

Nollywood and Its Others: Questioning English Language Hegemony in Nollywood Studies

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Abstract:

The current trend in Nollywood Studies is to focus on the way video films are being made and consumed around the world, a focus that parallels the name “Nollywood,” which, as Jonathan Haynes and Alessandro Jedlowski point out, references the film industries of Hollywood and Bollywood (Haynes, “Nollywood” 106; Jedlowski, “Videos” 11). While such studies are important in understanding the global impact of Nigeria’s film industry, a focus on migration, diaspora, and transnationalism of largely English-language films often overshadows those being made in Nigerian languages. Ironically, according to 2011 National Film and Video Censor’s Board statistics, Nigerian-language films are currently about 75% of the productions being made in Nigeria (Bala, “2011” 18). While research is being done on Nigerian-language films, the theorizing about Nollywood most found often at international conferences and in international publications is most often of English-language productions. This is problematic for several reasons: 1) It ignores the majority of the films being made and consumed in Nigeria, as well as the local discourses surrounding them; 2) It overlooks the full history of the video film in Nigeria, as well as nuances and variations in the style and culture of Nigerian-language film industries; 3) It risks missing the way that Nigerian-language films are also crossing borders and appealing to transnational audiences. Such oversight creates gaping holes in the research used to theorize the video phenomenon in Nigeria. The first part of my paper examines English-language hegemony in representations of Nollywood, and the second part demonstrates why the study of Nigerian-language films is important in theorizing Nollywood. While I touch on multiple

Nigerian-language industries, the bulk of my examples and analysis come from Hausa language industry, which I have been studying since 2005.

What the name “Nollywood” conceals

The first documented use of the term “Nollywood” for the Nigerian film industry is the September 2002 *New York Times* article “Step Aside, Los Angeles and Bombay, for Nollywood” by journalist Norimitsu Onishi (Jedlowski, “Videos” 17). Though the term has long been contested by those who resent the cultural imperialism evident in naming a Nigerian product after Hollywood, it has come to be widely accepted by the media, scholars, the Nigerian government, and a certain segment of the film industry who celebrate the industry precisely for the connection to the wider world its name implies. Jonathan Haynes argues that though the name is problematic, it is “here to stay because the term is irresistible to journalists and, more importantly, because it neatly expresses powerful aspirations by people in the video film industry and by their fans to have a big, glamorous entertainment industry that can take its place on the world scene and appeal to international audiences” (“Nollywood” 106).

The popularity of the terminology, notwithstanding, the focus on international reception, which the term Nollywood implies, often ends up homogenizing the internal variety of the film industry. As Haynes notes,

Names conceal as well as reveal, and ‘Nollywood’ covers up the diversity of the Nigerian video film production in the same way that ‘Bollywood’ covers up the production of Indian films in Tamil, Bengali, Telegu and other languages besides Hindi in other parts of that huge country. In Ghana and other places that have

been flooded by ‘Nollywood’ films, people have no idea that Nigerians make films in Yoruba and Hausa and Igbo as well as in English. (106)

The homogenizing language of “Nollywood” seems to have affected, or at least paralleled, how the Nigerian film industry is presented in the international media and is studied by scholars. Alessandro Jedlowski points out that “the introduction of the term Nollywood [...] reified the basic features of the video production, creating a ‘catchy’ brand” (“Videos” 95-96), which filmmakers saw as useful in marketing the films abroad and the Nigerian government saw as useful in “rebranding” its image. Jedlowski observes that, not long after the time the term “Nollywood” was introduced, a number of international film festivals and documentaries began to feature the video film industry (96-97). The naming, the film festivals, the documentaries, and reports like that by UNESCO that has pointed to Nigeria as having the second largest film industry in the world (UNESCO 3), helped project the image of Nollywood as an alternative large glamorous industry that rivaled other global film industries like Hollywood and Bollywood. Yet these documentaries and film festivals also often ended up presenting stereotypes about the industry that, like the term Nollywood itself, homogenized the internal diversity and rapidly changing modes of production (See Jedlowski, “Videos” 114-136).

Akin Adesokan points out that the “excessively mediated” presentation of a global Nollywood has the effect of “isolating the English-language-accented, [...] variety which relies on familiar generic conventions [...] as the default Nollywood film” (“Anticipating” 99). Although Hausa and Yoruba films have been made on video from the 1980s (Ali 30; Adesokan, “Alade”) and the 1992 film *Living in Bondage*, often celebrated as launching the video distribution phenomenon, was made in Igbo, popular perceptions seem to be that Nollywood quickly became and is mostly an English-language industry. This perception likely developed

because of the international popularity of the English-language films and their stars. As Jedlowski notes, English-language films were the ones that travelled the furthest and were most popular abroad (“Videos” 16). Indeed, he recounts that following a piracy-induced production crisis, by 2010, some Lagos filmmakers told him that the diaspora was now their primary market (77). It was the popularity of the diaspora market, alongside struggles with VCD piracy that gave rise to premiers in cosmopolitan multiplex cinemas. Popular filmmaker Emem Isong, for example, told Jedlowski that she premiers her films first in America before bringing them back to the African continent (77). The second coming of cinema furthered perceptions that Nigerian filmmakers were beginning to use a mode of production more acceptable in the West.

In a 2011 article, “The Myth of Nollywood and the Rise of Nigerian Cinema,” L.A.-based film consultant Rob Aft celebrates the “growing number of high quality films” and how “Nigerians are filling cinemas at \$6-10 a ticket to watch home-grown films.” He simultaneously denigrates “Nigeria’s direct-to-video industry.” Citing the crisis in video film production, he argues that it is “ridiculous” to cite the UNESCO figures often used to celebrate Nollywood and asserts that his “sources in Nigeria” had told him that video production was “in steep decline” in Nigeria. This, however, is an overly dramatic assessment. While the UNESCO figures are problematic, as Jedlowski points out,¹ and while English-language films were indeed in decline, there were as many videos being produced in 2010 (Bala 12) as there were in 2005 when UNESCO did its research (UNESCO 2)—it is just that most of the films made in 2010 were in Nigerian languages, which are often invisible to the international media.²

