



‘The man from Africa is on his way’: Styling in Nollywood Films

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... contemporary diasporas present us with profound transformation, with a shift from the traditional formations and identities characterizing diasporic communities, to the ways we learn how to engage with the new ‘Other’, generating new grammars of experience and subjectivity. (Bailey, Georgiou and Haridranath 2007: 1)

Our film industry, now popularly called ‘Nollywood’ despite its deficiencies, has been able to project a measured Nigerian identity to the world. (Mba 2009: 11)

‘Sir, a call has just come through. The man from Africa is on his way’. Receptionist from *Osuofia in London Part II*

I always see African men checking out the shirts - African men like wearing shirts. If a Black guy is wearing a casual style shirt hanging loose over a pair of casual trousers – he’s from somewhere in Africa.

[http://www.ravishlondon.com/items/\(28\).html](http://www.ravishlondon.com/items/(28).html)

Abstract: The Nollywood industry has become a subject of scholarship in a number of disciplines in the humanities in which various theoretical paradigms are explored (Ogunleye 2003, Adamu et al. 2004, Ugochukwu 2013). In this regard, one of the strongest criticisms levelled against Nollywood Studies is repetitiveness arising both from poor circulation or dissemination of published work and scholars’ hesitation to acknowledge or refer to work previously done in this field. Hayne’s review and annotated bibliography (2010) provides a detailed and critical overview of the literature on this burgeoning industry. With that criticism in mind, this paper moves in a totally new direction to explore Nollywood as a subject of sociolinguistic analysis and scholarship. It focuses on the use of styling and stylization to assign ownership and therefore ascribe identities to individuals and communities.

Keywords: Styling, representation, identity, Nollywood, translocality, diaspora

1. Introduction

‘Nollywood’ is the name by which the Nigerian motion picture industry

has become known. It is said to be the third largest film industry in the world after Hollywood and

Bollywood in terms of volume and revenue per annum. According to the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board in 2009, 1000 video films were licensed and its estimated revenue has been put at \$589.8 million

([http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2010-EDiA/papers/014-](http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2010-EDiA/papers/014-Radwan.pdf)

Radwan.pdf) 1. As an industry, Nollywood has attracted critical attention and the traditional cinema hub in Burkina Faso run by FESPACO represents it as pulp rather than cinema. The reality though is that the impact of Nollywood as an industry and cultural phenomenon ramifying throughout the Black and African diaspora, the share volume of production involved and the revenue it is generating together make it critical naivety to ignore it.

2. Theoretical Framing

I shall begin by locating my discussion in what Androutsopoulos

(2012: 2) describes as ‘cinematic discourse’. According to him, this field of inquiry

pinpoints a contextualised approach to film as a site of sociolinguistic representation, including its relations to production and/or reception and the sociolinguistic knowledge that it articulates and presupposes.

The only reservation with such location in this instance is that critics of African Cinema exclude video films from the category of cinema because of the former’s access via the small rather than the big screen. The cinema (hall) is a site of social engagement at the centre of which is a motion picture. Ironically, across Sub-Saharan Africa, video halls like the one in Figures 1a and 1b serve virtually the same purpose and so arguably, representations in Nollywood would qualify as cinematic discourse.

Fig. 1a: Outside view of Uncle Gabb Video Show, Blantyre, Malawi



Fig. 1b: Inside view of Uncle Gabb Video Show, Blantyre, Malawi



There are four theoretical strands that lend themselves to the framing of my task in this paper. The first is style in sociolinguistics. A special

issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* was dedicated to 'styling' with the primary purpose of challenging, as it were, 'conventional

sociolinguistic assumptions about linguistic ownership and speech communities building on insights from anthropology and cultural studies' (Rampton 1999: 421). Ownership invests a supposed owner with an association to and a claim on the owned by which they may be identified. Thus, when that association or claim is broken or extended to another the sanctity of the original identity or the boundaries of it is rendered tenuous. In his introduction to the special issue, Rampton goes on to say that the volume's focus was on 'a range of ways in which people use language in discursive practice to appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images or stereotypes of groups that they **don't** themselves belong to'. We establish therefore that styling is about identity construction.

According to Bucholtz (2011: 11) styling is not a property of situations but of speakers. Citing Coupland (2007) and Eckert (2003) she describes style as a bundle of semiotic resources indexically tied to a social type, category, or persona'. The information excerpt presented in the epigraph above thus invokes a sense of anticipation in terms of patterns of language use. How does one do being 'a man from Africa'? Which semiotic resources does a cinema audience explore in order to recognise him? What sorts of narrative orientation is explored by the script writer or film maker to make these obvious? In answering

these questions I unveil a stash of stereotyping discursive practices which are deemed essential to constructing the supposed identity of a group. There is one little detail in film culture though that marks a departure from Rampton's outsiders doing crossing. The actors who explore the stereotypes by which individuals and communities are identified may indeed be drafted from within the group. In other words, performances draw on values, perceptions and representations that are ensconced in community or national discourses.

The second of my four strands is the constructedness of identity. If we subscribe to Alim's (2004) remark, then styling or stylizing as a discursive practice in identity construction arguably operates from essentialist presumptions or beliefs. He had noted that social categories do not determine speech style or social behaviour in general but that they are always being constructed and reconstructed in performance with speakers manipulating linguistic indexicality to locate themselves in fields of discursively produced identities. This is increasingly the popular and critical view among identity scholars. The assumption that particular ways of speaking or behaving represent particular groups of people and by which such groups may be ascribed an identity constituted the bedrock of early and mid-20th century scholarship.

