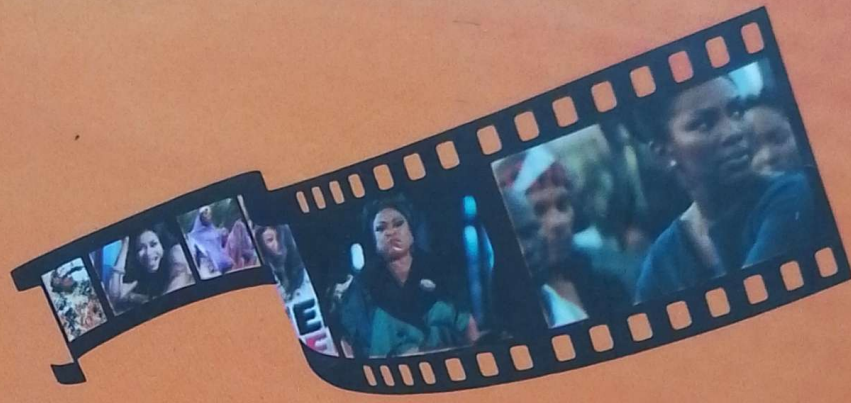




FEMINISM AND FEMININITY IN NIGERIAN FILMS



Edited by: Oludolapo Ojediran

FEMINISM AND FEMININITY IN NIGERIAN FILMS

Edited by:
Oludolapo Ojediran, Ph.D



PERFORMING ARTS
CREATIVE ARTS SERIES

First published in 2022
By Department of the Performing Arts
University of Ilorin,
P. M. B. 1515, Ilorin,
Kwara State, Nigeria.

‘Feminism and Femininity in Nigerian Films’
© Oludolapo Ojediran (2022)

The moral rights of the individual Authors have been asserted.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the copyright holders’ prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

Cover design and book layout by Tokunbo Esho

ISBN: 978-978-970-430-9

Printed by Etchwise Consulting Ltd.
+234 803 805 9815

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

Preface	v
Notes on Contributors	vii
Perspectives of Films and Home Videos on Nigerian Screen - <i>Oludolapo Ojedirán</i>	1
Historical Approach to Women Representation in Nigeria Film Making - <i>Femi Yinka Atteh</i>	10
Audience Interpretation of Female Representations and Empowerments in Nollywood Films - <i>Muhammed Bolaji Olorunoje</i>	25
Representation of Traumatic Feminine Identities in Celebrity Marriage 1 & 2 - <i>Linda Jummai Mustafa</i>	44
Widowhood Rites and Intra-Gender Oppression in Kingsley Ogoro's The Widow and Emelu Chibuzor's Save the Widow - <i>Tajudeen Kolawole Ibrahim</i>	59
A Filmic Analysis of Women And Social Justice in Jetta Amata's Black November and Kunle Afolayan's October 1 - <i>Ayobami A. Aponmade</i>	75
Women and the Quest for Political Emancipation in Ishaya Bako's 4th Republic - <i>Kehinde Ajibade</i>	91
The Portrayal of Women in Selected Yoruba Home Video Films - <i>Kazeem Rufai-Ahmad & Lanre Qasim Adenekan</i>	108

Politics of Subversion in Kémi Adétiba's King of Boys - <i>Olayinka Magbagbeola</i>	119
Renegotiating Gendered Self and Feminine Values in two Selected Nollywood Films - <i>Oludolapo Ojdiran</i>	143
A Musical Study of Tope Alabi's Sound Tracks in My Step Mother - <i>Ayobami Eko</i>	158
Socio-Cultural Subjugation and Challenges of Exorbitant Bride Price in Selected Nollywood Movies - <i>Adenike Arinomo</i>	175
The Dialectics of Female Gender Response in Kunle Afolayan's Citation - <i>Omoniyi Olutimi</i>	189
The Prevalence of Women Victimization in Kunle Afolayan's Citation and Tunde Kelani's Thunderbolt - <i>Abolade Fakayode</i>	208

EIGHT

THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN SELECTED YORUBA HOME VIDEO FILMS

