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***AMA: JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND CULTURAL STUDIES***

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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

With emerging trends in theatre research and scholarship, *AMA: Journal of Theatre and Cultural Studies* has maintained its stand as a dependable and reliable resource material in inter-disciplinary scholarship.

This Volume: Vol.15, No. 1, of 2021 is an eloquent testimonial to the resilience of the editorial team in ensuring a continued history of astute research and scholarship in order to guarantee adequate learning and pedagogy.

Although the articles in this volume have individual trusts, they are inadvertently related in a collective call for the revitalization of the dramatic, performing and media arts. It is actually what can be termed an "awareness" volume as the essays bother on advocacy.

Awaritoma Agoma's discourse on Solo performance titled "Solo Performances and the Restructuring of the Theatre Curriculum: A Study of Tunji Sotimiri's Performance in Solo Africa" makes a case encouraging teachers and students of Theatre Arts to pay special attention to Solo acts. He traces that evolution of Solo performance and outlines the benefits to the individual actor, the institution and the society. Similarly, Emmanuel Iroh advocates for the use of dramatic techniques in the pedagogy of prose in secondary schools. His work, "Adaptation of Novel to Dramatic Drama for Classroom Teaching: The Efficient Secondary Commercial School, Uyo Experiment" explores the use of drama as an alternative way of teaching prose and as a means of ensuring better understanding.

Martina Omorodion in her essay "Good Governance in Nigeria: The Place of Women" equally calls on women to rise up to their responsibilities as co-equals with their male counterparts in the society. She advocates for the active participation of women in politics. As Martina recognizes the fact that women are beginning to make little impact in politics, Kelechi Ogbonna and Chisimdi Ihentuge call for the utilization of the ethnic identity as a unifying factor for the political and economic growth of the nation. In their essay, "Exploring Positivity in Ethnic Identity for National Re-Integration in Nigeria: A Multimedia

Perspective" is a call for policy makers to cash in on our seeming 'unity in diversity to galvanize a united nation.

Canice Nwosu takes the role of teachers of drama further in his "The Teacher of Teachers as Developer of Human Resources: A Re-appraisal of Dan Uwandu's 'Child Development through Drama'". Here he extols the virtues of a teacher and submits that teachers are nation builders because they are character molders as well as nation builders through the formation of persons they instruct. Likewise, Felix Gbenoba, shows how the medium of drama is an effective way for the interpretation of poetry in "Drama as Style for Enhanced Patronage of Modern Nigerian Poetry: A Reading of Selected Poems in Hope Eghagha's *The Governor's Lodge*". He draws semblances of drama in the poetry of Hope Eghagha and explores how these dramatic elements have helped in a better comprehension of the poems. Equally, in "Nigeria's Female Dramatic Creativity: An Analysis of Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Salami's *Sweet Revenge*", Rosemary Asen calls for an end to negative cultural practices against women. These practices, the author contends, hinder the growth and development of the womenfolk. It calls for the assertion of female rights and better collaboration amongst themselves. And Chibuike Abunike calls for a reduction in violent movies in his work "Examining Domestic Violence through the Film Medium in Nigeria: An Analysis of Selected Films". This lessening of violence in movies he believes can be achieved through proper censorship.

In another wake-up call, Josephine Odunze proffers solutions towards the revitalization of the Abuja carnival. Her essay, "The Defunct Abuja National Carnival: Towards a Rekindling of the Dying Embers" seeks avenues towards the renaissance of the Abuja Carnival. She contends that the carnival is a veritable source of revenue and great tourism potential. As Josephine is calling on cultural administrators to bring forth resources towards the rebirth of the Abuja carnival, Onyeka Ebekue and Somtoo Arinze-Umobi in "Between the Nollywood Classroom and Nollywood Practice: Absence of Synergy or Synergy of Absence" are advocating that there should be a synergy between the Nollywood film practitioners and the Nollywood academia for quality assurance in Nollywood video films.