In contemporary times, perspectives along the lines of early 20th century scholarship conflict with developments in the sociolinguistics of identity (see Bucholtz and Hall 2005, Omoniyi and White 2006) which stress the constructedness, multiplicity and in-the-moment nature of identity. The identities which underlie the classifications ‘Hollywood’, ‘Bollywood’ and ‘Nollywood’ amongst other ‘woods’ are equally essentialist because contemporary practice in film production shows increasing hybridization in cinematic cultures both in form and content. In other words, genre format and content, texts and contexts have mutated significantly. Evidence of this abounds in a number of recent productions. *Bend it Like Beckham*’ (2002), *The Love Guru* (2006) and *Slum Dog Millionaire* (2008) which were all Hollywood blockbusters grossing \$76m, \$40m and \$377.9m worldwide respectively are exemplary of the crossings in cinematic cultures which make it difficult to pigeon-hole any of those films in traditional terms.

I turn now to the third strand - the shift from postcolonial theory and its treatment of the continuing relationship between erstwhile provinces and their respective metropolises to the post-national (Heller 2011) and neo-millennial paradigms of analysis. Here, the focus is not just on how the other is imagined and represented but equally importantly, how the self imagines

and represents itself as a consequence of self interpretation and perception in the complex social reality of the globalised world – performing local and global in the same breath. In other words, with regards to Nollywood, the construction of styles (identities) deemed to characterise Nigeria (spaces, persons and social action), is informed by the actors’, producers’ and script writers’ perceptions of contemporary orientations of global cosmopolitan relationships. It is arguably multidisciplinary and complexly multidimensional since especially if we consider the development in the disciplines of engaging multi-theoretical paradigms in the bid to produce a more holistic knowledge. For instance, according to Haynes (2010: 111) ‘Film Studies scholars are apt to focus more on psychological consequences and the articulations between the formal structures of films and the psyches of their audiences’.

Each and all of the paradigms applied by Nollywood scholars are justified within the ambits of the logic of disciplinary specificities as well as the interfaces that are set up when disciplinary boundaries are crossed such as we find in this essay. Haynes also remarked that ‘the third biggest film industry in the world is going to attract a lot of attention, as it should, and commentary on it cannot be restricted to a small priesthood of initiates’ (2010: 111). Thus recent and growing interest in social theory in Sociolinguistics

scholarship opens up a vista that enables us to explore Nigerian society, Nigerian diasporas, Nollywood's audiences (local and global) and all other social constructions and representations that Nollywood films present to us.

The fourth and final theoretical strand is hybridity. Working in tandem with popular culture, the information technology revolution has also facilitated a merger or blending of culture worlds so that the world in which diasporic peoples metamorphosed into an 'Other' in the perception of their homeland folks is no longer distant, imagined and truly different in the traditional sense. Rather, digital television, transnational media networks beam those metropolitan worlds into provincial living rooms via satellite technology. The social and cultural practices of the former are thus witnessed first-hand by all and in some cases shared. The Arab Spring experience of 2011 is a firm illustration of sharing of values and practices facilitated by information flow. A sociolinguistics of cinematic discourse needs to engage with the socio-theoretical import of access to information and practices which were hitherto authored and authorised by, and associated solely with the voice of the diasporic subject, and to the process and practice of constructing the diasporic persona.

The narrative accounts of diaspora people no longer constitute the main

or sole source of information and knowledge for instance, neither about the West nor about the diasporic subject in the West, in postcolonial societies. Not only do the *homelanders* themselves witness the West and African diasporas through what Appadurai (1996) described as the mediascape, they may in fact partake in those practices through entries and commentaries on weblogs and other media forums and platforms such as 'Naijafilms.com'. In fact, in some cases some of the cultural practices and activities of diasporic communities actively involve homelanders. For instance, the practice of arranged marriages among some minority ethnic cohorts in the United Kingdom involves sourcing husbands or wives for spouses located in the diaspora. These events which become filmic resources therefore are prime sites of stylization of the Other as I shall demonstrate with three Nollywood video films, *Love Wan tin tin (date unknown)*, *The London Boy* (2004) and *Osuofia in London* (Part 1 & 2, 2003, 2004).

3. Style and Sociolinguistics

The stylistic agent according to Cameron (2000) is a prescriber of the form and standard of performance expected of a group in the provision of a service that involves communication. Thus, service encounters in call centres was the object of her study across the United Kingdom. Other scholars who have worked on style, styling, stylization include Eckert (2001), Bell (1984,

1999), Coupland (2001), and Rampton (1995, 1999). The fundamental principle that they all explore is that a group defining performance is identified with a social or cultural community. The salience of such performance always calls the group to mind. It is not arbitrary but rather based on observation over time even though in stylisation there may be an element of exaggeration. It may also be the case that particular texts may be complex being multiple-layered and therefore requiring to be peeled like an onion. For instance, in stylizing a national diaspora, such as 'Nigerians', there are several component variables (religion, gender, ethnicity, education, etc). At the same time these may be the basis for internal differentiation within the country. They are expanded in the perception of an external audience to represent the larger national group. We shall return to this later in our discussion.

In popular culture, social groups may be identified with ways of doing things especially in entertainment. If we take rappers for example, we have some sense of the quintessential image of a rapper in terms of body art, couture, swagger or limp and rapping. According to Peter Wilton (Oxford Music Online) rap

... originally referred to stylized speech used by American urban black youth. When this kind of speech was used by the master of ceremonies (MC) to

introduce the disc jockey (DJ) at street parties, it became attached to a musical backing; the MCs were known as 'rappers'. (http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5492?q=rap&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firthit)

Aspiring artistes stylise their heroes and in major performances such as the X-Factor UK or X-Factor USA, some events are themed around the work of famous artistes. Both in make-up and songs, the contestants anchor their performance to the themed artiste's works. Let us take as an instantiation of this point, Lorna Cooper's blog entry (editor, MSN TV, 13/11/2011 at 22:09) under the title 'X-Factor 2011: Kitty Brucknell goes ... then goes Gaga: Misha Bryan'

Misha B sang the song Kitty wanted; Lady Gaga's Born This Way. And, as usual, she delivered. Too bad the atrocious styling wasn't as superlative as her vocals; Misha B is 19 - the X Factor stylists made her look 50!