Kazeem RUFAI-AHMAD & Lanre Qasim ADENEKAN

Introduction

The reflection of issues relating to women has remained a dominant theme in some Nigerian and indeed, Yoruba films produced in recent times. In fact, the contents of a remarkable number of some of these films indicate that women are being portrayed as inferior, marginalised, subjugated and silenced. This calls for serious attention from scholars, critics and intellectuals to create an avenue for the modifications of some of the contents of some Yoruba video films in relation to the portrayal of women. This study employed the deductive and descriptive methods to identify the various ways that women issues are addressed in Yoruba films' contents. It is discovered in this study the different phases in which female characters are portrayed in Yoruba video film contents. The study, therefore, recommends that Yoruba film producers should always create video contents that promote female positive contributions to social, political, economic and cultural development of Nigeria. The study, therefore, concludes that there is need for reappraisal and management of film contents in the Nigerian film industry, through video contents preview by selected film experts before final copies will be premiered or marketed.

The invention of the internet and worldwide web has promoted human activities and turned the world into a global village. Human activities, therefore, can be assessed in far-away locations. This phenomenon has aided the proliferation and distribution of Yoruba video films. Lewis (2005, p.189) contends that:

Yoruba is a tone language spoken in West Africa by approximately 20 million speakers. It is a native tongue of the Yoruba people. Yoruba language is spoken... in Benin,

Togo and in communities in other parts of Africa, Europe, North America and Latin America.

Lewis contention captures the large territories where Yoruba language is spoken which bring the need to salvage the language from unintended extinction. The audience of Yoruba films also learn about material and immaterial aspects of Yoruba culture. However, this does not mean that there are no anomalies in what constitute the contents of some Yoruba video films. Rafiu (2007, p.177) argues that:

Yoruba film industry is trying and leading in the indigenous language crusade but very few of them qualify as promoting the language and the culture of the Yoruba people. For instance, mixing, switching (codes), slang, vulgarity and nudity are what we contend with in Yoruba films.

This study, therefore, examined the portrayal of women in selected films produced by Dan Kazeem Productions and Rasol Entertainments Limited. The study explored different phases by which female characters are portrayed in Yoruba video films and suggestions are made to create video contents that should promote female positive contributions to social, political, economic and cultural development of Nigeria.

Perspectives on Yoruba Video Films

Yoruba video film is a brand of film celebrated by Yoruba people within and outside the shores of the country. Ayakoroma (2010, p.1) notes that "the term Nollywood is said to have been coined by the Financial Times of New York, to describe the Nigeria video film industry, just like Hollywood (America) and Bollywood (India)". This position alerts us of the genesis of the name 'Nollywood' but its inadequacy lies in its failure to provide the date of the coinage. However, Haynes (2007, p.132) provides us with the date noting that "in 2002, when the term Nollywood was coined, it met with opposition from Nigerians who thought it suggested that Nigerian film making was only a copy of the American model".

The output of the Yoruba video films has greatly helped in bringing international attention to Nigerian film industry. Akpabio cited in Ebewo (2007, p.54) observes that besides English and Pidgin-English, 836 (eight hundred and thirty-six) Yoruba language movies have been produced; forty-four Ibo language films, four Hausa films, five Edo movies, one Isoko were produced between 1995 and 2000. It can, therefore, be said that Yoruba video film is a powerful collaborating Nigerian film brand in the world ranking of the Nigerian film industry. As a result, Ayakoroma (2010, p. 2) notes that "in 2005, it was rated the third most lucrative film industry in the world, after Hollywood and Bollywood...but analysts were to submit in 2008 that it had become the second largest film industry after Bollywood".

Some Yoruba video films have projected the beauty of Yoruba culture. This is projected in films such as *Saworoide* (1999) *Arugba Osun* (2006), and *Narrow Path* (2006) by Tunde Kelani, among others. These films projected Yoruba culture in good light. However, it should be noted here that while some Yoruba films projected Yoruba culture in good light, there are some Yoruba films which failed to follow this direction. Some Yoruba films have been found to treat women issues with triviality by portraying female characters with negative tendencies not minding the fact that women actions are products of the society in which they find themselves.

