

CULTURAL SPACE

CONTEXTUAL CINEMAS: SCREENING EVERYDAYNESS OF AFRICA IN NOLLYWOOD

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Abstract. African video-films, like performances generally capture the complexity of people's everydayness. Apart from challenging formerly held stereotypes about the continent, they reveal the identity of Africa by underpinning key circumstantial experiences of her people. The thrust of this paper is to explain this everyday experiences in the context of a new wave of video-filmmaking culture and representations across the continent, starting with Nigeria and Ghana. By means of textual analysis as a methodological approach, it critically examines two video-films: Uziga (2008, Andy Nwakalor) from Nigeria and Enemy Within (2013, Pascal Amanfo) from Ghana to conceptualise the nature of this situation across the continent. At the end, it recommends that the present model of new cinemas across Africa be considered an alternative audio-visual prism (as against mainstream western stereotypes) for home grown truths that Africans can easily identify with.

Keywords: Contextual Cinemas, Africa, Everydayness, Popular and Filmmaking Cultures

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Introduction

The most striking feature of every filmic narrative is its communicative context, that is, the social situation from which its storylines emanate, and which imbues those storylines with codes and conventions that speak to people's specific experiences, environment and world-views. Thus, the make-up of a film story can be used to analyse the identity construction of its makers. Presently in most parts of Anglophone West Africa, filmic productions are visible that point to a new wave of video-filmmaking culture that is very significant. Their significance lies not only in their demystification of the skills needed for film production generally, but also in the fact that they have helped to democratise the use of digital technologies. This has helped in boosting production efforts across the whole of Africa. The thrust of this paper, therefore, is to showcase how the new video-film model is uniquely empowering individuals through its participatory method of production, demonstrating that the West can no longer claim to be championing the monopoly of technological skills in filmmaking practices across the globe.

One of the purposes of this paper is to make the point that the doggedness of stakeholders in these local industries should be saluted, especially because they have broken the barriers

erected by mainstream [dominant] cinema standards, and through creating an alternative visual language that most Africans can contextually identify with. Thus, the argument of this paper is that since the present day video-film productions of Africa, especially those of Nigeria (Nollywood) and Ghana (Ghallywood) are culturally Afro-centric, they can in essence be termed 'contextual cinemas' as regards their model and unique significance to the continent. Other instances where this model operates, aside from Nigeria and Ghana, are in Jozywood (South Africa), Bongowood (Tanzania), Riverwood (Kenya), Kannywood (Northern Nigeria) and Ugawood (Uganda). The difference between this present model and the 'old' is not only in the technology of production which differs greatly but also in its stylistic approaches. Whereas the 'old' celluloid narrative style was ideologically orchestrated to fight colonial conditions (auteurally and nationalistically), the new model is more or less, hinged on spectacle and commercial purposes. Above all, the new model is built up within the framework of speaking to the realities of the African 'self'. This means speaking from circumstantial points of view as against the somewhat abstract nature of canonical art cinemas of Africa. These, as we shall see in the films analysed in this paper, are typical of the new digital video-film culture in Africa today, and characteristically impacts their participants both economically and socially.

Theorising New African Video-Film Culture

Ideologically speaking, popular culture thrives in most African filmic narratives, meaning that they utilize specific elements of performances and rituals to convey certain messages to audiences. It is in this sense that the context of African traditional elements in films are said to speak to viewers by portraying communal viewpoints in ways that respond to people's everyday basic yearnings. In this sense, 'context' is assumed to be the framework upon which the productions are based and is the labyrinth in which culture, more or less, "make meanings relevant to everyday life" (Dissanayake 2003: 204). Like in the case of contextual theology "which is rooted in the experience of the people" (Wati, 2002: 9) so also is the issue of cinematic storylines rooted in people's living circumstances. Thus, the argument here is that given the availability of digital technologies, a unique video-film model that brings in the circumstances of people's everydayness in fashioning engaging storylines has emerged across Africa. Starting with the Nigerian (Nollywood) film industry and its Ghanaian (Ghallywood) counterpart, it is arguable to consider these new cinemas as 'contextual' because of their exclusive model and significance to the continent.

