

Critical Appraisals of Aesthetic Tools in Contemporary Nollywood City Films

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Abstract

This study is a critical exploration of social characteristics as aesthetic tools for viewers' fancy and attraction in Nigerian city films. Aesthetics is any creative strategy employed by culture producers to win consumers of cultural products such as films. The study is guided by Roman Jakobson's Formalist Theory, which pays attention to the functionalities of the inner properties of creativity. Contemporary Nigerian filmmakers pay attention to city films for economic reasons driven by the need to survive the harsh Nigerian economy. The filmmakers identify the vibrant population blocs and glamourise their social traits for attraction and fantasy. Such population blocs include people of Westernised consciousness, who glamourise Occidental grandeur; the Gen Zs, who are counter-culture; the Yahoo Boys, who flaunt ill-gotten wealth; the Olosho Girls (social media baddies), who sexualise; and Street Boys and Girls, who sensationalise lexicons of self-adulation or expletives. Strategic attraction of viewers through aesthetic resources is necessary for these filmmakers to gain patronage and survive the declining Nigerian economy. However, the deployment of these social characteristics as aesthetic tools has been interpreted as the filmmakers' promotion of negative aspects of Nigerian society. However, this social aesthetic strategy and practice may not abate anytime soon.

Key Words: Film aesthetics, Social characteristics, City film genre, Nollywood, Yahoo Boys

Introduction

The significance of aesthetics in films, as art productions, cannot be overemphasised. Aesthetics is the set of features of an object that make it artistic. Süzeni (2020) maintains that the art of aesthetics in society can create positive effects, especially by making common objects more appreciated and desired. Similarly, Briemann and Pell (2018) aver that aesthetics is particularly concerned with the perception and appreciative evaluation of the artistic piece. They further opine that aesthetics is qualitative in nature, noting that it acknowledges the supremacy of

beauty. These perspectives on aesthetics point to the appreciation of art's values, with the essence being the derivation of sensory, psychological, or psychic pleasure and satisfaction by the receiver or consumer of a work of art. This goes to show that as important as the contents or signification of a work of art is, so also important is the manner of expression, that is, the resources employed for the realisation of the magnitude or intensity of impact on the consumption of artistic works. Makers of films in Nigeria have come to realise the importance of aesthetics, particularly in filmic artistry. They have therefore been sensitive to aesthetic resources in their works. The consciousness of Nigerian filmmakers of the importance of appreciating artistic works has especially been necessitated by the need to cope with a harsh economy. The strategies employed by modern filmmakers to present films to consumers in Nigeria as cultural products are peculiar. This has ignited the curiosity for this study. Such strategies have evoked curiosity because they are multidimensional.

The focus of this study is to explore how film practitioners in the Nigerian film industry go about the manifestations of aesthetics in contemporary Nollywood films with emphasis on multidimensionality pronounced in its cosmopolitanism, film variation, and semantics. The study focuses on the manifestation of aesthetics within the city film subgenre in the societal context. Films from Nigeria could be divided into two along the temporal trajectory. These include traditional films and city films. The former portrays cultural practices indigenous to the people of Nigeria across the regions of Nigeria that Nollywood portrays. The latter genre, city films, reflects the modern West-oriented social system and characteristics of the Nigerian people. These two dichotomies are depicted respectively by (for example) mud houses, cultivated or uncultivated land, and mansions of Western architecture, expensive cars, electricity and a sophisticated transportation system and services. It has been observed that of these two genres, however, the city film genre has a higher prevalence in Nigeria these days.

Local knowledge of the Nigerian social system, which includes activities in the film industry in the country, shows that the films that derive their subjects from city life in Nigeria are noted to be many more than those on life in the hamlets, depicting Nigerian country life decades or centuries ago. There are some justifications for this phenomenon. These include a higher population in the city, a higher geriatric demographic distribution in the villages, and vibrant economic buoyancy in the city. This is because in Nigeria, today, there are more riches in the city centres than in the countryside. This is according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022). The bureau has further

asserted that Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural settlements of Nigeria because 72% of people in villages are poor, whereas the figure is 42% in urban centres. This goes to suggest that Nigeria's city population is denser, more vibrant, and varied; varied in the context that there are different groups or classes with common traits, identities, and ideologies.

The aesthetic constituents in the Nollywood city films are strategically initiated to meet the expectations and yearnings of the different demographic blocs in the Nigerian social system. This is the effect and application of the Functionalist Theory in this study. Such groups include the Gen Zs, street urchins, women-traders, artisans, taxi-drivers, cult groups, *Hook Up* Girls, political jobbers, fake lifers, land grabbers, the been-tos, shylocks, *Yahoo* swindlers, and so on. In this study, an attempt has been made to illustrate the different social conditions and demographic blocs. This, together with the Functionalist Theory, is an attempt to account for the identified social groups that have occasioned the choices of certain aesthetic tools in the representative city films as follows.