Phases of Women Representation in Yoruba Video Films

Women have been the bedrocks of Yoruba film productions especially from acting perspectives. This is because the number of women acting in Yoruba films has increased tremendously over the years. This may be as a result of employment opportunities generated by the sector. Scholars have argued that films produced by the Nigerian home video industry have portrayed Nigeria as a nation of cultured people with positive image. However, Adeseke (2015, p. 56) posits that "it is not true that it contributes to the positive image of Nigeria in the global arena, rather most of the films have succeeded in wreaking havoc on the image of Nigeria abroad". We agreed with

Adesoke's position. This is because in some notable Yoruba films, women are being represented in different phases of negative tendencies. This view is supported by Eke (2012, p.8) who asserts that:

Nollywood women's conditions gravitate between obsessive desires, including pre-occupation with motherhood or marriage and extreme states of desperation (attachment to men), "witchcraft", murder, and helplessness. Also, many films deal with the struggle between good and evils; the assumption is that the good prevails. While women are passive, men are the heroes, the "saviours", and women's survival seems to hinge on their relationship with men as wives.

Some film producers, screenwriters and film directors have forgotten that women attitudes are products of the societies in which they found themselves. Thus, their attitudes can be said to be the influence of the society on their personalities. Therefore, women characters in Yoruba films should not be treated as inferior in the society. Women portrayal in Yoruba films should be done bearing in mind the influence of the society on women. For this reason, the resolution of such films should be on the society and not the women character. This is because we live in a patriarchal society. This made Ekwierhoma (2008, p. 113) to conclude that "most of the images found within the Nigerian filmic frame are masculinist and patriarchal". Doki (2012, p. 750) also shares a similar view that:

Often times, women are presented as trivial beings whose only concern is with the unsophisticated and domestic aspects of life and living. Nollywood movies have continued to cast the women either as husband snatchers, home breakers, ineffective gender, uncritical, evil doer, unwholesome, erratic, uncharitable, docile, impatient, loud, lazy, glamorous, greedy, materialistic, amorous et cetera.

On the other hand, some critics have claimed that Nigerian movie industry has made a landmark achievement, perhaps due to the general acceptability as a medium of entertainment, education and

information for its position as the third largest producer of films in world film ranking. No doubt, films in Nigeria have performed these basic functions. However, this does not negate the fact that the Yoruba video genre inflicts negative tendencies on the viewing audience especially through the representation of female characters.

Women in Selected Yoruba Video Films' Content

Olojojo

Olojojo is one of the Yoruba films produced by Rasol Entertainments. It was produced and directed in 2014 by Rasaq Olayiwola popularly known as Ojopagogo. The film centres on Tayo whose wife gives birth to a baby boy. His mother-in-law comes to his house to help in taking care of the new born baby. Not far from this period, Tayo's father also comes to the house for the same purpose. While in Tayo's house, Tayo's father woos Iya Funke, his in-law. Iya Funke refuses his proposal. As a result, Tayo's father starts to plan evil against her. First, he uses charm to change himself to Funke's husband and goes to Iya Funke's room to sleep with her. He also gives Lekan, one of his sons, the same charm to change to Tayo in order to sleep with Funke's sister. Along the line, Funke's mother later gets impregnated. All her efforts to terminate the pregnancy prove abortive. She eventually kills herself. Her ghost continues to disturb Tayo's father. Consequently, he confesses the atrocity he has committed against Iya Funke and all members of his family. He also dies at the end of the movie. Tayo and Funke lose their only child as a result of rivalry between his father and his mother-in-law.

The prominent issues in this movie range from promiscuity, lack of trust and most importantly domestic violence. Promiscuity exists between Tayo's father and Funke's mother. There is also promiscuity between Lekan, Tayo's brother and Funke's sister. He is able to lure Funke's sister into sexual escapade through his father who gives him charm to seduce her. However, Funke's sister does not know that it is Lekan. This is because any time Lekan wishes to perpetrate the evil, he changes to his brother- Tayo. Funke's sister easily falls for him

thinking that it is Tayo. She falls easily because of her love for material things which she desires from Tayo.

Furthermore, there is act of violence in the movie. There is domestic violence which revolves around the movie from the beginning to the end. For instance, for the fact that Mama Funke does not agree to go out with the father to her son-in-law, he uses charm to control her until she eventually puts Tayo's only son in the refrigerator and the child dies. This is purely an act of violence especially from a man who does not have the fear of God at heart. Baba Tayo kills his grandson because mama Funke does not agree to go out with him. Funke's sister and her mother suffer for the evil they did not perpetrate. Obviously, these two female characters are presented as weak and also as objects of man's self-gratification. They cannot fight for themselves having being charmed by Tayo's father. This scenario depicts men's world where men dominate women.

