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The Creative Menopause Syndrome in Nollywood Video Films: A Lingering Deficiency



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Abstract

The Nigerian movie industry, otherwise popularly known as Nollywood, is arguably Africa's largest film industry and ranked amongst the top three film industries in the world. With a prolific output of over a thousand productions annually leading to a humongous popularity, Nollywood is without a doubt a staple in many African households and beyond. Obviously, the industry has evolved over the years by leaps and bounds giving the top-notch quality of some productions in recent times. However, despite this evolutionary stride being made, the quality of majority of movies coming out of the industry have predominantly remained shaky and dreary. It is seemingly a case of moving in a circle of creative dearth with many Nollywood video films often failing to inspire any major shift in contents and narrative styles. This

study, thus, looks at the creativity question as well as the lack of creative impetus which has continued to characterise and constitute a major downside of Nollywood video films. Anchored on the theory of creativity espoused by Kozbelt, Beghetto and Runco, this study finds the dearth of creativity to be a serious lingering deficiency which has and or is eating deep into the fabrics of Nollywood, making the industry a subject of protracted scathing criticism and an object of universal derision. Hence, by way of conclusion and recommendation, it is imperative Nollywood filmmakers improve upon their artistry in filmmaking and not sacrifice creativity – what is significantly required to make a movie of good quality – on the altar of rushed production for quick cash.

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Introduction

Nollywood is the generic and colloquial name for the movie industry in Nigeria. Apparently, the term is formed and modelled to follow in the manner of Hollywood and Bollywood which refers to the film industries in the US and India's Bombay respectively. With its continuous usage in the media to refer generally to the Nigerian movie industry, "Nollywood" is assumed to be a portmanteau of the words "Nigeria" and "Hollywood." The origin of Nollywood as a term may be vague but its earliest usage has been traced by Jonathan Haynes to a 2002 article by Matt Steinglass in *The New York Times* where it was used to describe Nigerian cinema. The term was also used by Charles Igwe in an article he wrote for *The New York Times* in September 2002. In yet another thought, the term is said to have been coined by *The New York Times* journalist Norimitsu Onishi in 2002 upon observing the filmmaking activities in Lagos, Nigeria.

It is worthy of mention that while the term Nollywood is a sobriquet generally used to refer to the entire movie industry in Nigeria, such application is not unified as there exist a great deal of diversity and a number of variations. Different genres exist which include horror, melodrama, comedy and action, as well as language division. It also includes films in English, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa (Bisschoff, 2015). Notwithstanding, while "Nollywood" and the spectrum of what it really stands for as well as which films are considered Nollywood has remained a subject of controversy among scholars and practitioners in the movie industry in Nigeria, Ayengho (2012) refers to Nollywood as "the totality of activities taking place in the Nigerian movie/film industry, be it in English, Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Itsekiri, Edo, Effik, Ijaw, Urhobo or any other of the over 300 Nigerian languages." Sharing similar thought, Tunde Oladunjoye is of the notion that the name Nollywood covers the totality of Nigerian films that include celluloid, home video, short films, documentaries, film literatures, training projects, equipment and capacity building of the industry and its professionals not just the home video alone (qtd in Adenugba, 2007). Nollywood is thus the umbrella name for movie activities generally as well as the process of filmmaking in the country with predominant concentration and/or base in the city of Lagos as the hub of those activities. It also covers movies in all the different languages there is today (in the same way that "Bollywood", in addition to the production of films mainly in Hindi, covers also those in Bengali, Tamil, Telegu and other languages) although there has been concerted efforts at separation by Hausa filmmakers given the designations "Kanywood" and "Kallywood."

With over a thousand productions annually leading to an increase in popularity, Nollywood movies is a staple in many African households. According to Giwa (2014:1), "The Nigerian film industry, also known as Nollywood, is Africa's most

prevalent movie activity in both the number of productions and value, roughly producing between 1,000 and 1,500 movies annually. Nollywood is making its mark in the film business.” Similarly, Moudio (2013) in an article she titled *Nigeria’s Film Industry: A Potential Gold Mine* states that “The Nigerian film industry...produces about 50 movies per week, second only to India’s Bollywood – more than Hollywood in the United States. Although its revenues are not on par with Bollywood’s and Hollywood’s, Nollywood still generates an impressive \$590 million annually.”