Methodological Approaches

There are certain strategic methods and tools that have been employed in this study for achieving the core goal of the study efficiently. The first of such tools and strategic approaches is qualitative research with emphasis on the analytical and interpretive methods. By this, inferences and conclusions are derived through the rationalisation of the available social details related to the primary goal of the study. In addition, triangulation of other tools was used. The 2025 Nicole Jose's model of Functionalist Theory was adopted. The selection of the research was through purposive sampling. Additionally, YouTube was considered to be the appropriate choice both for universal accessibility and abundance as an internet host of film resources. The appreciable View performances of the films on YouTube were also given due consideration. The researcher has employed all these methods in order to ensure the logicity of research claims and the acceptability of the conclusion in the study.

General and Contextual Perspectives on Aesthetics in Artistic Works

In this section of the study, the general and contextual views of aesthetics are examined. First, the general view of aesthetics is that it is important in any work of creativity, as asserted in this study. The importance that aesthetics asserts could be seen as emanating from the impact it generates on the audience, the ultimate consumer of the creative works. Owing to this, many scholars have

expressed opinions on aesthetics in artistic works. Some of the enunciations of the scholars are evaluated in the context of films at this juncture of the study. First of all, aesthetics has been looked at as a phenomenon and the property of an artistic work which has psycho-psychic implications. This is the crux of Jiang's (2021) assertion that the aesthetic induction strategy of aesthetic film refers to the planner's understanding of beauty seen in the use of the creative resources that culminates in inner feeling known as aesthetic feeling. He further opines that the aesthetic feeling brings about the audience having feelings from the experience of beauty, ensuring inner satisfaction, including a sense of harmony, as well as enjoyment of the spirit of beauty. The significance of aesthetics for inner satisfaction is further underscored by Aniukwu (2021), who bemoaned filmmakers' exclusion of aesthetics in Nollywood productions at different stages, which could be achieved through strategic use of camera works, sound systems, and applications of costumes for film aesthetics. Petrovici and Ivan (2019) also highlight the emotional or psychic significance of aesthetics in the language context. This is seen in their assertions that art films have a peculiar aesthetic language through strategic linguistic resources, and this mandates hermeneutical involvement of the viewer either emotionally or intellectually. Odedina lends strong credence to these perspectives on the psycho-psychic power of aesthetics in films in the postulation that films have the power to evoke viewers' emotions in the process of entertaining and communicating the filmmaker's imagination.

The psychic impact of aesthetics in films, noticeable in the foregoing, is what Franco (2023) sees as a film's emotional life. He opines that the aesthetic value itself is the positive quality perceived by viewers in the significance they experience. The core viewpoint by Franco is that film emotional life, so far as it is important to the *discovery* or the *evaluation* of the viewer's human nature of emotion. He concludes that such experience is in the progress it represents concerning resourcefulness as emotional subjects directed toward the actualisation of the ideal life of the individual. Furthermore, there are the social contexts of film aesthetics. In this context, the aesthetics of film is looked at from the social significance of aesthetic strategies in films. To this extent, Li (2024) contends that films can be constructed such that content can focus on and address social phenomena such as class division. In Li's perspective, the themes of films can reflect social class based on accusations levelled in relation to the suffering of the lower social class, which is not uncommon, and the crux of the director's strategies is to express concerns for the people in the lower class and also concerns for class divisions.

Secondly, aesthetics is contrived in this study as any tool or resource that elicits attraction, fancy/fantasy, and hedonistic sensation. To this end, the study conceives and applies social characteristics as aesthetic strategies, constructed and used as resources to elicit the attraction of potential viewers of Nigerian films in the city-film subgenre. At this juncture, it is imperative to assert that the emotional and psychological dimension to the consumption of aesthetic values in work of art such as film is germane to the social dimension to aesthetic consumption as the core of this study. That is, these perspectives lend credence to the focus of the study which is the special consideration by makers of city films in Nollywood for the emotion and psychology of the different social groups and generations in the contemporary Nigerian municipal society. This is illustrated in the study with the aesthetic properties extracted from representative city films in modern Nollywood.

Situating the Concept of ‘Social’ in the Context of this Study

The word-concept "*social*" is contextually conceived in this study. For the purpose of this study, *social* is not intended to mean the geopolitical zones of Nigeria, government or governance, including the economic activities. Rather it signifies the general consciousness of the different groups bound together by orientations, beliefs, practices, habits, or ideologies that are city-oriented. The focus of this research is to examine how the orientations of the populations in these blocs are considered by Nollywood filmmakers in determining the content of their works and the tools of expression. That is, social indicates the philosophies, ideologies and practices of the different demographic groups in Nigerian society, especially as these groups are critical factors in film consumption in Nigeria in modern times.