The logic here is that as the new popular video-films of Africa address people's needs, they are able to resonate with their audiences and their needs due to their ability to summon familiar socio-specific spectacles from across the continent. They use pan-Africanizing thematic leitmotifs to tell stories that interrogate cultural and moral dilemmas, and this means that their realistic narrative patterns should make them be seen as 'contextual cinemas'. Context here is an operative word that captures the situation and circumstances of Africa in these narratives: societies' structural organization and relationships, worldviews, rituals, landscapes, riches and poverty, *et cetera*. It also refers to the technical practice of using ordinary digital video-cameras to shoot and produce these video-films with particular kind of viewers in mind. These are some of the elements that make one consider such video-film representations as being 'contextual' to Africa, because of their shape and form, and due to their content and context.

Africa is abysmally poor and many of her young people are unemployed. This being the case, there is hunger in the land; hence the ideas of migration to other countries *and* improvisations with technology among people who are exploring diverse means of survival so

as to change their ugly situations. Writing on the reality of poverty in Nigeria, Olowa argues that poverty in that country can be seen in two ways, namely “structural (chronic)” or “transient.” Whereas the transient is reversible, the structural kind of poverty, manifests itself (according to Olowa) in the form of “persistent or permanent socio-economic deprivations”, which are linked to a host of factors such as limited productive resources, lack of the necessary skills for gainful employment, and endemic socio-political and cultural factors, including those of gender (2012: 26). Nigeria, like Ghana, struggles with this kind of structural poverty, in which where many people are homeless, lacking almost everything good, from shelter to pipe-borne water to sanitation facilities, excluded from access to education and healthcare services. It is in the shadow of these problems that many young people are trying their hands on digital technologies to survive. The films they make are low key productions meant to be consumed on television screen rather than in cinema complexes. They are not films in the sense of *Black Panther* with its dazzling effects and spectacles but are, rather, purposefully made to have low resolution density for household television appliances. These are the unique, and strongest, characteristics of this model of filmmaking: that the fact that they are specifically rooted in a particular economic context, with its particular financial strength and consumption values. . Unlike many who are worried that such improvisations are not true forms of cinema, Nigerian and Ghanaian audiences, like most other Africans, enjoy the video-films to the fullest, and the makers of these films have used them to successfully fashion a new kind of video-filmmaking model across Africa, a model best described as ‘contextual cinema’.

Contextual cinemas are screen narratives that deal primarily with the circumstances and realities of their consumers. They are socio-cultural in approach and speak to the everydayness of the people who consume them. What needs be stressed further is the fact that there is an intractable meeting and departure points between these films as ‘contextual cinema’, and the practice of examining them as ‘contextual criticism’, for fear that one might assume that both mean, essentially, the same thing. Whereas ‘contextual cinema’ is considered a technical designation that refers to the new wave of popular video-film representations in Africa (and not only in Africa), ‘contextual criticism’, on the other hand, is a methodological approach to the interpretation of texts and their meanings across disciplines such as film studies. While contextual criticism deconstructs the “dialectical relationship between the cultural form and its many contexts and investigates how those contexts shape the text and how the text affects its context” (Garritano 2013: 8), contextual cinema specifically underscores the uniqueness of the African video-film model by focussing on the ways in which its concepts and storylines are drawn from people’s everyday lived experiences, and in ways different from mainstream production styles. In other words, its representations and storylines take the socio-economic context of Africa to heart. Thus, while contextual cinema speaks of the impression one gets from the media-scape of the new video-filmmaking culture, contextual criticism refers that an approach that can be used to decode meanings of texts in various forms, be they literary or electronic.

This paper does undertake some textual analysis of the video-films it considers, with a view to understanding just how they ‘stand tall’ as the new face of Africa on screen. As Diawara (2010: 170) observes in relation to Nollywood in particular, the “films attempt to be universal African stories, without a visible marker of ethnic identity or authorial presence”, signalling the pan-Africanizing nature of their art. As artistic works and texts, the films emanate from communities and address social and communal issues in such a way that communal voices (values) are regularly seen to echo through them. Following this is the evocative use of cultural costumes and symbols, alongside natural settings that realistically foreground deep-seated popular perceptions of contemporary realities.