Nollywood, with its prolific output, has advanced over the years due to the individual efforts of dominant producers and marketers alike. Since the explosive start with the great debut performance of *Living in Bondage* (Agba, 2014:155), the Nigerian movie industry has continued to thrive mainly due to the collaborative efforts by producers, directors, writers, actors/actresses etc. to create a distinct film tradition in Africa with a global appeal. Characteristically, Nollywood movies today are occasionally broken up into multiple parts on one or up to three discs, and lasts between an hour or two hours which often include advertisements and promotional content in-between (Giwa, 2014:2). Although a significant improvement can be noticed in the quality of Nollywood movies being produced in recent times, it still seems a case of moving in a circle of creative dearth. While we may laud and commend the production quality of such movies as *The Amazing Grace* (2006), *The Figurine* (2009), *Ije* (2010), *Inale* (2010), *Tango with Me* (2010), *Mr & Mrs* (2012), *Black November* (2012), *Phone Swap* (2012), *Iyore* (2014), *Fifty* (2015), *The Wedding Party* (2016), *93 Days* (2016), *’76* (2016), *The CEO* (2016), *Okafor’s Law* (2016), *Isoken* (2017), *Roti* (2017), *Slow Country* (2017) and a few others more in terms of content and other aesthetic appeal, we just cannot ignore and thus fail to be critical of the tide of lackluster Nollywood movies that are frequently being churned out which we may aptly describe as hokum. In fact, for every Nollywood movie out there with satisfactory quality there seems to be dozens of others with poor quality, thereby making the numerous bad ones overshadow and take the shine off the few good ones. It is therefore not surprising Nollywood has been the subject of protracted criticisms revolving around the content of movies, general production quality and professionalism.

Many criticisms have continued to trail the content of Nollywood movies especially their narrative value and plot structure regardless of the national and international appeal it has garnered over the years. On this note, therefore, it is seemingly a paradoxical status for Nollywood to be enjoying a humongous patronage despite the continuous production of movies with little artistic worth and poor plot construction as Roy Armes is quoted in Agba (2014:155) saying:

Nollywood as a film industry is frequently, being snubbed because the output of the films according to critics, in terms of sound and aesthetics is poor. Yet, the subjects and themes of Nollywood for whatever reason do attract not only Nigerian audience attention, but also the global audience.

Film critic Iroh (2009:32) has criticized the “poverty of creativity, ideas, innovation and a coordinated strategic plan” in Nollywood. Along the same line, another film critic, Akande (2009:24), is critical of the predictability of the content of Nollywood movies which are virtually always centred around subject matters like “conflict between mothers-in-law and their son’s wives, scenes dealing with police battling criminals, burial and consultations with native doctors, and so on.” Often structured in the same way with repetitive content because Nigerian filmmakers are very fond of recreating what made a previous movie successful in terms of sales, Nollywood movies for long have held a stigma of obsessive, repetitive and predictable storylines, topics and thematic preoccupations that ranges from romance/love, ritual, family, deception/betrayal to crime etc. In addition to a generally poor production quality, the storyline and plots of these movies are not only predictable but also horrendous and monotonous. Furthermore, in terms of unrealistic plot construction, Nollywood never fails to produce a variety of storylines that include those not readily visible in movies from other parts of the world (Madichie, 2010:626).

Generally, filmmaking is a creative undertaking that requires and thrives on creativity. Unfortunately, despite the effort by few talented Nigerian filmmakers in recent times to creatively tell stories and restore quality and professionalism to Nollywood with improved scriptwriting, brilliant directing and impressive cinematography, many Nollywood movies are found to be lacking that creative touch necessary to heighten their aesthetic appeal and make them of good quality. Against this backdrop, therefore, the researcher sets out in this paper to examine what he identifies and describes as “the creative menopause syndrome” in Nollywood movies as manifested in the general production quality especially in the areas of titles, movie covers/posters, storylines, plot structures/constructions, special effects, topic/thematic considerations, and soundtracks/theme songs. With movie production a constant activity in the country, the display of stifled creativity or lack of creativity is not a rarity with many of the movies being produced so pedestrian in content, especially the case of watery storylines which makes it so easy for viewers to predict how the story unfolds and ultimately what happens in the end. Unfortunately, this creativity question has compelled a lot of people, particularly critics and those in the know of what good quality filmmaking entails, to assume that

Nigerian filmmakers as far as filmmaking in Nigeria is concerned, including other members of the production crew, are a bunch of amateurs and novices. Hence, the need and expediency to carry out this study which is aimed at drawing critical attention to this lingering deficiency that has persistently remained a major undoing of the Nigerian movie industries, with the hope that filmmakers and would-be filmmakers would rise up to the challenge of raising the bar in movie productions.

