Late-2000s Nollywood and the Industrial Conditions that Helped Precipitate the Emergence of New Nollywood

Around the late-2000s, which is when a number of writers suggest many aspects of Old Nollywood came to an end (Chamley 2012, Haynes 2014, Adejunmobi 2015), a major technological shift in the form of online streaming distribution gained roots in Nigeria and Africa. "The Report: Nigeria 2013" (2013), published by Oxford Business Group, found Nollywood "benefitted from rising internet penetration rates in recent years. Iroko Partners, a Lagos-Based firm that was established in September 2010, has acquired the rights to large collections of Nollywood films and albums and made them available online for paying subscribers" (285). Indeed, the creation of Iroko TV began the establishment of locally- owned Nigerian online media platforms. It is no coincidence that Iroko TV's launch corresponded with

the increasingly unbearable challenge piracy posed to a market that, untilthe late-2000s, was run

exclusively by DVD production and distribution. Furthermore, "The Report" (2013) noted that

Iroko TV opened up Nollywood films to Nigerian diasporic communities, and "the company

pays filmmakers, musicians and other content producers touse their work [which was] relatively

novel in Nigeria, where CD and DVD piracy are common" (285). While Iroko TV and

subsequent similar platforms have been unable to move distribution completely online and deal a

deathblow to piracy networks (Okome 2019, 76), what they achieved was to provide a robust

alternative to the piracy-driven distribution system in Nigeria. The conditions that precipitated

the introduction of digital media platforms in Nigeria exceeded matters of economics and piracy,

even if at the end of the day, almost all the other conditions were effectively subsumed by the

economics of its distribution. Other nations, like South Africa, with their more established

satellite services and terrestrial digital television technologies entered into the Nigerian film

industry and introduced it to other forms of distribution. While it might not have gained a

stranglehold inNigeria in its early days, that would change over time, and the nature of terrestrial

technologies prepared the grounds for the successes of Iroko TV and others. The entry of more

regulated transnational media distribution platforms into Nigeria is widely viewed to be a benefit

to the Nollywood industry. For example, Jacobs (2019) puts it this way: "As for Nigerian

audiences, they judge MultiChoice [owner of DSTV, a South African direct broadcast satellite

service] as having had "a positive effect" on Nollywood… what matters most to Nigerian

audiences of satellite television "is accessibility", which DSTV provides even better than discs

[VCDs, DVDs]" (103). Also, speaking of DSTV's relationship with Nollywood in a positive

light, Adejunmobi (2011) states, "Starting in 2003, DStv created a channel for African films

titled AfricaMagic. The line-up of films on AfricaMagic was (and remains) so heavily dominated

by Nollywood films that some commentators have suggestedthat the channel should be called

NigeriaMagic" (70) This excitement by writers is, however, not shared by the Nollywood

practitioners I interviewed, who consider South Africa's foray into Nollywood with a good

degree of cynicism. As far back as the late-1980s, when NTA's local TV series were doing well,

Keppy recalls:

> We had *Checkmate* and *Ripples* [TV series] at the time. So, Producers
> from South Africa invited ten of us. I was one of the ten…What they
> wanted to do was buy into our clout, locally, introducing us as their
> characters on their soaps gradually. But they did not agree to our terms.
> You know we had terms because we didn't want to … we considered
> ourselves as Nigerians. You know, as Nigerians, we have some amount of
> pride. We believed we had also grown in someamount of capacity and we
> requested, after we had roundtable discussions among ourselves, that we
> wanted a couple of things. We wanted a full-page credit, for instance…
> because we also knew at thetime that they wanted us more than we
> needed them. Around that time, they had sent in people to come and
> understudy Nigerians. Now, they own the movie industry. They came,
> they understudied usand now, they're running the shot, so to speak.

Ajaegbo, in his capacity as the chairman of the Film and Video Producers Marketers Association

of Nigeria expresses the same sentiments as Keppy:

> It should be noted that whoever controls your distribution, controls
> your industry. That is one thing Nigerian Film Makers should realizeat
> any point in time. Today, the broadcast is being controlled by a South
> African company in the name of DSTV and Africa Magic.
>
> When you talk about broadcast distribution, they control it, you can't
> take it away. They dictate what happens and what does not happen. In
> the DVD market, the local market controls it. The exhibition is
> controlled by the cinema owners; they dictate what will happen and
> what will not happen.

The challenges South Africa poses to Nigeria's film industry date back decades, and

according to Keppy, these South African media powerhouses took advantage of the industry's

informal structure. Practitioners who groaned under the burden of piracy were compelled to

grudgingly ink deals with South African media companies. Ajaegbo talks about the splintering of the local market that took place in the late 2000s between three major distribution systems: piracy networks maintained their grip on DVD Asaba films, South Africa's DSTV controlled the satellite digital services in Nigeria, and Cineplexes were re-emerging to take hold of the exhibition space. A more diverse and competitive distribution terrain, plus the competition of these platforms for Nollywood films, which resulted in larger funding commitments by them, will strongly encourage the quickening ofthe arrival of what became New Nollywood around 2010. In conclusion, the common reduction of the concept of informality in Nollywood to a modern, capitalist phenomenon can minimize our attention to how the cinema is influenced by preceding Nigerian arts regimes. Some of Nigeria's postcolonial, modern capitalist African arts practices appear to evolve from -or in the least, correlate with- precolonial, pre-modern Nigerian performance art practices and philosophies. As a result, the origins of some of what we call informal practices in postcolonial Nigerian cinemas are non or extra (existing outside of)-capitalist. That universalizing, modern capitalist principles have co-opted them as solely capitalist phenomenon should not erase the fact that many of Nigeria's informal practices were formed outside of modern capitalist ideologies to meet non-capitalist needs.

CHAPTER 5:
AN EMERGING DIRECTION IN NEW NOLLYWOOD

Rather than the use of my conclusion chapter to draw on a sort of thread that runs through the dissertation, toward something of a closure, I use this chapter to open up this project to outline a new and emerging direction for Nollywood's notion of film as a place for positively influencing Nigerians' perception of their realities. While this philosophy generally remains the same in Nollywood, its mode and approach are currently evolving among certain filmmakers and producers. My outline of these changes in this Nollywood film philosophy, which have not been recognized in Nollywood scholarship yet, is a metaphorical indication that this research project is better seen as ongoing, and a conclusionwould be premature.

5.1 Transnationalism: New Nollywood's Neorealism and the Role of International Film Festivals

To conclude, I want to explore a cadre of New Nollywood filmmakers and their post-2010 introduction of a nation-specific neorealist film style into the Nollywood terrain. To briefly describe neorealism, I borrow from Bert Cardullo (2011), who defines neorealismas a film style developed in the 1940s in response to:

> …the banality that had long been the dominant mode of Italian cinema, but also against prevailing socioeconomic conditions in Italy.With minimal resources, the neorealist filmmakers worked in real locations, using local people as well as professional actors; they improvised their scripts, as need be, on site; and their films conveyed a powerful sense of the plight of ordinary individuals oppressed by political circumstances beyond their control (19)

Certainly, neorealism as a film style has since extended beyond Italy, with the reading of neorealism into films that have come out of countries as diverse as the US, where Laura Roberto

(2014) uses Martin Scorsese's interviews and his anti-establishment and independent, art house style to argue for a Hollywood filmmaker with a taste for neorealism.In Indian cinema, Biswas (2007) notes that in the 1950s, a desire by Indians to move from tradition to modernity found a relevant aesthetic in Italian neorealism, which was a departure from the mainstream and conventional non-secular type that predominantly trafficked in spectacle over narrative (72-73). However, neorealism underwent a vernacular rearticulation in India whereby it reached into its own past to connect with 20th century Indian novels (75). In the case of Iranian neorealism, Naficy (2011) states it came about as aresult of growing political discontent among the Iranian people toward their pre- revolutionary governments. These grumblings presented themselves in the form of counterculture to the one sanctioned by the state. In filmmaking, according to Naficy, discontent among the people adopted neorealism as an opposition to the dominant escapist song and dance melodrama genre of the 1950s and 1960s. Either in motivation or/and characterization, we find elements of the neorealism the above scholars describe with regards to the US, India and Iran in New Nollywood's neorealism.