Little wonder Louis Walsh said she reminded him of Chaka Khan (yeah, he meant vocally, but she looks like Chaka in that get-up!). "You are truly a class act," Gary Barlow told her. [<http://tv.uk.msn.com/images.aspx?cp-documentid=159766018&p>

age=8. Accessed March 14, 2014]

The point I wish to stress here is that the X-Factor stylists constructed a persona that Lorna Cooper judged to be 50 years old which in her view was dissonant with Misha B's age of 19, and therefore undermined the entertainment and artistic quality of the performance. Cooper suggests that Louis Walsh's allusion to Chaka Khan could double as a reference to the age-ing of the contestant by the stylists. The representation of God in the character of Bruce Almighty (Morgan Freeman) attired in white based on popular imaginings of the cultural whiteness of God (2006) and the artistic transgression of a Black protagonist is a possible analogy to stylising a model persona in cinema. Discourse communities in spite of increased mobility between and within them are still habitually characterised by reference to salient social and cultural practices, and so expectations of patterns of discourse are accommodated within reason.

If we take our reference to popular culture one step further, we find that hip-hop and Hood membership as sites of social identification produce a perspective on style. Within that perspective, we talk of the language of the street and the codes of conduct which accord them recognition and according to which they select their social faces (Goffman 1981). The stylistic features by which we identify the membership as well as the site constitute the hallmark of the

community of practice. In relation to Nollywood films then, the genre's association in part with rituals and other aspects of ethnic and cultural practices which the African and Black diasporas recognise is the reason that the films resonate with the latter. Theatrical performances in those communities explore these practices as invaluable resource in the form of humour, sarcasm, metaphor and so on.

I shall conclude this section by briefly addressing the issue of patent and the representation of cinematic cultures with Hollywood as reference point vis-à-vis style and styling. Certain cultural practices cannot be successfully patented. Long distance running could not have been successfully patented by Kenya considering that Uganda, Ethiopia and other East African countries have the same kind of terrain that lend themselves to the development of that sport. Even though both India and Pakistan are great international cricketing nations, the Caribbean nations and the UK stake no lesser claim to a cricketing nation identity. It is in this context that I hold up Marston, Woodward and Jones III (2007: 47) for scrutiny. They remark in their paper that they

selected Nollywood because of the ease with which it has been incorporated into globalization's frame, right alongside Mumbai's Bollywood, in *aping* Los Angeles's Hollywood. We attempt to show that this

imitative positioning is itself the product of the spatialities writers have brought to globalization, and that a different reading can be marshalled to produce a more culturally and politically attuned understanding of Nigeria's burgeoning film industry (my emphasis).

In my discussion above, I had presented styling and stylisation as either self or other representation but what may not have been obvious is the fact that the styler and the stylee often belong to different social categories and in some cases strata of social hierarchy. Thus, in the reference above there is a certain suggestiveness of Hollywood's superiority to Nollywood inherent in the charge of 'aping' and imitating by the latter of the former. This is a sweeping generalisation that is flawed when it is subjected to thorough conceptual analysis. We must ask whether when Hollywood and other mainstream agents and representatives stylise African communities and personas in productions such as *The Last King of Scotland* (Forest Whitaker), *Amistad* (Djimon Hountodji) and *Coming to America* (Eddie Murphy) that is also aping and imitating. Or is the mainstream only capable of artistic parody?

4. Constructedness of identity

Stylising is both a process and a conscious act of representation (i.e.

stylisation) of a specific demographic cohort, such as the representation of the Nigerian diaspora as a Europeanised or Europeanising subculture in Nollywood films. Auer (2007: 12) explains stylisation as a discursive practice that explores linguistic variability-based group differentiation. He remarks that

... there are many social-communicative styles in which certain features stand out as the most salient ones which are, for instance, used as mock features in stylisation and crossing. These strategies of social discrimination through language reduce complex styles, but in such a way that they are still easily recognisable. In sum style in modern sociolinguistic theory is a concept which mediates between linguistic variability and practices of social categorisation of self or other.

Thus, stylisation is an attempt at social or cultural group representation based on normatively ascribed identity characteristics of an individual or a group. In theatre, styling is carried out by affecting speech style and other behavioural patterns like taste in music, fashion, and other general interests. In the end, the target is brought to life in the minds of the audience through the performances especially of individual actors or an aggregate of

actors. Comedy, especially parody, thrives on this.

In the light of these conceptualisations of constructedness and stylisation, we could have stereotypes of 'being a Nollywood film', a template of the quintessential Nollywood film towards which scriptwriters and actors may appear to orientate to create humour. However, when cinematic culture boundaries are crossed and hybridisation occurs, what we have are creative transgressions of essential identities. For illustration, *The London Boy*, a 2004 production, has a storyline shot in two contrasting cultural environments; the United Kingdom and Nigeria. Starring Ramsey Nouah, Segun Arinze, Ben Nwosu, Simone McIntyre, Danielle Johnson, Emilia Azu, Fred Amata and Uche Ama Abriel, it was produced and directed by Simi Opeoluwa. We find the actors performing crossing (Rampton 1995) for all sorts of creative reasons and cinematic effects. Those become instances of representation of the racial or cultural 'other' rather than constructions of self-ascribed social identities, except where crossing has been instigated by perceptions of diasporic identities and invoked in the reconstitution of the relocated or displaced self.

