

Reasserting Tunde Kelani's Auteurism: A Review of his Artistic Signature in *Arugba*

Nyamekye Nyarko

Department of Theatre Arts,
University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana
Email: nnyarko18@gmail.com

and

Joseph Aketema

National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI),
Accra, Ghana
Email: aketema@yahoo.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-1791-1612

Abstract

Tunde Kelani (TK) is one of the few astute filmmakers of the African continent whose cinematic works defy laid-down artistic styles and conventions. He expresses his cinematic language and narrative styles, which famously pay high credence to Yoruba cosmology, beliefs, and poetic and folkloric narrative elegance. Tunde Kelani's auteurial and linguistic styles reflect every other artistic work he produces. Apart from giving his audience something of traditional and Afrocentric worth, he heightens themes of corruption and its devastating consequences on society through his films. Through content analysis, this article considers the thematic concerns of Tunde Kelani's *Arugba* (2009). The term, auteurism is not a new concept when it comes to appraising the works of Tunde Kelani but new in the filmic discourse of *Arugba* (2009). Tunde's cinematic signature is expounded to give insight into the themes raised as a means of explication. The conclusion reached is that TK exudes ideological, cultural, poetic and metaphysical motifs in the film *Arugba* (2009) in ways that intensify his concerns about the decaying political and societal rot within African society.

Keywords: Auteurism, TK, *Arugba*, Metaphysical, Artistic signature, Nollywood.

Introduction

African movies especially, those produced from Nigeria, have received global acclaim and criticism. In the academic discourse community, Nollywood has become a centre of film criticism and appreciation due to the artistic output of the films (Osakpolor, 2021; Omoera, Edemode, & Aihevba, 2017; Haynes, 2016). One such that has received keen attention is that of Tunde Kelani (TK). He is an auteur of immeasurable worth who has emerged as a strong voice to reckon with in the film industry in Africa and beyond (Omoera & Anyanwu, 2020; Onikoyi & Ayodabo, 2019, Ayodabo, 2016). The film, *Arugba* (2009) a political drama, is one of Tunde's fine pieces, which excoriates the king (Kabiyesi). The Kabiyesi, a replica of modern-day corrupt African leaders is criticised for making token gestures against corruption. His regime is nourished on clientelism and political tokenism. This paper examines the works of Tunde Kelani, which firmly positions him as an auteur. The discussion examines his artistic auteurism through his film *Arugba* (2010). Before examining Tunde Kalani as an auteur a synopsis of the film is important.

Synopsis

Arugba is a doctrine or religion in Osun Osogbo of the Yoruba people through which sacrifices are offered to the gods. A maiden virgin stands as an intermediary between society and the gods. It is believed that once the virgin lady carries the sacrificial victuals to the gods, their supplications, pure as the virgin would be well received. There is a powerful festival in honour of the Osun Osogbo of the Yoruba people. One of the important components of the festival is for a virgin maiden to carry the Bowl of Osun which contains the sacrificial items and relics of Osun. Adetutu is selected and fed by Yemoja, the river goddess of Osun through a dream at the sacred river (Osun) where she went to fetch water. Adetutu becomes the votary maiden for a lot of festive occasions. She is caught up in a myriad of debilitating challenges of his people: corrupt practices, assassinations, HIV/AIDS, infections deaths and kidnapping. The Kabiyesi through his ingratiating linguist, Aigoro can silence some dissenting views from sub-chiefs of the council who speak of the increase in hunger, poverty and corruption in the land. Chief Alasa who is one of the lead voices against corruption is assassinated on the orders of the Kabiyesi. The Ifa Baba divines that Adetutu, now a university student still maintains her purity as a virgin when all the daughters of Kabiyesi some of whom are much younger than Adetutu fail the virgin test. Adetutu

remains a strong symbol of her people. She is an advocate against HIV/AIDS, cholera and child kidnapping. Kabiyesi loots enough and builds a lot of mansions and opens businesses abroad. Adetutu together with Makinwa advocated against looting and plundering of state coffers. They become lovers. Together with a few respected elders, they become the new hope for their people in the end.

The Man Tunde Kelani

Tunde Kelani was born on the 26th of February, 1948. His childhood life in Abeokuta, which was profoundly immersed in Yoruba culture, enabled him to gain insightful knowledge of Yoruba belief systems. He attended the Oke-Ona Primary School in Ikija Abeokuta and had his secondary school education at Abeokuta Grammar School. His grandfather was a Chief (the Balogun of Ijaiye Kukudi when he was old enough to understand the customs of his people. This intimacy provided Tunde with the privileged to witness most aspects of the Yoruba ways of life: the Yoruba religion, Yoruba literature, Yoruba philosophy, Yoruba environments and Yoruba worldview in arts at close quarters. Over the years TK has not only garnered experiences working as a filmmaker, producer and director but equally has acquired a vast and profound knowledge of the Yoruba culture and literature most of which is noticeable in all his films such as *Orun Mooru* (1982), *Saworoide* (1999), *White Handkerchief* (2000), *Thunderbolt: Magun* (2001), *Agogo Eewo* (2002), *Arugba* (2010), *Maami* (2011), and *Dazzling Mirage* (2015).