Nigerian National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) statistics indicate that Nigerian-language films comprised around 61% of the films turned into the board between 1994 and 2001, while English films were around 39% (Abua 166). Between 2002 and 2003, Nigerian-

language films were approximately 54.5% and English-language films about 45.5% of films approved by the board (Gana, Vol. II 174). There seems to have been a peak of English-language films in 2004 at around 66.4%, compared to 33.3% in Nigerian languages. The numbers of English-language films started going down again in 2005, with Nigerian-language films again at around 53.5% (Gana, Vol. III 275), and around 58% in 2006 (Oni 18), to finally around 88% in 2010 (Bala 12).³ The 2010 report from the NFVCB Verification Unit shows that 1,612 Nigerian films were submitted to the board in 2010, although only 1,114 were approved. Of these 1,114 films approved for release in 2010 only 133 (around 12%) were in English, while 582 (around 55%) were in Yoruba, 349 (around 29%) were in Hausa, and 44 (3.5%) were in Bini. Five Igbo films and one Efik film were also approved (Bala 12). By 2011, English films had risen to 279, around 25% of the films approved by the board, but they were still a minority compared to Nigerian-language films. In 2011, 434 Yoruba films at around 39% and 327 Hausa films at around 29% were approved. Bini films, with 73 accepted, had grown to around 6.5%. 4 Igbo films and 6 “others” were also reported. The statistics for 2010 and 2011 did not include films in Ebira, Esan, Etsako, Fulfulde, Gbagyi, Ibibio, Idoma, Igala, Itsekiri, Isoko, Nupe, Tiv, and Urhobo that I’ve heard elsewhere are being made (see Bala 15; Bello “Music”; McCain “In Conversation”; Abua 166; Gana, Vol. II 174; Gana, Vol. III 272-275; Adam 18, and so on). Ironically, as we can see from these numbers, flawed as they are, the majority of the films being made in the country, which are often used to boost the fame of the English-language “Nollywood,” are actually in Nigerian languages. Similarly, although the advent of cinema release in Nigeria is much celebrated, the 2011 NFVCB “Film Censorship and Classification” report shows that 1,743 local movies were submitted and 1,123 approved for video release (17), while only twelve local films were submitted and approved for cinema release (19).

Yet Aft's assumptions are understandable as even the NFVCB, despite having numbers that show the importance of indigenous-language films to the film industry, often marginalizes them in their programs and materials, while celebrating and promoting the glamour of an international English-language Nollywood. In 2011, when the NFVCB announced their cooperation with the non-profit Homevida for a "short film script competition," the assumption seemed to be that scripts would be submitted in English. Homevida confirmed this assumption when I asked them online about the language of the entries.⁴ In the March 2012 issue of the NFVCB magazine *The Classifier*, reporter Waziri Joel Amos inexplicably asks popular Nollywood actor and director Stephanie Okereke "her take" on why "over 90% of our movies are in English Language" (11). These assumptions are even repeated by some scholars. Nwanya Njideka, for example, claimed at a 2010 conference that, "Most Nigerian films are produced using English Language at the expense of vernacular" (59).

Of course, not all scholarship has reinforced these stereotypes. The historical importance of the Yoruba travelling theatre and cinema in the development of video films, their geographical proximity to English-language productions, and the more frequent co-collaborations means that Yoruba films are often invoked and analyzed alongside English-language films. And while Hausa films are frequently neglected in comparative studies,⁵ there has been a lively discourse surrounding the industry in northern Nigerian newspapers and internet forums, as well as a fair amount of scholarship done in northern universities. In 2003, Abdalla Uba Adamu, Umar Faruk Jibril, and Yusuf Adamu organized a conference *Hausa Home Videos: Technology, Economy, and Society*, out of which came a sixty-five paper proceedings written by scholars and film stakeholders alike that is the most comprehensive resource on Hausa films to date. Scholars like Abdalla Uba Adamu, Matthias Krings, and Brian Larkin have published widely on Hausa films

and often present at international Nollywood conferences. There have been at least three PhD dissertations completed on the Hausa film industry, including the work of Umma Ado Abbas, Isa Yusuf Chamo, Umma Aminu Inuwa, at least six or seven MA theses, and dozens of BA theses.

However, other than the work of Adamu, Krings, and Larkin, much of the current scholarship on Hausa films done in Nigeria discusses the films in relation to Hausa literature and culture with little attention to the wider field of studies on video films. It often remains in local departmental libraries and publications, accessible only to scholars who travel from university to university in search of materials.⁶ The research that makes it to international Nollywood-themed conferences or into international publications is only a fraction of the total work being done on video films. Much of this problem has to do with the inequalities of the global academy. Scholars based in European and American universities, including myself, often have more access to funding for research in Africa than scholars in African institutions do. The most influential books and journals about Africa are published outside the continent. As Biodun Jeyifo has pointed out, as African scholars have moved West to escape infrastructural problems in African universities, the “centre of gravity” in the field of African literary and cultural studies has shifted away from Africa. The most visible research on Africa comes to reflect the interests of the Western academy (433-439). Unfortunately, these unequal structures of power are reproduced within the Nigerian academy as well. For example, at the ten Africa-themed video film or film and media conferences I have attended since 2006, seven of which took place in Nigeria, at only one of them, which was focused regionally on Northern Nigeria, were there more than one or two papers on Hausa films. Papers on Nigerian languages are generally in the minority at these forums.⁷ In most scholarly discussions of Nollywood, Hausa films are footnoted as an “other” to Nollywood, somewhat more like Swahili films in Tanzania than Nigerian films. The problem

seems to be, as Haynes notes of the distance between African cinema scholars and Nollywood scholars (“A literature” 106), that there is little communication between “Nollywood Studies” and those in mostly Northern Nigerian universities doing research on Hausa popular culture. This lack of communication, in turn, impoverishes larger understandings of the complexity of the film industry within Nigeria.

At conferences and in publications both inside and outside of Nigeria, English-language films are usually still spoken of, as Adesokan notes, as “the default” Nigerian film (“Anticipating” 99). Many of the edited volumes and international conferences that look at video films and “Nollywood” have celebrated how the films have, in the words of John McCall, “created a Pan-African forum that makes speaking of a pan-African cinema and indeed pan-African culture possible for the first time” (96), focusing on the way the films are crossing African borders and establishing themselves in the Caribbean and the cosmopolitan centers of the global West. (See Ogunleye’s 2003 *African Video Film Today* and her 2008 *Africa through the Eye of the Video Camera*, Saul and Austen’s 2010 *Viewing African Cinema in the Twenty-First Century*, and Krings and Okome’s forthcoming *Global Nollywood*). This attention to transnational Nollywood as it has moved around Africa and the world has provided much needed attention to how technologies and techniques pioneered in West Africa are contributing to a kind of globalization from below.⁸ At the same time, this focus on migration, diaspora, and reception of English-language films often sidelines the diversity of filmmakers and audiences within Nigeria in the same way that popular discourse has. This partiality to border-crossing English-language productions is similar to the focus on cosmopolitan English-language literature in postcolonial literary studies that, scholars Karin Barber, Graham Furniss, and Joanna Sullivan point out, often ignores flourishing literary traditions in African languages (Barber “African-

language literature, Barber and Furniss “African-language Writing,” Sullivan). As Simon Gikandi has argued, perhaps, “[W]e need to rethink modes of reading and analysis that are focused so much on the familiar tropes of postcolonial theory—globalization, transgression, and hybridity—that they fail to take notice of unfamiliar, but equally powerful, local scenes of being and belonging” (639).

