

## PDF - DIGNITY OR SUPPRESSION: THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THUNDERBOLT NOLLYWOOD HOME VIDEO FILM - researchcub.info

To investigate the representation and images of women in Nigerian film, this research will adopt a thematic and semiotic analysis of Nigerian film of "Thunderbolt" (2000) produced by Tunde Kilani, one of the films belonging to Nollywood. This popular film belongs to the melodramatic genre that characterizes contemporary filmmaking in Nigeria. Most interestingly, despite the film is characterized with socio-cultural history, it employs the genre and theme in relation to women's position in the narrative structure. The selection of this film is based on its popularity, which occurs due to the popularity of the filmmaker, more importantly the melodramatic, heartwarming plot, love and narrative of the film. The film revolves about two different tribes in which the protagonist (woman) proves to her husband beyond any reasonable doubt of her love and hope that two different tribes can live in harmony in spite of their cultural differences. The film portrays a woman is loyal to her family vows and abhor any sort of sexuality outside marriage. Thunderbolt is decidedly progressive. It is beyond any doubt that the audience's identification with Ngozi as a (relatively) strong female main character somewhat subverts societal norms of male dominance.

This examination of sexual politics is suitable to the video-film's overarching discourse of modern (or Western) beliefs versus African tradition. While it is somewhat Western in its treatment of sexual politics, however, it sides overtly with traditional beliefs in many other ways. The film portrays a modern African woman educated and well-to-do, and she works instead of staying home to take care of her baby, and her modern beliefs nearly cause her downfall, as she scoffs at the idea that she has been placed under some sort of curse. It is faster-paced, more focused on character psychology, and far more melodramatic than canonical films.

This study indicates empirical evidence to support or disprove such misgivings of women in our society. This is demonstrated by the widespread condemnation of violent and socially deviant contents of the Nigerian films, stereotyped and negative portrayals of vulnerable social groups like women. The film narrates mystical love victimization.

Theoretically, this research employs the feminist perspective to identify the images of women in the selected film using the semiotics approach as its method. Semiotics concepts are applied when analyzing the film. Semiotics as originated from linguistics can be applied to cinema although care must be taken when doing so because cinematic language is not like the normal verbal language in everyday use Abubakar (2014). Considering the popular definition of Semiotics as the scientific study of signs (Saussure, 1983), this study uses the conceptualisation of semiotics found in the works of various researchers on semiotics to explain sign usage in this study. Signs take the form of words, images, sounds, odours, flavours, acts or objects, but such things have no intrinsic meaning and become signs only when we invest them with meaning common to a particular society. According to C.S. Peirce (1931:58), 'nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign'. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as 'signifying' something - referring to or standing for something other than itself. We interpret things as signs largely unconsciously by relating them to familiar systems of convention. Since the science of sign has been a major medium of communication across races, tribes and people over the ages, it is pertinent for us to consider it as a vehicle for disseminating themes for this study. Greimas (1990) cited Oso (2016) postulates that nothing, in semiotic has meaning in and of itself because context is very important to meaning-making. For this study to be complete, the subject matter must be understood well. Themes in any work of fiction are the key or central

ideas of the producer of films and through these themes; comments on life generally are made (Kofa, 2010). Adágbádá (2009:31) postulates that the source of the theme is that which forms the basis of a poem, prose or play, and it is normally the society with its cultural norms and values. Authors' way of using signification as a means of conveying their thematic concerns is the major thrust of this study; hence, it is the meaningful use of signs which is at the heart of the concerns of semiotics that is dwelt on in this study.

However, according to the feminist film perspective, most of the films produced in Nigeria reproduce and distort the images of women in comparison to their real social images and roles. While describing the way women are portrayed in Nigerian video films, Adekunle argued that *"there is a noticeable trend in the Nigerian film industry...the women in the films come as wicked, manipulative, loose in morals, diabolic and inferior to the men"* (Adekunle, 2010, p. 1). The controversy here involves whether the films distort or reproduce reality. Some of the social situations reviewed in this research attest to the film images situating women as they are in real life.