Nigeria's new neorealist filmmakers include Ema Edosio Deelan (directed *Kasala,* 2018), Abba Makama (directed *Green White Green,* 2016, and *The Lost Okoroshi,* 2019), C.J. Obasi (directed *Ojuju* (2014), and *O-Turn* (2015) and a few others. Most of these neorealist filmmakers travel in the same circles and perceive of their work as belonging to amovement. Many of them belong to what they call 'Surreal16', a filmmaking collective.[25] I also look at Kunle Afolayan's *Mokalik* (2019) as belonging to Nigeria's neorealist category,even if Afolayan himself has not declared his subscription to this unique film mode in Nigeria. These filmmakers cut across ethnicities and cultures, so the neorealist film style in New Nollywood is not unique to a

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[25] British Film Institute did a detailed article on Surreal 16 in 2018: https://bit.ly/3tp7gbn

Nigerian sub-nation, ranging from Imo (Southern Nigeria) to Jos (the Middle Belt region). Other than that, these filmmakers have spent muchof their lives in Lagos, and all of those I include in this project reside in Lagos, which compels curiosity with regards to the role of Lagos in informing the neorealist style.

Furthermore, other than reading transnationalism of Nollywood in the context of diasporic and international production (Jedlowski 2013; Samyn 2013), transnational cultural affiliations (Larkin 1997), transnational informal distribution (Miller 2012) and globalized online distribution platforms (Obiaya 2010; Pratt 2015), I approach transnationalism in NewNollywood as it applies to Nigeria's new neorealist film mode and its complex relationship with international film festivals.

In general, New Nollywood's neorealist tradition subscribes to many of the characteristics Cardullo (2011) identifies in Italian neorealism. Nollywood's neorealism foregrounds the experience of the Nigerian working/lower class. Lawton (1979) states Italian neorealism "eliminat[es] entirely any intromission of fantasy" (8). While descriptionsas this one by Lawton may be contested for their absoluteness, neorealism's general aversion for escapism has been well-theorized (see Wagstaff 1989; Sharma 2008). However, clear distinctions exist between New Nollywood neorealism and Italian neorealism as well, and these, together with similarities, will be highlighted during thecourse of this chapter.

5.2 Overview of New Nollywood Neorealism Practitioners

Among the group of young New Nollywood neorealist filmmakers (not in reference to age, but a denotation of their relatively contemporary entry into Nigeria's film industry) and their films, certain visual and aesthetic commonalities are beginning to emerge. While, so far,

filmmakers belonging to this burgeoning Nollywood film mode are but a few, their impact is far reaching, and their frequent presence in film festivals worldwide has earned them a unique kind of acknowledgment and reputation. On average, many of these neorealist filmmakers engage more extensively with global film cultures and practices, particularly in North America and Europe.

As a film form, Nollywood's neorealism is beginning to take its legitimate place inthe mapping of Nigeria's cinema. This new film mode articulates a new and different relationship with the Nigerian audience from Nollywood's escapist cinema. New Nollywood's neorealism addresses the Nigerian audience differently, and its philosophy appears to beautify, or in the least makes acceptable Nigerians' ownership of their gritty realities. The aesthetic engenders pride in the common, the rough, the plebeian and the everyday experience of the majority of its local audience. It is an aesthetic interested in thedepiction of the experience of the Nigerian people as they are, as opposed to one of escapism which abandons the present in anticipation of a kinder future, and which tends tohover outside the reach of its audience.

It must be acknowledged that unlike Nollywood's escapist film from which has traditionally circulated via the DVD format, films in the neorealist tradition in Nigeria have mostly found their place in film festivals around the world -particularly ones in the West. Where Nigeria's commercial film-gatekeepers have largely expressed a rigid reluctance to distributing this cadre of films locally, because they envision their low marketability, Western film festivals in particular became their primary site for exposure. Until recently, and, but for a significant few—Afolayan's *Mokalik* for example, international film festivals presented the first only outlet for this kind of films. Thus, they provided, at least in theory, a'merry-go-round' route for beaming back into Nigerian mainstream film culture a new Nigerian cinematic mode that, in the

first place, originated in Nigeria. After exhausting theirfilm festival opportunities, these films, for example *Kasala!, Green-White-Green, The Lost Okoroshi* have recently found a home on Netflix. Both *Ojuju* and *O-Town* are streaming on KweliTV, an online streaming platform that exclusively curates contents owned and produced by members of the African Diaspora.

The first generation of New Nollywood filmmakers I associate with the neorealist aesthetic -a generation still relatively and historically infant -have a very small or non- existent footprint in the pre-2010 straight-to-DVD Nollywood era. Hence, one will be hard-pressed to find productions of theirs circulating in Nigeria's informal distribution networks.In a sense, they can be defined as filmmakers without any significant mainstream popularityprior to their entry into film festivals. Their identities as notable filmmakers can be largely argued to derive from, and be a product of, their films screening at film festivals.

These filmmakers investigate meanings in the social, economic, and environmental structures within which Nigeria's working-class largely exists. New Nollywood neorealist filmmakers are less inclined to focus on capitalist pursuits as an end goal in Nigerian stories.This frees them from any pressures to preserve and employ local escapism tropes like preoccupations with wealth. Therefore, they delight in narratives and an aesthetic that call on the unvarnished, unfiltered, raw character of the everyday living experience of most Nigerians. While they may not necessarily speak of poverty (sometimes, it is even of happiness or contentment despite it), they are willing to set their films as a recognition ofNigeria's lower-class, most of whom are circumstantially removed from the life of extravagance central to the more traditional escapist Nollywood films.

I met some of these filmmakers at the 2019 Lagos Studies Association Conference in Nigeria, and later, on separate occasions, sat for interviews with two of them: Ema Edosio

Deelan, whose film *Kasala!* (2018) won awards at Motion Picture Film Festival (MPFF) and Indiefest Film Awards (IFA), and Abba Makama, whose film *Green White Green* (2016) screened at TIFF and Virginia Film Festival (VFF); his latest film, *The Lost Okoroshi* also screened at TIFF 2019. C.J Obasi's film, *Ojuju* (2014) debuted at Africa International Film Festival (AIFF), screened at Fantasia International Film Festival, Canada, and a couple more. His film, *O-Town* (2015) screened at Goteborg Film Festival in Sweden. Kunle Afolayan's *Mokalik* (2019), which went straight to Netflix, rather than through notable film festivals, also deserves some examination as it might indicate the beginnings of New Nollywood's neorealism's transition from its predominant film festival distribution to other distribution modes.

I engaged in a realistic discussion with these filmmakers, to address how film is a medium in their reality, and how this reality becomes the canvas on which they 'paint' their narratives. Edosio's *Kasala!* is set in a Lagos slum, and the narrative centres around a group of disadvantaged adolescents who resolve to 'steal' an uncle's car to attend a party. Of course, things take an unanticipated turn, and they find themselves scrambling to fix and return the car before the uncle's return home. *Kasala!'s* commitment to stepping outside Nollywood's more typical exploration of privilege becomes glaring from the start. We see beaten and scorched roads, lined with an abundance of broken-down vehicles; we are assailed by mostly poorly managed building structures squeezed up against each other, some residential, some makeshift spaces for apprenticeship services. We are denied any moment of respite from the reality in the slum, nor does an insertion of a wealthy charactertake our gaze to what is possible outside of the slums. This is a world complete in itself, even as it is incomplete. It is a neighbourhood the average Nigerian is, in the least, familiarwith, and to which he or she can relate. To quote Frank Ugobude from *BellaNaija*, one of Nigeria's most popular lifestyle websites:

Kasala stands out in so many ways, a lot different than your typical Nigerian movie. First, the location makes the project as real as it gets.If the recent discussions on social media are anything to go by, Nigerian film watchers are tired of seeing people who live in highbrow areas and drive fancy cars even while being broke and unable to afford food on their table. *Kasala* does justice to this, setting up in the dirty slums of Surulere and making it as real as real goes.

Edosio elaborates on her insistence on her depiction of reality: "Look, you come into the country, and the reality is that it's shitty. But it's beautiful shitty. Yeah, I mean, that's thereality I want to show on camera, not that everything is perfect". Beyond setting her film in a slum, her association with the socially-minded philosophy comes from her beatification of the 'shitty'.