Such textual analysis, however, is secondary to the paper's aim of theorising the technical culture of video-films and their shaping. Even if we grant that one problem with most African video-films is their low standard of quality, which makes people disregard them as not 'meeting cinematic standards', it is still disheartening to note that most are not given serious attention globally. Cousins, who laments this scenario, argues that "non-Western cinema is undervalued in film books, festivals, retrospectives, TV programmes, magazine polls, entertainment journalism and the like – a situation that damages the medium" (2004: 15). In Nigeria and Ghana, particularly, this disregard has led to the emergence of more film festivals than there are cinemas. Their intention is to do for the industries what mainstream film festivals cannot do, such as acknowledge the creativity of those in the video-film sector without blocking anyone off. The main difficulty of those who deride these video-films according to Haynes (2000: 1) is that they consider them as "something between television and cinema and [which] do not fit comfortably within the North American structures of either" (thus, this problem of format both in production and exhibition processes is a big issue that also speaks to context in this paper). Given Africa's situation as a developing continent, it is understandable that not all the technical prerequisites for world class cinema are easily accessible there. This is one of the reasons why there are many make-shifts in producing films in an *ad hoc* fashion across Africa that is very common today given the ease of digital technologies. And given this situation, there are forms of experimentation, manipulation and improvisation which many do not yet understand, making it hard for them to classify such productions as films in their own right.

What Africa needs as regards her video-film model is an understanding devoid of both destructive criticism and paternalism. The old stereotypes that made people look down on Black Africa may make accessing the video-films difficult, but it cannot stop their production; hence, the call should be to encourage all efforts towards indigenising cinema in Africa in whatever fashion serves the people. Discussing, and rejecting, the attitude of those who criticise the video-film model, Garritano argues that:

They demonstrate little awareness of the incredible range and variety of popular movies or interest in the audiences who consume and take pleasure from them. These criticisms, it seems, have functioned chiefly to produce and police a particular idea of what African screen media is or should be (2013: 5).

Instructively, Garritano's use of 'popular' to qualify these video-films (or movies, as she calls them), highlights the fact that like performances in African popular culture, they constitute an entertainment brand that socialises viewers within their environment. She talks about the 'audiences' and that use of the plural alone points to a huge population of people from across Africa and beyond who are identifying with the new art form. Based on this, understanding them as aspects of Africa's rich popular culture is, as Martin-Barbero (1993: 83) argues, more of "a style, a plan of operations, a way of walking through the city, a way of living in a home, of seeing television, a style of social interchange which becomes a place for technical inventiveness and of moral resistance." In other words, the culture of these video-films provides a site for the deconstruction of Africa's social systems and their complexities. They are a voice of the community, and are ideologically infused with communal values that encourage people's affirmation in their societies. Being contextualised within a people's wealth of experiences, they resonate easily with viewers, and spread like wildfire across the continent. Not only do they pan-Africanise worldviews, but also express the way of life of the people, both in its ancientness and modernization processes. As mentioned by Krings and Okome, the video-films are very popular and are generally being enjoyed widely. Thus, "[i]n Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa, for example, Nollywood has served as a model of film production and inspired the growth of local film indus-

tries” (2013: 1). This is corroborated by Garritano who argues that “based on the models established in Ghana and Nigeria, budding industries in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Cameroon have emerged” (2013: 2). The case of the video-film culture calls for a de-westernization of old conceptions in order to explain these home grown experiences from their insiders’ perspectives or from the grassroots up. Understanding this well would help the appreciation of the new place of Africa in the filmmaking processes. Since context is a key factor in understanding meanings carried by sign-systems (Schreier 1986: 50), the video-film model of African descent must, therefore, be seen as a visual site for decoding the significance of her symbolic values in both present and past contexts, especially around issues of identity construction and cultural analysis.