The use of signs and symbols in dances as expressed in some war dances is explored in Tochukwu Okeke and Judith Ume's

discourse in “The Significance of Cultural Symbols in *Ogbo* traditional War Dance”. The authors use this work to underscore the importance of symbols in traditional dances and explain how such signs aid the audience’s understanding of the performance. Charles Nwadiuwe and Ebuka Ilukwe make a call for an overhaul of the Nigerian Creative Industry in order to create a level playing ground for performers through a review of the Copyright law. The article "Copyright Law and the Challenge of Piracy in Nollywood Business" advocates for stricter penalties for defaulters in the creative business. And, Ver-Or Kachii sums up these calls for a better society in his article "Theatre and Revolution in Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die*". Here the author calls for continued use of the theatre as means of sensitization and mass orientation. It is believed that through revolutionary plays like *Hangmen Also Die* that the cries of the masses will be heard and a better society will emerge from the ashes of the old.

We look forward to receiving more articles on this advocacy for the revitalization of the performing arts and similar discourses especially works that encourage interdisciplinary research.

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**BETWEEN THE NOLLYWOOD ACADEMIA AND  
NOLLYWOOD PRACTICE: ABSENCE OF SYNERGY OR  
SYNERGY OF ABSENCE.**

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**Abstract**

The Nigerian film industry known as Nollywood has been graded the 3rd biggest film industry in the world following behind America's Hollywood and India's Bollywood respectively. The grading however is done based on the quantity of films churned out every year from these industries. Unlike its counterparts, Nollywood has been noted as having very much more films with copious flow of shallow and inept contents. Many of its stories lack depth of feel and can barely challenge one's imagination as the plots are mostly on a flat scale and maintain a linear progression. The technical aspect is not without its incessant flaws mostly evident in the continuity, sound and editing. These and many more form the bedrock of the numerous flaws that mar the quality in content of the blossoming industry. This study however observes that the major factor that is responsible for the low quality in many of Nollywood's films is lack of professionalism. It also observes that there are so many quacks operating in the Nigerian film industry because there is a widened cleavage between the industry and the art institutions in the country. Therefore, it is the aim of this research to find ways by which the industry can have a complemented relationship with the schools of art in Nigeria so as to enhance a more quality output. Focus group discussion and literally analysis will be the underlying method used in this research.

## Introduction

What is today known as Nollywood has its origin in a very humble beginning necessitated by the drive to find an alternative to the trending celluloid industry which had become very expensive and had surged virtually beyond the reach of the average Nigerian film producer. The need to tell the African story and to also have indigenous contents in the euro-saturated Nigerian television space was an unavoidable booster to the adaptation of the Video cameras as an alternative technology to celluloid film making. The experiment has since its inception in 1992 with Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* been an unimaginable success. It has bolstered and built a film culture that is well known throughout the world. The Nigerian film industry popularly known as Nollywood has become a success story that cannot be neglected in Film discussion circles all around the world. It has become the new window for telling the African story bereft of foreign manipulations and colonial inclinations. Its success is tied to the nature of its contents which tends to be indigenous and treats the African experience from the grass root level. Thus Uche Onuzulike opines that:

Nigerian video films are deeply rooted in Nigerian cultural traditions and social texts that focus on Nigerian community life. Nigerian video film stories are told using African idioms, proverbs, costumes, artifacts, cultural display, and the imagery of Africa. (176)

It is the sense of belonging and identity derivable from these films that gives it the unalloyed acceptance it has irrespective of its numerous narrative flaws and technological inadequacies. Espousing this stand, Amaka Igwe is of the opinion that "the Nollywood industry thrives because of its originality and non-conformity approach to film making" (para. 2).

The Nigerian film industry has had a gigantic leap within its 24years of hatchery. Its impact on Nigerian society goes far beyond mere entertainment. Since its inception, Nollywood has contributed tremendously to Nigeria's economic growth. In respect of this, Ayeni Adekunle Samuel declares that:

" The media industry is valued at \$650m; the music industry at about \$105 million (SMW 2013) and Nollywood at almost 100 billion Naira. The monetary figures portend to increase over time

when adequate financial tools are implemented to track and interpret earnings in the industry (par.5).