Sociology of Nigerian Film Productions

The Nigerian films could be categorised in terms of the genres necessitated by demographic indices. To this end, the genres of Nigerian films, broadly speaking, include, but are not limited to, City Films and Culture Films. City Films are films about the city life of Nigerian and address social topics relating to the modern Nigerian city experiences, and such topics related to the Youth culture. These, in no particular order, include Western characteristics seen in enhanced feminine glow, architecture, opulent lifestyle, and the *been-to* accent. Others topics include the orientations of the social groups such as the Gen Zs, the Lambda culture, the *Japa* syndrome, Yoruba Demons practices, the Sugar Daddy syndrome, the clubbing habits, the *Yahoo Yahoo* Syndrome, the Hook

Up phenomenon, the Single Mother syndrome, side-*chicking*, *Street Boys and Girls* culture, as well as street-life ideologies such as the *Marlianism*. On the other hand, Culture Films are a genre of film productions set to address critical cultural concerns in society such as the promotion of culture, most noticeable in culture indigenisation advocacy. Such films are mostly set in the countryside with such features as lush forests, mud houses, and rustic simplicity. It should be stated that city films are far more than cultural films, and the preference of the filmmakers is due to some factors. There is more opulence in the city, and there is poverty in rural Nigerian society. In addition to this, there are more youth in the city than in the rural areas in Nigeria. The mercantilist expectations of the filmmakers are satisfied by the riches in the city and the high population of the vibrant section of the population, the youth, in the city. This accounts for the proliferation of city films in Nigerian film industry in contemporary times.

Analytical Illustrations with Representative Films

The focus of the paper in this section is to investigate the tools and resources of aesthetics in Nigerian city films. The investigation is in the social contexts. That is how social factors and phenomena arouse inner emotions, psychic lulling, and sensory satisfaction in viewers. This is in such a way as to meet the epicurean yearnings of the viewers. To undertake this, specific contemporary Nigerian city films are accessed on YouTube and relevant social circumstances in the films are analysed. The analyses are subsequently redirected towards asserting the crux of the study. The perspectives are broadly divided into Western features, Conceptual Phenomena, linguistic tools, and cinematic framing. These are discussed in detail further.

Western Physical Glamour as an Aesthetic Resource in Nollywood City Films

“Western physical glamour” here means those items of modern times which are products of Western technology. These include, but are not limited to, modern cars, modern houses, infrastructure for modern living styles, human dressing and so on. These become aesthetic in the context that they are resources of attraction and fantasy for a target population among Nigerians. These features are copious and strategically situated in many Nollywood films of the city films sub-genre, as illustrated forth. The first city film that affirms the featuring of items of Western sensation as aesthetic strategies is *One Way Traffic* by Vincent Nwachukwu. *One Way Traffic* belongs to the city film subgenre because it addresses the lifestyles of the city people in Nigerian the contemporary times. The sensation intent of the filmmaker begins with the first themed display-

scene, which features modern architecture, high-rise buildings, wide clean streets, lush vegetation, as well as cars zooming past. All these give an aura of modern neighbourhoods.

The neighbourhoods of these descriptions are much desired in Nigeria. Such communities are choice areas of Lekki, Victoria Garden City, Victoria Island, and many others in Lagos, including many of such in Port-Harcourt, Abuja or Kano. They are expensive areas where many privileged city people, such as celebrities, reside. Indeed, a Nigerian celebrity is not considered a true celebrity if he or she does not reside in these choice areas because the neighbourhoods are opulent communities. To this end, many city people in Nigeria fantasise about conspicuous consumption such as intimidating modern houses, expensive cars and restricted or gated settlements as a sign of social class. This lifestyle is a source of attraction and fantasy to the city dwellers. The filmmaker is conscious of this social phenomenon, and this explains the strategic insertion of this themed scene-display at the initial point in the film.

These resources of Western glamour are complemented by the strategic display of human sheen and sensation noted in feminine glow and masculine attraction. These two human features are as much motivated by Western consciousness as they are perceived in Nigeria. The feminine glow is noted in the chemically-enhanced (toned) light skin, enhanced long hair and Western accent of Bolu in scenes one, two, and 4 and more especially when this is considered in the context of scene two, where cars are strategically placed in clean streets where Bolu is taken in an exotic black Toyota saloon car. This scenario is a sensation to many city people in Nigeria. To an individual in the West, this may be regular because the West is a developed continent with sustainable cities where streets are clean, cars are super-clean, streets are wide, and buildings are tall and beautiful. Such an individual may consider the city features highlighted above as ordinary. However, these features are sources of sensation. Many modern Nigerian women make efforts to tone their skin, wear long hair and ride expensive cars in a gentrified location.