Image 3: A scene from *KASALA!,* depicting the world of its characters

Image 4: A scene from *KASALA!,* depicting the world of its characters

Makama's *Green White Green,* which Edosio praises as largely responsible for inspiring her to shoot her own film, presents the same aesthetic, albeit slightly differently, asit does not take place in the slums. For Makama, the film, which hearkens to the colours on the Nigerian flag to reflect a nationalistic endeavour, actually articulates the experience of bohemian, middle class friends who decide to shoot a film, prior to their resumption at university. Self-reflexive, to say the least, the film throws us into the challenging reality behind low-budget filmmaking in Nigeria: rudimentary production style, cobbled-together props and improvised techniques and practices, and camera angles staged to reflect a degree of technical and artistic inexperience and naivete. This is the behind-the-scene reality from which Nollywood's escapist films are often made. Filmmaking in Nigeria is marked by informality, the understanding that lack and insufficiency underline process, and the ability and ingenuity to produce something out of near-nothing is key to artist survivability. *Green White Green* gives us access into that world. When I

put the question of style to Makama, he called on Cameron Bailey's (TIFF's artistic director)

reading of his work: "Your work reminds me of early Richard Linklater, early Spike Lee...".[26]

Makama's reference to Cameron Bailey's observation is an indirect confirmation of his

commitment to presenting the collective reality of Nigerian audiences in all its rawness.

Image 5: The broken equipment for their film explodes in *Green White Green*

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[26] A shared characteristic between Linklater and Lee, to which Cameron might have likely referred, is a history reflecting a commitment to depicting the unvarnished rawness of ordinary people's everyday reality: According to (Diawara, 1993) Lee's capture of the experiences of underprivileged Black American street life in such films as *Do The Right Thing* (1989) is a strong attempt at depicting reality as it is.

Linklater is also described as: "...connecting with empathetic audiences whose own realities had not (at least not yet) been deemed worthy of colonization by the major studios…They may have had limited production resources and little hope of wide distribution, but each filmmaker shared what Linklater identified and empathized with in the films of Eagle Pennell: 'He was kind of a folk artist who liked doing things in his own backyard. [...] Here's a guy who saw something unique about what was right in front of him' (2009:15)..." (Stone, 2013, p. 15).

For Obasi's *Ojuju,* which can be argued to have pioneered this style in 2014, despite being a zombie film with a subjective jaundice-yellowish colour tone that further perverts its world, is set in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, and its characters are at home within that space. Here, we have a seemingly irreconcilable contradiction: the zombie fantasy genre andthe neorealist film style. Yet, casting aside certain cultural, cinematic and genre expectations, and recalling the extent to which many Nigerian traditions and religions normalize the integration of the supernatural and transcendental in the natural and physical world, what is typically seen as fantasy may also be seen here as an element of (neo)realism.As a neorealist film, Obasi refuses to privilege the audience with the potential taste of paradise, wealth and glamour that may exist outside the world he has created, an aspirational goal capable of drawing attention away from its audience's likely present reality. In his behind-the-scenes interview on Youtube, Obasi's philosophy is uncannily familiar:

> I just wanted to do something that had a grassroot appeal. It just felt like, most of the time, the films we see coming out of this part of the world are mostly synthetic, and I just felt that it's about time we made a film that was as close to reality as possible. Without people driving posh cars and ladies all well made-up and stuff. I just wantedto see real people for a change… While I was in the area [film location], I just found it was a very interesting environment...an areaof people who supposedly live below average… I felt like this is Nigeria. This is 90% of Nigeria.

To contextualize the concept of the zombie in the reality he hoped to capture in hisfilm, Obasi's zombie becomes the perverted manifestation of an economic, social and environmental malaise in a poor community, where his characters are dependent on contaminated water that turns them into zombies.

The first film by a pre-2010 mainstream Nollywood filmmaker to employ a neorealism aesthetic, yet by-pass film festivals to go straight to Netflix is Kunle Afolayan's *Mokalik* (2019).

In his previous films, Afolayan commonly worked in the traditions of escapist cinema, his stories anchored to issues of power and/or wealth, or the pursuit of them. For example, his protagonists in *The Figuring: Araromire* (2009) find themselves under the control of a figurine bestowed with the power to provide wealth and good luck fora time, followed by misery; *Phone Swap* (2012) looks at the lives of two city folks in the upper middle class and upper class, with much of their story set around airport and airplane travels, symbols of high class, wealth and privilege in Nigeria; In *October 1* (2014), beyondits surface story of solving murder cases, the setting of the story around when Nigeria gained its independence from colonial rule in 1960 draws on themes of an imaginary, hope-filled future. At that point in Nigeria's history, there existed the heady feeling associated with the prospects of national independence, of coming into one's own, and of seeing the world as conquerable. The collective psyche, even if heavily tinged with naiveté, gave rise to a potpourri of ambition, pride, power, liberty and wealth. It is on this backdrop of hopefulness, a better tomorrow, the endowment of agency to Nigerians as a signification of freedom and liberty, that *October 1* hangs its focus on the postcolonial future that can be. In *Mokalik,* Afolayan jettisons the attractiveness of fantasy and aspirational ideal for value in present and gritty reality.

Afolayan shot all but the introductory scene of *Mokalik* in one location -an auto-mechanic village (*Mokalik* is the Yoruba vernacularization of the term 'mechanic). The filmis about Ponmile, a young boy from a wealthy family, whose father decides there is something to be learned by him spending a day at the mechanic's as an apprentice. Unlike in more developed societies, the auto-mechanic in Nigeria occupies one of the lowest rungs in the service sector. Its practice is further stigmatized by its informal mode of training, and its low-wage earning status. As such, Ponmile is plunged into a reality quite unlike his.

Image 6: The Mechanic centre in Mokalik, where almost the entire film is set

All of that said, we cannot under-emphasize the role of informality in New Nollywood's neorealist film traditions as well. These Nigerian filmmakers may have studiedabroad in addition to their engagement with cinema traditions like neorealism; they may have been deliberate in their decision to separate themselves from Nollywood's escapist cinema; their approach to film may point to a level of sophistication and critical understanding that Nollywood has not typically been known for. All of these, however, do not negate the fact that these filmmakers are also responding to an industry environment thatis economically challenging, and whose informality (and lack of standardization) creates a space for low-budget neo-realist films. Much like Okey Ogunjiofor's refusal to address the role of informality in his Nollywood vision in chapter 2, these Nigerian neorealist filmmakers are less eager to expound on the extent to which their motivations are informed by informality and its practices. Perhaps, because they consider informality much less than the more exciting neorealism genre they have created out of, and as a consequence of

informality, these filmmakers appear more comfortable talking about their film-form than their

industry. Yet, the role of informality as an economic phenomenon is something we must factor

in, recognizing that even Nigeria's neorealist filmmakers are not insulated from the same

challenges that have consistently plagued the industry. Therefore, the adoption of neorealism can

also be expected to be a practical and realistic response to prevailing headaches in Nigerian

filmmaking, most of which are attributed to the economic effect of informality. When both

Edosio and Makama reference informality's economic consequence on their work, it is

indirectly, and largely to reinforce their acumen and doggedness. Nonetheless, we get some

insight from such moments. On the question of funding, Edosioprovides a light-hearted but

telling account:

> Nobody wanted to give me money. There's hardly any funding for
> filming in Nigeria. So, what do I have? I have my skills as a
> cinematographer, as a director as an editor. So, I went around to borrow
> money. I threatened my sister I was going to steal her car; shegave me
> 200K. Everybody gave me money. I raised four million Naira and I
> produced, shot, directed and edited *Kasala!*, it was one ofthe hardest
> things that I did in my career.

Similarly, Makama, adds:

> I self-funded myself. And my sister, my business partner funded
> everything… I answer to no one, and I make whatever I want, and well
> I only answer to my sister who's kind of my consigliere, who gives me
> advice, but at the end of the day, I'll still do exactly what I feel is
> appropriate for the visual of the picture, you know, so yeah, ifit's like,
> it gives you freedom, creative freedom, it gives you freedomfrom...
> legally as well, you know, nobody's has a contract on your neck.