Clearly, although there is much important research that is being done, there needs to be a shift in the ways in which we talk about the video phenomenon to include more of the 75% of the films currently being made in Nigeria, as they relate to each other and not just as seen through a filter of English-language films. We also need to be aware of how the fashions and funding priorities of the Euro-American academy influence academic discourse on Africa’s video film industries. While, as Haynes points out, the term “Nollywood” may be here to stay, it is important to more fully interrogate the assumptions and generalizations the adoption of the term has influenced. In the rest of this article, I point to several reasons why there needs to be more focus on the particularities of and similarities between different Nigerian-language filmmaking traditions. First and most obviously, as I have demonstrated above, Nigerian-language films are the majority of the films being made in the country. A focus on English-language films ignores most of the films currently being made and consumed in Nigeria, how they characterize themselves, and the local discourses surrounding them. Second, a focus on English-language films overlooks the full history of the video film in Nigeria and Africa, as well as nuances and variations in the style and culture of indigenous-language film industries. Third, such a focus risks missing the way that Nigerian-language films are also crossing borders and appealing to transnational audiences. An attention to these “Nollywood others” should nuance how the entire field is understood, point to similarities and differences between different film

industries, and challenge clichés that are often repeated about Nigerian films. While I make reference to other language films here, my focus is on the Hausa film industry, which I have been studying since 2005 by watching films, gathering scholarly and media representations of the industry, and engaging in participant observation on film sets and editing studios.

Indigenous-language films as a money-makers

While English-language films, as Jedlowski points out, are the most well known and well circulated globally (“Local” 60), the films that recently seem to be making much of the revenue for filmmakers, in part because of piracy issues, are those made in indigenous-languages. English-language actress, scriptwriter, and director, Franca Brown remarks: “If my films get to America and other countries through video dubs or DSTV it is not good, the only way I can get feedback in terms of finance coming back to me is when people buy my films in DVD and CD[...].” (Leke 36). Although, as Jedlowski has described, cinema release is increasingly becoming an option for big-name producers (“Videos”), local films the NFVCB approved for cinema exhibition in 2011 were less than 1% of the Nigerian films approved for video release (Bala, “2011” 17-19). The relatively smaller distribution networks of local-language videos, while still vulnerable to piracy, seem to give filmmakers slightly more control over video markets than the sprawling distribution of English-language films. At the 2007 “African Film” conference in Illinois, Ghanaian filmmaker Socrate Safo said that he had started making films in Twi rather than English so as to stem piracy outside of Ghana. “If I make it in Twi and you pick it and you pirate it, there’s nowhere you’re going to sell it than to bring it back to Ghana and sell it, because Nigeria, Togo, wherever, they don’t speak Twi. And I’m also getting a larger audience than this English in my own territory, so I don’t make these films with the outside

market in mind because when I do it I lose.” He also said that he was re-shooting his English films in local languages, so as to recover his investment. Safo, here, seems more interested in maintaining his business targeted at a local audience than in reaching a wider English-language audience beyond the shores of Ghana. In a recent email, Ghanaian movie scholar Carmela Garritano told me that Safo is now making Akan films. Observing that “piracy is only part of the equation,” she points out that similar to Nigeria, part of the industry is working on high budget English-language movies for a “transnational market” but that lower-budget Akan-language movies now “dominate the market,” particularly in Kumasi where producers and marketers tell her that English language proficiency and literacy is “far lower than in the greater Accra region.”

In Nigeria, even though piracy is a serious problem for large transnational languages like Yoruba and Hausa, producer Muhammad Dahiru told me in 2010 that he had done a study that showed that the average Hausa film sold around 100,000 copies, while the average English-language film sold only about 50,000 copies. Producer Emem Isong, best known for her English-language films, told me in an email that each of her Ibibio films has sold “at least 100,000 copies, which is a huge success in the vcd market as at now.”⁹ She told me that she planned to focus on Ibibio language films “for a while until we have been able to work out our chaotic distribution system in Nigeria.”

No doubt part of the reason these films sell so well is because, as Jedlowski notes, indigenous-language filmmakers “enjoy a larger loyalty from their audiences who saw them as the only available form of entertainment in their respective languages” (“Local” 60). Director Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, like Emem Isong, is best known for his English-language films, but he has also made films in Igbo, Ibibio, and his own language of Edo, also called Bini. He told me in a phone interview that though Nigerian-language movies are more restricted in terms of global

audiences, “I have made more money with my language movies than English[...] The passion with which the people go after it is different from that of English. If it is well packaged, they are bound to get more appreciation from it.” Tiv producer John Agbaingya made a similar observation, saying, “We have discovered that those who shoot films in their local languages tend to get better earnings from the work. The sales are better.” He speculated that “people seem to be tired of the conventional English movies you find around Nollywood. They are looking for something that has a different flavor, which is our culture really portrayed in it. So, they actually look out for these movies” (McCain “In Conversation”). Although, on a global scale, English films likely sell far more than Nigerian-language films, these popular English-language films sell mostly through piracy structures that make Nollywood stars globally famous but do not bring much money back to their producers. Imasuen noted that local languages are more profitable because they are less expensive to make: “I invest, let’s say, \$8,000 to make an Edo language movie, and you spent probably about \$50,000 to make an English film. So if you [...] look at the number of sales you make, the English one may be more popular, but if you now look at the profit margin, you find out that you are making more doing a language movie than in English.” This would help explain how Tiv filmmakers, who told me they generally only print 10,000 copies per film, are able to make a living from filmmaking (McCain “In Conversation”).