Dodo

This film was also produced in 2014 by Rasol Entertainments and directed by Rasaq Olayiwola (Ojopagogo). This movie revolves around Mope, a deaf and dumb lady in Ilu Ayepe. Mope is one of the beautiful girls in Ayepe village. She hawks fried bean cake around the village. One day, a woman calls her inside the house for her sons in order to rape her. Mope is able to escape. As if this is not enough, these two men- Lekan and Dada sneak after her when she is going to the stream to fetch water. They are successful in raping her along the bush path near the stream. Because of this incident, the village headmaster advises her mother to send her to the school for the needy. She attends a special school for the needy where she later meets Toba who falls in love with her.

At the introduction ceremony, Toba's mother discovers that her son is about to get married to a lady that she lures into her house for her sons to rape. Because of this, she refuses to give her consent to their union. This is because of Toba's siblings who had raped Mope sometimes ago in the village. Later in the movie, Toba falls in love with Kike, one of Mope's friends. He later marries her. As a result of

the pains which Mope goes through from Toba's family, her friend uses charm to make Kike to be sleeping with her husband's family including Toba's father, his gateman and his two brothers. Kike is later sent packing from Toba's house. At the end, all Toba's efforts to bring Mope back to his life prove abortive as Mope is later found to have gotten married to another man.

In this movie, there is nemesis which catches up with Toba's mother. A lady whom she arranges for her sons to rape and whom her sons successfully rape near a bush is later found to be in love with the elder brother of those rapists. Their brother is not aware of this situation because he lives in the city. The nemesis which catches up with Toba's mother is the fact that she uses her hand to send away the only woman her son ever loves. She regrets this action at the end of the movie.

There is the issue of promiscuity which ravages our society to date. This is depicted in Kike's action and fornication committed with her husband's family. She sleeps with almost every man in her husband's house including her husband's father and the gate man. Any time she is caught sleeping with a man, she will use trick to lure the person who sees her to also sleep with her. So, nobody is ready to say the truth because those who see her sleeping around are also found to be part of the promiscuous act. This is an act of promiscuity and infidelity which are social vices displacing some families in our society.

Sister Mary

Sister Mary is another Yoruba film which portrays women characters in a negative way. This movie was produced in 2014 by Dan Kazeem Productions and Directed by Afolayan. The story of this movie revolves around Sister Mary who happens to be a daughter of a famous pastor. Sister Mary while preaching gospel finds herself in the midst of garage boys who drag her to their boss- NURTW Chairman named K. Fash. Kayode Fashola (K. Fash) becomes the Chairman of the NURTW with the help of some garage boys and a lady called Omotoke who fights tooth and nail to see that he gains

power to become the Chairman. K. Fash and Omotoke have been in a relationship before he sets eyes on Sister Mary. When Sister Mary comes to his office to preach to him to desist from hooliganism which characterizes garage life, he is fascinated and begins to fall in love with Sister Mary. Eventually, he finds himself in the web of love and starts to attend the same church with her. A conflict ensues between Omotoke and Mary. With all the efforts of K. Fash to marry Sister Mary, her parents do not agree.

For this reason, Sister Mary elopes with K. Fash. On the other hand, Omotoke who has been living a wild garage life changes her lifestyle to emulate Sister Mary in order to win back K. Fash. By attending church regularly, Omotoke later meets a gentleman who proposes to marry her. The irony of the situation is that Sister Mary who starts her life as a person of God later changes to wayward life as a result of her action to elope with K. Fash. K. Fash later runs away during an attack in the garage. Sister Mary narrowly escapes death during the attack. She runs back to her parents to seek forgiveness.

Sister Mary is a Yoruba movie which portrays some social vices in our society and the consequences of involving in such vices. The movie treats the issue of unemployment and establishes that it is not all garage boys who are not well educated. This is portrayed in the character of K. Fash. Although, K. Fash finds his living by being the leader of the NURTW, he is a graduate who seeks alternative because he cannot find a white-collar job.