In the same vein, the featuring of Bolanle Ninalowo in the first scene is strategic. It is for the optimisation of his 6-pack figure, enhanced by gym tools, as this is a major attraction among many city women in Nigeria. This 6-pack attraction leads to another film for the study, *In His Bed* by Ariyike Oladipo. In this city film, Tosin, Yinka's wife, declares to him, "Lounging is not going to bring your six- packs. Okay?" And when Yinka asks, "Who cares?" Tosin retorts, "I do, I actually do. I like you all buffed and ripped and sexy". Tosin's attraction to a masculine physique is an expression of the social reality in Nigeria, where many women are fascinated by a masculine 6-

pack body build. Furthermore, in the film *In His Bed*, Western material items, facilities and objects are copious and methodically infused for aesthetic attraction. In this particular case, the theme display scene is an airport, the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, with the loud humming of aircraft engines in the background. After this themed scene, there is the carousel area of the airport where travellers are waiting while their bags are being conveyed to them. The scene that follows this is the display of a state-of-the-art bridge in an eyebrow area of Lagos overlooking the ocean. At this stage, the loud humming of the aircraft has diffused into a British accent phone conversation. This is followed by the elegant sheen of a slim lady, Tosin, with long hair, skimpy dresses, and glossy facial paintings. Each of these features is a source of attraction and fantasy to most of the vibrant city people in Nigeria, and such attraction is the cardinal essence of any aesthetic style and tools. It needs to be asserted that the conceptions of the city people in this study emphasise the youth, adults with youth sensation consciousness, and the geriatric demography with Western orientation. It de-emphasizes puritanical religiousness. The validity of this is noted in the fact that the Nigerian youth in religious circles have modernised or Westernised religious behaviour and characteristics. This is a phenomenon that has been motivated and enhanced by the digital revolution. This is corroborated by Kanu et al (2024), who have noted that “the proliferation of digital media has ushered in a paradigm shift, which obviously goes beyond geographical boundaries and granting Nigerian youth unparalleled access to a wealth of information and religio-cultural experiences”. This has enabled the infiltration of Western lifestyle into Africa, Nigeria inclusive. These features being analysed in this film are the characteristics of modern religion, especially among the youth and the adults of liberal religious mindset.

Aesthetic manifestation through the features cited occurs in a number of varied ways. The first is that, in Nigeria today, the phenomenon of *Japa*, the phenomenal Westward migration rush to escape the harsh economic conditions in Nigeria, is a fervent desire among the people, especially among the youth in the country. As a result of this desperate desire, anything that relates to westward relocation is an attraction for both psychic and psycho sensation, as this is conceived by the Nigerian population as a signal of accomplishment. The filmmaker is aware of this social consciousness and this is a motivation for opening the film with a scene showing an airport and aircraft. In the same vein, the filmmakers are aware of the Nigerians’ inordinate rush for money Emeh et al (2023). This is the justification for the filmmaker’s show of elite lifestyle. Furthermore, the elegance of the slim lady could be looked at in Nigerian social context, as many Nigerian ladies

in the city go to great lengths to look slim, wearing Brazilian human-hair wigs. Therefore, Tosin is a metaphor for and a crafted source of imagination and fantasy for many Nigerian ladies. These features therefore serve aesthetic purposes of attraction and regaling in the film, *In His Bed*, as the film establishes relevance with the viewers. All these are expressions of Western consciousness, and such are marks of civilisation and social empowerment among Nigerians in the present time. This awareness and intentional consciousness have motivated the filmmaker to infuse these features strategically in the film as sources and tools of attraction, fantasy, imagination and inner satisfaction in the audience, the viewers.

Phenomenal Human Character as Aesthetic/Attraction Tools

At this juncture in the study, research focus shifts to how the conceptual-phenomenal behavioural patterns of the blocs of the people in society. Focus is also on how such behavioural patterns are a major consideration in filmmakers' construction of the contents of their films in the city-film subgenre. There are many of such human social characters. There are as many such as there are the number of different social blocs. The filmmakers often target and reflect the social cultures of the social blocs of people that have substantial memberships. The representations of the cultures of these social groups usually evoke attraction, a sense of belonging, sensation, fantasies or laughter as the case may be. Each of these impacts of the strategic representation of the attributes of the social blocs is a psychic and psychological output. The representations are therefore aesthetic deliberately crafted by the filmmakers in order to win the segment of the population in focus in a given situation. Some of these social blocs and attributes are evaluated at this juncture, and the first to be evaluated is the strategic representation of the attributes of the Nigerian Gen Zs as can be seen in the film *Gen Z Challenge* by Chika Ike. The Gen Z in Nigeria exhibit counter-culture attributes to a near-rebellion extent.

Meduna (2024) comments on the counter-culture disposition of Gen Zs, asserting that **in** her own reality, Nigerian Gen Zs feel as if they were strangers in their own homes. She believes that the unique challenges the generation faces are exceptional. She takes pride in Gen Z children. They possess a mentality different from the typical moralistic Nigerian cultural upbringing. She goes further to aver that it is evident that Gen Zs significantly differ from the past social generations, such as the boomers or Gen X, and what matters to older generations in terms of relationships and culture is of a different essence to Nigerian Gen Zs. They have the inclination to please their group orientation on social issues, and this leads to their collective consciousness. Such consciousness

that Meduna is alluding to includes an easy life, high fashion noted in piercings, mail earrings, dreadlocks, slim feminine body structure, expensive human-hair wigs, clubbing as well as resort parties, including affinity to the internet. This is the representation in this film. We see four young female Gen Zs who see modelling as a profession. They are staying at a hotel, having parties, and riding horses on the beaches. Their male counterparts hang around as directors and photographers. There is so much glamour around them. The skimpy dresses and the glamour of expensive accommodation and beach experiences are veritable means of fantasy to the Gen Zs who are massive in population, surpassing 57 per cent of the population, according to Amuge (2022). The filmmaker needs this population for the mercantilist essence. The tastes and consumption patterns of Gen Zs are, therefore, highly invaluable to the filmmaker in order to be popular and attain huge sales. This may not be the case if the film were about the rustic cultures of the village youth.