Here, the notion of identity and culture in representations should be underscored in order to make sense of ‘texts’ contextually. This can help to answer the call of those who argue for de-westernising media studies in the context of Africa. Irele, who considers it both an ‘African scholar’s burden’, and a duty of utmost necessity to explicate African experiences for the outside world and. According to him, this duty is about:

The necessity to take charge of the knowledge that has been produced and continues to be produced on and about our continent....This imperative arises from the historical context and peculiar circumstances of our relationship with the West, which has exerted such pressure upon our experience and our awareness that it is no exaggeration to say that all forms of modern African expression have been massively conditioned by it. (1991: 57 – 58)

There is a need to bring to the fore some explications of these experiences in order to help people understand what go on within African cultures and contexts. Like Irele, Tomaselli et al. believe that “theories are needed to explain various, often widely different and original African applications of imaging and recording technologies and their resulting aesthetics, which take into account the subjectivities and cosmologies of particular sets of viewers” (1995: 22). Following them is Tcheuyap (2013: 14) who also calls for an “innovative and inclusive theoretical framework” for the analysis of African films, thereby pointing to the fact of speaking up for oneself in the African context. It is charges such as these that warrant a theorisation of the every-day-ness of Africa in cinematic representations. Thus, if context is significant in interpreting meaning of texts, (texts exemplified here by Nollywood and Ghallywood films), what can be said about the new popular video-(film) making culture of Africa?

Nollywood and Ghallywood as Examples of Contextual Cinemas of Africa

Documentary films like *This is Nollywood* (2007, by Francho Sacchi and Robert Caputo), *Nollywood Dreams* (2008, by Jacques Pauw, produced as part of South African Broadcasting Corporation, SABC News Agency ‘Special Assignment’ programme), *Welcome to Nollywood* (2007, by Jamie Meltzer) and *Nollywood Babylon* (2008, by Ben Addelman and Samir Malal) report on what is going on in the Nollywood industry. They discuss the video-film culture and direct viewers to the contextual nature of its low cost productions. While *Nollywood Dreams*, for instance, understudies the making of *Deceit of the Gods* by Chinyi Ahaneku, *This is Nollywood* dovetails with the complexities of the production processes of another film, titled by Bond Emeruwa’s *Check Point*, to show how it is made in less than two weeks in order to buttress its *ad hoc* style of production. Characteristically, one or two video-film cameras are pointedly focused on actors as they perform scripts and give life to stories. With or without building film sets, the directors and editors of these films, use computer generated visual effects to create spectacles and dazzle viewers with glamorous moments. While some

films are shot on public streets, others are staged in rented premises like hotels or personal houses. As I have argued elsewhere:

Nollywood is an industry of the people – almost emergent from the streets and focuses on people’s every-day-ness to tell their stories. It uses languages and themes that resonate with Nigerians and Africans alike, guided by the tenets of nationalism and cultural identity to tell their stories (Uwah 2012: 240).

Instructively, this understanding points to the nature of the political economy of both Nollywood and Ghallywood, which Garritano (2013: 16) argues is too often informal. That is the business of production apparently “are conducted without documentation....Artists and crew negotiate their fees with producers, directly and privately”, bypassing the legal rigours approvals to which filmmaking companies are subjected in the dominant cinemas of the world, where most often than not, the government puts instituted structures in place. The key-players in video-films often plunge unto business at their own risk, armed with aspirations to recoup investments as soon as their products hit the market stands. Thus, once people have scripts they think audiences would like, the next thing they do is to hire directors, producers, artists and equipment for a short period of time to produce and sell their works. The owners of stories may finance their productions by themselves or some ‘marketers’ may buy them and decide on how they are to be made. Commenting on this scenario, Alamu highlights that the Nigerian government in particular has left the film industry in the hands of private individuals who dictate what happens on screen because of their monetary investment. These are the business tycoons popularly called ‘marketers’ in the Nigerian sense. According to Alamu, Nigeria’s film industry:

The Nigerian film industry is controlled by the market. Unlike the film industries in some other countries, such as the US and India, where professionalism is represented and the government provides an environment in which the industry can flourish, the Nigerian government has shown little interest in the development of Nollywood. Without much needed funding from the government and private businesses, producers have had to rely on marketers for the funding of film projects. Thereby empowered, many marketers dictate to producers and contribute to production decisions. The practice of producers influencing casting and story is now rampant in the industry. Because he, who pays the piper, dictates the tone, many directors do not have the courage to challenge this undue influence. (2010: 169)