In postcolonial cinematic discourse, we must differentiate between the hybrid, creative communicative practices of new ethnicities (Hall

1989) and the behaviour affectation of first generation immigrants for the simple reason that with the latter, speech resources were all fully formed before 'the journey' so that attempts to forcibly mimic London English are easily recognisable as affectation. This is resource for parody and it is explored in creating light-hearted humour when the society holds up a mirror in self-reflexivity. The British television series such as *Goodness Gracious Me* and *Mixed Blessings* in the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently *Meet the Adebajnos* (2012, UK's Africa Channel on Sky 209) have exploited that idea. The representation of that generation is different from the representation of second generation diaspora people who had been born away from home and exposed to and socialised in English in its homeland. The focus shifted from competence in the language to the intergenerational disjuncture due to language and cultural perspective differences. The parents are chastised for not teaching the children the culture. The diaspora responds to this chastisement by launching programmes such as 'Learn Yoruba in 27 Days' by (www.Yorubaforkids_abroad.com) aimed specifically at diaspora's children.

In the opening shot of *The London Boy*, we are introduced to the protagonist, Chidi (Ramsey Nouah) whose father has recently died. His widowed mother is dressed in the traditional black or dull colours of

mourning. He makes plans to travel to England by selling family land which leads to confrontation with his infuriated uncle, Gaga. In that opening, a number of the core issues of stylization which we shall engage with in this paper are unveiled. First, we are presented with the patriarchy of the Nigerian cultural milieu conveyed in the widow's assertion of her helplessness with the demise of her husband and Chidi's assumption of responsibility as the new head of the family following his father's demise.

The construction of women as dependants in the traditional Nigerian/Igbo cultural economy is stylized in the narrative of the predicament that confronts the widow as we find in the lamentation of Chidi's mother (cf. Kiesling 1998). The story begins in what is obviously Nigeria with the widow in mourning black garb questioning 'Why me, God? 'My husband, what will I do without you?' Why did it have to happen to me?' 'Chineke, is this what life is all about?' In contrast, Chidi who sits nearby in silent mourning turns and beholds his mother saying 'Mama o zugo' (In Igbo, Mother, it's enough, stop crying). He instructs Chinyere his sister to take the mother in before he soliloquizes:

Extract 1

'So papa you're gone?
You've left us, just like that?
Without warning, you left.
Where do I start from? Where
do I begin?

I'm the next man in the house
yet I have no money. How do I
feed my mother? How do I
feed my younger ones? Eoh
papa, eoh! [ideophones]

The social structure of the traditional Nigerian (African) family is conveyed in the portraiture of Chidi's new headship of the family following his father's demise. Decision-making is a masculine endeavour as we see in the stances taken by Chidi and his uncle in their power play scenes. This is also another feature to be explored for the representation of the community. The social actors and actions are situated in sociological processes that prospective audiences watch and recognise as characteristically Nigerian. In other words, these are perceived as defining social practices, albeit essentialist. Film is thus a credible source of material information on cultural history and process. The research that informs styling by the script writers and the film producers explores such secondary sources as well as primary sources such as theatrical performances. Let us look a little more closely at this particular aspect of stylisation in the chosen films.

Extract 2:

Mother singing

Chidi: Mama
Mother: Chidi my son
Chidi: Mama, I want to talk
to you
Mother: My son. Yes my son,
about what?

Chidi: Mama you know that for the past two years that I've graduated, I've been working tirelessly doing all kinds of jobs, uhm, good, bad, dirty jobs, any kind of job just to make ends meet. Yet I can't even save. Yet I can't even take care of myself not to talk of my family. Mama it is frustrating, very frustrating. It's not easy to survive in this country o mama.

Mother: Chidi my son, you know one needs patience to survive in this country. Uhm, you have to just have patience. God is not sleeping

Chidi: Exactly Mama. That is why I do not want to sleep myself. Yes. Now, I have made arrangements to leave this country, to find my destiny somewhere else.

Mother: Chidi. Bri - ginni? Outside the country?

Chidi: En en now London, Britain, England

In Extract 2 above, Chidi divulges plans to seek his fortunes in Britain to his mother. Her shock is captured in her response to the information 'Chidi, Bri-ginni? Outside the country?'. 'Bri-ginni' [glossed as Bri-What?] is a clever morphological blending operation in which the two-syllable word Britain is split and then creatively mixed with the Igbo word for 'what'.

5. Imagining, imaging and representing the other

In this segment of my discussion the focus is on the society rather than on

the individual. The capacity of cinema to construct and represent social (dis)order is captured in Androutsopoulos's description of cinematic discourse as a 'site of representation' (2012: 1). In all the three films on which my discussion in this paper is based, the narratives straddle Africa and Europe/America and therefore automatically create an opportunity to comment on the two societies bearing in mind the social history that binds them together; coloniser versus colonised.

The imagination of England takes two forms for two different groups of people. Educated, urban, young and ambitious types regard England as a land opportunity and they used metaphors such as 'greener pastures', 'land of milk and honey', 'land of the golden fleece', to describe it. This comes across in Chidi's statement to his mother that moving to England is the solution to the hardship he experiences in providing for his family. He would find his destiny there. In fact, he would become a millionaire in a few months; he assures his mother on the eve of his departure. He sells a portion of family land to raise his airfare and by so doing he offends his uncle, Gaga. In contrast, his infuriated uncle refers to England as the 'Whiteman's Land', a colonial description which in contemporary times marks one as rural and uneducated. In reality this can also then be a measure of narrative style through which a particular film is situated in a period in social and

cultural history. Using the stream of consciousness technique we access Gaga's thoughts as he ruminates in the extract below.

Extract 3:

'Ehh, this small boy wants to travel to the Whiteman's land, eh.
Butterfly calling himself a bird
When I Alk Agaga eh cannot travel to Benin City
Eke wants to travel to the Whiteman's Land
His wish In this land
Oya, let him go let me see. I am here'.