Another source of aesthetics in the city film genre in Nigeria is the foolishness of the rustics in the city. That is how the subalterns behave in the city where they serve as gatekeepers, gardeners, cooks, or drivers. Their attributes, such as low reasoning, city life ignorance, rivalry among them, mode of dressing, and lifestyle, are sources of laughter to the viewers. The scenes of the subalterns are strategically inserted into city films as interludes or comic relief to amuse the viewers. The rustic attributes of the subalterns in the city, locally or overseas, are intended to be flavors to the core motifs of Nigerian city films. This is illustrated in the city film *Osuofia in London* by Nkem Owoh. In this film, the artistic representation of the foolishness of the rustic subaltern is the major creative attraction. All centres on Mazi Osuofia, who lives in the village but whose brother invites him to London. The potential travel is a breakthrough because in Africa, travelling to the West is seen as a breakthrough, and this is why the rates at which young Nigerians embark on travels overseas are indeed alarming Akpomedaye (2021). Such forced travels embarked upon by the youth are known as *ja pa* in Nigerian local parlance. Okunade and Awosusi (2023) say that in recent times, *ja pa* describes the alarming frenzy for over-migration by the Nigerian youth. They opine further that *japa* is a new coinage for describing the over-migration trend of Nigerians to Europe or the West in general. This point of Osuofia's travels to London is where the artistry for aesthetic intent begins in the film. The dressing for the journey is a combination of an old ash-coloured suit, a traditional African cap, and the hems of the trousers are tucked into the socks. Arriving in London, while in a Limousine car, he put his big bag beside him on the back seat. He

sits spreading his whole body across the seat as a mark of maximising enjoyment. He also utters the following on his arrival at Heathrow Airport:

Wow, a European coming to pick me at the airport. Brilliant. Please,
leave my bag alone. I will follow you. ... Limousne? So, this is my
brother's car. Don't rush me. What God created this beast of a car?
It has got mirror in it!

These comments are expressions of rustic ignorance and innocence that culminated in foolery, as seen in Osuaofia's placing a heavy bag on a limousine seat, his waving at passers-by from a moving car, and his resting his legs on the car's compartments. These acts are to regale the civilised elite, and this is an aesthetic essence and function. This genre of film act is not targeted at the village audience in that the acts become aesthetic when they are interpreted by the elite class. There are hardly any ways by which the uneducated population would be able to interpret the act as odd because they too are likely not aware of elite culture which makes the attributes of Osuaofia odd. Therefore, it is in the context of city culture that the attributes become aesthetic.

Another attribute of the subaltern aesthetics is name-dropping. This takes the form of the subaltern jester identifying with the gentrified social class for social relevance. This is a common practice in the Yoruba wing of Nollywood and is illustrated in Baba Suwe's comic artistry. To illustrate this, the film *Larinloodu2* is cited. In the film, Baba, who is on a vendetta visit to his former landlord, vituperates as a kickback at his former landlord, engaging in name-dropping to validate his newfound opulence. He does so thus:

You need to see the calibre of people who graced my party.
Minister came. Tinubu came. Lam was present. Governors of
Ondo and Ekiti State were also present... I did not know before
that Tinubu is such an amiable person. Even Lam was well-
behaved. All of them were present, and I served them.

This excerpt is dense with copious political name-dropping, and this is strategic, aesthetically. These include the jester's status symbols, identification with the political party and the personality in power, and cultural balance. The personalities alluded to in the excerpt are the current governor at the time, and political figures have cronies and ardent followers. There is a tendency that these followers are pleased and are positively disposed to the film. This is a result of the hero-worshipping of their benefactor. In Nigeria, political allegiance is profound and total because of

the political gains the followers aspire to get from their godfathers, whose influence is absolute. Thompson (2020) has corroborated the absoluteness of political godfathers in the assertion that:

He belongs to a mafia that superintends over who gets what, when and how in the chess game of politics. So powerful is he that he can pick up a politically embryonic individual from nowhere and shore up his political capital in the twinkling of an eye in the estimation of the voting public.

In this vein, Baba Suwe's reference to the Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo and so on is for the excitement of the indigenes of these Southwestern Nigerian states among the Yoruba, who are competitively proud of their subcultures. Such name-dropping of the symbolic figures from each of these states, which are subcultures in the Yoruba nation, is for cultural aesthetics for the regaling of the cultural imagination of the people.