## **1.2 History of Nollywood.**

The emotionally traumatizing "Master – Servant" relationship, apparent in the constant assaults, batteries, intimidation, segregation, victimization, carried out while using Colonial masters on the colonized, with darkened clouds of resentment, vengeance, thirst for freedom, offering option to splattering drops of such thoughts, instinctively projected consequently of the colonized intermittent in-subordinate actions, began to distribute one of many blacks. The British realized they had to tread with caution when they even now desired to take part in "god" inside their lives when films just like Tales of Manhattan, Trailer horn, Tarzan series began to stir up a revolution in the hearts of Blacks around the globe.

Aware of the lethal energy of insurgency which could be unleashed consequently of the movie medium, the British out of fearfulness for his or her lives and achievable the loss of the Queen's sovereignty took the bull while using horn, and swiftly created a Colonial movie Censors Board (FCB) in 1933 to censor and classify films just before they were released for visual consumption while using public. Following the establishment of the board, Films just like "The primitive, primitive man, Dixie, Buffalo Bill, The Keys of the Kingdom, Sleepy village Girl were tagged 'suitable' to be watched , while Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Clive of India, The Isle of Forgotten Sins, home of Frankenstein were considered as unsuitable for viewing .

The list of documented films created for the duration of the 70s era and transcending somewhat into the 80s is simply astonishing and goes to demonstrate that the Movie Industry has been near to much longer, contrary towards '1992 perception syndrome' most are already injected with .Such works include Kongi Harvest (1971), Alpha (1972), Bull Frog in the sunlight (1974), Amadi (1975), Ajani Ogun (1975), Muzik Man (1976), Bisi, Daughter of the River (1977), Ija Ominira (1978), Aiye (1979), Kadara (1980), Jaiyesimi (1980) Efunsetan Aniwura (1981), Cry independence (1981),Ija Orogun (1982) Owo L'Agba (1982)

Several researchers have written Literatures on Nollywood ranges from the historical aspects of the industry to the theme, plots, production and distribution of films for local and global audiences. The film has been a source of expressing and understanding the Nigerian culture as well as an influence on the lifestyles of Nigerian people. origin of movies to the 1960s when the first set of Nollywood movies were produced by great historical filmmakers, the likes of Hubert Ogunde, Jab Adu, Ola Balogun, Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala) and Eddie Ugboma. These professionals are considered to be the first generation of Nigerian filmmakers. Moses Olaiya a.k.a Baba Sala, brought the modern Nigerian comedy to life with his comic movies. Sam Loco Efe's name can't be left out in this nomenclature with his humorous comedies. Hubert Ogunde was a

pioneer in the field of Nigerian opera. He was known for the establishment of the Ogunde Theatre in 1945, which was the first professional theatrical company in Nigeria. He was also referred to as the father of the Nigerian theatre because of his great contribution to the birth of the Nigerian film industry.

The Nigerian movie industry (Home video Industry) a.k.a Nollywood has been typically accepted to have started-- immediately following the success of Ken Nebue's "Living in bondage". From then on, its expansion and attendant complications are known (by fascinated parties). The Nigerian film industry is increasing the level of scholarship with several researchers investigating the genres, production, distribution and challenges faced by the film with the country the number of films produced, as well as the themes and storyline of Nigerian films (Ebewo,2007; Haynes and Okome 1998, Obayiuwana 2011)cited Elizabeth (2004).

Nigerians became fully involved in the production of films, and by 1970, the first indigenous feature film, "**KONGI'S HARVEST**", written by Wole Soyinka, was produced in Nigeria. However, it was directed by an American and many of its crew members were foreigners. Later, more individuals became involved in the production of indigenous films, the likes of, Ola Balogun, Eddie Ugbomah, Ladi Ladebo and others. With several studies done in the past about the emerging Nollywood film industry, the Nigerian film industry is viewed in both negative and positive ways.