More so, the movie portrays social unrest which characterises the NURTW and other garage unions. Through this, the movie portrays social vices such as drug abuse, stealing, hooliganism which are normal routine found among garage boys. These acts lead to frequent clashes between opposing camps which eventually leads to loss of lives and properties. Another important issue is religious hypocrisy. This is portrayed in the character of Sister Mary who is well behaved and committed to upholding the spirit of evangelism. She moves around to preach gospel and win soul to Christianity. With all her commitment to this course, she is easily swayed by lust and infatuated love from K. Fash. She eventually finds herself in

waywardness by smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol and having pre-marital sex with K. Fash.

Conclusion

It has been established in this study that women are sometimes portrayed in Yoruba films as husband snatchers, wicked wives or in-laws, prostitutes and so on. Importantly, women actions are sometimes influenced by the society in some Yoruba films. For this reason, the treatment of female characters in Yoruba films should not be that of relegation or total condemnation but the contents of Yoruba films should treat positively the impact of women and their personalities in the society. From this study, certain anomalies are evident from the ways and approaches video films producers treat female characters in their films. It is obvious that some Yoruba video films lack content reappraisal and therefore produce films of low qualities in terms of relevant contents.

It is imperative, therefore, to emphasise that women have and are still contributing effectively to the wellbeing of the human race all over the world. We have heard about the activities of the Aba women riot of 1929, the impact made by Queen Amina of Zauzau, Moremi, Funmilayo Kuti and other notable women in the history of Nigeria. The Yoruba film producers should endeavour to reappraise their films through effective content management. This can be done through proper script editing, auditing, review and preview before the film is finally released into the market. Furthermore, Yoruba films producers can adopt cultural or historical based film contents instead of concentrating on fictions or stories which do not contribute positively to the society. Finally, it will be crucial to state that film producers should produce films which will promote Nigerian cultural heritage in order to build positive image for the country because Nigeria is a nation with cultural diversity. The filmmakers, no doubt, have enough to explore in this regard.

References

- Adeseke, A. E. (2015). Nollywood and women profiling: A case study of two Nigerian home videos films. In B.F. Ayakoroma and A.D. Akoh, (Eds.), *Repositioning nollywood for the promotion of cultural diplomacy and national security*. pp. 52-61. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Ayakoroma, B.F. (2010). Nigeria video films and the image question: A critical reading of Lancelot Imasuen's *home in exile*. In S.E. Dandaura and A.C. Asigbo (Eds.), *Theatre, culture and re-imagining Nigeria*, pp. 1-4. Nasarawa: Society of Nigerian Theatre Artistes (SONTA).
- Doki, A.G. (2012). Reality versus identity in nollywood movies: Reminiscences of a 'womanist'. *Makurdi journal of arts and culture*, 10 (1): 74-84.
- Ebewo, P.J. (2007). The emerging video film industry in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of film and video*, 59 (3): 46-57.
- Eke, M.N. (2012). Nollywood and the woman palaver: Desperate women, bad women, witches, and saints. *Makurdi journal of arts and culture*, 10 (1): 1-24.
- Ewrierhoma, E.M. (2008). Women through the eye of the camera: The aesthetic challenge of Nigerian films. In F. Ogunleye (Ed.), *Africa through the eye of the video camera*, pp. 112-118. Swaziland: Academic Publishers.
- Haynes, J. (2007). Nollywood in Lagos, Lagos in nollywood films. *Africa today*, 54 (2): 131-150.
- Lewis, M.P. (2005). *Ethnology languages of the world*. Texas: SIL.
- Rafiu, A.K. (2007). Stemming the tide of Yoruba language endangerment through home video production. *The performer: Ilorin journal of the performing arts*. 9: 176-182.

Filmographies

Adeniyi, F. (Producer), and Afolayan, O. (Director). (2014). *Sister Mary* [Video]. Ilorin: Dan Kazeem Productions.

Olayiwola, R. (Producer), and Olayiwola, R. (Director). (2014). *Dodo* [Video]. Oyo: Rasol Entertainments.

Olayiwola, R. (Producer), and Olayiwola, R. (Director). (2014). *Olojojo* [Video]. Oyo: Rasol Entertainments.