Theoretical Framework

Studies in creativity and creative acts cuts across several disciplines—philosophy (specifically of science), psychology, technology, sociology, theology, education, linguistics, business studies, economics and the arts etc. For this reason, there is today numerous variety of definitions and approaches from scholars. Although we may see creativity manifest in different areas of life and in its various stages either at the forefront or in the background, creativity is looked up here specifically in the fields of art, specifically filmmaking. Creativity in this regard, thus, refers to the phenomenon whereby a person creates a new work of art that has some kind of value, and what counts as "new" may be in reference to the individual creator, or to the society or domain within which the novelty occurs (Anoiko, 2011:23). Creativity, beyond a single personal trait but a set of traits, is central to the creative art industries where the importance of the role it plays has been equated to that of innovation in other sectors of the economy. It is a key resource in the creative industries as it gives artists competitive advantage and enhances their status. Although there are those who know their crafts, creativity is considered very important because not being creative enough to do something will mean staying in the same spot as well as remaining at the same level (Wong, Kim & Matthews, 2010:2, 6).

According to Montagu (1964:281), “in a sense every art work is the creative treatment of actuality. Actuality is the raw material that, as experience, must pass through the consciousness of the creative artist (or group) to become transformed by labour and in accordance with technical and aesthetic laws into the art product.” Creativity implies the tendency to generate and/or recognize ideas, alternatives or possibilities that will usefully and aesthetically communicate with others, and also will be uniquely entertaining to us and others (Franken,1994:396). It is any idea or product which constitutes novelty and, as a result, distinguishes it from others even as it changes or transforms existing domain. As Csikszentmihalyi (1999:315) observes, “for creativity to occur, a set of rules and practices must be transmitted from the domain to the individual. The individual must then produce a novel variation in the content of the domain, the variation then must be selected by the

field for inclusion in the domain.” Creativity is not merely defined by novelty but also the worth of such a novel creation. In his work *Creativity – Beyond the Myth of Genius*, Weisberg (1993:4) sees creativity as all-encompassing when he says that the term “creative” refers to novel products of value. He further notes that for something to be creative, it is not enough for it to be novel. Essentially, it must have value or be appropriate to the cognitive demands of the situation. Sternberg and Lubart (1996) corroborates this view with the assertion that “A product is creative when it is (a) novel and (b) appropriate. A novel product is original not predictable. The bigger the concept, and the more the product stimulates further work and ideas, the more the product is creative.” Along the same line, McIntyre (2012:204) underscores value as a crucial defining feature of creativity saying “Creativity is an activity where some process or product, one that is considered to be unique or valuable in at least one social setting, comes about from a set of antecedent conditions through the located actions of a creative agent.” More than just the ability to create, filmmaking creativity is characterized by the novelty of an idea, its usefulness as well as applicability, and its ability to stimulate reaction/interaction. In a report by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) published in 1999 in which an elaborate definition of creativity was given, they identify four characteristics of the creativity processes as follows:

1. It is imaginatively, it always involves imagination, since it is the process of generating something original.
2. It is purposeful: it is imagination put into action towards an end.
3. It produces something original in relation to one’s own previous work, to their peer group or to anyone’s previous output in a particular field.
4. And finally, it has value in respect to the objective it was applied for. Creativity involves not only the generation of ideas, but also the evaluation of them, and deciding which one is the most adequate one.

Creativity especially in filmmaking is most obviously characterized by the ability to perceive and present the world (situations) in different ways and from different perspectives. It entails the processes of thinking and then producing in the sense that new and/or imaginative ideas are conceived first before they are turned into filmic reality. In this way, creativity is therefore the process and also the ability to make or bring into existence a new artistic expression vis-à-vis these novel ideas in films. For it has been argued that having ideas and not acting on them makes one only imaginative and not creative. Filmmaking as a creative process necessarily requires creativity which is apparent almost throughout all the stages of getting a

film done from the conceptualization/development of the idea/script, preproduction, production and perhaps to distribution. As “divergent thinking to conceive new ideas” (Heunks, 1998:264), filmmaking creativity is most importantly measured in terms of originality. However, originality, like novelty, is vital but alone not sufficient for creativity because ideas and products that are merely original might very well be useless. Original things have got to be effective (in terms and in the form of value) to be creative (Runco & Jaeger, 2012:92). “Originality is vital, but must be balanced with fit and appropriateness” (Runco, 1988:4).