While not exclusive to informal industries, it is more common in informal industriesto

have a scenario where filmmakers adjust their film production to fit their available funding,

whereas more institutionalized cinemas like Hollywood possess stronger pipelines for providing

required funding. Even if my interviewees refrained from touching on it, we can presume that New Nollywood's neorealist filmmakers' disinclination to cast establishedstars exceeds ideological persuasions. These filmmakers are usually scraping funds togetherto shoot their films, and financial constraints expectedly factor into actor hire. Altogether, Edosio's N4,000,000 (US$9,600) presented its own financial inhibitions, and remaining in the neorealist tradition, where the film settings required little or no detailed alteration for example, is a practical choice. Again, while this is merely a speculation as Edosio made no reference to such calculations, it is one that deserves a significant amount of consideration. As well, Makama's sense of freedom to make whatever film he wanted derived from how he had raised funding for his film. He was able to make a different kind of film on account of his sense of independence. From Makama's assertion in the interview that no distributor showed any interest in his film, we can conclude a more formalized film industry, were it tohave invested in his film, would likely have endeavoured to redirect him to the more formulaic, escapist Nollywood style. Thus, Makama has also been a benefactor, even if indirectly, of Nollywood's informality.

5.3 New Nollywood's Neorealism and Old Nollywood's Escapist Style: Continuities and Discontinuities

The relationship New Nollywood has with more traditional and older Nollywood is more complex than to imagine anything nearing a clear demarcation. Rather, there are areasof continuities and discontinuities, and each tradition, as a consequence, presents both advantages and disadvantages.

Aside from the fact that Nigeria's film industry homogenizes New Nollywood's neorealism and Nollywood's more dominant escapist under the much broader realities of informality, other areas exist that highlight continuities between both film traditions.

Neorealism has been at the centre of how I analyze New Nollywood in relation to Italian neorealism, placing a strong focus on the working/ low-income class experience. Unlike its Italian counterpart, but following in the tradition of Nollywood's escapist cinema, New Nollywood's neorealism is not inherently averse to fantasy elements in its narratives. As earlier referenced, Obasi's *Ojuju* is about zombies; Makama's *The Lost Okoroshi* is about the possession of a security guard by a spirit. Obasi is currently in the post-production phaseof his latest film, *Mami-Wata,* a film about a mermaid-like deity. However, what might seem like a sharp contradiction between realism and fantasy is overwhelmingly mitigated by the unrelenting foregrounding of the narratives' social and economic context. When these films have a fantasy component, they derive their essence from the more central theme of the characters' everyday reality and social environment. In this, New Nollywood neorealismshares a similarity with the more established pre-2010 Nollywood escapist cinema. Among New Nollywood's neorealist filmmakers, there exists an enduring interest in the supernatural and the spiritual, and their incorporation into their characters' experiences. Yet,Nigeria's neorealist filmmakers tend not to employ the supernatural as a means to obtaining wealth or power.

Another major continuity between New Nollywood and its more dominant escapist counterpart, which is a distinction from Italian neorealism is found in the tone projected by these two cinemas. Where Italian neorealism "was accused of deep pessimism" because its focus on depicting the on-going direness of the Italian postwar experience (Bolelsaw and Turaj 1988, 16), New Nollywood's neorealist cinema aligns with Nollywood's escapist cinema when it subtly projects an optimism that underlies its narratives, images and message. This positive tone, broadly looked at, is not unlike the optimistic and remedial character embodied in Nollywood's older escapist cinema. To further nuance this point, however, a more detailed look

at how Nollywood's neorealism is ameliorative is helpful. New Nollywood's neorealism is not

without a militant, post/anti-colonial strain. As a rejection of colonial ideologies, this film style

is a critique, not only of colonial and Westernfascination with depicting images of

impoverished, anemic Africa, but also of Nollywood films which go to great lengths to appeal

to what they imagine are Western sensibilities. In *Kasala!*, Edosio's critique of how poverty in

Africa is typically depicted in media images is achieved with the energy of her characters, the

pacing of the film, her choice of an engaging, lively colour palette, and the effervescence of the

film's scoring. These definitiveelements question the assumptions of greyness and gloom in

relation to Africa's impoverished regions, as commonly portrayed in the media. Edosio

poignantly put it this way to me:

> I saw the depth of the filth, but there were children swimming in this
> water. They were happy. You know there are problems here. But
> nobody shows the strength of this network, the average Nigerian, the
> guy pushing the wheelbarrow, who makes 1000 Naira… Nobody
> shows that strength. Nobody shows the happiness. Nobody shows a
> sense of community...

This motivation strongly reflects a desire to contest and reject capitalism's

universalization of wealth, material possessions and privilege as the complete and exclusive

marker of happiness across cultures and societies. As such, there is a poetry about New

Nollywood neorealism's depiction of the mundane, the raw, and the plebian. Through narrative,

it beautifies the 'ugly', and makes interesting the narrative of the seemingly uninteresting; it

sheds light on the face totally consumed and rendered unrecognizable in thethronging multitude

drowned out by the realities of life.

Similarly, with Makama's *Green White Green,* the film does not suggest an attack on the

Nollywood film form, or a comment on its industrial weakness. *Green White Green* presents

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itself largely as a positive critique of how Nollywood makes things work in an environment where the absence of funding defines the reality of the filmmaker. For Makama, the emergence of this reality on screen produces a certain visual aesthetic, which ought to remain no longer confined to the behind-the-scenes, but deserves its place on screen, to disrupt a space that has otherwise mostly served escapist purposes. It is a film that applauds, perhaps is boastful of, the reality of Nigerian filmmakers and the challenges theyface, and the outcome of their dedication, determination and grit.

In Obasi's *Ojuju,* the film narrative refuses to dwell on the economic conditions ofits characters as something to be despised and rejected—even if these conditions served as the context for the narrative. Obasi's characters are lively and take the challenge life has dealt them with boldness.

For Afolayan's *Mokalik,* a very didactic film engaged in the promotion of charity, contentment and hard work, the film advocates for the appreciation of whatever reality one finds himself/herself, and whatever vocation one finds to do. From the very beginning when we are introduced to Ponmile, not once do we get a glimpse into his privileged life. In the tradition of neorealism, we spend the next hundred minutes with economically disadvantaged Nigerians, but of a content and happy kind. We, alongside Ponmile, vicariously live the everyday experience of the Nigerian mechanic and the struggles intrinsically associated with the practice. In a sense, Ponmile is shedding off the audiences' ideation of a future utopia, and calling them back to their present reality, and the kind of positivity one may find in it. This is not a romanticization of harsh realities, or a naiveté about the extent to which life challenges are overwhelming for many Nigerians. Rather, this film style manifests as a sort of defiance, a defiance against general and conventional perceptions of poverty as something to be shameful about, to be hidden, and not

publicized.These neorealist filmmakers in Nigeria opt to counter these ideas, by confronting and challenging the viewer with challenging images that are, nonetheless, backdrops for optimistic storytelling. The characters are inseparable from their economic context, yet they refuse to anchor their stories on these unfavourable conditions: they go out and party, play,work, love. Edosio describes her motivation thus:

> Yes, there's poverty, but how can you show their happiness, which isa universal topic? How can I show how they fall in love? What is the meaning of love to them? And these are the kind of stories that I'm interested in telling.

As a philosophical approach, New Nollywood neorealism shares similar social intentions with that of Nollywood's escapist cinema, even if they differ in their mode of address: the former rejects assumptions that its local audience must subject themselves to mental transcendence to temporarily experience the sense of worth, comfort and plenty theyfail to experience in their reality. Instead, it unearths meaning and strength, a glimmer of quivering, yet stubborn worth from within the audiences' reality and presents it to them as unique codes of value from which they can take pride. This is a different kind of appeal, possessing a rigid effort to remain unpretentious in its mode of conversation with the audience.

Location shooting is another aesthetic continuity connecting New Nollywood's neorealism to Nollywood's older and dominant escapist cinema. While New Nollywood's neorealist aesthetic seeks to confront the audience with the experience of the Nigeria's working class, while its location-shooting is also overwhelmingly conditioned by the lack offunding and the absence of studios and their accessorial technologies (Haynes 2007), shooting on location in Nollywood is not an exclusively New Nollywood phenomenon.

Nollywood has primarily shot on location since its inception in the 1990s, and this styleremains in New Nollywood's neorealist cinema.