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

This study was motivated by the researcher's observation that the representation of women in cinema today is a matter of debate. Nigerian cinema practices are influenced by the patriarchal ideologies and fantasies of the male filmmakers where women are placed in a lower social status, often domesticated as housewives, secretaries, nurses, and child breeders Abubakar (2014).

However, this kind of maligning of womanhood did not stop but was augmented through negative representations. In most Nigerian films, women are portrayed as home breakers, prostitutes, materialists, victims of poverty, and evil doers. This type of representation is not restricted to films produced by men in Nigeria; even those produced by women situate women in such ominous positions. Women are suppressed and maligned within the film industry; they play secretaries, prop girls, odd-job girls, receptionists, and similar characters. They are oppressed by being packaged as images (sex objects, victims, or vampires) and they are oppressed within film theory by male critics who celebrate auteur (Thornham, 1999). The above prescribed roles attached to female cinematic representation are passive, very low status roles. None of the roles is active, and women tend to be under men as their masters, husbands, or fathers. However, in some societies, these features might not offend based on the status of women in those societies because media, including film, reflect a society, although feminists suspect the male auteur of distorting the real social images of women in their films

It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the best method to represent the features and images of Nigerian women in Nollywood films. This research work revolves around Nigerian film Nollywood and examines one film. However, the theoretical approach is feminist film theory while the methodology for analysis remains the semiotics approach

This research investigates the dominant images of women in Nigerian film industries, Nollywood. To do so, the following questions will be answered:

1. What are the major features and images of women in Nigerian cinema? How are they represented in the context of their social status? Are they positively or negatively represented in the film?

2. How does Nigerian cinema reproduce or subvert cultural hegemony? Do the films promote patriarchy or feminism?

#### **1.4. Aim and objectives**

The aim of the study was carried out to critically examine how women are being portrayed in Nigerian film:

- i. to bring out the major features and images of women in Nigerian cinema.
- ii. to ascertain the level of representation of women in the context of their social status.
- iii. to determine whether or not Nigerian films promotes patriarchy or feminism.
- iv. to investigate whether the Nigerian cinema reproduces or subverts cultural hegemony.

### **Chapter Two: Theoretical framework**

#### **2.1 Feminist film theory**

Many competing approaches and theories guide film analysis, including anthropological theory, semiotics theory, neo-structuralism theory, feminist theory, and neo-Marxist theory (Ukata, 2010). Feminist film theory emerged in the 1970s and is rooted in the women's movement of the 1960s. The central discourse of the feminists involves how film texts are worked and constructed to impose patriarchal ideology on females. However, the desire of the female to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema, while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which women were given favorable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists led to the birth of feminist film discourses. Additionally, in their bid to counter the masculine-oriented cinema, feminists even delved into criticism of the mainstream media representation of women, such as in television programmes, newspapers and magazines (Hollinger, 2012) cited in Abubakar (2014).

Feminist documentary and films reveals what motivated feminists to start their films: They (feminists) found that women traditionally seen on the screens were the reproduction of the experience, imagination, and fantasies of male filmmakers. Feminists, both academics and radicals, at all levels are fighting to bridge the cultural gaps between men and women. Feminists works in the humanities have aimed both at eliminating the disadvantages that women directors, authors, visual artists, and composers have in relation to their male colleagues and supplying missing historical information about women (Buikema, 1995).

McCabe maintains that the primary intention of feminist films is to understand the ways in which women are represented in film and to expose the sexist and women-centered content of cinema narratives as well as to reveal the media description of women as sexual objects for men's pleasure (McCabe, 2004). Feminists in film studies are also concerned about the sexist image of women in the works men produce, which led to coining of the term 'sexual difference.' Feminist studies have focused on establishing a female aesthetic independent of the cultural norms and values set by men (Buikema, 1995). Nevertheless, Haskell (1973) and Rosen (1993) reveal that feminist arguments on films are about representation and spectatorship, the stereotypes of women in cinema, and the distortion of women's images from reality.