The commercial importance of the audiences for Yoruba and Hausa films, in particular, is evident in the corporate decision taken in March 2010 by South African satellite television company DSTV to add to their mostly English-language “Africa magic” channel, begun in 2005, a Yoruba channel and a Hausa channel, which broadcast films across West Africa (Lasisi).¹⁰ Similarly, corporate recognition of the growing importance of celebrities from these industries is reflected in the Nigerian communication company Globacom’s inclusion of Yoruba and Hausa

stars alongside English-language stars and musicians as “Glo Ambassadors.” In fact in August 2011, Glo dropped two English language stars, Jim Iyke and Kate Henshaw, while simultaneously signing Yoruba film personalities Kunle Afolayan and Odunlade Adekola and one Hausa star Jamila Umar Nagudu (Niyi).¹¹

Reclaiming video history: the development of Indigenous-language industries

The dependence of much of the Nigerian film market on indigenous-language films, even for filmmakers like Ison and Imasuen, most known internationally for their English-language films, demonstrates why focusing comparatively on indigenous-language films is so crucial in theorizing “Nollywood.” A similar comparative focus is needed in studies of how the video phenomenon developed, the nuances and variations in the styles and cultures of the different film industries, and the interactions between those industries. While *Living in Bondage*, produced in 1992, has achieved a mythic status as the first “Nollywood film,” an assumption promoted by documentaries like Franco Sacchi’s *This is Nollywood*, journalism of the sort seen in the *Economist*, and other popular media reports, a more careful look at the entire industry complicates these claims. Popular Ghanaian video-films were being made long before *Living in Bondage*. Garritano points to Allen Gyman’s 1985 *Abyssinia* as the first Ghanaian feature made on video and William Akuffo’s 1987 *Zinabu* as the first video hit in Ghana (“Contesting” 21, 27). In Nigeria, Yoruba actor Yinka Quadri claims that *Living in Bondage* producer Kenneth Nnebue produced twenty-seven Yoruba films before the Igbo hit (Bakare). Adesokan writes that filmmaker Muyideen ‘Alade’ Aromire claimed to have made the first Yoruba video film *Ekun* in 1986, though other Yoruba filmmakers came out with videos before Aromire could exhibit *Ekun* in 1989 (“Alade”). Jonathan Haynes and Onookome Okome write that there were “short, mostly

comic” Igbo video-films being “sold, unpackaged, in Onitsha Market” before *Living in Bondage* (71). Hausa films were also being made in the early 1980s. Novelist and filmmaker Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, who started out his career in a drama group, and co-writer Bashir Mudi Yakasai claim that between 1980 and 1984, amateur drama groups like Gyaranya, Black Eagle, Dynamic Fighters, and Tumbin Giwa made around nine video films. Out of these, two videos *Hukuma Maganin ‘Yan Banza*, adapted from a Chinese film, and *Karshen Alewa*, adapted from an Indian film, were sold commercially (Gidan Dabino and Yakasai 339, Ali 30). The first successful commercial production was *Turmin Danya* in 1990 made by the Tumbin Giwa drama group, and one of the earliest hits was the 1992 *Gimbiya Fatima* (Ali 32), which according to novelist, director, and actor Bala Anas Babinlata spread on video as far as Niger and Cameroon. At the same time, Hausa producers were aware of what was happening in Yoruba cinema. Babinlata told me that Yoruba filmmaker Hubert Ogunde came to Kano around 1988 to audition Hausa actors for one of his productions. Though Babinlata was chosen in the audition, they were never called south. Jos-based producer, actor and marketer Aminu Hudu Ilyasu Almah told me that watching a Yoruba film, which he claimed featured Hausa actors, in a cinema inspired him to begin making Hausa films in the early 1990s.

Thus we see that, though fans of English-language films often protest that Hausa and Yoruba filmmakers are separating themselves out from a “mainstream” Nollywood,¹² the growth of English-language films actually came after the development of indigenous-language films made on video. This proves to be the case in terminology as well. As Adamu notes, the name “Kanywood”¹³ for the Hausa film industry was first used as the name of a column in the August 1999 issue of Hausa film magazine, *Tauraruwa*, three years before Onishi’s use of Nollywood for the entire industry in the 16 September 2002 *New York Times* (Adamu, “Transgressing”). The

history of the terminology should add more nuance to how the film industries are discussed. Hausa filmmakers have long felt marginalized from the national establishment, one of the reasons the association, Motion Pictures Practitioners of Nigeria (MOPPAN), was founded in 2000 as an umbrella group for northern filmmakers to lobby the federal government for support (A. Mohammed, personal interview).¹⁴ But while the term “Kannywood” is often seen as an antagonistic separation from Nollywood, it was more a statement of identity by geographic location. When I spoke to Sanusi Shehu Daneji, the founder and editor of the magazine, now a scriptwriter, he told me he named the Hausa industry after its centre in Kano, modeling the name on Hollywood. He thought the name caught on because the “Kanywood” column was a gossip column about the industry and was popular with readers. Despite initial complaints from Kaduna filmmakers at the Kano-centric nature of the term, the name stuck. Thus, similar to the term “Nollywood,” the name “Kannywood” was one that seemed to be first given by the popular press and adopted by audiences before eventually being adopted by filmmakers.

In many of my research interviews, I asked Hausa filmmakers how they felt about the terminology. Some like Ahmad Sarari, one time Vice President of MOPPAN and currently the northwest zonal coordinator for the NFVCB, pointed out that “N” stood for Nigeria and that “Nollywood” should be considered the umbrella under which other language industries fell (personal communication). But most of the other filmmakers, even those like Sarari who theoretically held this position, use the term Nollywood to refer to the English-language industry and see Nigerian-language industries as having distinct cultural identities. Star actor, director and producer Ali Nuhu, who acts in both Hausa and English-language films, said that he thought the two industries were separate because their crews were different. He and others pointed to the English-language industry as being wealthier and having better equipment. Pioneering filmmaker

Hamisu Lamido Iyan-Tama argued that while Nollywood referred to Nigeria, Kannywood referred to a more transnational industry of Hausa speakers across West Africa who watched the films. Daneji said that when you watched Kannywood and Nollywood films, it seemed as if they came from two different countries.