Good filmmaking requires creativity and creativity itself in the process of filmmaking requires passion and commitment for a good film to be made. Creativity cannot be extruded with force but takes a creative digestion time to stir up. As Sternberg (2006:88) unequivocally affirms, “Creativity and simply thinking in novel ways are facilitated when people are willing to put in up-front time to think in new ways.” Renee (2013), citing Julie Bernstein, suggests that creativity is something one works at, not something one merely has and execute. In her words, “it’s more of a skill that can be built upon and honed, rather than a characteristic that you either have or you don’t.” This is why Renee feels it might sound preposterous and even a little insulting to think of creativity as something that can be mustered as well as something we can do better. She explains further that “There is this presupposition that creative people are born that way, and each has a predetermined “amount” allocated to them – an inherency that decides who creates and who doesn’t and to varying degrees.” Garnett (2016) takes a more philosophical approach in explaining how filmmaking creativity is worked at thus:

The problem is that you can’t measure creativity except retrospectively, and even that is disputed. To locate and nurture creativity, you need people of taste and sensitivity, with exceptional antennae, not qualities easily found on the executive ladder; you need patience because creative work, as opposed to repetitive manufacture, doesn’t come to order; you need to encourage it, over time, through frustration and failure. Plant in good soil, offer water and sunshine, prune where necessary and resist the temptation to constantly dig it up to see how it’s doing. You also need to connect each commissioner with the result, to see over time how they’ve performed... A company growing an idea...has to nurture creativity or die. The trick is to demand tight discipline with room to play. The days are over when people could be manipulated like machines... Television and film companies need to go on the front foot, believe in themselves and then give its creative base the power and responsibility to deliver.

Creativity is like a storeroom (of ideas) that is open to all, however, not everyone has what it takes or meets the requisite precondition necessary to access and utilize it. In filmmaking, therefore, creativity has a paradoxical status and implication in that it is easy yet difficult to explore. For those who have the key to access the creative storeroom, it is as much easy, although not essentially effortless, to bask in the grandeur of creativity as much as it is for a fish to swim in water. For others that seem not to know or have what it takes to explore creativity and are, as such, without the access code, unlocking creativity or delving into the creative realm is often seen as a herculean task. In addition to having a paradoxical character, creativity is also said to be somewhat shrouded in mystery. “Creativity itself is seemingly a mystery, for there is something paradoxical about it, something which makes it difficult to see how it is even possible. How it happens is indeed puzzling, but that it happens at all is deeply mysterious” (Boden, 2004:11). Some basic ingredients – more like access code/formulae – which allow us access to creativity include curiosity, intensive interest, knowledge/skill, value, collaboration, diligence, imagination, persistence, conviction, productivity, courage, non-conformity and the likes. For Sternberg and Lubart (1996), a confluence of six distinct but interrelated resources are required by creativity. They are intellectual abilities, knowledge, styles of thinking, personality, motivation, and environment (qtd in Sternberg, 2006:88). Contrary to long held belief that creativity is a gift bestowed on or exclusive to a selected few and with many starved of it, creativity is at the disposal of everyone (although not everyone is able to make use of it) and is everyone’s to lose overtime. Like intelligence, everyone has creativity to develop unfortunately not everyone does. “Creativity is a shape-shifting animal we try to catch and connect to as often as possible and learning how to do that is both a personal and universal path. If we all respond differently to setbacks and victories, there is a common understanding that creativity is also deeply intertwined with time and work” (Sejean, 2014).

At this point, we take a look at the theory of creativity put forward by Kozbelt, Beghetto and Runco as they provide an in-depth overview of creative magnitudes by drawing on theories that explain a range of creative experiences (Kerrigan, 2016). In their theory, distinction is made between “little-c creativity” and “Big-C creativity.” The former, according to them refers to everyday creativity whereas the latter implies eminent creativity (Kozbelt, Beghetto & Runco, 2010:23). They consider a student filmmaker, for instance, to be “little-c” creative because they are likely to have limited experience which may never result in a tangible product nor move “beyond an individual’s own personal insights and interpretation.” Others operating at the level of “little-c” creativity in filmmaking may include amateurs and first-time

filmmakers – beginners- who are seen to be creatively infantile, individually creative or having an inchoate/fledgling magnitude of creativity. In the Nigerian context, however, if we must add then we will consider filmmakers who are more interested in quick cash than quality and would, thus, literally with the speed of light produce movies with watered storylines and low-quality techniques that flood the industry to belong to the “little-c” creative category.