Moreover, feminists are accusing the media, script writers and the film producers of misrepresenting women, portraying them in a stereotypical manner, denigrating them, and always showing them in the home and subordinate to men (Nelmes, 2007, p. 227). It is necessary that women should be shown in a variety of roles; they should be depicted as heroines, not only in the roles of loving a man, homemaking, and bearing children. The women should be represented as active.

They should not face ridicule or unhappy or tragic endings; women should be given high positions, depicted

in adventures that do not center on sexual attraction for a man or in working with other women without cattiness (Thornham, 1999). Moreover, Claire Johnson, in her paper "Women Cinema, a Counter Cinema," showed how women have been portrayed in films since the days of silent cinema. Women are always seen as an extension of a man. Thus, she castigated the narrow roles women have been given in films (Nelmes, 2007).

The other feminist theories that help in examination of the feminist movement concerning cinematic representations are reflection theory, equality theory, and theory of difference. Reflection theory of women and film says that the cinema reflects and represents the social reality. The way women are depicted in films is the way society treats them. These depictions are false and distorted; hence, they should be changed (Hill & Church, 2000).

If the cinema reinforces the social reality, feminists must first change the societal perceptions of women and the way they are treated, starting from the grassroots rather than attacking the male auteur to the extent of deconstructing the cinema contents with regard to female representations. Reflection theory, describes societies where women are highly valuable and respected, their cinematic images are the same as in reality. Moreover, feminists have strongly opposed reflection theory, arguing that it allows a reconstruction and distortion by the filmmakers (White, 2000).

Feminists agitating for equality are trying to emancipate women, to have them seen as coherent, rational, and autonomous. De Beauvoir provided an example of equality emancipating theory. She argued that women should live the way men do and their social roles should go beyond motherhood and subalterns to men; rather, they should be equal and shoulder to shoulder with men. Moreover, part of their struggle is to acknowledge the ignored women historical figures, authors, visual artists, playwrights, and composers (Buikema, 1995).

Feminists who apply the theory of difference campaign for the abolition of sexual differences, for females to have full access to social and cultural structures. They want women's social and cultural positions to be strengthened, using different means to promote women's interests and raising questions regarding women's aesthetics. However, Buikema argues that sexual difference is constructed by society. In addition, while demarcating gender and sex, Buikema maintained that 'sex' refers to biological differences between women and men and 'gender' to the identity and social position that accompany this biological difference in particular cultures (Buikema, 1995). This entails that the feminist discourses on film and cinematic representations justify the patriarchal domination and ideology imposed on females within the popular culture. However, without a tangible vision of feminism, it is impossible to fully understand how gender shapes the cinema.

To crown it all, the arguments and discourses of feminists in all spheres and disciplines revolve around three basic perspectives: representation, spectatorship, gender and sexual difference.

## **2.2 Semiotics and the semiotic approach in film studies**

African literary artists have used and are still using various theories to analyse and evaluate literary works. Among such theories are Formalism, Structuralism, Marxism, Feminism, Semiotics and Sociology of Literature among others. These theories are aesthetics of discourse; they are tools for deeper literary interpretations. Semiotics is the theory and study of sign and symbols, especially as elements of language or other systems of communication (Umberto Eco, 1987) cited Oso (2016).

Semiotics is a method used for textual analysis in social science disciplines and linguistics. It is concerned

with how combinations of signs communicate and make meaning in a given text. The text can be sound, image, or a combination of the two. Semiotics is the study of the means that can be used to communicate, such as words, images, traffic signs, flowers, music, and medical symptoms (Taylor & Willis, 2007; see Berger, 2000). Saussure (1916) maintains that semiotics is a science that deals with study of the life of signs within society (Noth, 1995; see Lapsley & Westlake, 1998).