While the Hausa film industry is often stereotyped as inward-looking, Umma Aminu Inuwa points out that many of the most popular Hausa-language artists and directors are actually not ethnically Hausa. She demonstrates that Hausa films have been influenced in multiple directions by Barebari, Fulani, Igbo, Kanuri, Yoruba, and other traditions within Nigeria, as well as by Arab, Indian, European, and American cultures (“Kutsen”)—many of these connections made through trade and the ancient Kano market long before the coming of colonialism. The cosmopolitan nature of northern Nigerian cities has often been reflected in films about encounters between cultures, such as in the interethnic Muslim-Christian love stories *Tsintsiya*, *Cudanya* and *Ga Duhu Ga Haske*. Some of the most thoughtful and complex films of crosscultural encounters within Nigeria have been written by scriptwriter Nasir Gwangwazo: *Sanafahna*, in which a Kano-based Hausa businessman marries a Tuareg girl from Niger; *Sarmadan*, in which one of the star-crossed lovers is a refugee from Sudan; and *Mutallab*, in which a Hausa man comes back from studies in America with an American fiancée. Ironically, while scholars of southern videos often call Hausa films “insular,” one of the greatest concerns of northern critics is that the films are too cosmopolitan. Hausa filmmakers tend to have far more awareness of the English industry than the English industry has of them, a situation that became painfully obvious during the 2007-2011 censorship crisis in Kano when powerful English-language producers did little to assist Hausa filmmakers who were being harassed and imprisoned by the state government. While recognizing Kannywood as a distinct industry, most

of the Hausa filmmakers I spoke to during this time strategically identified themselves as “Nigerian filmmakers,” an identity that positioned them as part of the larger national film industry, who could defiantly resist Kano state authority by selling their work in the other thirty-five states of the federation (See McCain “The Second”).

Sometimes the “othering” of Hausa and indigenous-language films introduces false dichotomies and covers over the ways in which these films are similar as well. More conversations between practitioners and scholars of Nigerian-language productions may reveal more convergences than have hitherto been realized and enrich our understandings of the aesthetics of the films and motivations of the filmmakers. Adesokan’s nuanced look at how the improvisational communal acting styles of older Yoruba actors affects the aesthetics of Yoruba films (“Practicing”) is also relevant to Hausa films. Many Hausa filmmakers came into filmmaking from drama clubs (See Ali and Larkin “Hausa”), not dissimilar to the Yoruba theatre companies further south and often improvise on set. Similarly, although the Indian-style singing and dancing in Hausa films is often considered the aesthetic feature that distinguishes Hausa films from other Nigerian films, Ogundele writes that “such is the popularity of Indian films” that at least some early Yoruba videos also “borrowed their story lines, complete with romantic love, dances and songs” (99).

In Nollywood Studies, in general, as Haynes has noted, more attention to the individual directors, scriptwriters, and producers as “auteurs,” beyond a preoccupation with “home video” modes of production, might add much more nuance to the way films are discussed (“What” 13-14). This is particularly relevant in another convergence between Yoruba and Hausa films: literary adaptation. Just as there have been multiple Yoruba novels adapted to film (Adagbada), Hausa films have also been based on novels to an extent that English-language films have not

(Adamu “Between”): from early adaptations of the novels of Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, Bala Anas Babinlata, Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, and Bilkisu Funtua, to more recent adaptations of the works of Nazir Adam Salih, Maje El-Hajej Hotoro and others. In the Hausa film industry novelists like Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, Bala Anas Babinlata, Balaraba Ramat Yakubu, Nazir Adam Salih, Nasir Nid, Ibrahim Birniwa, Maje El-Hajeej and others have become producers, directors, scriptwriters, and actors. The connection between literature and film often means the films adapted from novels or scripts directed or written by novelists have more depth than what is often stereotyped as the slapped-together Nollywood film.

Such examples challenge often repeated assumptions, such as those I’ve heard at academic conferences, in the popular media, and documentaries and film festivals cited by Jedlowski (“Videos” 126), that filmmakers are just out to make fast money and care little about aesthetics and politics.¹⁵ While of course, filmmakers want to make money, as it is their livelihood, few Hausa filmmakers make vast amounts of wealth from their films.¹⁶ In fact, I know many directors, producers, and actors who do not even have cars. A large motivating factor for many of them is simply passion for the profession. At the Zaria “Nollywood and Theatre for Development” conference in 2011, scholar Ayo Akinwale, who also acts in Yoruba films, said in his presentation that though Nollywood stars often advertised making fees in the millions, Yoruba actors were rarely paid beyond N100,000 per film. Most Hausa actors make significantly less than this amount.¹⁷

A closer look at Nigerian-language films and at individual filmmakers might also provide more links to studies of African cinema and a certain political and aesthetic ideology than has previously been discussed. Filmmakers sometimes present themselves in ways that parallel the progressive goals of third cinema, as a cinema by and for the people. While as Jedlowski

observes, English-language films seem to be increasingly geared towards Hollywood models of distribution available in Nigeria only to elite audiences (Jedlowski, “Videos” 205), Hausa and other indigenous-language films by virtue of their language remain focused on a more grassroots audience. When I asked Hausa director and comedian Mikail Isah bin Hassan why, though attending FESPACO in 2010 and having the desire to work with other African filmmakers, he made films in Hausa, he said his intention was to enlighten the masses. This moral commitment to “the masses” is a theme I have frequently heard in dozens of interviews I completed from 2006 to 2011. As Adesokan has pointed out in analysis of the Yoruba film *Owo Blow*, there is often a great amount of intentionality and reflexivity in the framing of moral discourse in Yoruba films, and as Matthias Krings and myself have pointed out, Hausa films are also often tactical responses to critics (Adesokan “Anticipating”; Krings “Conversion”; McCain “Video”). Both Isong and Imasuen told me that when they make indigenous-language films, as opposed to those in English, they are more likely to focus on “social themes.” Imasuen feels that a film “made in local dialect [...] has a deeper impact on the people than when it is made in English, because the language gives them some sense of belonging, and the message is more appreciated than when it is made in English.” Imasuen and Isong, as well as Tiv and Hausa-language filmmakers I have spoken to, also emphasize that they want their indigenous-language films to contribute to preserving their language and culture, a goal that parallels Kenyan writer and theorist Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s activism for writing in African languages (*Decolonizing*). Both Jedlowski (“Videos”) and myself (“Video”) have worried that as more Nollywood productions move toward cinema distribution they may lose the connection to a grassroots audience scholars have often celebrated. But it may be that as the English-language portion of the industry becomes more like Hollywood, Nigerian-language films stay closer to the aesthetics and moral vision of the grassroots. In Hausa

films, this often means an attention to storylines that deal with middle to lower class characters and resolve with a didactic appeal to conservative Islamic values. The films often resonate with the social and political critique made by Nigerian populist politician Aminu Kano, who started the first Hausa-language drama groups in the 1930s (Khalil 139-140). A large number of low budget Hausa comedy films share the improvisational techniques and educational motives of both oral tales and the drama groups out of which they grew.