This is one reason why film producers look for stories that can appeal to viewers: their video-films are not meant to be propaganda tools in the hands of a government that, anyway, does not support them. The stories can therefore emanate from the circumstantial nature of people’s everyday life styles. They can also be myths of villages or stories that encapsulate rituals of celebrating communal events. At other times, they are simple narratives of cultural and moral dilemmas that teach new visions of life by interrogating ancient beliefs in order to didactically teach new visions. Thus, some video-films are ideologically crafted to portray the complexity of African cosmology, with specific roles for individuals and spirits as defined in the African belief system. As argued by Haynes, for instance, “witchcraft as a weapon in domestic or neighbourly antagonisms, mysterious fates....are stock elements in the videos” (2000: 3). With familiar landscapes as settings, acceptable costumes and gestured rituals that become part of storylines that trace social norms through internal elements of narratives, the video-films tell Africa’s stories with an “Afropolitan” mind-set. Diawara (2010: 178), speaking on Nollywood, states that the significance of the industry “lies in the stories it tells, be-

yond theory and abstraction, about the dislocations of people, social relations, economies, cultures and identities in Africa.” The video-films are African narratives based on African lifestyles. They may be very limited by resources and technologies, but they still dramatize Africanness in relation to the world. While they may engender some kind of Africanist ideological impressions as a way of shaping consciousness about Africa, they nevertheless interrogate the continent on some perceived dilemmas in order to chart new pathways for people to follow. This brings me to two key cinematic texts: *Uziga*, 2008, and *Enemy Within*, 2013.

***Uziga* (2008), Culture and Context**

Shot in Jos, the capital of Plateau State of Nigeria, *Uziga* is a typical Nollywood video-film, one that revolves around a community’s belief system and its ritualistic methods of resolving a cultural dilemma. It is the story of the people of Kosangi who must appease the gods of their land in order to be saved from extinction due to an unknown crime. According to the ‘voice of the gods’, their village priestess (Jumuoke Olatubosun), a crime is committed in the land of Kotangi, a mountainous rural community of peasant farmers, ruled by a king (Olu Jacobs) who seeks a solution to his people’s problems. Thus, summoning the entire community at the public square he admonishes them as follow: “our land is doomed unless a young man, a virgin; a virtuous man comes forth and willingly offers himself as a sacrifice for the land...” This speech, accentuated with the pensive lamentations of the people is where suspense instantly is evoked as it makes viewers wonder at how one could willingly go to death to save others?

Uziga, is in essence, a Nollywood epic video-film that uses not only the mountainous locale of Plateau State as its setting but also the pre-historic costumes of locally fabricated mats and girdles as costumes to narrate a folkloric tale dovetailing the reason for change of name of the community from ‘the people of Kosangi’ to the ‘people of Uziga’. Significantly, it speaks to the contextual nature of the sacrifice in African thought and culture as well as the duty of individuals to their community. Above all, the cosmological view of things in Africa as involving not only the living members of the society but connecting even the dead, the deities (spirits) and the ancestors is visible in the text. Here, due to the deaths of so many people in the community, especially the young ones, due to an unknown curse sent as punishment by the gods, a search ensues for a young male virgin who may sacrifice his life for his people. Even though some ventured to die, like Jabi, who was contesting over a girlfriend with Uziga the prince, the words of the seer were instructive as to whom it must be that could save the community. According to her, “he that must give himself must do so out of love for his people” implying the supremacy of the community over the individual. But while the king would have loved Jabi or any other person to sacrifice himself, he is bemused by the voluntary submission of his only son, Uziga for the improbable mission. The difficulty in coming to terms with such a decision does not only reveal the humanity of characters like members of his royal household who cry openly before all else but also shows the stringent nature of pre-colonial societies in enforcing the will of the gods.

