

LOCATING TRANSNATIONAL SPACES

Culture, Theatre and Cinema

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF
Professor Emmanuel Samu Dandaura
fsonta, fitin, MNAL, MNIPR



*Sue Matheson, Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah
and Prayer Elmo Raj*



Locating Transnational Spaces

Culture, Theatre and Cinema

A Special Publication of the International Association of Theatre Critics

And

*Faculty of the Arts, Business and Science, University College of the North,
The Pas, Manitoba, Canada*

IN HONOUR OF

Professor Emmanuel Samu Dandaura,
fsonta, fitin, MNAL, MNIPR

Edited by

Sue Matheson, Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah
And
Prayer Elmo Raj

Published by the International Association of Theatre Critics and Faculty of
the Arts, Business and Science, University College of the North, The Pas,
Manitoba, Canada.

Copyright © 2020 Sue Matheson, Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah and Prayer
Elmo Raj.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or
by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and
retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by
a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

First Published, 2020.

ISBN: 978-978-56857-7-0-X

email: okpadahstephen@gmail.com, smatheson@ucn.ca and
pelmoraj@gmail.com

9. Communication of HIV/AIDS Through African Theatre Entertainment Education: The South Africa Experiments
Obi Nwagbo Pat.....99
10. Third World Cinema and the Committed Art of Sembene Ousmane
AbdulRasheed A. Adeoye, Ph.D and Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah.....109
11. Women and their Choices of the *Other Room* in Zainabu Jallo's *Onions Make Us Cry*
Oluwakemi Emmanuel Olowonubi, Basiru Adebisi and Confidence Ozioyiza Daniel.....120
12. Cultural Realism in Nigerian Home Video Films: A Study of Kenneth Okonkwo's *Village Destroyer*
Kenneth Efakponana Eni Ph.D, AbdulMalik Adakole Amali Ph.D and Blessing Adjeketa.....132
13. The Role of the Arts in Community Development in Developing Countries
Oluwafemi Daniel Adebisi.....139

Section B

TRANSCULTURAL SPACES AND GLOBALISATION

14. The Marlian Empire: Exploring Celebrity Culture and Its Impact on Nigerian Youths
Effevotu Efetobor Stephanie, Biola O. Adumati and Elijah Oje Tosin.....148
15. Art Management and Alliance Francaise Du Lagos, Nigeria
Shadiat Olapeju Shuaib, Ph.D, Omolola Adewale Shukurat and Gabriel Oghenevwarho Ojakovo.....159
16. A Theoretical Analysis of Interculturalism
Giorgia Scribellito.....170
17. Some Notes on Ge'ez Literature: Medieval Hagiographies in Ethiopian Literature
Dawit Girma.....183

12

Cultural Realism in Nigerian Home Video Films: A Study of Kenneth Okonkwo's *Village Destroyer*

Kenneth Efakponana Eni Ph.D,
AbdulMalik Adakole Amali Ph.D and Blessing Adjeketa

Introduction

Edward Taylor's definition of culture as a complex whole gives room to the argument that the term is omnibus and multifaceted. Scholars in cultural studies and the humanities have articulated numerous definitions. For instance, Saduri Bello makes us understand that it is "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenge of living in their environment, which gives order and meaning to their social, political, economic, aesthetic and religious norms thus distinguishing them from their neighbours" (Bello, 1991, p. 189). Bello elucidates further that it is:

the sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterise a people. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture, therefore, refers to the whole lot of African heritage. We could see that African culture embraces the totality of the African way of life in all its forms and ramifications (p. 189).

This portends that culture is developed by a people, learnt and transferred by an older generation to a successive one. These include attitudes and traits peculiar to their everyday life. People who claim to share a single origin or descent, also share the same social norms, taboos, values, language, dressing, music, arts, religion dances, greeting habits, rites of passages from birth, through marriage to death, which they embrace and become a pattern of their existence. Idang (2009) expounds that culture "marks a people out distinctively from other human societies in the family of humanity" (p. 97). These people are provided with images of their basic concerns, principles, ethics, and bodies of manners, rituals, ideologies, strategies, and tactics of self-survival including certain notions of good and bad deeds and various forms of folklore and legends. "The way we give logic to the world begins at birth with the gestures, words, tone of voice, noises, colours, smells, and body contact we experience. . . . Our culture is what is

familiar, recognisable and habitual. It is “what goes without saying” (Van and Laurent, 1993, p. 1).