The expanse and diversity of Europe and of whiteness as a racial category are totally homogenised into 'Whiteman's land' in Uncle Gaga's worldview. In this worldview, England is synonymous with overseas and Europe. Gaga undermines Chidi's ambition to go to England with the use of the Igbo idiom 'a butterfly calling himself a bird'. Although butterflies and birds have the capability of flying, they do not belong in the same phylum; the former does not have the latter's capability. Chidi described his uncle as 'that enemy of progress' and revokes all kinship ties to him and with the exclusionary metaphor, 'besides, if there is no crack in the wall, lizard would not enter.' He strips him of membership of the family network and constructs him as other and out-group. Let us look at Chidi's utterance in response to his mother's assertion that gaga is his uncle.

Extract 4:

Which uncle? He is not my uncle. That enemy of progress! This man cannot be my uncle. Besides, if there are no cracks in the wall, lizard would not enter. This man cannot be my uncle. He can't do more than a dead rat. *E chi ku mo*, if this cockroach tries anything, I'll machete him.

The construction of the Igbo as hot-tempered and fatalistic in Nigerian ethno-national discourse has been explored widely in television dramas. The character of Okoro in the canonical television drama series *The Village Headmaster* of the 1970s and 1980s readily comes to mind. The series stylizes some of the major ethnic groups of the Nigerian nation; Chief Eleyinmi is quintessentially Yoruba; senior teacher Mr. Garuba is Hausa; Okoro is Igbo and Basseyy Okon is Efik. The latter was fond of interspersing his speech in Pidgin/English with the Efik exclamation 'Hey, Abasi mbok!' (Lord of mercy!). These images seem to have been embraced by all and therefore sometimes used in self-representation or in comedy and self-denigration for the purposes of creating humour. They have now been co-opted into film. In *The London Boy*, furious Chidi declares and threatens that he would kill his uncle.

Seven days later, Gaga allegedly casts a spell that inflicts Chidi with an immobility ailment; the reference

to seven is significant in Igbo mythology and is an attempt to authenticate the ritual involved in spell casting. As an extension of the authentication of traditional rituals, Gaga berates Chidi's family for transferring him from hospital to a church for healing instead of seeking his help to a native doctor (herbalist). Once it seemed like Chidi had found a cure in Christianity, Gaga trumped up charges and had him arrested and locked up by the police. This incident is also a classic strategy in stylization where traditional ritual practices are represented as rural, ancient and uneducated in contrast to Christianity which is modern, urban and educated.

Next, we meet the elders of Umuocha being informed of the Oracle's selection of Benson Mbakwe who lives in England to the vacant stool of Igwe.

Extract 5:

Elder 1: Em, pardon my curiosity Ezenmo, who could that be?

Priest Ezenmo: The gods have chosen the son of Mbakwe Onigbo to be the new Igwe of Umuocha

Elder 2: Eh,?????

Elder 3: What did I hear you say Ezenmo?

Elder 2: Mbakwe, ordinary Mbakwe

Priest Ezenmo: Benson, the one living in the Whiteman's land.

Elder 3: No! This is insane. This is madness.

Priest Ezenmo: Did I hear you well, that the gods are insane and mad?

The above characterisation of the process of selection of an Igwe from the diaspora as 'madness' and 'insane' although only ambiguously refers to the location of Benson Mbakwe in the Whiteman's land, is arguably a reflection of the homelanders' perception of people in the diaspora as inappropriate for leadership roles in the homeland. This speaks to the very heart of schemes instituted by national governments to encourage continued dialogue and engagement with their emigrant populations who constitute a potentially invaluable external human resources pool, especially for development planning. The Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) and Non-Resident Indians (NRI) schemes by the Nigerian and Indian governments are examples of these. The Finance Minister in the cabinet of President Olusegun Obasanjo, Dr. Mrs Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was drafted from her Vice-President post at the World Bank to help with transforming the country's fiscal structures between 1999 and 2003, and going on to serve in successive administrations too.

The exploration of cinema as a site of engagement (Scollon 1998) with the political system of a state is etched into this statement by the Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board to the effect that:

Film makers can play a strategic role in building a Nigerian nation that is modern, cohesive, and a stable democracy, able to understand & express itself, to capture its constantly evolving identity and to communicate all this to Nigerians, and the rest of the world ...

Thus, the Censors Board sees as its duty in conjunction with other agencies and stakeholders helping to 'empower, build capacity and direct creative energies of our new breed of filmmakers towards the understanding that indeed Nigeria is in every movie'. The Nigeria in the Movies (NIM) initiative was set up for intervention of this kind. The agency complements in some ways the *Nigeria Image Project* launched in 2004 later renamed *The Heart of Africa Project*. Through the representation of Nigeria as the centre of black cultural heritage, attraction of cultural patriots to the country in the diaspora has risen. For example, popular culture events in Abuja Nigeria often have hip-hop icons and other global celebrities from the Black and/or Nigerian diaspora as guests; these include 50 Cent, Beyonce Knowles, Akon, Kelly Rowland, Kanye West and Kim Kardashian among others. This representation of Nigeria is also particularly facilitated by the exploration of transnational storylines as we find in the film *Osuofia in London*.

After portraying the disgust of some of the elders of Umuocha at the Oracle's choice of a diasporic citizen over a resident local for the vacant chieftaincy stool, the film introduces us to the England-born mixed race daughter of the nominee and her Black British-Nigerian boyfriend to bring the cultural schism to the fore. We meet the boyfriend and girlfriend pair of Ken and Stacey Mbakwe in a London leisure park embroiled in an argument. Beyond their interpersonal relationship issues, the conversation becomes a site of commentary on cultural practices, conflicting homeland and diaspora identities, filial devotion, patriotism, sense of self, loyalty and preference.

Extract 6:

Ken: Girl, sorry. What's the problem?

Stacey: My father and my younger sister are leaving tomorrow for Nigeria.

Ken: Finally? For what?

Stacey: He's gonna be the King of the village. Tradition says it must be him or no one else.