Opening with the initial screening of the mountainous landscape characteristic of Jos, *Uziga* showcases itself as a community video-film, made to tell a story of African people inhabiting such an environment. Here, landscape does an ideological work for the text by conventionally aiding its narrative (Rijsdijk 2014: 19). As the opening credits fall on the screen, a panoramic camera view of the locale is detailed alongside a dazzling soundtrack that evokes sentiments of worry and lamentation in order to signal potential challenges. This is soon understood in the life of the king who pleads with the seer to forbid his son from walking himself into his own death in tears. Thus, a lot of contextual issues clearly manifest in this video-film ranging from setting,

costume, cultural dilemma, narrative leitmotifs as well as the nature of manipulating technology to work within African circumstance. In other words, they do not only support the argument of this paper that the video-films are relational to the people but also constitute a site for deconstructing everydayness by portraying a people's worldview underpinned by their notion of crime, justice, sacrifice, rituals and above all, identity formation within a given context.

The demands of the gods in African cosmology are always inflexible, and communities are often torn apart in the attempt to satisfy them. This is rooted in African beliefs about existence, which see it as a holistic thing involving both those living here on earth and the (living) dead ancestors in the land of the spirits. Sacrifices and ceremonial rites therefore become an important avenue to reach out to them in the spirit world which is the reason why rituals are often celebrated contextually in Africa. The fact that these aspects of everyday life get represented in these video-films is significant for how they are contextualised in an Africa. There is the use of folkloric soundtracks that people can understand to enhance filmic narratives as there is the choice of ordinary living environment as locale for the realisation of storylines. Again, like every society where the struggle to make ends meet is the reason for work, everyone in this video-film, from the king to the seer, down to the half-naked children playing freely along pathways, and the maidens going to and from the stream, helps to illustrate the nature of social system relationships in African communities. Like most other Nollywood films, *Uziga* leads a discussion on the significance of hearkening to communal summons without being selfish. As a typical tenet of communalism, even the comfort of the palace could not make the prince withdraw from sacrificing himself for others but rather propels him the more to do so. In his response to his mother who cries to frustrate his move towards death for the community, *Uziga*, states his commitment, thus: "I love this land. I love my people. I have to save it" implying a resolve in pursuit of a higher communal good. This in actual fact makes his father, the king of Kosangi bless him in tears and change the name of the community after his heroic deed in the following words:

Uziga, it hurts but never have I been so proud of you than today. Your love for your people is beyond comparison....Let it be known to generations yet to come that for this noble act of yours, we shall no longer be known and called 'the people of Kosangi' but from now on become 'the people of Uziga.'

The changing of names like this, in the context of the African worldview, is a symbolic mark of an historic feat in the life of a place or its people. Great nations are often named after their kings or according to the achievements of their forebears in times past. Thus, while keeping the memory of the dead indelible in the minds of all who tell their stories, such a change is also a significant way of rewarding the iconic individuals in their communities. Therefore, as contextual as most video-films are in Africa, they project so many things such as aspects of a communal voice, individuals as bearers of community values, the struggles and sacrifices of life, the rites and rituals of cultural purification and significance of public square meetings, among other things. In all of these, the dynamics of the society (or community) is the hub around which the video-film narratives revolve. They do not only constitute the spectacle of visual performances but also lead discussions on the everyday situation of the people in their environment. With meagre resources and simple storylines, they create a space where the nature and identity of Africans are interrogated or affirmed by summoning such elements as their structural relationships, socio-religious circumstances and worldviews. As with *Uziga* in expressing context in Africa from Nollywood's perspective; so it is with *Enemy Within* in harping on modern dilemmas contextually to discuss pan-African every-day-ness from Ghal-lywood's standpoint.

***Enemy Within* (2013): Dilemma of Trust in Relationships**

Enemy Within uses everyday and contemporary leitmotifs like love affairs, infidelities, suspicion, blackmail, domestic violence and betrayal to tell Africa's story. Following the conventional narrative pattern of cause and effect techniques, it achieves its universal appeal by moralising family life and relationships in Africa. It is the story of Kelvin (Dan Tei Mensah) and Jocelyn (Roselyn Nigissah) who enjoy a seven year old marriage without qualms until the re-appearance of Jocelyn's ex-boyfriend, Jack (Frank Artus). Here, passion and reason exchange batons as they struggle to take centre stage at this family's love life and activities.