Globalisation, Western education and Capitalist interactions with traditional African cultures have had enormous effect on the perception of Africans by the outside world. This contact has subjected the cultural practices to serious modifications and also eroded some African cultural practices. Since the inception of the movie industry in Nigeria, hundreds and thousands of films that tell the story of the nation and its people are being produced annually. These stories range from religious through economic and social themes. Included are films that portray the traditions of Nigerian societies. Their realistic representations of philosophies characterised of these societies either compound the erosion of these cultures or refurbish them. This chapter therefore takes a look at how realistic African culture and philosophies are represented in Kenneth okonkwo’s home video film, *Village Destroyer* (2016).

Cultural Realism, Childlessness and Communalism in Africa

Film portrays people as natural as they are in real life. In the same vein, film realism is the creation and presentation of ideas, events, social conditions, as they really are. Films that misrepresent a peoples’ culture are non-realistic films. Conversely, a film that portrays the society truthfully is a realistic one. This realism deals neither with portraying specific actions nor of idealism nor of nominalism, but truthfully. Cultural realism in film therefore is “realism which aims at interpreting the actualities of any aspect of a people’s life, free from subjective prejudice, idealism, or romantic colour. In cultural representation, movie producers either represent the culture realistically or not. Whatever the case may be, home video lovers in Nigeria and the global diaspora watch these films which have to a large extent shaped their view of the continent either negatively or positively. Obiyo (2013) notes this with his statement that:

Through it, many people outside the continent and especially those who have not visited it have come to understand that Nigerians and Africans do not live on trees or work about naked as had been speculated previously, nor are we bloodthirsty and cruel, but are just like other people of the world who could be bad, good., greedy, or nice because people are people, regardless of their nationality and location. (p. 284).

Film has broadened the colonial and postcolonial discourse. “The colonialist introduced their culture that included religion, language, clothing, food, music, health care and a set of beliefs that Africans were conditioned to adopt” (Jackson, 2013, p. 2). Okot p’Bitek also mentions that “contrary to

the African idea that everybody must marry in the prime of their youth, have a family (and for a man, the more wives and children he has the better), young intelligent, beautiful and handsome Africans were lured to think that wifelessness, husbandlessness, childlessness and homelessness, were a virtue" (Jackson, 2013, p. 15).

Okonkwo's *Village Destroyer* explores the theme of childlessness. This is an issue that echo on the Nigerian cultural space. Childlessness is the inability of a man to impregnate his legally married wife and the inability of a woman to conceive after twelve or twenty-four months of marriage. This state of being childless may be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary childlessness has to do with couple's personal choice of abstaining from sexual intercourse or using medically suggested protective agents while they have the physical mental and financial capacity to have children. On the other hand, involuntary childlessness has to do with the inability of a person to conceive due to complications related to either both the man or the woman. African men who are victims have problem of inferiority complex and may not be allowed to talk in council of elders' meetings where their age grades are. Their contributions are frowned at no matter how relevant they may be. However, the blame is always on the woman in most African communities.

Also, the cause may either be biological or spiritual. But whatever the case either voluntary or involuntary, either caused by biological processes or spiritual, the state of being childless is frowned upon in communities on the African the continent. "Thus childlessness could be a traumatic and worrying experience for men and women who for cultural or personal reasons, view childbearing as central to their live" (Obiyo, 2013, p. 10).

In most Nigerian societies such as in Urhobo, Yoruba, Igbo, Igalla among others, a prayer that echo from the bride or groom's father is that of childbirth. It is the most appreciated of all the supplications from parent and well-wishers to a newly married couple. This indicates that the primary reason people marry in Africa is for procreation. This is the only means through which the family and the entire communities can continue to exist. There is the belief that readiness for marriage is readiness for procreation. Hence once a couple is childless after some years of marriage, "the link in the rhythm of life that guarantees the continuation of the family from one generation to the other is dissolved. Childlessness therefore poses a threat for the families involved and the entire community" (Obiyo 2013, p. 9). Obiyo (2013) mentions further that the problem of childlessness ranges "from psychological, physical and/or emotional to social problems, such as broken homes, depression, marital conflicts, psychological problem which comes as a result of inability to bear children, both sexes may feel inadequate to their roles, having mental illness" (p. 10).