However, semiotics can be said to come out of linguistics as some early semioticians borrowed certain concepts of semiotics application from linguistics structures. Buckland argued that *“early semioticians borrowed from structural linguistics the communication test, a deductive method of analyzing how the underlying level lends structure to surface level”* (Buckland 2004, p. 36).

Chandler (2000) maintains that Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was a pioneer who regularly referred to semiotics. According to Chandler, the other key role players in the early development of semiotics are American philosophers Peirce (1839-1914) and Morris (1901-1979). Chandler also acknowledged Eco, Barthes, Kristeva, Metz, Jakobson, Halliday, and Greimas as leading contemporary semiotic theorists. Moreover, semiotics cannot be separated from structuralism; Levi-Strauss in anthropology and Lacan in psycho analysis are also considered important in the field (Chandler, 2000).

In addition, semiotics also deals with how meanings are produced within a given media text. Seiter (1999) identifies the benefits of semiotics analysis thus, *“It allowed us to describe the workings of cultural communication with greater and enlarged our recognition of the conventions that characterize our culture”* (Taylor & Willis, 2007 p. 19). Moreover, Berger argues that *“semiotics helps us to understand how to decipher the messages we are sent and understand better the messages we send about ourselves to others”* (Berger, 2000, p. 43). Moreover, Vanzoonen (1994) defines semiotics analysis thus, *“semiotics analysis can be seen as formalization of the interpretative activities ordinary human being undertakes incessantly”* (Taylor & Willis 2007, p. 19). Fiske maintains that when dealing with semiotics we concentrate on terms like denote and connote (Fiske, 1990). He further argued that semiotics systems *“concentrate on analyses of a structured set of relationship which enable a message to signify something. Moreover, semiotics works tend to contribute in demystification and neutralizing representations and making them as constructed signs”* (Westlake & Lapsley 1998, p. 33).

Based on the above definitions of semiotics from different scholars, semiotics involves the study of different linguistic and cultural signs and the way they make meanings in a given text. Text can be sound, image, spoken words, or a combination of all. The meaning for semioticians should have cultural significance. Through various types of signs, everything in this world entails and imparts a certain meaning of its own in the eyes of the receivers. Chandler (2000) explains that in semiotics, signs are perhaps everything from which meanings can be deduced, like words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. To analyze semiotics in Saussure’s approach, every sign has two concepts: a signifier, the form the sign takes, and the signified, the concept it represents.

Semiotics has been criticized because its approach tends to be subjective based on the researcher’s level of perception of what he or she is analyzing. If two people are given the same text to analyze, their results will differ, particularly at the connotative level. Nevertheless, semiotics provides researchers with unifying concepts and sets of methods. It is the approach that made available different methodological terms to follow in analyses. Semiotics serves as a textual analysis method that gives more room to researchers to express their thoughts, while also giving them the chance to dig beyond the surface and manifest meaning

of a text. Metz( 1974). continued to argue that *“film, like a verbal language can be used merely as a vehicle without any artistic intention, with designation (denotation) governing alone and consequently, the art of the cinema like verbal art is, so to speak, driven one notch upward”* .

Semiotics has been criticized because its approach tends to be subjective based on the researcher’s level of perception of what he or she is analyzing. If two people are given the same text to analyze, their results will differ, particularly at the connotative level. Nevertheless, semiotics provides researchers with unifying concepts and sets of methods. It is the approach that made available different methodological terms to follow in analyses. Semiotics serves as a textual analysis method that gives more room to researchers to express their thoughts, while also giving them the chance to dig beyond the surface and manifest meaning of a text. However, the problem of film expressiveness as Metz put it is that cinema is not like a language system because it contrasts important linguistics facts, while a language is a system of signs with rules used for inter-communication (Metz, 1974). Metz continued to argue that *“film, like a verbal language can be used merely as a vehicle without any artistic intention, with designation (denotation) governing alone and consequently, the art of the cinema like verbal art is, so to speak, driven one notch upward”* (Metz, p. 77). He further maintained that the semiotics should be applied to cinema studies with the greatest caution

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presented research method adopted for the study. It examined such germane items as research design, data source, data design, data analysis procedure, sampling technique which was anchored for data collection.