Ken: So he's going to abandon everything he has here to move to the little remote village?

And I'm supposed to be [par' ov I], to abandon my career and go with him

Ken: Hm. How awful. Are you going with them?

Stacey: 'Of course I can[?t] be part of THIS CRAP. London's the home I know

now. I can't leave for anywhere else.

Ken: Certainly not. God! How come I don't know about this?

Stacey: How would you? You would have been jumping from one continent to another, from one woman to another.

Ken: Oh baby girl, don't be like that.

Stacey: I will be like that. You think I don't know about all your lies and cheating behind my back? I just, God ah!

Ken: Come on, don't let us quarrel over nothing. I'm not as bad as you think. Come on baby girl. Ok I'm sorry. I'm sorry for everything. I'll mak'em all up to you.

Stacey: I've heard THAT CRAP several times before. You're not gonna make up anything. Please, time to go. Please take me home.

Ken: Stacey, Stacey, come on Stacey. [Wetin dey do this girl? She tink say na??=? What's wrong with this girl? She thinks that ...] Ok, ok, come on.

Stacey: 'There's no way I'm taking a flight to fulfil some crap superstition

meaning signified by the style contrasts with other social meanings'.

In the conversation presented in extract 6 above, a number of styles are mentioned and the alternative styles are either offered or inferable from context. Stacey is thus the quintessential second generation British-Nigerian averse to the ways of her parents' homeland and therefore rejects them as irrational and inconvenient. She shows no unease with stating her dissociative stance 'Of course I can[']t be part of THIS CRAP. London's the home I know now.' She dismisses the traditions of her forebears as 'this crap' and emphatically establishes that she subscribes to a different sociocultural system and owes the other no loyalty. The 'crap' reflects the metropolitan elite perception of and disdain for provincial cultural esotericism.

On another level, the conversation also reflects a filmic representation of domestic disharmony, involving a stressed fiancée and an unreliable and philandering fiancé. Ken's use of Pidgin in his retort 'Wetin dey do dis girl' implicitly underlines Stacey's diasporic otherness. The change in footing to comment about Stacey in the Third Person is an attempt to appeal to the sympathy of his imagined audience (Goffman 1971). This is a clear departure from his earlier direct appeal in the Second Person to Stacey 'Come on, don't let us quarrel over nothing'.

According to Irvine (2001: 22)

'Whatever 'styles' are, in language or elsewhere, they are part of a system of distinction, in which a style contrasts with other possible styles, and the social

Ana De Fina (2007: 58) argues that ‘shifts into dialect are often accompanied by stylization features and that their function as contextualization cues indexing particular kinds of social personae relies on the existence of ideological assumptions about the status of dialects as language varieties that are shared by participants’. Based on this, I shall suggest that breaking into non-local accents of English such as Cockney or African-American Vernacular English in interactions involving diaspora folks visiting the homeland may be construed as an act of divergence aimed at signposting their desirable Otherness. This is premised on the ideology that the foreign accents in question have greater market value (Omoniyi 1986; Blommaert 2009) than the accents of their compatriots. This is mirrored in the reception that characters performing such otherness in Nollywood films have.

In *Love Wantintin*, the ‘professor’ establishes his membership of the elite class wearing his trousers with braces, a parting in his hair, a very mid-20th century style, strolling around with an air around him and complemented with the interjection ‘imagine the conconbility!’ This is a styling of post-independence Nigerian elite who were also called ‘been-to’ in the social discourse of the period (i.e. people who had spent time in Europe and returned home). These overseas-trained professionals were represented in national political discourses of the time as men and

women of ‘timber and calibre’, very important personalities described in the mass media as ‘caterpillars and juggernauts’ – political and social heavyweights. One of the measures of high social standing was being ‘a been-to’, and evident in a repertoire of English that included multisyllabic vocabulary items that were not readily comprehensible. Following Asif Agha’s (2005, 2007) voicing and semiotic processes in discourse framework, the use of a peculiar language could be used to characterise this social category. Agha had in a seminal paper (2005: 38) argued the case that ‘the social existence of registers depends on the semiotic activities of language users ...’ Thus repertoires and their significations in the films are socially and culturally rooted in society and the diaspora-homeland interface. In other words, the discursive voice always has a goal and language use is directly tailored to the attainment of that goal. In the stylization of been-tos, the more incomprehensible an utterance was or the higher the degree of its inaccessibility to the social mass it seemed, the better elite the speaker was deemed to be in the people’s evaluation.

The naming-culture of the era also held a clue as to whether one had lived in Europe. Among the Yoruba, ‘Tokunbo’ (‘one that’s brought back from overseas’ having been born there) and ‘Bamidele’ (One that follows one home after sojourning abroad) were popular names of

children in the Government Reservation Areas - the exclusive section of the city set aside for top bureaucrats and politicians. Thus in films, the use of these names and others with other kinds of signifying associations are illustrative of stylization. According to Agha (2005: 38),

encounters with registers are not merely encounters with voices (or characterological figures and personae) but encounters in which individuals establish forms of footing and alignment with voices indexed by speech and thus with social types of persons, real or imagined, whose voices they take them to be.

Similarly, when diaspora folks in Nollywood films perform the homeland by interweaving their English medium interactions with proverbs, shibboleths and other linguistic features through which we are able to trace them to patches of the homeland, the function of such stylisation may be to contest their otherness in the perception of homelanders, make a claim for national identity, or differentiate themselves from other demographic cohorts in the adopted country. For instance, in *The London Boy*, the announcement of the new Igwe is followed structurally in the film by a shot of London Bridge and two diasporic Nigerians immediately marked as such by couture – striking brown leather jacket, and row of

shops. Ken (played by Lanre Falana) who is the boyfriend of Benson Mbakwe's daughter Stacy (Simone McIntyre) meets Jide his friend he owes some money. Their exchange is in Pidgin English. This flags up one of the strategies that diasporic folks deploy to construct and maintain their homeland identity. The dialogic context in which that code choice occurs suggests that it is not intended to influence the perception of outsider bystanders. The couture which contrasts with the Igbo outfit of the elders in the preceding shot constructs Ken and his interlocutor as acculturated but that fact is mitigated by their choice of Pidgin English. This choice accords people a specific kind of persona as in the extract below from a conversation between Ken and his friend Jide.