The hundred billion naira estimated worth however may even have been an underestimation in light of the new ranking of Nollywood as the second largest film industry in the world following behind India's Bollywood. Thus Efe Ebelo discussing the impact of Nollywood on the economy of Nigeria declares that:

...The Nigerian film industry is widely adjudged as the most prolific in the world with consistent production of over 2,400 yearly titles in the past three years – 2,408, 2,514 and 2,621 in 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively. Provisional Data in 2011 from the Nigerian Films and Videos Census Board (NFVCB) indicated that 1,743 and 1,234 movies were respectively registered and approved. (Para. 4)

The above data reveals the amount of employees that go into the industry for such output to be both efficient and possible. It is however believed that apart from agriculture, the entertainment industry is the second highest employer of labor in Nigeria with Nollywood taking the lead. Thus, Moudio Rebecca (para.7) posits that over a million people are currently in the employ of Nollywood.

However, Nollywood is not without its errors and shortcomings. The Nollywood industry is notorious for its low budgets which inadvertently affect the output quality. The stories are most times hurriedly put together and rushed into the market for a quick turnover and this most times results in many errors and shallowness of the movie's contents. These errors are most times blamed on the unprofessionalism of its practitioners as many of them lack formal training. Also, there seems to be a kind of divide between the academia, the government and the field practitioners and this divide does not in any way help the young evolving industry. This problem is therefore the major factor driving this research which is aimed towards finding a soft landing ground where these three arms can come together in a synergy towards improving the Nollywood industry. This research is therefore grounded in social interdependence theory.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Nollywood Academia**

In this research, the 'Nollywood Academia' implies all those involved in the business of research and learning in the area of Film and creative arts

mostly in the higher institutions in Nigeria. These include the academic instructors, professors, researchers and students within the tertiary set up of Nigeria's educational environment.

### **Nollywood Practice**

'Nollywood Practice' in this research denotes the act and art of producing a Nollywood film. This will include the activities of all those (practitioners) who are on field in the business of Nollywood. These are the ones who are the real filmmakers who roll out the films that are referred to as Nollywood films. These practitioners include the Producers, directors, actors, continuity, makeup artistes, cinematographers and every other crew member who contribute in one way or the other to the successful making of the films.

### **The Divide between the Nollywood Academia and Nollywood Practice.**

There is a complementary relationship that exists between the different institutions in society. Every of these institutions contribute to the growth of the other. A certain lack in one in effect spells an imminent lack in another which it is meant or supposed to complement. The society is therefore like a basket of hands girded by the various institutions. The dearth in one must spell an unavoidable consequence on the other. The South African tribe of Xhosa expresses this interdependency of beings in their traditional philosophy of 'Ubuntu' which literally translates to "I am because you are". This interconnection of elements is what the interdependence theory professes. Johnson and Johnson opine that "Social interdependence exists when the accomplishment of each individual's goals is affected by the actions of others" (135). This therefore means that the actions and inactions of any of the elements that are meant to complement each other must have an eventual effect whether positive or negative on the composite body. This contractual synergy is therefore needed in the day to day existence of the different business and corporate organizations that operate within the society.

Unfortunately, the interdependence of relationship between the academia and the industry in Nigeria is yet to be plucked. This is because both the academia and the industry are yet to work out an inter complementary relation that will amount to a healthy growth in the industrial setup. The effect is a skill gap between theory, research and practice. If theory fails

to recognize current and trending innovations in its practical field, then such theory loses touch with modernity and in effect becomes obsolete and lacks essence. If, on the other hand, industry fails to stay in touch with trending theories, its operations become skewed and outdated and lacks touch with reality. It will also lack the competing power to match other industries in the global atmosphere. Lamenting the effect of this gap on the Nigerian University graduates, Adetokumbo Kayode opines:

... the gap that exists between what is taught at school and the skills required to perform on a job is so wide that a high percentage of young graduates are said to be unemployable for lack of needed skills that would make them profitable for any employer. This state of affairs has existed in Nigeria for so long that there is urgent need for serious actions to stem the tide and correct the malaise that is robbing the nation of progress in many fields of endeavour. (para. 5)