Directed by Pascal Amanfo, *Enemy Within* is contextually structured to dramatize the tension and anxiety of life. The establishing frame is a wide angle shot of a crying man confessing his crime to a listening pastor. While both are seated and face each other in a close range shot of two talking heads in an intimate *mise-en-scene*, suggesting that Kelvin leans on his pastor-friend for wisdom and understanding to ease his tension: a representation which re-enacts the religious tendency of most African Christians, who see the church as a place of succour in moments of crisis. Using this as a signature note to the nature of crisis in the video-film leads viewers to wonder at the human nature angle of the narrative, as Kelvin, telling his life story, appears shattered emotionally as his marriage. Combining visuals with Kelvin's voice-over narration initially creates a hybrid quality in this video-film, as it methodically lets viewers observe his inner struggles as a person battling with a larger-than-life situation. Initially, he recounts to the screen and pastor how wonderful their love life was as a family as the screen gushingly translocates viewers to a love-beach where he plays with his wife, (Jocelyn) and kid (Olivia) fondly. With their assurances and promises of a love-life that is 'to-be-continued', one would think that this couple have a most desirable onscreen union. It does seem most desirable and ideal, until the onscreen setting changes. The movie then translocates its viewers to a new domestic space where one of Kelvin's friends, Greg, returns from Europe and discusses before the entire household his frustration about Africa.

The advice of Jocelyn to Greg, that he should take things easy, does not work well in this instance. He immediately accuses her of being a gold digger in Kelvin's life, one who married him for selfish reasons because Jack, the one she formerly loved, has gone to prison and is feared dead. Eventually Jack re-appeared, and after walking past a lady coming out from a shopping mall who happens to be his ex-girlfriend, Jocelyn, he becomes bewildered. Since both could not resist each other, the screen uses the looks in their eyes to express what they feel and hide inside as it soon casts them as people caught in love. As stupid as Jocelyn is, she tells Faith her friend, everything about her affairs with Jack without knowing that she too has an ex-boyfriend in the person of Greg. Thus, with Faith, Greg plots and sees to the destruction of Kelvin and Jocelyn's marriage. In different ways and varying steps, Greg leads Kelvin to make him his personal assistant and becomes in-charge of his company's accounts. Again, with convincing arguments, he makes Kelvin believe he is loved less than Jack by his wife, and enthrone suspicions around them to the extent of instigating Kelvin to murder Jocelyn in cold blood in their house due to the anger of all he is told.

Domestic violence therefore is one theme this video-film moralises upon in the context of family relations in Africa. Using different motifs like infidelity and blackmail, the director interrogates trust in personal friendships and wonders at the extent to which a friend or neighbour can be involved in family affairs. The 'enemy within' in this production is actually Greg, who, through his dirty deals, plots a make-shift assassination attempt on Kelvin and makes it seem like his wife is the one planning it. Again, he advises Kelvin to kill her, and not report her death to the police, to tell lies and cover things up. When one 'Detective Mark' investigates, to unveil the culprit behind Jocelyn's death, Greg finds himself too ask-

ing Kelvin to kill him, so that he will have no other person or thing standing between him and peace.

Contextually, *Enemy Within* problematizes friendship among peers. Its use of sound effects to externalise emotion, too, helps indicate the actions and reactions of its possible viewers in their natural settings and situations, especially in decision making moments regarding family relationships and friendships. Kelvin's tears as he narrates his confusion for instance, is typical of men portraying their humanity (not masculinity) in moments of truth just as the fact that he talks to a pastor is a re-enactment of everyday religious sentiments of most people in both Nigeria and Ghana where distressed individuals often run to pastors in difficult circumstances. This is both cultural and contextual in an Africa where televangelism is fast becoming a recurring trend in television and video-film cultures. Here, the producers use the screen to preach the gospel of salvation to viewers who watch typical everyday stories they can relate to, or which resonate with their experiences. In Nigeria and Ghana, situations as portrayed in this video-film abound where family friends for instance do cause marriages to break up due to envy or animosity. Both Greg and Faith become enemies of their friends by betraying the trust reposed on them by Kelvin and Jocelyn respectively. Again, using typical landscapes, road set-ups and familiar streets where villagers move about freely to tell story informs the contextual nature of this film to Africa's ontological condition. It speaks to people's situations with everyday themes such as poverty and riches, anger and solace, and love and betrayal, in order to contextually address them with screen visuals. In other words, and in contrast to what happens in mainstream western cinematic studio set-ups, the coding of these African video-films follows the paradigm based on what obtains in people's lifestyles, and therefore deals with their worldviews, geography, socio-religious and political things that qualify them be termed 'contextual cinemas' of Africa.