Extract 7:

Ken: How you doing now?

Jide: I just saw you I say make I

Ken: I know, I saw you too that's why I actually came over

Jide: Ken wetin dey happen? The money now. The money you say go enter account yesterday

Ken: Don't worry Jide, ah I don't like, you're always too much in a rush, don't worry, it's cool. Actually you know the problem, I'm expecting some guys from the United States right, you know, once that is gone through, you'll be fine

Jide: En, my main person,
anyhow anyhow I go call
you for evening en

Ken: just give me a call, call
me, call me. Take care of
yourself. I wan go meet my
babe

Jide: I go call you. Take care

In this short interaction between Ken and Jide, both diasporic Nigerians we catch a glimpse of a pattern of social relationship that is often rampant in immigrant communities – a system of *Underground Economy* transactions including the opening up of credit lines, loans, debtors and creditors, business support networks and so on. Ken either owes Jide some money or promised to make some fund available to him. It seems to be the latter in order for Jide's action of throwing out Chidi as a mark of primary loyalty for supposedly snatching Ken's girlfriend.

De Fina (2007: 60) notes that individual and collective identities are not completely exclusive of each other and 'can be built around inclusion and exclusion from many different types of categorisations such as ethnic affiliation, gender roles, social, personal and situational roles, etc.' In a sense then, Ken's infusion of the Pidgin utterance 'wetin dey do this girl now'? (What's wrong with this girl?) in the dialogue with his girlfriend Stacey who does not speak Pidgin represents her to the audience as a diasporic 'other.' The utterance contains an embedded proposition

not previously tabled and justified that something is indeed wrong with her and the purpose in that turn was to establish the nature of her ailment (in Ken's question). It is insinuated that whatever is wrong with her is responsible for her violation of norms of a sociocultural category he belongs to and from which she is excluded being biracial.

Fishman writes, 'specific languages are related to specific cultures and to their attendant cultural identities' and that 'the specificity of the linguistic bond of most cultural doings...makes the very notion of a 'translated culture' so inauthentic and even abhorrent' (2001: 3).

Since stylisation is 'a borrowed style' (Bakhtin's dialogic imagination 1981) employed in order to make characters speak with an affectation, mark them as different and from the more prestigious place. The knowledge that language has an indexical capacity coupled with the ability to manipulate that knowledge for the purpose of positionings and stance-making are jointly responsible for the effective operationalisation and management of multiple identities. These identities which are located on a hierarchy (Omoniyi 2006) are complementary in nature, and jointly define the person. Thus when stylisations pick up on one of the many constituent identities available to a person, it must be regarded as specific to the moment or context observed in a particular film role.

If we apply this conceptualisation of identity to the situation at hand, we must argue that neither diaspora as a social category nor being in it as a cultural location produces a speech style or behaviour but rather diaspora as an identity construct results from the assignment of values to performances that position subjects so located in a specific way. The othering that is evident in the receptionist's announcement in Extract 8 below, which I have also used in the epigraph to this paper illustrates a particular kind of subject construction or positioning.

Extract 8:

Receptionist (voice on intercom): Sir, a call just came through that the man from Africa is on his way.
Ben Okafor: Good.

'The man from Africa' must have certain mannerisms, appearances etc. in his cultural repertoire that is normatively regarded as representative of being a man from Africa. Ben Okafor, a Nigerian diaspora solicitor colludes with Donatus's White British widow, Samantha in an attempt to dupe Osuofia, her brother-in-law of her late husband's estate. But when Samantha realises that Ben had been using her only to get his hands on Donatus's will, she grabs the documents and runs off to get Osuofia and together they head for the airport and Nigeria. They are received with fanfare back in the village.

In the film, we see one clear illustration of film-makers' attempt to capture and represent the diaspora's relationship with mainstream British institutions in the scene where Metropolitan Police officers apprehend Ben Okafor the solicitor handling Donatus's estate (Osuofia's inheritance). Let us look at the interaction in the extract below.

Extract 9:

Lawyer: What have I done
Police Officer: Speeding
Lawyer: I am a lawyer. Is it because I am black?
Ben Okafor: You will not get away. I'm going to get you. You wait and see. I'll show you what African man I am. You wait. I tell you I will get you.
(He is arrested for breaking the speed limit.)
What are you doing this for? (To police officers) Is it because of my accent?
Look, I'm a British lawyer.
1st Officer: You make me so angry
2nd Officer: And for spoiling my lunch (burps)

In the scene, we see Ben apprehended for breaking the speed limit in pursuing Osuofia and Samantha through London traffic as they headed for the airport. The officers in a Metropolitan Police official car had been in a lay-by when the solicitor sped past. One of them had been eating his lunch and he comically cited the interruption of that activity as one of the grounds of

arrest subsequently. The second officer of the pair was completely professional. The film-maker assumes a stance of objective balancing through complementing the professional with the comical cop. These representations obviously draw upon public perceptions of the police force as an institution especially concerning their relationship with minority communities.

A string of instances of stylisation abound in exchanges in the storyline around Osuofia's arrival in London. The scenes around which stylisation is performed include Osuofia's encounter with the White taxi driver/escort sent to fetch him from the airport, and the exploration of Nigerian fraud theme in Ben Okafor's attempt to con Samantha into thinking that they are colluding to dupe Osuofia of his inheritance as the deceased's next-of-kin:

Extract 10:

Osuofia: What just happened?