In addition to these socially mediated tools of aesthetic regaling in the city context discussed so far, another social aesthetic strategy in the modern city Nigerian film subgenre is the portrayal of the lifestyles of people engaged in certain social maladies. The focus for illustration is on cubing behaviours among Nigerians and the Yahoo Yahoo culture among Nigerian youth. Indeed, clubbing is a global phenomenon as a means of relaxation, but the way it is practised in Nigeria is peculiar. The hallmark of clubbing in Nigeria includes popping the champagne, high consumption of expensive alcohol, lewdness, and excessive spending of currencies. Also, the *Yahoo Yahoo* culture is particularly among the male Nigerian youth, which manifests in cyber fraud, and this has yielded so much too so many male youth and adults in Nigeria. One of these is Ramon Olorunwa Rasak, also known as *Hushpuppi* according to the United States Attorney's Office (2022). These two social maladies are perpetrated by a huge population in Nigeria. Willie-Nwobu (2024) describes the huge population of perpetrators of *Yahoo Yahoo* social malady and crime as the army of *Hushpuppi*'s acolytes who disdain hard work but have a voracious appetite for expensive lifestyles.

As a result of this, filmmakers target such a huge population for their sales. This is why filmmakers represent the attributes of such culture, and such representations are a source of excitement for, validation of and identification with the huge population. This is illustrated in two cardinal films, one for each of the two social maladies so identified earlier. The first film to be considered is *Yahoo Boy* by Anaele Dominic Ugochukwu. This film exhibits the lifestyle of typical Nigerian

boys engaged in internet fraud. The opening scene is a vivid representation of the expensive and fun-driven life of the typical Yahoo boys in Nigeria, and because of this, the first scene is strategically positioned as the first scene for the potentially striking effects it would have on the population of the orientation showcased in the scene. In this scene, there is an explicit display of profligacy and debauchery. Huge amounts of cash are thrown into the air. New currency notes are sprayed onto topless girls. This happens as the girls wiggle their buttocks to the lewd songs in the background. There is also a display of many bottles of expensive alcoholic drinks, and heavy smoke of substances such as, in local parlance, Loud, Ice, and so on. This is as the puffing of smoke and the wiggling catch up with the frenetic background music, which reads “party all night long, we will party all night long.” This type of lifestyle is the dream of the population bloc of this orientation, and portraying this lifestyle as vividly as this evokes excitement in such people. Such a vivid representation also convinces the general viewers of the originality of the film. In both ways, the viewers' attention is captured, with consequential effects of fantasy and regaling across the different classes of viewers, respectively.

The Olosho tradition is the female social malady perpetrated by young Nigerian girls. It takes the form of the potent commercialisation of sexual escapades in exchange for money and a fast, fun-filled life. This is characterised by several traits. These include a huge, sensational Social Media presence where their body features are flaunted for randy patronage. They engage in excessive consumption of alcohol and substances as part of nightlife. They designate themselves and are referred to by the public as “baddies”. However, concerns have been raised about the population and activities of the “baddies”. For example, Itodo (2024) reports that Nollywood actress and prolific film producer Funke Akindele has voiced her concerns about the ‘baddies’ trend prevalent among ladies on social media in modern Nigeria. He discloses that the record-breaking producer expressed she’s worried about the “baddies” because she feels that Nigerian ladies have to be more than the practice of flaunting body features and endowments, as well as the luxurious lifestyles of the baddies on social media. Itodo states that Akindele disclosed her displeasure with the daddies' activities while she was speaking in a recent TV interview with Arise TV. This *Olosho* social malady is rife in the major cities in Nigeria, but it is essentially prevalent in Lagos, the Southwest region. It is a social malady that many young Nigerian girls engage in as a profession (Essien et al, 2022). It is a demographic bloc which constitutes a viable clientele for the filmmakers. This explains why a scene which vividly depicts the typical messiness of the life of *Olosho* girls is made

the first scene in Temidayo Babatunde's film *Olosho Five Million*. It should first be asserted that Yahoo Boys and *Olosho* girls are in sync. They patronise each other as it is a question of lazy fun-loving girls (*Olosho Girls*) preferring spenders of free money (Yahoo Boys) to hard-working men. This monetary gratification is seen in the title of the film itself, and the film is so titled as a source of excitement and attraction. The combination of these two demographic blocs is a huge market for the Nigerian filmmakers. This is why their culture is aptly captured in scene one, which is a night club engulfed in wild life reflecting randy behaviours, wild drinking, frenetic erotic dances, topless dressing, as well as heavy smoking. All of these usually culminate in sexual patronage. This is the case with Kolade (male) and Anjola (female) in this film. Both meet each other at the club described. They end up together in Kolade's home. Though the filmmaker attempts to preach morality in the film, such is overshadowed by the strategic promotion of debauchery in the film, which is undertaken for striking impact on the population of this culture and orientation.