Discontinuities, however, also exist between Nollywood's escapist and neorealist traditions. In how actors are cast, a different motivation and structure exists between these two cinemas: like Italian neorealism, which strove to overwhelmingly cast non-professionalactors in an agenda to reflect the degree to which the film was by/for the people (Cardullo 2011, 36), the New Nollywood neorealist filmmaker also desires and decides on an actor onthe basis of how unknown they are. Invariably, this makes casting in New Nollywood's neorealist cinema very dissimilar to Nollywood's escapist tradition, which has developed a supporting star-system from which just about every of its filmmakers aches to find a willingactor (Tsika 2015). In contrast, New Nollywood's neorealist filmmakers break away from Nollywood's more traditional reliance on inaccessible, high-income earning actors. That said, the typical actor in New Nollywood's neorealist cinema is not a non-professional in the same way it is used in Italian neorealism. In New Nollywood neorealist cinema, the actors are better described as 'not yet' professionals: they may not have a history in acting, but are hoping to become professionals in the future, eventually establishing themselves as high-earning stalwarts of Nollywood escapist cinema.

What have these cinemas gained and lost in the process? New Nollywood's neorealist cinema gains the advantage of bringing an additional approach to articulating theNigerian experience on screen, thereby, enriching and broadening the Nollywood (postcolonial African Cinema) discourse. It opens more possibilities for young Nigerian filmmakers whose pessimistic view of Nollywood's informality might have completely discouraged them from entering into the industry. Nollywood's neorealist cinema has managed to transcend the limiting encumbrances

that have typically restricted Nollywood'sescapist cinema from appealing to film festivals. For all of that, there have also been losses.

Currently, if we should return to how elite culture has been more universally understood, New Nollywood's neorealist cinema would fall under the category of elite culture. As I earlier noted, I met these neorealist filmmakers for the first time at an academic conference,where their films were praised by researchers and critics alike. To the degree that it rejects certain elements of escapist entertainment, New Nollywood's neorealism suggests a more critical and serious tone, even if it has scarcely jettisoned Nollywood's interest in the comedic. Its willingness to confront the harsh Nigerian reality more directly projects an inherent desire not to give in to pleasure and fantasy as escapist tools. A consequence, as it has been with cinemas worldwide that have been tagged with an elitist identity, is that Nigeria's neorealism reorganizes Nollywood's audience structure. Nollywood's neorealist cinema continues to struggle with appealing to a mass-audience that generally seeks a film style whose uplifting, remedial and comedic elements are more visible, more blatant, and more on the surface. As I further elaborate upon in the next section of this chapter, Nigerian neorealist filmmakers' dismal success to secure local distribution is a proof of their films' local penetration. Film festivals have become the primary distribution and exhibition networks for these neorealist films, with digital platforms like Netflix increasingly showingan interest in them. Both of these avenues have done little to encourage any mass interest within Nigeria. Film festivals and their inaccessibility continue to perpetuate perceptions ofelitism. Similarly, in Nigeria, digital streaming platforms are luxuries enjoyed by Nigeria's upper and elite class. These permutations are notoriously geographical, nevertheless. Film festivals are more accessible to Nollywood audiences in the diaspora, although that fact does not altogether eliminate the image of elitism that has always burdened

film festivals (Dovey 2015). Also, most of Nigeria's neorealist films are beginning to make it on to streaming platforms like Netflix and Amazon Prime where they become accessible to the significant number of Nigerian and African diasporic communities in Europe and North America. These streaming platforms are nowhere as demarcative and indicative of social and economic classes in these Western societies for example. As a consequence, Nigeria'sneorealist cinema has a bigger presence outside of Nigeria than it does within. Therefore, where its elitist identity hinges on both the critical nature of its visual aesthetic and inaccessibility within Nigeria, only its aesthetic quality eventually qualifies it as somewhatelitist among its diasporic audiences. In essence, there exists a subtle difference between how Nigeria's neorealist cinema is perceived among local audiences in Nigeria and amongdiasporic audiences.

5.4. New Nollywood Neorealism and Its Transnational Relations

In the most practical sense, the notion of 'national cinema' is a problematic one, because it assumes homogeneities and exclusivities within nation-state boundaries (Higson2000). According to Shaw (2013), "[t]his problem is resolved by having 'transnational' replace 'national' as a new conceptual framework within which to examine film cultures" (49). Broadly, the key approaches to reading transnationalism into cinema are in its transnational production (Crofts 1998), distribution and exhibition (Higson 2000; Higbee and Lim 2010). Other writers have explored informal market systems in their transnationalcharacter as means of distributing pirated films across formal borders (Villazana 2013).

Writers Shohat and Stam (2003) have examined transnationality in cinema as a means for West's reinforcement of the (neo)colonial status among its former colonies. Rather than themore common approach of studying the transnational relations between the West/Global

South, colonizer/former colonies, Larkin (1997) looks at the horizontal relationships between two former colonies: India and Nigeria, and their cultural and religious similarities.Here, I choose not to focus on the above approaches. Instead, I look at how Stuart Hall's (1997) concept of ethnicities, Steven Vertovec's (1999) use of Hall in looking at transnationalism, and Shaw's (2013) certain groupings of transnational cinema modes help my analysis of New Nollywood's neorealism.

Hall (1997) sees ethnicity expressed as contradictions which occurs within the globalization process and is about the cultures on the margins of colonial empires that are increasingly asserting themselves against the colonial Centre. The colonial Centre has subsumed these cultures' differences and diversity in the name of preserving, in this instance, the United Kingdom's self-indulgence through its exploitation of Commonwealth members. Hall sees these Commonwealth Non-Western members as seizing certain westernideas and technologies to tell their own local stories, differentiating themselves from colonial Britain by choosing not to employ these ideas and technologies as a means by which to 'take-over' the world (39). But then, according to Hall, even these marginal places are not static, and very quickly that one learns any attempt to define their uniqueness is equally an effort to highlight how they have been hybridized by influences from the colonialCentre (36). Hence, Vertovec (1999) looks at transnationalism as a trans-border affiliation that may occur between unrelated identities, which have, however, come together because of some shared ideas. Vertovec says, for Hall, ever-changing representations conditioned bydiasporic or transnational influences "provide an 'imaginary coherence' for malleable identities" (450). Similarly, Robin Cohen (1996) employs Hall to state:

> [T]ransnational bonds no longer have to be cemented by migration orby
> exclusive territorial claims. In the age of cyberspace, a diaspora
> can, to some degree, be held together or re-created through the mind,
> through cultural artefacts and through a shared imagination (516).

The emphasis here is transnationalism that occurs on the level of shared ideas, imaginations,understandings among diverse peoples, communities or institutions within different nation- state boundaries. These transnational relations have been brought about by digital technologies and the fluidity with which these technologies allow information to travel across borders. They can also be seen to be partly responsible for a number of Deborah Shaw's (2013) fifteen groupings of how a cinema can be transnational:

> transnational modes of production, distribution and exhibition;
> transnational modes of narration; cinema of globalization; films with
> multiple locations; exilic and diasporic filmmaking; film and cultural
> exchange; transnational influences; transnational critical approaches;
> transnational viewing practices; transregional/transcommunity films;
> transnational stars; transnational directors; the ethics of
> transnationalism; transnational collaborative networks; national films
> (52).

Of these fifteen, I focus on three: transnational modes of narration, influences and viewing practices. I examine the first two briefly, while I do a more extensive study of the third.

Indeed, New Nollywood's neorealist style comes over sixty years after the decline of neorealism in Italian cinema in the 1950s. Granted that these countries are culturally and historically very dissimilar, how might the emergence of neorealism in Nigeria suggest a transnational relationship between Nollywood and post-WWII Italian cinema? The crop of New Nollywood neorealist filmmakers I examine here, in addition to their relative youthfulness, are more interested in differentiating themselves from Old Nollywood. They

appear to have determined identifying with filmmakers, conventions, styles and industries not local or restricted within their own nation-state borders is their path to self-assertion. AsI earlier stated, these filmmakers are more sophisticated and cosmopolitan. As film makers, critics and cinephiles, they are generally savvier than the crop of film practitioners that populated the industry in the 1990s. Often, their filmmaking training have benefitted from film education in the West, among other like-minded filmmaking communities. For example, after graduating from Ogun State University in Nigeria with a Bachelor of Science, Ema Edosio studied at the New York Film Academy. Obasi has been in a series ofEuropean film workshops, including LIM2019 Workshop in Krakow, Poland, where he came in contact with broad and diverse film traditions. Kunle Afolayan, who I hesitate to categorize a neorealist filmmaker, since he has so far made only one film in this style, studied filmmaking at the New York Film Academy. As transnational influences and as a narrative style Italian neorealism informs how these filmmakers make films in Nigeria and for the Nigerian audience. It was therefore not altogether surprising when Edosio confirmedto me the style she was after is that of the "...keke man" (bicycle man), a direct reference to one of Italian neorealism's most celebrated films, the *Bicycle Thief* (De Sica, 1949). Her exposure to, and adoption of, Italian neorealism is a clear evidence of transnational ideas shared among culturally diverse peoples, who happen to connect on the level of filmmakingand in their interest to capture the harsh economic realities of their people.