At the same time, there is historical and currently increasing cooperation between individuals in the different Nigerian film industries. Filmmakers like Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan, Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, and Emem Isong make films in English and in Nigerian languages, and there has been contact between the Hausa industry and other Nigerian industries as well. While these filmmakers often express the desire to preserve their languages and cultures, they are also interested in working across ethnic and linguistic boundaries. Adamu has analyzed Hausa remakes of English films, as well as films made by English-language filmmakers featuring northern themes and Kannywood actors (“Transgressing” 11). He describes Nollywood producers who have invested in Hausa films, though noting that “interest had waned” by 2002 (15). However, Igbo producers like Prince Chidi and Iyke Moore in Kano are still producing Hausa films. Kano-based director AGM Bashir told me he started out his work with NTA English-language dramas in the 1980s, attended a directing and scriptwriting workshop in Senegal in 1992, and worked on Yoruba and English-language films in the early 1990s with directors like Tunde Kelani and Tade Ogidan. He started making Hausa films in 1999 with Igbo producer Iyke Moore. He still works regularly with English-language actors in Kano and, though Muslim, has even directed church films. Bashir, whose father was Hausa and mother Yoruba,

sees himself as a Nigerian filmmaker, disliking both terms “Nollywood” and “Kannywood.” He dreams of making a film that code switches between Hausa, English, and Yoruba.

There is also a limited amount of cross-over for Hausa and English actors. Ali Nuhu is the best known Kannywood-crossover star, acting in high profile English-language movies and winning the 2006 Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Upcoming Actor (“Ali” 6), but other Hausa actors and actresses have acted in English-language films, including Sani Danja, Rahama Hassan, Hauwa Maina, Abbas Sadiq, and others. The 2007-2011 censorship crisis may have actually been, as Nuhu posited, a “blessing in disguise” that helped further open the local industry to “a whole new world of ideas,” when Kano-based filmmakers began to leave the state and look for distribution beyond the powerful ancient Kano market (Aminu, Alao, and Tijjani). Increasing friendships growing between popular Hausa and English filmmakers seem to have increased co-productions. Hausa film production company Alumma Entertainment recently released a Hausa film *Karangiya* with Nollywood stars Aki and Pawpaw. 2-Effects Empire is making *Wata Shari'ar* with Nollywood star Jim Iyke. 2-Effects director and producer Yakubu Mohammed says he hopes these “mega movies” will “create a strong collaboration between Kannywood and Nollywood” (Giginyu). Both Afolayan (personal communication) and Imasuen have told me they would like to make Hausa films.

Jos is a location where Hausa and English-language filmmakers have historically mingled. Sani Mu'azu, a past president of MOPPAN, directs films in Hausa and English. Kenneth Gyang, a recent graduate of the National Film Institute in Jos, also directs Hausa and English-language films. Dahiru Mohammed's Jos-based production company 3sp makes mostly Hausa films, but in 2010 produced the “epic” English-language film *Hamza*, a story of a Hausa prince who chases slave traders across the Sahara to save his kidnapped lover. Both Kannywood

and Nollywood actors were cast in the film, including Ali Nuhu, Omotola Ekehinde, Olu Jacobs, Sani Mu'azu and others. Andy Nwakalor, the director, although Igbo, speaks Hausa, and in addition to many other English-language films has also directed Christian Hausa films like *Zunubin Rakiya 2*. Although both producer Mohammad and marketer Almah told me that because *Hamza* was made in English it sold better in the south than the north, Mohammad told me part of his motivation for making the film in English was to show the rich culture of the north to the south, as well as a northern film with good production values.

Filmmakers are quite intentional about targeting certain languages and genres at certain audiences. Imasuen targets lower-budget films on topical social issues “like trafficking, HIV/AIDS, and stigmatization” at Edo audiences and looks to such films to bring in revenue. On the other hand, he recognizes the global power of “Nollywood” that piracy networks have created, which he and other high-end filmmakers try to harness via cinema distribution. He told me he was making the “biggest film of my career” about the 1897 British invasion of Benin in English so that he could “create and draw global attention to the issue of reparation.”

The concept of “national” cinema has been promoted through centrally-located workshops, like Amaka Igwe’s BOB-TV in Abuja, the National Film Institute’s Annual SHOOT workshop in Jos (although in 2011 and 2012, it moved to Lagos), and the Abuja-based Zuma film festival regularly attended by popular Kannywood directors like Hafizu Bello, AGM Bashir, Falalu Dorayi, Ishaq Sidi Ishaq, Isyaku Abubakar Jalingo, and others. Iyan-Tama’s film *Tsintsiya* won the award for “Best Film on Social Issues” at Zuma film festival in 2008, while Jalingo’s *Ciki Daya* won “Best Indigenous” film at Zuma in 2010.

Indigenous-language films crossing borders

Although a focus on English-language films is perhaps natural when looking at the transnational and trans-Atlantic audiences of the films, Nigerian-language films, as Moradewun Adejunmobi has noted, are also crossing borders and receiving transnational attention (4-5). In a March 2009 article on the production crisis in the English-language industry, *Newswatch* reports that “Sound Image, a Nollywood movies’ sales outfit in London, confirmed that [...] the ratio of English movies sold by the outfit is 1:2 in favour of Yoruba movies” (par. 12). Isong told me that though her primary market for Ibibio films is in Nigeria, she premieres her Nigerian-language films in the U.S. and sells them especially in Houston and Atlanta where there is a considerable population of people from Akwa Ibom and Cross River. Imasuen told me that people in the Diaspora are using his subtitled Nigerian-language films to re-learn their languages.

Other than satellite channels such as Africa Magic Hausa, the distribution of Hausa films abroad is less formal. When I travelled to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, for FESPACO in February 2011, I found pirated copies of Hausa films in the market. When I was in Niamey, Niger, in September 2010 and March 2011, there were Hausa films constantly playing on the television. Though not as many Hausa films are made by Nigeriens, I saw music videos on television of Nigerien actors miming to Hausa film music produced in Kano. Nigerien friends told me anecdotes about how Zarma and Tamajeq speakers who had previously not spoken Hausa had started learning the language so they could watch the films. In addition to Niger, one of the strongest Hausa film markets in West Africa is Ghana, where an Islamic organization honored Nigerian producer and actor Sani Danja with a “Star of Islam” award for the way he promoted Islamic values in his Hausa films (Maikatanga 17). There is also a small Hausa film industry in Accra. In November 2010, I met Ghanaian Hausa film producer Suwaiba Abubakar

who had come to Kano from Accra in search of Kannywood stars to put in her films. Abubakar also hosts a Hausa film-themed show on an Accra radio station.¹⁸