Why are you carrying bag?

Samantha: OK well you have to pack your things now we must go

Osuofia: We have to go?

Samantha: Yes. He's trying to steal your money. He's going to hurt us. He's chasing us now.

Osuofia: Ben Okafor?

Samantha: Yes, listen, you never needed to sign those documents in the first place

This whole thing is a scam.

Osuofia: So where is the warehouse? Even if we have, the money is not here

Show me that warehouse so dat we use trailer carry

Samantha: Osuofia, it's ok. I just have to be your wife

Osuofia: You what? You don't mean it

Samantha: Of course I do.

Osuofia: Fantastic. You'll follow me to Africa?

Samantha: Yes.

Osuofia: It should have been yesterday.

In Ben Okafor's confrontation and arrest scene after breaking the speed limit and being rude to an officer, we also find intriguing representations of the various perceptions of and attitudes towards homeland folks by professionals in the diaspora. In Ben's comments and claims, it is obvious that there is an element of condescension. The manner in which normativity is seemingly extended to accommodate the fact that Donatus's British wife, Samantha was not his next-of-kin but a blood brother with whom he had obviously had no real relationship constitutes a conflicting cultural exegesis of the notion of inheritance. Osuofia inherits his brother's entire estate including his widow too and in so doing subtly ratifies polygamy. Samantha's Machiavellian response in Extract 11 below captures a moment of failed trans-cultural negotiation.

Extract 11:

Osuofia: When we get to Africa my people will love you. In fact they will treat you like a queen

Samantha: (aside) I don't think so. I'm coming for one reason only. I'm coming for only one thing to get my share ...

Samantha's cover of Sting's popular song 'I'm an Englishman in New York' (see Appendix 2) to capture her perception and presentation of self and more importantly the actions she describes in identifying herself as English rather than African revolve around cooking and speaking in a particular accent.

Extract 12:

Song (Samantha singing)

I'm an English girl in Africa

You can hear it in my accent when I speak.

I'm an English girl in Africa

See me pounding yam with my mortar

See me cooking *egusi*

But I carry my teabags in my bag

I'm delighted to be here in Africa

I'm an English girl in Africa

The features of self-identification that Samantha references in the extract above are the same ones that a successful styling of her persona would entail. Her accent and the teabags in her bag supposedly inscribe her as an English girl in Africa. However, the references to 'pounding yam with my mortar' and

'cooking *egusi*' are cultural practices and stylisations of African womanhood. The co-occurrence of both of these values in one persona is indicative of the complex identities of inter-racial matrimonial encounters and the articulation of third-space identities.

Conclusion

Osuofia's account of his visit to London to the Council of Elders is embellished extensively to gain recognition and respect from his peers. Social recognition or disdain achieved on the basis of one's association with a sociocultural space stems from a pre-existing interpretation and imagining of that space as a better and more prestigious space than that occupied by those giving the respect and recognition. What is interesting in the foregoing discussions is the constructedness of identity and the fact that in the films we actually see some level of conflict between old essentialist tags such as the 'the African is on his way' in the epigraph and the situated identities and representations that viewers are led to through the revealing claims and counterclaims of the characters. The latter mark stylisation at work; how closely the scriptwriter knows the socio-culture in which these characters, events and interactions are located determine to some extent the success of the films.

Notes

1. <http://www.nollywoodflicks.com/category/nollywood-production/>

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5492?q=rap&se_arch=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit

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Appendix 1.

Online protest letter to the Director General of the Nigeria Film and Video Censors Board NFVCB

Mr Emeka Mba

Nigerian Film and Video Censors Board *[Insert your address here]*

Plot 730, Alexandria Crescent,

Wuse II, Zone A7, Abuja

P.M.B. 5053 Wuse,

Abuja FCT.

Dear Mr Mba,

I am writing with regards to the recent documentary 'Return to Africa's Witch Children' which was shown on Channel 4 in the UK in November 2009. *[If you saw this in another country, insert the channel, date and country here.]* The

programme was a moving feature about the huge numbers of children being accused of witchcraft and subsequently abused, abandoned and tortured with many of them becoming vulnerable to sexual exploitation and child trafficking.

The documentary also showed the work of Stepping Stones Nigeria (SSN) and other child rights NGOs, including SSN's partner, the Stepping Stones Nigeria Child Empowerment Foundation (SSNCEF). I wholeheartedly support their work in looking after children who have been so badly damaged following accusations of witchcraft and I stand with them as they try to eradicate this horrific abuse.

I was particularly concerned to learn about the prevalence of Nollywood films and home movies which encourage the belief that children can be witches and which often portray children eating human flesh and wreaking havoc on the lives of their families. Whilst I recognise that a person is entitled to freedom of artistic expression and the freedom of religious belief, this must not infringe the fundamental rights of the child including the right to be free from discrimination and the right to be free from all forms of abuse, torture and discrimination.

I am concerned that the popularity of films which promote the belief in the child witchcraft is contributing to the huge rise in the numbers of children accused of witchcraft and subsequently abused and abandoned. These children are not only physically injured but emotionally, psychologically and spiritually damaged, with many children acquiring long-lasting scars which will impact them as they go into adulthood. I am aware that the Kenyan authorities have attributed the rise in child witchcraft accusations in their country to the widespread popularity of films on this subject.

In light of the horrific abuses being suffered by children across Nigeria and elsewhere, I believe it is for the NFVCB to act with responsibility when censoring films, recognising that films can be both agents and dictators of culture. Therefore, I believe that the NFVCB should do the following:

1. Acknowledge the primacy of child rights by censoring all films found to be promoting the belief in child witchcraft or which may lead others to carry out child witchcraft accusations or abuse.
2. Make a public statement denouncing child witchcraft accusations and abuse.

About the Author

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