5.5 Transnational Viewing Practices: New Nollywood Neorealism and the International Film Festival Circuit

In general terms, by curating a film made outside of their own national boundaries, film festivals are participating in the transnationalization of that film. According to de Valck (2013), film festivals,

> are located at the nexus of local-global relationship. to an awareness of transnational differences and connections. They serve as meeting points and hubs for international communities of film professionals (filmmakers, critics, producers, etc.) whose careers are built in the transnational space of festival screenings. (2)

The regular entry of Nollywood films into international film festivals is a recent phenomenon. International film festivals were not receptive to films that came out of Nollywood's straight-to-VHS/DVD industry (Wong 2011, 66), and Haynes (2016) attributes this historical challenge to, among other things, poor sound production (XVI). In post-2010, however, New Nollywood films have more frequently screened at major international film festivals. Examples include *Eyimofe* (Berlinale 2020), *Taxi Driver: Oko Ashewo* (TIFF 2016), *76* (TIFF 2016). These recent developments have prompted an interest in the role of international film festivals in the transnationalization and internationalization of New Nollywood (see. Haynes 2014; Adejunmobi 2014). So far, the absence of scholarship on New Nollywood's neorealism as a sub-category of New Nollywood also means it has not yet been duly examined in relation to international film festivals. To make my argument here, a brief look at the transnationalism and film festival frameworks I employ is necessary.

The study of media imperialism is a space for analyzing transnational hierarchical and imperial relations between the media industries and cultures of the Global South and that of the

West (Boyd-Barrett 2015). In *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (2014), Shohat and Stamelaborate on the imperial, hegemonic and Euro-American character of global media networks, which can be traced back to colonial Europe's use of the ethnographic and exhibitionist camera, together with other technologies in general, to propagate an ideology of racial supremacy in Africa (104-105). Euro-American domination of global media networks continues to legitimize the idea that First World countries are cultural transmitters,while the former colonies in Asia, Africa and the Americas are the consumers and spectators (30). Beyond that, power-dynamics favourable to the West are perpetuated in the periphery through the capitalization of media and the reinforcement of a subjective, Western impression and expectation of the African image.

For my analysis, it is helpful to approach film festivals as a phenomenon of Eurocentrism and nationalism, having originated under Mussolini's fascist regime in 1932,when the Venice Film Festival was established (Loist 2016). Similarly, in his analysis of Asian film festivals, Nornes (2014) states, "This should hardly be surprising, because the international film festival world is embedded in geopolitical structures and epistemologies that grant Europe the status of subject" (246). Loist (216) builds on Nornes, stating,

> old engrained (post-)colonial structures as well as language barriers,
> which are borne out of a long- standing Eurocentric "first Europe, then
> elsewhere"-or respectively a "first Hollywood, then elsewhere"-
> stance, that have hindered free flow and exchange, andresulted in the
> ignorance of European and North American (51).

Regardless that Western film festivals may have Eurocentric sentiments, and perpetuate Western supremacy and colonial ideals, non-Western films continue to rely on them. After all, as Loist (2016) points out, "festivals have become an important networked global distribution route for "alternative cinema."" (52). Others have argued for a more complex and nuanced film festival character, noting for example that film festivals are also:industries with internally generated

agendas (Archibald & Miller 2011), spaces of/for activism (Tasc6n 2015), a globalizing and post-nation phenomenon (Palis 2015). That said, implicit Eurocentrism continues to underlie film festivals today (Stringer 2016).

Here, I look at how New Nollywood's neorealist cinema complicates its relationshipwith film festivals in the West. I look at how the New Nollywood's neorealism reclaims thepower to define the African identity and resisting colonial expectations in international film festivals, which are transnationalizing agents. Transnationalism like Nollywood is a 'messy and internally differentiated phenomena—not one thing!

New Nollywood's neorealist filmmakers understand that if they think of their local audience enough to choose to make films about, and for them, they also must find a way around a market system unfavourable to their penetration. Edosia explains:

> When I made it, I was like, okay, fine. I've made this film. What next?
> And I took it to cinemas. Everybody rejected it... unfortunately,the
> gatekeepers would not allow this certain kind of narrative, a certain
> kind of stories to be told. There's a way for you to tell your story.
> There's a way for you to fight for your dreams. And that's how it
> happened with the film festival.

Makama puts it similarly:

> If my film hadn't gone to a festival, you wouldn't be having this
> conversation with me. You wouldn't know who I was. I wouldn't have
> been at the LSA conference… if I hadn't gone the festival route,if I
> decided to have put it in the cinema with virtually no marketing budget
> and no distributor that believed in the project, you know, my film
> would be nowhere.

The idea that (international) film festivals discovered Nigeria's new and still emerging neorealism smacks of the fallacy of colonial thought that discovery begins only atthe point of contact with Western legitimizing systems. An example would be such as offered by Ulrich Gregor's in his interview with de Valck (2007), while referencing film festivals intervention in cinema culture: there is "no new cinema cultures to be discovered" (71). However, but for film festivals—largely ones in the West—New Nollywood's neorealistcinema risked remaining in near complete obscurity in Nigeria for a much longer time.

Around the world, thousands of film festivals open to audiences yearly, each equipped to ensure its selection processes conform to its philosophy and mission. When it comes to their relationship with non-Western films, the legacy of colonial paternalism continues to run through the veins of most Western film festivals (Dovey 2015: 37; Wong 2011: 61). Film festivals in the West have largely failed to shake off the enduring colonial ideologies that inform how they determine and judge which African films best articulate colonial interpretations of Africa. Bill Nichols (1994) talks about film festivals allowing us the opportunity to experience the unfamiliar, the different and new auteurist styles (17). Yet,who determines what is unfamiliar, different and/or stylistically new?

Dovey's account of Soetendorp's interview with Hawa Essuman, a Kenyan-based filmmaker, at the 2010 International Film Festival Rotterdam, paints the picture glaringly. According to Dovey (2015), Rabbi Soetendorp, the renowned Dutch humanitarian, expressed surprise at Essuman's film: "... "I am quite humbled. You've made an overwhelming film with all this colour and all this hope despite everything." The phrase "despite everything" is clearly meant to suggest that Africa is a place where it is unusual tofind color and hope" (65). Revisiting that interview with the filmmaker later, Dovey concluded from Essuman, "... while claiming to

be a "discovery", the Africa program at the2010 IFFR remained haunted by the specters of stereotypical European images of Africa" (68). Perpetuating these stereotypes has been successful. Yet, barring some filmmakers' nationalistic and anti/postcolonial sentiments about promoting non-Western film festivals, most non-Western filmmakers worldwide still seek approval from Western film festivals. Inessence, non-Western filmmakers seek Western acceptance and approval; they seek the potential for distribution and financing through these festivals. The search for an audience that they imagine may better appreciate their art, and win them acclaim and recognition, accounts for New Nollywood's neorealistic cinema's Westward journey to film festivals in Europe and North America. On the other side, Western film festivals must rely on criteria set up to help determine what films reflect how they (want to) understand Africa. Consequently, exoticness may quite easily become a guiding light by which curators with aWestern lens home in on their finds.