Audiences for Hausa films have been found even farther afield. Filmmakers tell me of fans contacting them from the Hausa diaspora in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and elsewhere. In the United States, Kansas-based Hauwa Al-Hassan partnered with Kano-based filmmaker Ishaq Sidi Ishaq in the 2000s to run Hausamovies.com, the only official internet-based Hausa film vender at the time. They shipped Hausa films all over the world. In October 2007, Al-Hassan rented out a cinema in the Bronx, New York, where there is a large Ghanaian Hausa population, to screen the Hausa film *El-Mustapha*, but she lost money on the venture. The same year, she attempted to bring several Hausa film stars to the U.S. on tour for her customers, but the U.S. embassy denied their visas (Al-Hassan “Re: Kina”; “Re: gaisuwa”). Though Al-Hassan shut down the business in 2010, another young U.S.-based entrepreneur, Mahmud Fagge, set up the website hausafilms.tv and is currently attempting to make films available online legally (McCain “Taking” 48). In the absence of legal channels, Hausa films currently available in the U.S. are those uploaded to YouTube, are pirated, or are brought back by individuals travelling from Nigeria or Ghana (Hausawa), similar to what Tiv filmmaker Agbaingya told me about the spread of Tiv films in the U.S. (McCain “In Conversation”). In November 2012, Hausa film director Falalu Dorayi told me that film stakeholders in Kano were formally meeting to discuss how to start showing their films in cinemas and distributing their films online.

There is also an increasing desire among Hausa filmmakers to have their films enter the international film festival circuit. Recently, Hausa filmmakers have visited FESPACO, the Durban International Film Festival, the ION International Film festival and other such forums, hoping to network with other African filmmakers and to improve their own skills (Bin Hassan;

Brown; Yaro). Hausa filmmakers have also screened their films abroad. Among those who have had international screenings are Ahmad Sarari, whose film *Waraka* was screened at the "Pavilion des cinemas du sud" at Cannes in 2008 (Goethe Institut), and Ado Ahmad Gidan Dabino, who took his film *Sandar Kiwo* on tour to universities around Europe in 2010 ("Sandar" 20). After Iyan-Tama was imprisoned for three months by the Kano State Censorship board in 2009 over issues related to his film *Tsintsiya*, he was invited to screen the film at the Canadian Film Centre and the Nollywood North American Film Festival in 2009, and the Subversive Film Festival in Croatia in 2011 (personal communication, 28 June 2012).

Similar to English films set abroad, there have also been Hausa films that advertise their transnational settings, such as *Nijeriya da Nijar*, *Sanafahna*, and 'Yar Agadez all set between Nigeria and Niger, *Iso* and *Surah*, set between Nigeria and Gabon, *Sai Na Dawo*, set in a mythical Ghanaian kingdom, *Khusufi* and *Kano to Saudiyya*, set in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, *Daham 1,2,3* and *Dan Auta a Dubai*, set in Nigeria and Dubai, and *Haula* set in Nigeria and London. Most recently, there has been much publicity about the first Hausa film made in India, *Kauyawa*, (Ciroma 18-20), completing the symbolic cycle of Indian influence on Hausa films that Larkin, Adamu and others have written about (See Larkin "Indian"; Adamu *Transglobal*). While Hausa films have thus far mostly been studied in terms of how they have adapted transglobal media influences, these examples demonstrate how they, too, are crossing ethnic and national borders, seeking both local and international audiences.

In Jonathan Haynes' sweeping overview of scholarship on West African video films, "What is to be Done: Film Studies and Nigerian and Ghanaian Videos," he calls for a more careful scholarship that takes into account both the scope of scholarly work in the field as well as "local debates or histories." I have consciously kept in mind Haynes' piece in the examples I've

given here of the spread and popularity of indigenous-language film industries and the connections between them, which I believe illustrate some of the reasons why a closer comparative study of Nigerian-language films is crucial in theorizing Nollywood. Much more research needs to be done in this trajectory, including detailed attention to minority language industries, such as the Bini, Nupe, or Tiv industries, and comparative studies, not just within Nigeria but between indigenous languages in multiple African countries, as Krings does when he briefly compares research on Hausa films with those on Swahili films (“Karishika”). Looking at what is being produced and consumed within Nigeria and how indigenous-language films cross borders in Africa, alongside the English ones, will give us a deeper understanding of how filmmakers use the video film medium to express those “powerful, local scenes of being and belonging” Gikandi speaks of, as well as ambitions to speak their language to the world.

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¹ Jedlowski points out that UNESCO did not “follow universal principles for all the countries under scrutiny,” relying on figures from the Motion Pictures Association of America and ignoring independent productions from the United States. By contrast, in Nigeria, it used figures supplied by the NFVCB, to which by law every video release must be submitted (“Videos” 108). There are additional inconsistencies between UNESCO’s report, which says Nigeria produced 872 films on video in 2005 (UNESCO 2), and the NFVCB numbers for the same year. I added up 1098 Nigerian films for 2005 from regional office reports in Volume III of the NFVCB Directory (271-75).

² Oni points out that NFVCB listed 1514 videos in 2006 (18). In 2010, only 1,114 videos were approved (Bala, “2010” 12). While a decline, this is hardly drastic, and by 2011, the numbers of videos submitted were going back up (Bala, “2011” 5).

³ As of June 2012, the NFVCB has not yet released Volume IV of their directory, for the years following 2006. The NFVCB Verification Unit gave me a copy of the 2010 and 2011 reports, but I was not able to obtain reports from previous years. Unfortunately, the NFVCB website is currently so error-ridden that the statistics listed there are not usable (See McCain “The National”). For Volumes I and II, which do not distinguish between Nigerian and foreign English-language films, I added the numbers listed and found my own percentages. In Volume III, I added the numbers, by language, listed from each regional office and found my own percentages. NFVCB statistics are not entirely accurate, as smaller productions, such as church productions and films made by new filmmakers in minority languages, do not always register with the board. This is especially notable in figures from the early days of the board. Volume I, for instance, lists only three films in 1994 (166). The board also sometimes makes compilation errors: Ahmad Sarari, zonal coordinator of the Northwestern NFVCB office, showed me a report, which listed by name 417 Hausa films that had been verified by his office in 2010, whereas the 2010 NFVCB Verification report listed only 349. Hausa films, therefore, seem to have been underrepresented in 2010 NFVCB figures. I have also heard complaints from NFVCB officials that producers sometimes sell their films to satellite channels without passing them through the board. Despite these problems, since all films are required by law to be reported to the NFVCB before they can be distributed or exhibited in Nigeria, NFVCB statistics remain the most reliable source of data about the Nigerian film industry.

⁴ Homevida also advertised an endowment for a “faith film” prize for films that promote “honesty, transparency, integrity and good citizenship as an expression of the Christian faith” but no awards for other faith traditions. Most Hausa-language films are made by Muslims, and there are Muslim themes in some Yoruba films as well.