On the other hand, as Kozbelt, Beghetto and Runco (2010:23, 43) further posits, the “Big-C” creativity is renowned and always stands out. Those who operate at the “Big-C” magnitude, like Alfred Hitchcock whose creativity is widely accepted as fact, unquestioned and much talked about in history books, are often described as being historically creativity. The concept of historical creativity as cited by Kerrigan “often relates to the social and cultural value and appreciation of a product, process or idea which in turn sees a transferring of the creative label, a reputation, to the person who claims authorship of the product, process or idea. The term is coined by Margaret Boden (2004:43) and she defines it as “ideas that are novel with respect to the whole of human history.” Again, from the Nigerian clime those we may consider to be operating in the “Big-C” creative magnitude would include Jeta Amata, Izu Ojukwu, Kunle Afolayan and a very few more others. Interestingly, the understanding of these creative magnitudes – “little-c” and “Big-C” – comes with different facets of creativity which have been termed the six P’s of creativity as follows: process, products, personality, place, persuasion and potential (Kozbelt, Beghetto & Runco, 2010:25).

The Creativity Question in Nollywood Movies

An apparent lack of creativity has been a major bane of Nollywood over the years with a plethora of the movies that are being produced generally of poor quality. These movies either have unreasonable/bizarre titles, unrealistic stories, monotonous theme songs, sloppy/untidy special effects and laughable covers/posters, or are marred by slapdash production, melodramatic acting and/or ludicrous plots development. As a result, movie critics and viewers alike have continued to draw critical attention to the dearth of creativity that typifies many Nollywood movies. In this section, salient areas in which the creativity of Nollywood is called into question are discussed.

Monotonous Storyline/Bad Script/Abysmal Plot Development

The courage to creatively tell stories from a diverse range of perspectives is something of an aesthetic treasure that Nollywood can afford but for some reasons have often failed to do so. Although some filmmakers in Nigeria have told quite

amazing and splendid stories using eclectic story-telling techniques, majority of them have continued to tell recurring and sloppy stories. Sometimes the so-called sloppy stories they tell are in themselves brilliant ones that, if not for ignorance, indolence, negligence and the sheer love for quick cash which gives rise to hurried movie productions that are severely devoid of sufficient techniques and depth, could have been developed to create a remarkable experience for viewers. The situation, according to Doghudje (2015), is such that a movie can be shot and put together in a matter of a week, making it possible for the actor to go on sets of other production without the much-needed time to come out of character. The archetypal themes and plot elements of these rash Nollywood movies as we continue to see such as cultism and occultism, ritual, greed, marital discord etc. is said to have been born following the success of Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* - a movie about a man who in his pursuit of wealth and power joins a secret cult and murders his wife in a ritual sacrifice. Ever since then, despite the evolution of the Nigerian movie industry by leaps and bounds over the years, the quality of movies coming out of the industry have predominantly remained shaky with stories being literally made up and shooting done in just a matter of days, based on vague scenarios or poorly developed scripts.

Creativity as the soul of filmmaking is sacrosanct yet many who go into movie production in the country fail to get it right, thereby betraying creativity. For this reason, except for a few directors like Jeta Amata, Kunle Afolayan, Steve Gukas and Izu Ojukwu etc. who have continued to raise the bar with quality productions like *The Amazing Grace* (2006), *Inale* (2010), *Black November* (2012), *The Figurine* (2009), *October 1* (2014), *The CEO* (2016) *Sitanda* (2006), *White Waters* (2007) and *'76* (2016), the average Nigerian movie which often fails to inspire any major shift in narrative styles looks just like the next one until there is a slight change in a few scenes and then the movie goes back looking the same again. Doghudje (2015) again observes:

Some of the Nigerian movies, without any regard for the viewing audiences, dredge up familiar plots to propel themselves forward, resting on tried and tested formulas that now, nevertheless, seem extremely trite and lazy. These plots might have seemed fresh, different and exciting the first few times they were used, but now, they're just irritants and stink of lack of creativity in an industry that is meant to be swimming with talent.

Several Nollywood storylines and plots have observably been overdone to the point that we find them repulsive. Talk about their epics, for instance, it is obvious that

