

Matheson. S., Okpadah. S. and Raj. P. (eds.)(2020). Locating Transnational Spaces: Culture, Theatre, and Cinema. Canada: The International Association of Theatre Critics and Faculty of the Arts, Business and Science, University College of the North. 246 pages. ISBN: 978-978-56857-7-0-X

Blessing Adjeketa³⁰

Abstract

Book review of Matheson. S., Okpadah. S. and Raj. P. (eds.) (2020). *Locating Transnational Spaces: Culture, Theatre, and Cinema*, pp. 246, Book published in English. Transnationalism as an emerging field of study is covered widely in this book in the areas of literature, linguistics and performance space.

Keywords

Transnational, Culture, Cinema, Theatre, Culture, Africa, Film, Intercultural

First submission: 18th August 2021; First Revised: 4th September 2021, Second Revised: 8rd October, Accepted: November 2021

³⁰ Blessing Adjeketa, PhD. Department of Theatre Arts, Niger Delta University, Amasoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. blessing.adjeketa@gmail.com

Sue Matheson is an Associate Professor at the University College of the North, Canada. She teaches in the areas of American Film and popular culture, Canadian literature, and Children's literature. Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah is a PhD student in Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. He is a Senior Research Fellow, Theatre Emissary International, Nigeria. Prayer Elmo Raj is an Assistant Professor of English, PG & Research Department of English, Pachaiyappa's College, Chennai-30.

Several books on transnationalism exist. Some include *Transnationalism and Society: An Introduction* by Michael C. Howard, *Growing Up Transnational: Identity and Kinship in a Global Era* edited by May Friedman and Silvia Schultersmandl, and *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* by Paul Jay. *Locating Transnational Spaces: Theatre and Cinema* is one among the best books in transnational studies and it forms the subject of this short review. *Locating Transnational Spaces: Culture, Theatre, and Cinema* is published in honour of a theatre scholar, Emmanuel Samu Dandaura. He is a professor of Nigerian theatre whose works include *Drumbeats of Death and Other Plays* (2009) and *Venom for Venom* (2010). He has worked across the borders of Nigeria and Africa. The book has contributors that cut across Africa, Asia, and Europe. Most of the contributors are professors, associate professors, and Ph.D. holders in the humanities. The book typically explains and expands the borders of transnational studies in the humanities. It discusses several scopes of transnationalism in the universes of different cultures, social, theatrical, and cinema.

The index feature of the book gives its readers overview of basic words and terms that are discussed in the book. The book has 21 chapters which are divided into three sections. The first section discusses theatre, literature, and cinema in transnational spaces. The second section talks about globalization and transnational spaces. The last section focuses on the dramaturgy and politics of Samu Dandaura. Further, the book introduces its readers to the background of transnational spaces disability, identity, freedom, migration, environmental concerns, and sexuality which dislocate and transcend the border of a nation. It also presents issues concerning race as listed above to create spaces for global interaction.

Another aspect of the book is its presentation of issues in Nollywood. Nollywood as an industry is divided into several groups. The groups include films produced in the English language, those produced in the Igbo language, the popular Kannywood films produced in the Hausa language, the Urhobowood films located in Delta State, and also films produced in the Yoruba language which are more popular especially in the western part of the country. All these groups combined make up what is popularly known around the world as Nollywood. Nollywood audiences are spread all over the world. Nevertheless, to meet up the demands of its audience, the industry engages in the use of subtitles. However, there are notable faults in the structure of the subtitled text especially in films produced in local Nigerian languages. The presentation of the texts sometimes results in misleading expressions, leading to negative impressions about the films. Due to their poorly executed and misleading subtitles, some of the movie's great stories, the effort of great actors, sophisticated equipment used in the production of the films are no doubt rendered useless to the viewers. Despite the challenges that come with subtitles, the industry needs to engage people who are proficient in the host language and the English language particularly in the arena of syntax and semantics to concisely march the structure of the source language to the target language without impeding intended meaning of the film maker. On cultural presentation especially in Nollywood films, the book recommends that scriptwriters, directors, and producers should engage in proper research before writing and producing films. Since film plays a major role in the preservation and documentation of African cultural heritage, care must be taken in handling ideas as these films are watched by audiences across the world.

Another area the book x-rayed is issues affecting women. The increase in the rate of sexual harassment and sexual assault against women at the workplace and students in higher education institutions transcends national borders. It is a deep-seated issue eating deep into the fabrics of the world. The book presents the issues of exploitation of the female gender in Africa and Nigerian in particular. It mentions laws that have been put in place to curtail the rise in the culture of rape and sexual exploitation. Three articles from the Maputo protocol; article 2; elimination of discrimination against women; article 3; right to dignity; and article 5; elimination of harmful practices is examined. These protocols focus on different aspects of women's life to fight for their rights. Specifically, these articles of the protocol address socio-economic, cultural, and political issues and how they affect women on the continent. In recent years, film makers have lent voice to tackle the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The MeToo movement that began in October 2017 serves as a hashtag on social media attempts to demonstrate the widespread prevalence of sexual assault and harassment of women, especially in the workplace. Chineze Anyaene's film, *Ije: The Journey*, is presented in the book as one artistic endeavour in the campaign against injustice against women. The film earned many awards locally and internationally because it is the first transnational Nollywood film that almost completely captures the dilemma of the African woman at home and abroad. With the analysis of *Ije: The Journey*, the reader is reminded of his/her responsibility, to women and humanity at large.