Concluding Remarks

No matter how symbolic a screen narrative or stage performance may be, one thing that makes it meaningful is its communicative context. This, ideologically speaking, refers to the entire nexus of specific elements of performances and narratives that portray key viewpoints of communities in ways that respond to their basic yearnings. In Africa as elsewhere, nothing is static; hence it is necessary to say that present day digital revolution has orchestrated across the continent a new filmmaking model that is uniquely and admittedly improvisational. The films may be said to differ from mainstream format but are nevertheless highly valued as assuaging the thirst of their immediate consumers and giving them the much needed psychological and emotional pleasure from the screen. They are conversations about the everyday being-in-the-world of African experiences as well as the portrayal the people's responses to the oddity of their ontological challenges. Both Nigeria's 'Nollywood' and Ghana's 'Ghallywood' are typical examples of these kinds of film industries, with the unique model that has practically broken barriers with mainstream [dominant] cinemas and created the much needed affordable alternative visual language for home grown truths that Africans in particular can contextually identify with. This, I believe, must not be ignored but, above all, must be recognised as giving Africa a voice of her own in a world terribly divided by globalization values and processes. The world of the digital revolution may be too slow in establishing strong presence across the continent but it must be said that at the moment it has helped create the enabling environment for filmmakers from across Africa to shine their torchlights along the pathways of their *setzen leben* in order to let her lived-in realities be seen from their own perspectives rather than based on stereotypes. This, again, one says, ought to be acknowledged and not be simply dismissed as not meeting global standards! Their representation of African-

ness as contextual cinemas is consistent with their duty to interrogate the continent and speak to her varied dilemmas, as well as to chart a new beginning for both filmmakers and the continent at large.

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Filmography

- Uziga* (2008) Directed by Andy Nwakalor, Samcivic Investment Limited, Nigeria
- Enemy within* (2013) Directed by Pascal Amanfo, Venus Films Production, Ghana
- This is Nollywood* (2007) Directed by Francho Sacchi, Eureka film production and the centre for Digital Imaging Arts, Boston, USA
- Nollywood Dreams* (2008) Directed by Jacques Pauw, South African Broadcasting Corporation
- Welcome to Nollywood* (2007) Directed by Jamie Meltzer, Cinema Guild, USA.
- Nollywood Babylon* (2008) Directed by Ben Addelman and Samir Mallal, National Film Board of Canada.

КОНТЕКСТНЫЙ КИНЕМАТОГРАФ: ЭКРАНИЗАЦИЯ ПОВСЕДНЕВНОЙ ЖИЗНИ АФРИКИ В НОЛЛИВУДЕ

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Аннотация. Африканские видеофильмы в целом отражают сложность повседневной жизни людей. Помимо сформированных ранее стереотипов о континенте, они раскрывают самобытность Африки, опираясь на основные аспекты опыта народа. Цель данной статьи состоит в том, чтобы объяснить этот повседневный опыт в контексте новой волны культуры и представлений в области видеосъемки по всему континенту, начиная с Нигерии и Ганы. С помощью методики текстового анализа критически рассматриваются два видеофильма: «Узига» (2008 г., режиссер Энди Нуакалор, Нигерия) и «Враг внутри» (2013 г., режиссер Паскаль Аманфо, Гана), чтобы концептуализировать сущность этой ситуации на всем континенте. В заключение предлагается рассматривать нынешнюю модель нового кинематографа в Африке в качестве альтернативной аудиовизуальной призмы (по отношению к основным западным стереотипам) в противовес примитивным истинам, с которыми африканцы могут отождествляться.

Ключевые слова: контекстный кинематограф, Африка, повседневность, народная и кинематографическая культуры

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