Criticism

This practice by Nigerian filmmakers of strategically portraying negative culture at the beginning of films has always resulted in adverse social implications. This is because, oftentimes, the excitement generated as the outcome of the deployed aesthetic resources override the rectitude that the filmmaker may want to advance in the subsequent scenes of the film. In fact, the proliferation of the *Yahoo* culture and the *Olosho* practices could be, in part, attributable to the digital presentation of these reverse cultures.

Peculiar Semantics as Aesthetic Resources in Nigerian City Films

Another notable tool of aesthetic in contemporary Nigerian city film is peculiar word choices. This is in the context of the exhibition of the deployment of coinages, jargons, argots and phraseologies. Such an exhibition is identification with the demographic blocs that use such peculiar semantics. This is as popular among the vibrant Nigerian population in the city, where there is a higher manifestation of wealth and economic power to spend freely. There is a huge reflection of many Nigerian social groups through their peculiar words or slogan in contemporary Nigerian city films. This is a way of eliciting the fantasy and imagination of these groups. It is underscored that the choice of words of Gen Z varies from one social experience and engagements to another. The first social groups in Nigeria whose word choices are examined as aesthetically represented in Nigerian city films is Uche B and Onwuka's *The Gen Z Wife*. In the city film, the viewer learns about the

marriage realities of two Nigerian Gen Zs. The peculiar words include Amanda's "wifey me" in "Maybe one day, when you are ready to wifey me". Amanda also refers to her hubby/boyfriend as "babe" and "baby". She also vituperates in the common language and terminologies of Nigerian Gen Zs, thus "It is not your fault. I am tired. What is it? Why are you screaming? Don't stress my life, abeg." Amanda uses these linguistic items in different situation and to achieve divergent purposes in the film. "wifey me" is considered a funky lexical substitute for "marry me". Nigerian Gen Zs, male especially female's use "babe" to refer to their lover rather than the conventional sweet-nothing such as "honey" or "sweetheart". Amanda's vituperation above comes when hubby complains that the house is too dirty as domestic item are scattered all over the place. Each of the lines in the vituperation signifies Nigerian female Gen Zs' sense of superiority to hubbies and that their beauties are inestimable. The non-readiness of the female Gen Zs to perform domestic duties which include cleaning and cooking is visible in the vituperation. There is also the intent to frustrate her boyfriend referring to the complaint as "screaming", and the word *abeg* is marker of emphasis for the intention of insult evocation. These words and expressions are peculiar to the Nigerian Gen Zs. The goal of this description is not to judge the Gen Zs in Nigeria as to the correctness or rightness of their behavior or orientation. Rather the goal is a mimetic reflection on the language of this social group. As it is, these words and the attitudes they reflect are likely to satisfy the yearning and expectations of the Gen Zs in modern Nigeria. This attracts and wins them over because the new-found attitude of the Gen Zs in Nigeria is a social ideology, a movement of a sort. Therefore, when they witness such philosophies being showcased, such may be interpreted as belief in or identifying with the social group and their ideology.

Another social group in Nigeria whose peculiar register shall be considered in this study is the Street Boys and Girls. Street boys and girls are the very young Nigerians who are usually not gainfully employed and whose activities are characterised by group rivalry, tension, conflict, and clashes, as well as street Lordship and heroism. As a result of this, their linguistic choices are expletives, curses, and coined panegyrics. This is because they need tools to weaken and override their street rivals and to indicate that they are tough men or women. Street boys and girls' groups emerge on the streets and in neighbourhoods. Street boys and girls, popularly known as Area Boys and Area Girls, constitute a huge population in Nigeria today. Olugbile (2024) has noted that the population of area boys and girls has grown. Statistics indicates an increasing percentage of street boys, comparable to the *almajiri* population in the North, and this group is made up of young

people especially in Southern Nigeria. Though area boys are alleged to constitute a menace in society, irrespective of this claim, this study focuses on the language of this social bloc. Such language use is the slogan of the circle, known as *Lambda*, which is the term used to designate the language of false personality, hero-worshipping, rated identity, fantasy of life, and deceit. This is to make the user more than they really are. Owing significantly to the huge population of Area Boys, filmmakers see their subculture as a huge market. Many Nigerian films have reflected this consciousness, but illustrations shall be drawn from Adunni Ade's *Osanle Omo Ghetto*. The film opens with commotion from the fisticuffs between rival Area Boys and Area Girls wielding weapons. After the arrival of the police has doused tensions, the viewer hears the *Osanle* Group saying:

Me, *Osanle* 1! Whoever underrates me shall be burnt even before the soup is cooked ... I feel you ... You are honored. Mosquito, as I am looking at you and Defense Minister, you put my mind at ease. You are too much. No one dares to dare you.... You are our mother. ... Say Mama, I am with you, 24/7. I am available for you. I will run errands for you beyond expectations... My Mother, Defense Minister is telling you that no one will near you in this area. If they bring war, don't worry, go and sleep, always strong and ready.