Communalism is an attribute of indigenous African societies. Gabriel (2015) relates the concept of communalism to a sub group of individuals and not one society. For him, communalism is "the strong identity with and devotion to the interest of one's own minority or ethnic group rather than those of society as a whole. He posits further that communalism is based on the assumption of common Identity-belief that people belong to specific groups, sharing history, language, culture and historic space" (Gabriel, 2015, p. 97). His view of the concept of communalism differs.

In Africa, a child's upbringing is the exclusive duty of the community and not only that of the nuclear family. Jackson (2013) makes us understand that "in the extended family set up, no person can starve if neighbours have food neither can a child be orphaned since children belonged to the community. The child's welfare is not just an obligation of its family but it is that of every member of the community. In actual fact, everybody was responsible for the other" (p.35). This indeed is platonic. The words 'we' and 'us' best describe the concept of African communalism. In the traditional setting, Africans are cooperative, and collectivist. Here, every member of the community willingly and happily cooperates with, and is proud and obliged to help any other member of his/her community. This readiness to help and share is a value that Africans attached to group life.

No man is an island of himself. The individualistic and self-importance of the West does not hold sway in the indigenous African setup. It is believed that because we are together, we are somebody and we are stronger. What this implies is that no single individual can make up a unit in a society. Individuals constitute the socio-political, environmental and work units of the society. Jackson (2013) articulates further that "communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each, or the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all" (p.36). The group is the centre of focus in the lives of individuals and the measure of an individual's worth is dependent on the extent of his/her association and conformity with the group's interests and aspirations.

Representation of Childlessness and Communalism in Okonkwo's *Village Destroyer*

Childlessness is well captured in *Village Destroyer*. Nwabueze has been married to Nkechi for seven years without having a child even though they desire to have one. Nwabueze laments thus:

Nwabueze: Why can't I give birth to children like every other man...I have made all the sacrifices that I know to the gods of our land. Why deny me a child?

It is not his fault that he blames the gods for his misfortune. This stems from the belief that the gods are the giver of children. Therefore, when childlessness befalls a man, he seeks the face of the gods and spirits by making sacrifices. All these, Nwabueze had done to no avail. Culture

demands in the film that a couple give birth after few years of marriage. When they fail to make children, it becomes a bizarre to the community, and the couple become an object of laughter. Nwabueze is seen as one who is not man enough and is not worthy of seating in a meeting with kings. This is totally revealed in his friend's comment below:

Nwabueze's Friend: I am talking to him like that because he (Nwabueze) is not a man. He does not have a child not to talk of children who is he to be telling those of us who have children how to train them.... You are telling him the truth. In fact he is not supposed to be seating among us were we able bodied men who have children are talking.

This condition is a disgrace to him and his extended family. He is seen as a house built with sand without a solid foundation. Nwabueze feels life has placed him where he does not belong.

Nwabueze: I am now a laughing stock in this village. I can no longer speak were men speak. I am now regarded as a woman in the midst of my fellow men.

For a man to be laughed at by his folks and prevented from talking and making his opinion where his colleagues are is dangerous especially to the victim of childlessness in Africa. There have been some instances where childless people have resorted to committing suicide because they feel left out of the social space. The case is not different with Nwabueze who desire to die than to live and face this shame every day of his life.

Indigenous African societies are communalistic. In this home video, the moment Paulina hears the news that Nkechi has given birth, she immediately finishes her sales for the day and heads to visit the new born baby. In the same vein, her response to the news that the father of the new born has gone mad shows her deep concern not only for the victim, but also for Nkechi and her baby. This concern is revealed in the questions she asks Nne:

Paulina: What about his wife? I hope nothing happened to the baby? What do we do?