The film industry in Nigeria is typical of the sector that lacks this industry-academia synergy. There is a yawning gap between the Nollywood practitioners and the Nollywood academia. The effect is a cyclic loop in which the industry keeps rotating in its style without making giant steps towards a rapid improvement in its structure and nature. This is because the gap has not allowed the symbiotic relationship between research and practice to exist. Each stays in its corner watching the other from afar trying to rigor out from its difficulties without proffering a helping hand. Every year, there are myriads of journal articles being churned out from the academia on Nollywood. Many problems are discussed and many recommendations are made. However due to the restrictive nature of most of the conferences in which these researches are discussed, the practitioners who in the real sense should be at the benefitting end of the findings from the researches are mostly not present. As a result, most often than not, these research works lack essence because the hands-on field that should reflect these findings in the films are not integrated. Thus these conferences become mere traditions by which the academia meets up with its requirements for promotions and job prerequisites. Also because the academia do not have a common relationship with the field practitioners, it becomes very difficult for them to really understand the intricacies of what it takes to be on field. In effect, most theories proffered may not be relevant and practicable within the circumstances of working in the field. Also because researching on field most times is

brehtaking both financially and otherwise, many researchers in the academia choose to avoid and take the simpler task of engaging in researches that are literary based. Dray Sussan in her articulation of the reasons for the seeming gap between the academia and the practitioners opines:

In academia, the most basic measures of success are typically scholarly publishing and obtaining grants. It is a truism that faculty must “publish or perish.” Anything that increases success in obtaining grants and producing publications in refereed publications increases career success. The quickest and easiest types of papers to write tend also to be the most narrow—and unfortunately, these are also the least likely to be considered relevant and useful by practitioners. (Para. 4)

Unlike most other film industries in the world, Nollywood is an unconventional industry with no laid down rules and definite structure. This is accounted for by the way it started and in the unassuming style and format with which the industry was bred. The industry today known as Nollywood was actually given birth to by marketers and producers who had no much stake in the media and entertainment industry. As a result many scholars in academia may find it difficult accepting an industry where its policies are made and controlled by practitioners who may have no formal training in filmmaking. As a result, while the academia look at the practitioners as a group of quacks churning out substandard films, the practitioners perceive the academia as opportunists who pontificate and profess theories that won't be applicable in practice due to lack of practical experience. Thus even if they get in contact with some recommendations from the academia, they tend to overlook impracticable propositions from people who do not understand their working conditions and thus lack the ethos to pontificate in the area.

However, the effect of this is that both the academia and the practitioners suffer. This is because they both lose out on research that can propel both the industry and the academia forward. Many objective and result oriented researches should have a reflection of practicability which can only be tested out in the field. Thus Dray opines that:

Academics benefit in practical ways from closer connections with the commercial world as well. In some companies, there are opportunities for academics to partner with practitioners to do

research that would not be possible by either side alone but that can answer real needs for information. Practitioners can sometimes help provide access to key populations of interest and can help leverage corporate resources to provide funding for certain types of research activities. (3)

It is however very obvious that Nollywood needs a professional touch to improve the quality of its content. Nollywood most times is criticized for errors that could have been well prevented with a touch of scholarship. Some of the scripts are badly edited and these sometimes result in a lot of grammatical blunder that becomes very embarrassing from an industry of its magnitude. Script errors mostly mar most films. Thus Israel Udomisor and Nurat Yusuf Tosin are of the opinion that "the problem of script writing in the Nigerian film industry is a cancer that has eaten deep into the industry fabric. The resultant effects of these are poor story lines, faulty scene design, poor themes and not too impressive performances of actors and actresses "(25). It is therefore pertinent that there is a joint effort between the academia and practitioners as this will help curtail many of these errors. It is obvious that if the full weight of the academia is felt on field, many of the script errors that mar most of the Nollywood films will be checkmated.

### **Conclusion**

Nollywood has gone a long way within its short years of existence. It has attracted discussions from all around the world and its economic impact in the nation has become well felt. Having gone this far with a structure that sometimes lacks definition due to its amoebic and indefinite nature, one can only imagine the rapidity of development that will accompany a better organized movie outfit like Nollywood. The call is therefore for practitioners and the academia to find a common ground through which they can synergize to improve the quality of the output from Nollywood. This synergy also will go a long way in improving the academia and academic curriculum of film related disciplines in the country.

### **Recommendations**

1. It will be pertinent to create a viable avenue through which the academia can engage in constant interaction with the practitioners in order for both to keep abreast of developments in their fields of learning and practice. Such bodies like Society of Nigerian Theatre Arts practitioners should find a common

- ground for interacting with the practice base bodies like National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP).
2. There should be a concerted effort at incorporating practitioners in the various academic conferences and workshops that are carried out within academia. This will help communicate research findings to the practitioners who will affect it in their works in the field.

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