#### **3.1. Research design**

This study adopted qualitative research design and drew its data from Nollywood film. This enabled the researcher to identify the various ways in which the film producers portray women in the film.

#### **3.2 Data source**

Thunderbolt film produced by Tunde Kilani and was written by Femi Kayode (2000) was critically examined

#### **3.3 Data Analysis Procedure.**

The analysis of the study was done in accordance with the aim and objective of the study.

- i. to bring out the major features and images of women in Nigerian cinema.
- ii. to ascertain the level of representation of women in the context of their social status.
- iii. to determine whether or not Nigerian films promotes patriarchy or feminism.
- iv. to investigate whether the Nigerian cinema reproduces or subverts cultural hegemony.

#### **3.4. Sampling technique, sample size and data collection procedure**

One film was randomly selected and critically examined.

### **Summary**

The chapter started with the methodology adopted to achieve the objectives for this work. Research design, data source, data analysis procedure, sampling technique, sample size and data collection procedure adopted for this work were also discussed.

## **4.0 Chapter Four: Analysis**

#### **4.1. Analysis of Thunderbolt.**

The analysis of *Thunderbolt* employs different modes and approaches but emphasizes on the semiotics method, which is the main methodological approach of the researcher. By examining the iconography of this film, semiotics concepts such as connotation and denotation, signifier and signified will be applied. Aesthetically, *Thunderbolt* (2000) is a film that presents the role of supernatural beliefs, folklore, heartwarming, popular melodramatic film, sexual politics in Nigerian society and the conflict between modernity and African traditions.

#### **4.2 Background information about the film**

*Thunderbolt* (2000) was produced by Tunde Kilani. The *Thunderbolt* resulting from jealousy caused by the evil plot of a man in the central theme of the film. However, *thunderbolt* is presented in the chronological order of its narrative using different types of shots and scenes. The film also depicts the conflict life style between two different tribes and jealousy .

Moreover, in terms of ideology, this film appeals less to ideology than the patriarchy embedded in most Nigerian societies. The Yoruba culture encourages patriarchy in that the men are the leaders at home. However, the critiques of ideology are concerned with deconstructing the ideological practices through assessment of their legitimacy. Rodriguez maintained that “a central aim of ideology critique therefore consists of assessing the legitimacy of a practice of subordination” (Rodriguez, no date, p. 269). With regard to the above statements, Nigerian elites are yet to wake up to using the film medium for influential aims in society. This is because filmmaking is not seen as a respectable activity but rather a profitable business. In Nigeria, filmmakers are considered immoral and agents of moral decadence.

### **DIGNITY OR SUPPRESSION: THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN THUNDERBOLT NOLLYWOOD HOME VIDEO FILM**

**The complete project material is available and ready for download. All what you need to do is to order for the complete material. The price for the material is NGN 3,000.00.**

**Make payment via bank transfer to Bank: Guaranteed Trust Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 0424875728**

**Bank: Zenith Bank, Account name: Emi-Aware technology, Account Number: 1222004869**

**or visit the website and pay online. For more info: Visit <https://researchcub.info/payment-instruct.html>**

**After payment send your depositor's name, amount paid, project topic, email address or your phone number (in which instructions will sent to you to download the material) to +234 70 6329 8784 via text message/ whatsapp or Email address: [info@allprojectmaterials.com](mailto:info@allprojectmaterials.com).**

**Once payment is confirmed, the material will be sent to you immediately.**

**It takes 5min to 30min to confirm and send the material to you.**

**For more project topics and materials visit: <https://researchcub.info/> or For enquiries:**



**info@allprojectmaterials.com or call/whatsapp: +234 70 6329 8784**

**Regards!!!**