Beside presenting issues pertaining to women, the book also talks about women who are at the forefront of presenting transnational issues. The book introduces a work of a prominent Nollywood film writer, actress, director, and filmmaker Genevieve Nnaji and her 2018 "directorial debut" African story film, *Lionheart*. *Lionheart* is one of the many African films that authentically present the Nigerian experience to the world. A film, that reminds its audience of the need to overcome the aforementioned social and political barriers. The film's ability to combine different languages to speak to its audience and give them relevant life lessons is applauded. *Lionheart* insists that change remains Nigeria's greatest challenge today and proposes that Nigerians' greatest strength lies in their cohesive and globally-minded multiculturalism. In short, merger remains the foundation of the Nigerian experience today.

Some of the literary works of Wole Soyinka, a Nigerian playwright, novelist, poet, and essayist focus on African cultural and religious violation by the corporeal and abstract presence of the colonialist. The book presents one of Soyinka's plays on the subject. *Issues in The Loin* and *The Jewel* focuses on such cultural and religious violations of the African community leading to the host community's loss of identity. *Transnational Spaces* presents *The Lion and The Jewel* as one of the many dramatic works of Soyinka that help in the understanding of postcolonial African identity. It mentions that most of Soyinka's characters are images of postcolonial cultural identities. Moreover, in the process of reading *The Lion and The Jewel*, we can see the definition and nature of the African worldview. With the discussion of the play text, the book presents Soyinka's definition of African postcolonial identity that is situated in constant questioning of orthodox conceptions of identity. It also relates some of the negative conditions Africans suffered from the hegemonic power of the colonialists.

One focus in feminist scholarship in recent years is on the issues of marriage. The reason is that many women are subjugated and subjected to different forms of marital abuse. In Africa for example, the book mentioned that every typical African woman is expected to wake up early and sleep late. In other words, the role of the African woman in the marriage setup is to live for the man, and for feminist scholars, this is the agony that women go through in marriage. Because of this anguish, feminists, especially scholars of feminism, have continued to look for ways to redefine and reconstruct existing traditions of marriage. The book explains that the situation some women, especially the educated women, find themselves in has made them either seek

divorce or depend on the divine for a solution to their marriage. Others have resulted in meeting different marriage counsellors who educate them on what marriage entails to know how to tackle issues of marital discord. Transnational Spaces however stated that, with the popularization of western civilization, women are no longer relegated to the background. They are gradually breaking off from the shackles of patriarchy.

Nigeria is blessed with plenty of mineral resources, and it has a conducive environment that supports life. However, it has one major setback: bad leadership. Most of the leaders (the traditional rulers, youth leaders, ward councillors, local government chairmen, state house of assembly members, governors, federal house of representative members, and the presidency itself) are all unwilling and unable to stand up to their responsibilities. Because the country has not yet awakened from its slumber of corruption, banditry, and kidnapping, playwrights and filmmakers across the country have been writing and producing plays and film stories dealing with these themes and proposing solutions. The play, *Venom for Venom* written by Emmanuel Dandaura is one of the many plays that present an exact Nigerian situation. The country is filled with revolts, ethnic terrorism, kidnappings, bribery, and unemployment, especially in relation to the people of the Niger Delta region of the country. It portrays leaders who do not care about the hardship and dangers faced by their subjects. Leaders who have lost the integrity and respect of the people because of their corruption. Youth leaders who were trying to lead their land and protect their interests have become oppressors themselves. Companies that bribe community heads and youth leaders to cover up unhealthy behaviour instead of fulfilling their cooperative social responsibilities. Instead of taking into account the health hazard posed to the people of the host communities by their activities, oil companies pay royalties to community executives while land and water become unaffordable to the poor. The activities of the companies have degraded the environment. Oil spillages have led to soil and water pollution resulting in reducing crop production and killing aquatic animals. Given the fact that agriculture and fishing are the major occupations of the people of the Niger Delta, they are facing unexpected hardship and hunger. They can no longer farm the land or fish in the rivers to provide food for their families. In other not to die in silence, youths in particular, decided to protest and take up arms to fight for a better life for themselves, their parents, their children, and future generations. However, such struggles are most often hijacked and deviated from by other groups with different ideologies to satisfy their egos and greed. Such youths who vow to fight for impartiality and fairness in the land, however, end up becoming vandals and criminals who kidnap company workers and their families or extort money from the companies. Because violence does not always yield a positive result in a fight against superior authorities, the play *Venom for Venom* suggests a constructive approach of peaceful dialogue to resolve disputes.

While this book is not the first work on transnational discussions, its strength lies in the fact that it discusses interculturality, transculturality, and multiculturalism through the lens of the creative industry-theatre, literature, and cinema. The reviewer expects more of this kind of book soon on the shelf of humanity. The presentation of cross-cultural ideas in the book is unique. We simply cannot completely discuss the themes in the book. We recommend the book to everyone, especially scholars in the humanities because the critical essays contained in the book are insightful. They shed light on the transnational dimensions in various cultural, social, theatrical and cinematic spaces.