movies such as *Evil Kingdom*, *Odudu Kingdom*, *Wisdom of the Gods* and *Forest King* etc. were all made to look like the 1999 Nigerian blockbuster *Igodo* in terms of themes and setting. These and many other narratives in different genres have clearly been drained to an unsavory viewing taste. There is an avalanche of Nollywood movies that replicate the evil mother/stepmother/mother-in-law theme which has often seen star actress Patience Ozokwor play the wicked character. A few names on the list would include *Evil Mother-In-Law*, *Mother-In-Law*, *Mum Dad Meet Sam*, *My Mother My Marriage* etc. Another theme observed to have been recreated with reckless abandon, amongst other tediously recurring storyline/themes in Nollywood, is the “Runs” girl trend. Some notable titles from the plethora of movies with the “Runs” girl theme include *Runs Girls*, *Lagos Runs Girls*, *Governors Runs Girls*, *Asaba Runs Girls*, *Abuja Babes*, *Girls of Fame*, *Calabar Girl*, *Hustlers* etc. The “Runs” girl is simply that girl or woman who is involved in arrangements in which she renders services, mostly sexual in nature, to those who demand for it (men specifically) in return for financial benefits. She is “a creature that through natural selection has evolved a means to survive and in the Darwinian mold has adopted a lifestyle that entails satisfying the segsy time needs of the male...species in return for material things” (*Moan.wordpress.com* 2012). Although the Runs girl designation may be thought of as a euphemism for a prostitute, there is a thin line separating a Runs girl from a prostitute as they can both be likened to different faculties of the same university – “money for sex commercial institute.” The runs girl is distinguished from a prostitute on the basis of the kind/range of services provided, *modus operandi* and the mode of payment. While the service of a prostitute is just the sexual act and payment predominantly cash, the runs girl can provide the girlfriend experience, be an escort, a personal assistant or any other persona desired of her and payment can vary from granting favours to cash and other material benefits (*fabulosgloria.com* 2017).

A lot continue to be said and written about Nollywood movies and the stereotypical storylines and actions that quite often define them. It is typical of Nollywood especially in the climactic denouement for a bad character (often played by none other than Patience Ozokwor or Chinwetalu Agu) who has used diabolical powers to commit evil to be suddenly struck by thunder and lightning in a *Deus Ex Machina* manner and die afterward immediately after making confession. This obviously begs the question of how realistic it is for every evil person to die as soon as they confess or that evil people always necessarily confess before they embrace death? Evidently, this does not happen in reality all the time and, in fact, in most cases. Only in the surreal world created by Nollywood does an evil character in a turn of event always necessarily suffer the double tragedy of blindness, paralysis or

any other form of bodily agony by virtue of a supernatural force marked by lightning and/or thunder strike, and ultimately death after confessing and attesting to all the evils he/she has done.

Directorial Clumsiness

There are quite a number of Nollywood movies that cannot be absolved of directorial lapses owing to deficiency in creativity arising from lack of training or carelessness/negligence. In an industry where anyone can be a “director,” it is not unlikely to be visually traumatized by how the movies have been directed. The outcomes of their directing as well as directorial incompetence are movie scenes with mismatch emotions, costumes and make-ups. For instance, a female character in a Nollywood movie scene who supposedly is just getting up from bed in the morning can be seen wearing a quite conspicuous make-up as against been ordinarily make-up free. Artistry is often measured by a director’s coordination of every aspect of filmmaking – use of shots and camera movements, acting, costume and make-up etc., the combination of which adds to and intensifies both the general aesthetic appeal of the movie and its overall quality which may have a powerful effect on the audience in terms of reception and appreciation. According to Ebewo (2015):

As the creative executive of a production, the director must coordinate the activities of his collaborators. A visionary director ensures that everyone works together toward a single goal. At the same time, the rhythm of the production, the verbal and visual balance of each scene, the intensity of the performances, and the overall style and design of the film rest with the director. Film directing is a difficult job because it requires the director to be not merely a jack-of-all-trades but a master of all – an effective director knows what he or she wants from his or her crew and must develop empathy and human understanding with the audience.

There is nothing wrong with a film dealing with similar themes especially from a different perspective, what is been frowned at is that they recur without any deviation and, so, with Nollywood it seems to be a seen-one-seen-them-all syndrome. A film can still be aesthetically unique even when it tells an already told story, and this is possible when a different perspective as well as different narrative techniques are incorporated into it. Film approximates reality, and reality is not a fixed and static experience that remains the same and only from one point of view. Therefore, it will be an absurd situation for a director to unintelligently tell a similar

story without any form of creative modification either to the narrative structure, the storyline itself or the techniques employed.

Ridiculous Titles and Nauseating/Congested Covers/Posters

A perturbing question that has lingered for long is whether or not Nollywood has run out of titles. This is in view of the ridiculous and ludicrous titles being ascribed to several movies as seen over the years. For many, Nollywood movies often come with hilarious yet horrible, unintelligent and unimaginable titles that leaves much to be desired. These movie titles, more often than not, are also accompanied with screaming covers/posters that does so little to enhance the aesthetic appeal and value of the movies. Also, in a typical Nollywood fashion, these movie covers/posters often come with blown up faces of actors/actresses (characters) starring in the movie in an unexcitingly congested manner, and with their appearance as well as exaggerated (facial) expressions literally revealing their characterization as regards the protagonist (hero/heroine) and antagonist (villain), and what to expect of the characters.