⁵ A few exceptions are Brian Larkin’s book *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, which looks at the Hausa and English industries side by side; my own “Video Expose: Metafiction and message in Nigerian films,” which looks at both English-language and Hausa-language metafiction; and Abdalla Uba Adamu’s forthcoming article “Transgressing boundaries: Reinterpretation of Nollywood films in Muslim Northern Nigeria,” which looks at Hausa re-makes of English language films. Krings has also looked at Hausa language films in relation to Tanzanian Swahili films (“Black Titanic”) and at reception of English language Nigerian films in Tanzania (“Karishika”). Though far less frequent, there has been some international journalism that looks at English films alongside the Hausa industry, including Pierre Barrot’s 2005 volume *Nollywood: le Phenomene video au Nigeria* (published in English translation in 2008) and the 2008 French television documentary *Nollywood, le cinéma africain dans la cours des grands*, both of which include substantial sections on the Hausa film industry.

⁶ To help correct some of this imbalance, I have tried to promote knowledge about research being done on Hausa films in Nigeria on the blog for the Hausa Home Video Resource Centre at Bayero University. See <http://hausahomevideoresourcecentre.wordpress.com>

⁷ The conferences were as follows: 1) “International Conference on Communication, Media, and Popular Culture in Northern Nigeria,” held in Kano, July 2006; 2) “African Film: An International Conference” held in Urbana-

Champaign, Illinois, USA, November 2007; 3) “International Conference on Nigerian Home Videos” in Ibadan, July 2008; 4) “Nollywood and Beyond: Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Industry” in Mainz, Germany in May 2009; 5) “Nollywood: A National Cinema?: An International Workshop” in Ilorin in July 2010; 6) “African Film, Video and the Social impact of the new technologies” in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso during FESPACO February 2011; 7) “Reading and Producing Nollywood” at the University of Lagos in March 2011; 8) “Nollywood in Africa, Africa in Nollywood” at Pan-African University, Lagos, in July 2011; 9) “Nollywood and Theatre for Development: Exploring the Bridges of Interaction” in Zaria, in November 2011; and 10) “International Conference on Nollywood, Woman, and Cultural Identity” in Makurdi in May 2012. Of course, this is only a sampling of the total numbers of Nollywood-themed conferences. I was not able to attend two northern-focused conferences “First International Conference on Hausa films” in 2003 and more recently the conference “Women in Literature and Films in Northern Nigeria” held at Kwara State University, Malete, in November 2011, which despite being focused on northern regional production had only four papers on films listed in its program of events. Jonathan Haynes lists four other conferences from 2001 to 2009 (“A literature” 107-108). The ten I have attended, however, seem a fair sample size. For example, at the conference held at Pan-African University, although quite a few of the presenters noted the existence of film production in multiple languages, only five papers out of thirty-three papers or roundtables listed in the program dealt in any detail with non-English language Nigerian films or audiences: one nation-wide audience study, two papers dealing with Yoruba films, one on Ibibio films, and my own paper on the Hausa film industry. Similarly at the University of Lagos conference, out of twenty-eight papers, three discussed Yoruba film content, and again, only my own discussed the Hausa industry. Other conferences I have attended have been similar.

⁸ Particularly important in challenging stereotypical conceptions of “Nollywood” are studies of video industries elsewhere in Africa, such as Ghana’s industry which developed at the same time as Nigeria’s (See Garritano and others), and more recently Tanzania (See the work of Krings, Bohme and others), Kenya (See Kinyanjui and others), and other African countries. Many of these films are also being made in African languages.

⁹ Popular Hausa director, producer, and singer Yakubu Muhammad told me in 2010 that his film *Sai Na Dawo*, the first film he marketed himself, had sold 115,000 copies in the first week alone. This, however, is on the high side. The numbers will vary by film and producer. Very popular Hausa producers may start with a print run of 50,000-100,000 and then reprint, while smaller producers will start with a print-run of 20,000-30,000 and then reprint in numbers of 5,000-10,000 several times. In 2012, producers told me that because of piracy and insecurity, which has made marketers fear to come to Kano, the market is declining, and print runs are becoming smaller.

¹⁰ M-net also launched “Africa Magic Swahili” to broadcast across East Africa in July 2011 (Star Reporter).

¹¹ Hausa stars Ali Nuhu, Sani Danja, and Yakubu Mohammad had previously been made Glo Ambassadors. Glo ambassadors like Ini Edo appeal both to English-language audiences and Ibibio audiences, as Isong mentioned in an email that Edo is also an Ibibio language star. Ali Nuhu, a Hausa star, and Kunle Afolayan, a Yoruba star, also have cross-over appeal to English-language audiences.

¹² In one representative comment, a commenter on an internet article about Kannywood road accidents said: “This shows that we are divided in Nigeria. The north wants their own identity. Well, they have never been part of Nigeria and will never be. That is why their so-called Kannywood is unpopular. I am just hearing the nasty name for the first time” (Kkk). In an informal conversation, one well-known English-language star also told me Hausa filmmakers were trying to segregate themselves from a mainstream Nollywood.

¹³ Some scholars spell the term “Kanywood” as it was first spelled in *Tauraruwa*; however, in the rest of this paper, I have chosen to follow the spelling, “Kannywood,” most often used in the popular media...

¹⁴ Founding president of MOPPAN, Abdulkareem Mohammed told me that they founded the association to help funnel more national assistance to northern films, since most of the film associations at that time were based in the south. In 2004, in an editorial in the magazine *Duniyar Fim*, he reinforces these anxieties about proving that Hausa films are Nigerian films, celebrating how the film *Kadaura* produced by Khalid Musa and directed by Bala Anas Babinlata, won an award at the National Film Festival (“Daga” 2).

¹⁵ The Nollywood retrospective at the 2004 Berlinale film festival, for example, advertised the program by titling it “Hollywood in Nigeria or: How to get rich quick” (Jedlowski, “Videos” 126).

¹⁶ Gidan Dabino and Yakasai state that the period between 1998-2001 was a particularly lucrative time for the Hausa film industry (345), but few Hausa filmmakers are currently very wealthy.

¹⁷ These cheaper fees are perhaps, in part, why Imasuen can say Nigerian-language films are more inexpensive to make than English language ones.

¹⁸ The use of stars to promote films with local actors also happens with other Hausa filmmakers on the periphery in Sokoto, Maiduguri and elsewhere, who will have a Kano-Kaduna based star act in the film with more local actors.