A critical scrutiny of the word choices and phraseologies of this excerpt indicates that there is a huge hero-worshipping which presents *Osanle*, the group leader, as larger than his/her worth. Each of the followers is also presented as a supper being. It needs to be stated that these words make sense only when they are uttered in a given atmosphere. The atmosphere is constituted by the presence at their coven (known, in local parlance, as *asabete*). They also raise both their hands, stump their feet, smoking substances, and drink alcohol. These attributes are exciting to many young Nigerian street dwellers, with modifications from region to region. The filmmaker's resolve to make a film on the Area Boys and Area Girls is an act of identification with the class of people especially the culture, which is underscored as the film begins with a street war. A group of people are proud of this attribute and is the target of the filmmaker for tremendous sales.

A Criticism of the Social Characteristics as Aesthetic Strategies in Contemporary City Films

It is critical to assert at this juncture of the study that the resources of aesthetics identified so far are facilitators of psychic and sensory fantasy in the consumption of city films in Nigeria. Indeed, they are efficient in entertaining either a segment of the population or the Nigerian people at large. They excite. They lull. They evoke emotions. They lure viewers into streaks of sensory euphoria and psychic hysteria, culminating in emotional satisfaction. To this end, one may argue that these aesthetic strategies are effective in contemporary Nigerian city films. However, this efficiency is only in the context of the filmmakers' mercantilist goal. This argues that the adoption of these social and artistic tools for epicurean purposes is detrimental to the sanctity of Nigerian society. It should be asserted that the aesthetic analysis throughout this study has inimical consequences on the areas of Nigerian society concerned. For example, the aesthetic tools in the Western context in Nigeria, as earlier analysed, do not benefit the Nigerian society in terms of the indigenisation of the Nigerian local culture for externalisation, which, if achieved, will lead to the home-grown progress of the nation. This is in the context that Nigerian cultural resources will continue to be jettisoned. Yet, culture remains a vital means through which the country can develop (Erhun, 2015; Akanle, 2012; Ningi, 2018).

In addition to this, the glamorization of Western features and development matrices in Nigerian city films widens the gap between city dwellers and city centres. Such a wide gulf will result in continued obscurity of Nigerian cultural society. Also, the attitudes of Gen Zs are counter-cultural and rebellious (Schrager, 2022). Similarly, the *Lambda* (expletives of deceit) of Street Boys and Girls is a glamorization of hooliganism, and it is capable of distorting the natural sensibility of the vibrant population who are the youth. This is dangerous for the sustainability of Nigeria's future. To the extent that they are true, so also is the promotion of other segments of Nigeria being showcased through the promotion of their subcultures. Such is capable of worsening the state of delinquency in the country. The attention that the filmmakers are paying to the *Yahoo tradition* and the *Olosho practice* glamourises the social maladies. The social aesthetics as adopted by the Nigerian filmmakers is a promotion of vengeance and vendetta. All these potential vices are being jettisoned by the filmmaking practitioners and sacrificed for the pecuniary intention and gain of the filmmakers.

In Conclusion

The social behaviours and semantics are creative resources that have been utilised by contemporary city filmmakers in Nigeria. This is for aesthetic attraction and fantasy to sustain the loyal patronage of different social groups as a reflection of the principles of the Functionalist Theory in the discourse. Such patronage is beneficial to film practitioners in terms of financial rewards. However, these strategies that the Nigerian filmmakers have adopted could be described as injurious to the social good. In itself, drawing on the social context as a resource for aesthetic purposes is not a vile practice. However, the selection of the kind of social ramifications to draw from is the main hindrance. The areas selected from for aesthetic intention are the social negatives. For example, many Africans still believe that Westernisation is cultural infiltration which should be resisted because they are of the view that Westernisation would continue to dwarf local cultures (Clifford, 2018). This paper holds that this perspective, as held by some Africans such as university academics, government institutions as well as the monarchical institutions, is a denial of the mimetic realities. This is because Western features are palpable on the continent, especially in Nigeria. Also, many Africans especially Nigerians rush to Western embassies for visas to relocate to the West. This contradiction is the order of the day in Nigeria at the moment. Other areas glamourised in the Nigerian city films include the *Yahoo* practice, the *Olosho* menace, the Street Boys and Girls strife and so on, which constitute social dangers and unrest. To the extent that glamourising them, which is identification or endorsement, is a license for social recklessness. Another disservice of the filmmakers' social aesthetic strategies is the relegation of the rural community, thereby widening the economic gap between the city and rural areas in Nigeria. However, the filmmakers may be absorbed by this indictment. This is on the basis that their activities are business-oriented. This requires that they adopt whatever non-criminal strategies would make them attract their clients for the consumption of their products. This will keep them afloat in business after all the current Nigerian economy is so weak, harsh and debilitating (Dike, 2014; Adesina, 2012). The exploitation of the social characteristics of a social group who are considered a menace is a moral question. This indeed justifies the professional aesthetic strategies of the Nigerian filmmakers of the city film genre.

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