Is there a version of Africa that typically makes it to film festival screens in Europe and North America? Is it the West's Africa, or Africa's Africa? New Nollywood's neorealism threads a line between these conceptually contrary positions. If historically, Western film festivals which are built on colonial philosophies, politics and structures -evenif sometimes inadvertently, warm up to Nigeria's neorealist cinema, the entry of this aesthetic into these festivals highlights a case of subversion. Both in theory and practice, this aesthetic rejects colonial interpretations and expectations of Africa, while enlisting historically colonial systems of exhibition in promoting and legitimizing its Africanist philosophies. These filmmakers typically manage to situate positive themed narratives on the unrelentingly raw, common and unflattering backdrops that form the canvas to which everything is anchored. As such, focus is redirected from the lingering perceptions of Africaas the suffering continent with irredeemably

helpless children, defeated parents and inhabitable environments. Instead, these filmmakers appear to vigorously engage –even attack - such assumptions, by presupposing that happiness and contentment for Africans arenot necessarily interwoven with their Western, capitalist version; that their characters can behappy/content in spite of, and perhaps because of (in the sense that they are still able to holdon to certain traditions they take pride in) the conditions of their immediate space. If these festivals are enamoured by the images of exotic Africa, to a considerable degree, because they satisfy colonial articulations of Africa, the African filmmakers who make these films dig deeper within these images to contest those very articulations, without altogether troubling their exoticism. Irobi (2006) observes a similar dynamic in precolonial Igbo performances:

> [T]hese African art forms must have developed very complex
> precolonial structures with formal elements capable of expansion to
> accommodate the terrors and discomforts of the colonial experience…
> The same lack of a critical semiotic competence to decode the
> information encoded in the diverse arts of the indigenouspeoples may
> explain why some Europeans found it hard to recognizetheir [own]
> faces when the mirror of satire was held up to them in community
> dramas in Nigeria before and during the colonial period (271).

Colonialists' lack of familiarity with the codes inserted into Igbo performances under colonialism enabled the Igbos' to successfully mask their subversive intent in plain sight of their colonial masters. Today, a similar form of distanciation appears responsible for keeping Western film festivals from recognizing the nuanced anti-colonialism in this New Nollywood's neorealism -not that its recognition threatens to warrant its rejection. As amatter of fact, in this contemporary time, this characteristic should further compel these films' celebratory and critical quality at these festivals. Of course, at a time where discourses around de-Westernization and cultural diversity in ideologically Western institutions are intensified, one must also be curious,

given the unique relationship, as to whether these film festivals are active or passive participants in their own de-Westernizationand decolonization. In their capacity as legitimizing platforms, in their hunger for the conventionally different, and aesthetically non-Hollywood (Nichols 2019, 16), Western filmfestivals have become, in the case of New Nollywood's neorealism, sites for pushing back against (neo)colonial expectations of the Africa image. These film festivals' 'compromising' relationship with the new Nigeria's neorealist cinema derives from the broader colonial interest in the unfamiliar as a marker of the 'other', where the unfamiliar isassociated with the location and place of the other, and where both the unfamiliar and other historically receive their designation by colonial determination (Baaz 2001, 7-10). A dynamic occurs, therefore, where the focus is so fixedly on finding the unfamiliar and *other*, that Western film festivals fail to consider that the 'exclusive' privilege associated with the authority to determine the unfamiliar or *Other* could, at the same time, be somewhat responsible for the self-divestation of their colonially-bestowed character. If one might attempt an articulation of this dynamic through the lens of indigenized film studies, the exploration of distribution and exhibition as potential sites for contending with colonial narratives gains heightened interest.

Yet, what does that mean for this aesthetic and its relationship with its local Nigerian audience in the face of inaccessibility? What does it mean for Nigeria's decolonized film studies and pedagogies? If the escapist narrative form has historically familiarized and integrated itself among the Nigerian audience via VHS/DVDs, and are considerably accessible as texts for research, what does New Nollywood's neorealism's heavy reliance on (Western) film festivals, so far, mean in terms of its local penetration? Have these films played in Nigeria once they get exposure in Western film festivals. How does it affect preoccupations with academizing knowledge that derives from these filmmakers' practices and philosophies, and the text of their

films? Or, rather than register the deficit of knowledge such inaccessibility may cause its study in Nigeria, and imagine its absence withpessimism, could the favourability with which these filmmakers perceive the role of film festivals constitute part of the broader collage of film philosophies among Nigerians? At this time, some of the above questions can only be answered with a significant amount of speculation. In any case, pending the availability of more nimble articulations of how this dynamic may impact the Nigerian cinema terrain, it benefits our study to equally prioritize loose ends that present themselves in our overall reconceptualization of film knowledge in decolonized ways.

5.6 The Evolution of Nollywood Audiences: Video Film Era to New Nollywood

I have talked about this to some extent, both in Chapter 2 and in the context of New Nollywood's neorealist cinema. Here, I pick it up from there, only my focus is more generalin this case, looking at how audiences have evolved from the early phase of Nollywood to New Nollywood. By 'New Nollywood', my reference here is to both neorealist and escapistpost-2010 Nigerian cinemas. Many of these films—particularly of the escapist kind, have acquired more complex narratives and visual aesthetics, and have become better funded. Collectively, New Nollywood has a much greater digital and streaming presence, and thishas vastly altered Nollywood's viewing landscape.

The emergence in the early 2000s of mainstream online multimedia streaming platforms like YouTube (Steigler 2009, 40) marked a shift in global cultural practices. In the film industry, traditional VCD/DVD distribution structures either completely went out of business or struggled enormously to reinvent their approach. For example, Netflix, which Viacom-owned Blockbuster refused to buy in 2000, in short order, significantly contributedto Blockbuster's rapid end

(Burroughs 2018, 13). In Nigeria, the marketers who had held the Nollywood informal industry in a stranglehold since 1992 began to face challenges fromstreaming platforms. Filmmakers and producers who had forever been at the marketers' mercy suddenly found an alternative to distributing their films. By 2012, iROKOtv, a Nigerian internet streaming service that distributed Nollywood films on both free and premium channels had around 4000 Nollywood titles (Haynes 2014, 54). Not that there wassuddenly a drastic turn in the fortunate of these filmmakers. Haynes further notes iROKOtv was underpaying Nollywood filmmakers (54). That said, whether out of naivete, desperation, or both, Nollywood filmmakers developed an interest in online streaming. In 2016, Netflix entered into the Nigerian market, and by 2019, the global streaming powerhouse was commissioning Nollywood content (Obiaya 2021, 253). Today, while Nollywood's DVD marketers still dominate the industry, thousands of Nollywood films are distributed online. In turn, online distributions further broaden and diversify Nollywood's audience base (Effiong 2018, 120). Online distributions increasingly bring Nollywood in contact with audiences who may have neither a prior familiarity with Nollywood's film style and cultural context, nor share in the history of Nollywood viewing as a social, communal activity. These more broad and diverse audiences enrich the further evolution and transnationalism of Nollywood as national cinema.

The massive disruptions in traditional distribution modes occasioned by new streaming technologies has also triggered a reorganization of Nollywood audiences across geographies: between Nollywood's local and diasporic audiences. Prior to the distribution of Nollywood films online, both its audiences in Nigeria and in the diaspora were solely reliant on the physical distribution of its VCDs/DVDs. In other words, this was an activity grounded in the practice of community. When Nigerians wanted to see a Nollywood film, they went to Nigerian or African

shops that sold or rented Nollywood films. They could alsolocate another Nigerian with whom they could exchange DVDs. Other times, they picked upthese films on their visit to Nigeria, or they requested these films be mailed to them from Nigeria (Dekie et al. 2015). As already mentioned in Chapter 2, this medium of physical exchange and sharing continued to engender Nollywood's early viewing tradition: the consumption of the Nollywood film as a social and communal experience.

In recent times, streaming platforms, "particularly appeal to African diaspora audiences, for whom films on physical formats, such as VCD and DVD, have often becomemore difficult to access than online films" (Dekie et al., 302). These writers add that the proliferation of Nollywood films online and the relatively low cost of online streaming and subscriptions have depressed the volume of DVD distributions and exchange within Nollywood's diasporic communities in Europe and North America (305). Meanwhile, it is the reverse in Nigeria, where the cost of internet data to stream an online film far exceeds the average cost of a unit of DVD in Alaba or other markets. This has a consequence: On average, Nollywood audiences in the diaspora have access to Nollywood films on streamingplatforms, while they increasingly struggle to find films that circulate in Nigeria in DVD format. Conversely, local audiences in Nigeria, are watching Nollywood films on DVD thatNigerian's abroad are more hard-pressed to find. This divide further complicates the concept of Nollywood as a grounds-up, non-elitist, popular culture industry. On the one hand, due to evolving technologies and disparate degrees of access, Nollywood is forced tofurther separate Nigerian audiences according to geography and location. Therefore, Nollywood audiences are generally seeing different films, depending on their location.