Besides the ridiculousness of some of these Nollywood movie titles like *Tears for Breast Milk*, *Born with Tears*, *Kidnapping Babes*, *Kiss My Pains* and *Broken Tears*, and others not sampled such as *Omoge Yahoozey*, *Final Sweet Potato*, *Tea or Coffee*, *God Loves Prostitutes*, *Love Without Language*, *Chocolate Pinging Salon* and *Tomorrow Lives Again* etc. all of which are capable of cracking one's ribs even before the play button is pushed, the covers/posters somewhat embody a serious lack of creativity which makes them visually unappealing. Perhaps, it was presumed that by inserting the face of every actor/actress on the covers/posters, the movies would gain more attention and patronage. While this is not in any way to suggest that having the faces of all or many of the cast on a movie cover or poster is unacceptable or impossible, it is important that this should be done nicely and creatively instead of grating our sensibilities with images of actors/actresses with contorted faces and mouths wide open. With or without the faces of characters on them, movie covers/posters of spectacular and admirable quality/standard can be created by virtue of creative ingenuity to soothe and satisfy the visual appeal of the critical audience especially. In comparing the movie covers/posters sampled above with the ones below, one could easily see and tell the glaring difference between them – a reflection of creative ingenuity on the part of the ones below and the lack of it in the case of the above.

Nollywood, it appears, never stops to spring surprises with the kind of movie titles they come up with which, as a matter of fact, are one of the awkwardly unique things to set it apart from other movie industries around the world. It has also earned for itself an awkward reputation of hurriedly making movies out of any

circumstance or occurrence so long as it is trending. From movie titles that are as long as a sentence to the ones as brief as a single word, Nollywood has quite often been in the habit of employing movies titles borrowed from popular foreign films (Hollywood especially) or novels as well as titles derived from names of celebrities (both foreign and local), trending events or hit songs released by music artists in the country.

These movies and several others more with their awfully designed covers/posters will almost inevitably attract a critical evaluation of the level and nature of creativity on display in Nollywood – a height of creativity that obviously cannot be defined. Making a lackluster parody of Hollywood’s blockbuster superhero franchise such as *Ben 10*, *Spider-Man*, *Batman* etc. does not only reflect a dearth of creativity but also a copycat syndrome in Nollywood which is likely to make the industry appear as a joke as well as an object of ridicule before the international public. Besides, the Nigerian remakes or versions of these popular superhero movies are so horribly made such that the muddled and jumbled special effects, amongst other aspects of the movies, are an eyesore. Thus, making the unsavory replicas of these Hollywood movies a disgraceful show of mediocrity by Nollywood. Perhaps, since it is a known trend and habit with Nollywood to replicate popular Hollywood movies in the most outrageous fashion, it may only be a matter of time before Marvel’s history-making *Black Panther* is recreated in the Nollywood mold.

Nollywood movie titles, covers and posters which many find to be awful sometimes gives a fair idea of the plot and makes the movie predictable such that, with a high degree of certainty, one can tell what will happen next. For example, the movies *Anointed Liars* and *Never Die for Love* clearly and readily encapsulate what the movie is about simply by virtue of such titles. At other times, the title is a significant deviation from the story the movie tells. Often sounding funny, such titles either appear rather contrasting or downright ambiguous. For instance, while the title *Tear My Bra (If You Can...)* may come with a tempting and taunting challenge for all men if at all they have what it takes to tear that bra, the movie is incongruously about a young man whose father encourages and urges the numerous young ladies interested in him to apply in order to stand a chance of becoming his wife. Also, contrary to the title *Tears for Breast Milk*, the movie actually tells the story of two highly successful men who, in order to maintain their wealth and wealthy statuses, makes a pact that their children must get married to each other.