She is concerned about the welfare of those around her. Protecting the image of one other is another characteristic of communalism, *Village Destroyer* presents. The unexpected illness that befalls Nwabueze is something disgraceful. The immediate family and close friends had to do all they could to ensure his image and reputation and that of the community is protected. Nne's reaction in Paulina's presence and the Medicine man's response is:

Nne. Don't shout it o. We don't want people to hear it

Medicine Man: Why won't I be in a hurry? I don't want the villagers to see him as a mad man

It is also out of love and concern for Nwabueze's wife that his friend and the women who came around her hide the present condition of her

husband from her. But when it becomes obvious that hiding the husband's condition from her makes no sense, Nne has to open up to her. However, the communal style of living demands that something still needs to be done by the victim's friends and relatives. The desire to bring things to normalcy prompts Nwabueze's friend to ask Nne what they must do now that she has been told.

Suffice to state that African communalism stands tall in times of joy and pain. The same women who come to celebrate the arrival of the new born baby with Nkechi also stand by her to console her in her time of distress. African communal life is not confined to only close family members and friends but it dovetails into the community in its entirety. For this reason, the elders hold a meeting to discuss the way forward about the unfortunate incident that has befallen one of their own. These are some communal questions demanding answers from everyone at the meeting. When it is time to get a solution to the problems of the land and it comes to the fore that only Nkechi's daughter has the solution, every member of the community co-operate. All of these are realistic representation of childlessness and the communal life of traditional African society.

Conclusion

Okonkwo's *Village Destroyer* no doubt, presents a practical scene of the African world. Its major setback is its unrealistic portrayal of leniency of the elders towards Iheanacho, Azubuike and their friends who engage in raping young girls who come to the stream to fetch water. It is therefore imperative to note here that rape is an abominable act against God, and man (especially when it is done in the forest as it happens in the case of Iheanacho, Azubuike and their friends). Punishments for such offence include but are not limited to public beating by youths and fining. That is, paying a particular sum of money to the family of the rape victim. When the rapist does all things possible to hide his evil act and he succeeds, only in this case is punishment left to the gods to meet on him. It is therefore recommended in this chapter that scriptwriters, directors and producers should engage in proper research before writing and producing films. Since film plays a major role in the preservation and documentation of African cultural heritage, care must be taken in the treatment of ideas as these films are watched by audiences across the world.

References

- Ajayi, A. & Buhari, L. (2014). Methods of conflict resolution in African traditional society. *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* Vol. 8 (2): 138-150.
- Ayuk, A., Emeka, O., & Uyang, F. (2013). Traditional methods of crime

- control and community security in Odukpani Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 14 (5): 61-66.
- Bello, S. (1991). *Culture and Decision Making in Nigeria*. Lagos: National Council for Arts and Culture.
- Crispinous, I. (2009). Belief in the spirits of the dead in Africa: A philosophical Interpretation. *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya* Vol.1 (1): 147-159.
- Ezedike, E. (2009). *African Culture and the African Personality. From Footmarks to landmarks on African philosophy*. Somolu: Obaro and Ogbinaka publishers.
- Farinde, O. (2008). Nollywood Portrayal of the Nigerian Society: Issues in Question. *International Journal of Communication*. (9): 282-289.
- George A. & Unwin, I. (2007). Cultural relativism and the language of morals. *International Journal of African Culture and Development* Vol. 2 (1): 34-45.
- Gabriel, I. (2015). African culture and Values. *Phronimon*. Vol. 16 (2): 97-111.
- Idang, G.E. (2009). *The Mind-Body problem in African Culture: From footmarks to landmarks on African philosophy*. Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers.
- Jackson, W. (2013). *Traditional African communalism and the neo-communal spirit in Africa: With Special Reference to the Bukusu*. A Ph.D Thesis Submitted as a Requirement for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1977). *Introduction to African religion*. London: Heinemann Books.
- Mbiti, J.S. (1969). *African religions and philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd.
- Obiyo I. D (2013). Impact of Childlessness on Marriage: A Study of Married Couples in Lowa Community, Imo State. *International Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice* Vol.2 (1): 56-70.
- Taylor, E.B. (1871). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*. London: John Murray.
- Van M. & Laurent. N. (1993). *The flow of cultures in Organisaition, theory, and the multinational croproation*. New York: Ghoshal and Westney.

Introdu

This ch
commu
commu
research
Mazah p
intervent
theatre, a
for this
research
Addition
groups,
performe

A Curso

The tem
worldvie
develop
term by
that wha
skyscrap
However
required
requirem
globally.

I
we cann
that is e
which th
defining
West Af
(2015) "
account
commun
they are
develop
defined.