Potentially, there is the chance that a Nollywood film soon belongs to Nigeria's local Nollywood while another one belongs to diasporic Nollywood. While local Nollywood audiences are inundated and spoiled for choice, their diasporic counterparts' nostalgic cravings are at the mercy of online streaming platforms. One must also wonder, though, how Nigeria's film industry plans to navigate the slow, but eventual disappearance of DVD-players from electronics markets and domestic spaces. Effiong (2018) references the domination and imposition of structures of media and technology from developed nations on less developed ones, so that any discontinuation of DVD production in former, for example, leaves the latter stranded (111). Computers, which are no longer guaranteed to come with a DVD-player, do not have the same degree of local penetration as did VHS and DVD players.

Of course, the idea of a stark and realistic demarcation between local and diasporic audiences is not without its problems. Online film distribution also unites diasporic audiences and local Nigerian audiences who have the economic means to afford online streaming under something of an elite culture.

The shift to online streaming from DVD distributions of Nollywood has also affected the community experience that has come to be identified with Nollywood. According to Dekie et al. (2015), the download-ability of media content on individual andpersonal devices has individualized the audience's watching experience and behaviour (303). It also means audiences do not have to gather together within a certain time-frame (particularly if it is a rental that must be returned) to participate in the communal viewing experience (304). Nollywood diasporic audiences are increasingly consuming Nollywood films as an individualized experience. This process does away with a significant amount of the sense of community and sharing that have been foundational to how Nollywood DVD is consumed.

In conclusion, my final chapter focuses largely on ideas that are not fully formed as my objects of study have relatively only just emerged or are currently undergoing rapid evolutionary processes that make them interesting for future studies. New Nollywood's neorealism is a new post-2010 film style in Nigeria. It is not to be mistaken for the broader New Nollywood, which is simply a time-stamp that recognizes the clear distinctions that emerged in Nollywood's narrativity, visual and aesthetic look, and production, distribution and exhibition modes around 2010. New Nollywood neorealism is part of New Nollywood, but it is not all of it. Even though it is also a cinema of optimism and it sees itself as a social agent for cushioning the challenges of its local and immediate audience, New Nollywood's neorealism is addressing its audience differently from Nollywood's older and escapist cinema. Yet, it faces the risk of being perceived as elitist, as long as it is generally inaccessible in Nigeria and circulates within spaces that have been commonly imagined to be elitist.

I also examine the role of evolving media technologies in the (re)shaping of Nollywood's audiences -home and abroad. Nollywood is almost completely dependent on technologies it does not make. Therefore, it finds itself at the mercy of these technologies' itmust respond to them and work with them. As such, a shift by filmmakers from physical piracy-ridden distribution systems to online streaming platforms appeared a viable and necessary move. However, the relationship between these platforms and the Nollywood films they host are not always simple and mutually beneficial. In a number of ways, online streaming has reordered the Nollywood audience landscape along geographies and economic and social statuses. In other ways, it has further territorialized Nollywood, with atype that remains within Nigeria's informal market in DVD format, and another that is distributed online, outside of the reach of most Nigerians.

FINAL OVERVIEW

This dissertation began with a review of literature on National, African and Nigerian Cinemas. In Chapter 1, I mapped out major contours relevant to examining Nigeria's Nollywood (and Kannywood) as not only a postcolonial phenomenon, but as outlined in Chapter 2, it is also a phenomenon with an origin story that has been thinly explored in Nollywood/ African Cinema scholarship. I also explored Nollywood's origin stories, which offer some details and nuances that available scholarship has, so far, insufficiently explored.These details, in many parts, help to further conceptualize how notions of postcolonialism, informality, indigeneity and globalization all co-exist within the Nollywood industry. In Chapter 3, as has been well argued with other major cinemas like Hollywood and European Cinema, I analyzed Nollywood as a phenomenon of Nigerian modernity, where its local modernity represents a vernacularized version of global modernity, which is perpetuated as a Western one. In Chapter 4, I looked at Nollywood and its informal practices in the contextof Media Industry Studies, to determine the extent to which Nollywood's identity is determined by capital, corporate, labour and informal forces. While certain Nollywood practices are restricted to capitalist and economic readings, because these readings align them with dominant global market ideologies, examining these practices in the context of informality and Nigeria's local cultures and traditions suddenly provoke new and more culture-sensitive understandings.

In the beginning of my dissertation, I emphasized the centrality of informality and, to a lesser extent, postcolonialism, to my research. In the case of Africa, there is a direct relationship between informality and conceptualizations of postcolonialism. The generalreading and reduction of informality to an economic, capitalist phenomenon that is the antithesis of formal and legitimate structures also divides the Global South and capitalist West accordingly. Formally

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colonized nations in the 'less developed', 'Third World' Global South are argued to heavily rely on informal market systems and practices while the 'developed' West is understood to operate within formal and legitimate systems. Broadly, these binaries support the postcolonialism argument that informality can be seen as a postcolonial African economic concept with which Africa opposes and liberates itself from Western attempts to universalize Western systems (Lobato 2010). As long as informality remains an exclusively economic and capitalist idea, and as long as economics is one of the areas in which Africa continues to repel the neocolonial and imperial West, informality will likely be restricted to its use as a Fanonian tool for the postcolonial rejection and liberation of former colonies from the colonizers.

When we free our notion of informality from its exclusive mooring to capitalist economics, however, so that it extends beyond its economic character, informality becomes more than a rejection, through circumvention, of formality (attributed to the colonizer, the West, First World, national government). A broader analysis of informality unearths a richer presence of Nigeria's precolonial practices in its postcolonial practices. Such an analysis provides an avenue to understand the Nollywood industry not only as a commercial cinema that employs alternative market systems to outwit Western economic hegemony. Nollywood can also be seen as inviting precolonial, communal practices into its postcolonial industry, and itis only upon the colonial introduction of modern capitalism that these age-old practices have suddenly and unfortunately acquired their negative informal significations.

Yet, there are a number of questions this thesis also raises, and which deserve further research. In Chapter 1, I outlined my rationale for situating Nollywood's beginning in 1992, and with Nnebue's *Living in Bondage.* However, I also acknowledged that, by identifying certain characteristics in Nollywood that originate in previous arts and performance regimes in Nigeria's

colonial/post-colonial regimes, some writers argue for a much earlier origin. If there is merit to their argument, and there is, what does that mean for an origin story that begins in the 1990s? How original are Okey Ogunjiofor's ideas—particularly when he takes an anti-West, anti-(neo)colonial position? Did Nigerian filmmakers of the celluloid era take similar positions? Under the banner of Nigeria's post-colonial cinema, all of these different cinema regimes in Nigeria may be explored to see the strength of their interconnectedness, and the transference of practices, some of which may have reinforced Okey Ogunjiofor's ideas, even if we hesitate to extend the term Nollywood to all of Nigeria's post-colonial cinema. Similarly, the argument in this project is that Nollywood was not a film festival-gowing cinema until the emergence of New Nollywood around 2010. I outline that, more recently, Nollywood films, many of which belong to the neorealist tradition, have been making it to international film festivals. This argument is valid to the extent that we consider Nollywood as a separate cinema that traces its beginning to the 1990s. Prior to Nollywood, even if nowhere as frequently as the post-colonial art cinemas of Francophone Africa, Nigeria's celluloid films screened at festivals like FESPACO. Are there grounds for drawing comparisons between Nigeria's celluloid films and the neorealist ones that have returned to film festivals? If nothing, we can point to the fact that there is some sort of full circle return of the latter to the former in their distribution, at least with regards to inaccessibility. Nigeria's neorealism films are relatively inaccessible to the local Nigerian audience; so were the films of the Nigerian celluloid era. What does this mean for Nigeria's neorealist filmmaking? These questions will benefit from more research.

How about informality—both in its meaning and use in this thesis? Much as I have argued that informality deserves to be understood beyond its modern, capitalist economics signification, there remains more to be gained from studying it more expansively in relation to

how it helps produce creative, innovative and inventive responses to the unique experiences that constitute the realities of postcolonial, largely Global South societies. In this sense, we further absolve informality of its very narrow capitalist, Western-oriented meaning. Taking this path will encourage our re-imagining of areas of the Nollywood industry that we have paid little attention to after having conveniently written them off as informal practices. Instead, these practices become areas for exploring creativity and inventiveness that only could have been born out of informality.

These and other similar questions present the different, additional directions this thesis could take. While it attempts to answer a number of questions, it has generated some of its own. I am hoping that I and/or others take these ideas up at some later time.

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