Albeit titles given to movies should reflect amply on what a movie is about without giving the story away and, thus, for the artistic purpose of creating suspense in order to retain viewers’ interest, can be metaphorically worked out as to readily mislead or make it hard for the viewers to tell what the movie is about, movie titles

necessarily do not have to be absolutely incongruous with what the movie is actually about – the story it tells. No matter how misleading a title has been crafted to be (i.e. to make the viewer think about something else that is different from what the movie is actually about), a significant level of connection should nonetheless exist between such a title and the movie. Unfortunately, a lot of Nollywood movie titles we see are neither metaphorical constructions nor misleading designations ingeniously worked out to create perceptive deviation in the viewers judging merely by the titles but sheer creative dumbness as the titles on several occasions have no clear-cut connection with or bearing on the movie. Lamenting this aspect of creative dearth in Nollywood is Isaac Dachen (2014), an editor, who posits:

Back in the days, movies like *Living in Bondage*, *Mortal Inheritance*, *Domitilla* and *Rattle Snake*, made a lot of sense and Nigerians loved and identified with these movies and learnt a lot of lessons while looking forward to further offerings. But these days, the kinds of movies that movie producers bring out begs intelligence and lack of depth, quality and deep research... they just sit in the corners of their rooms and bring them on. You get to hear titles like *Tear My Bra (If You Can)*, *Black and White Ghosts*, *Iron Pant*, *Tube and Tyre*, *We are Useless*, *Aka Gum*, *Calculator*, *Holy Kidnapper*, *Radio Without Battery*, *Chelsea and Liverpool*, etc. and if you sit down to watch these movies, you will get lost at the lack of credibility and depth.

Worst still, the copycat trend already alluded to has in recent times taken another dimension with filmmakers now imitating the works of their counterpart within and not just foreign contents. Nowadays, some Nollywood filmmakers blatantly copy each other's title or build their titles around another's with the incorporation of certain key words into theirs. Sometimes when this happens, it is mainly because a filmmaker wants to easily ride on the back of a successful movie to gain success by making a movie with similar title or having seen the success recorded by a movie, they decide to create something very similar to it in terms of title (and sometimes storyline) with the hope of also achieving success with it. For instance, at the time the movie *Stupid Love* was released and was a success, there grew a thematic obsession with love as titles/topics on love began to trend and love became a recurrent word with most movie titles. Examples include *My Type of Love*, *My Love*, *I Will Never Love Again* and *Fantastic Love* amongst others.

Insipid Theme Song/Soundtrack

For many Nollywood movies, theme songs are often composed to necessarily incorporate and capture the same title as the movie. For instance, where a movie is titled *Love is on the Run*, then we can expect the theme song to be *Love is on the Run* and the chorus sounding “Love is on the Run” like a broken record. There are also annoying instances when one particular song – presumably the theme song – will be played virtually from beginning to end of the movie whether or not it belongs or suits some of the actions/scenes. As unintelligent as these songs often are to narrate the entire story of the movie, one theme song can be played monotonously in every scene be it love, robbery, fight, burial or ritual scene etc.

A movie as we all know does not have one or the same scenes shown all through but is made up of diverse scenes and modes to its expressions. It therefore amounts to a lack of creative insight for a song, especially one whose lyrics is literally the plot of the movie, to be played in all almost all the scenes in a movie. Apparently, a movie would unsurprisingly be devoid of suspense when the so-called theme song/soundtrack tells the entire story. A movie theme music with vocals expressing what the entire story is about has been described as one of the highest obvious “I-know-what-would-happen” attributes of such a movie. It suffices therefore to say that movies will do well in terms of quality to have well-made music soundtrack composed specifically for the film which would be made up of different music themes for certain scenes as well as characters.

Conclusion

Nollywood has obviously become a major part of the life of most Nigerians even though majority of the movies that are being produced have only displayed mediocrity and a patent lack of ideas. This lack of ideas which this paper construes to be a lack of creativity on display in Nollywood is tantamount to lack of originality. Hence, the essence of this discourse has been not merely to advance scholarship but to spur filmmakers and would-be filmmakers in the Nigeria movie industry to improve upon their artistry in filmmaking in order to produce good movies of high quality with better storylines, casting, appropriate costumes/make-ups, well-made theme song and other soundtracks, good covers/posters amongst others, and not sacrifice creativity – what it significantly requires to make a good movie – on the altar of hurried production for quick cash. For the romance of creativity and artistry will pave way for beauty to flourish and lead to the production of movies with very high artistic and aesthetic value and appeal.

Every aspect of filmmaking as well as every part involved in the process of making a film is of utmost importance. Thus, the movie’s concept, the music

composition and how the music is used, the way the story is expressed vis-a-viz the narrative techniques employed in telling the story, and other various aspects of a film should be carefully worked out and properly done in order to achieve a fantastic and brilliant film. For this reason, a critical appraisal such as this which Nollywood gets quite often should not be misconstrued as a sheer faultfinding undertaken intended to cast a shadow of doubt over the capabilities and potentials of the industry but must be seen as a contribution to the growth of the industry as regards the quality of movies being produced.

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