Tunde Kelani has international exposure to media coverage having worked in the 1970s with British Broadcast Corporation Television (BBC TV) and Reuter's correspondent for Nigerian television. Tunde Kelani has won a lot of international recognition and awards. Some of them are the Africa Movie Academy Awards in 2009, Recipient of the prestigious 'Africa Reel Award' at the Silicon Valley African Film Festival (SVAFF), California, USA in 2012, NMA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014, Member of the Emmy Awards International Jury in 2015, Angenieux Award (Prix du Public) at Nollywood week 2015, African Magic Viewer's Choice (AMVCA) Industry Merit Award in 2018, Ecran d'Honneur award at the 22nd edition of the Ecrans Noirs Film Festival in July 2018, Elected to vote in the Directors Category of the Board of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences also known as 'The Oscars' in 2019, Leopold Sedar Senghor Prize for African Cultural Creativity and Impact in 2019. In the 1991s he established Mainframe Film and Television Productions, "a

company whose major philosophy is to promote African culture through audio-visual means" (Okwuowulu, 2016, p. 9)

Methodological Consideration

To have an expansive and in-depth discussion of the film, the study employs the use of content analysis. The use of content analysis in media studies has endured for a little over eight decades. Currently, it continues to serve media content analysts in diverse ways. According to Prasad (2008), "content analysis is described as the scientific study of the content of the communication. It is the study of the content regarding meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages" (p. 1). In the film, content refers to the form, structure, and narrative styles of a film's content. As rightly affirmed by Prasad (2008) "content denotes what is contained and content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a message" (p. 2). In the content analysis process, the media analysts create an abstraction which they use to gauge and analyse media content. As correctly affirmed by Prasad (2008) "the researcher asks the question 'what do I want to find out from this communication content' and frames the objectives for study" (p. 8). In this methodological approach, a view of Tunde Kelani as an auteur together with thematic objectives such as Auteurism and Tunde Kelani, Tunde Kelani the Auteur, cinematic language and auteurism, the consistent themes against corruption, religious practices in Tunde's works, the case of the Ifa, the use of music and dance, the use of folkloric language, and the mise-en-scene as an auteur signature form the basis for the discussion.

Auteurism and Tunde Kelani

Before discussing auteurism in Tunde Kelani's film *Arugba*, it is important to look at auteurism or auteur theory in filmmaking. This would enable us to put our discussion into perspective. The auteur theory as Rabiger (2008) states is, "The concept that one mind controls the creative identity of a film" (p. 593), while Bordwell and Thompson (2008) posit that an auteur is, "the presumed or actual author of a film, usually identified as the director. Also sometimes used in an evaluative sense to distinguish good filmmakers (auteurs) from bad ones" (p. 477). For instance, the *Nouvelle Vague* or the new wave that emerged in France in the 1940s acknowledges the director, as an author of the film work. According to Onikoyi (2016), the *Nouvelle Vague* insists that every piece of finished film work whose creative process is the director's, "primary creative force" makes the

director the auteur (p. 245). According to Bordwell and Thompson (2003, pp. 57-58):

During 1913 there arose the *Autoren* film, or 'author's film'. The term author did not at then, mean what auteur means today—the director of the film imposing their artistic authority on the creation of the entire film. Rather, the *Autoren* film was publicised largely based on a famous writer who had written the script or the original literary work from which the film was adapted. The director of the film was seldom mentioned.

In this case, Mario Puzo would have been an auteur, not John Copolla who directed the *God Father Trilogy* (1972). Also, some of the adapted works of Tunde Kelani himself would have paid credence to the authors of the books he adapted rather than himself. In this case, *Arugba* whose screenplay is written by Ade Adeniji would have been credited as the auteur granted that it was a book with famed themes and sub-plots like, Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) or Coelho's, *The Alchemist* (1988). In some instances, the father of African cinema, Ousmane Sembene who is a writer, and who faithfully adapted his literary pieces such as *God Bits of Wood* (1962) into a film is considered or argued an auteur. This is because he expresses and exerts his ideological, philosophical, artistic and aesthetic insignia into his films. Over the years, as it was in Hollywood in the early 1950s, it emerged that "an auteur usually did not write scripts but managed nonetheless to stamp his or her personality on studio products, transcending the constraints of Hollywood's standardized system" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 461).

Persons in the Hollywood industry most regarded as auteurs were: Howard Hawks, Otto Preminger, Samuel Fuller, Vincente Minnelli, Nicholas Ray, and Alfred Hitchcock (Naremore, 2014; Sarris, 1963). They were seen not just as craftsmen but as filmmakers whose personal life philosophies, ideologies and beliefs constitute the larger part of the final output of their films. In the early parts of 1950, a significant movement in filmmaking gathered momentum when, a group of young men who wrote for the Paris film journal *Cahiers du Cinema* had the habit of attacking the most artistically respected French filmmakers of the day (Palmer, 2008; Bordwell, 1991). The writers such as Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer, and Jacques Rivette influenced largely, how some of the films were churned out. Rabiger (2008) explains the auteur,

“refers to the writer/director controlling the whole screen realization process” (p. 14). Part of the work as an auteur includes the cumbersome process of also making the cast and crew understand their beliefs to enable them to translate the script into visuals. Rabiger (2008) further indicates “where your work lies should help clarify its genre and even how the film should look” (p. 179).

Summarily, Rabiger (2008) states that at most times the auteur may have their film categorised as shown below:

Either	Or
Auteur (personal, authorial stamp) Genre (film archetype)	Genre (film archetype)
Subjective (character’s) POV	Objective (Storyteller’s) POV
Non-realistic and stylized	Realistic
Duality requires audience judgment	Conflicts are generic and not analysed
Conflicts are interpersonal	Conflicts are large-scale and societal
Conflicts are divergent and unresolved	Conflicts are convergent and resolved
The outcome uncertain	Outcome reached via struggle
The subject is an individual hero	A subject is a group
Past	Present
Emotion	Intellect
Humour	Tragedy
Fast	Slow

Tunde Kelani the Auteur

Before discussing Tunde Kelani as an auteur, it would be inadequate to judge his work or auteurism from *Arugba* alone. Onikoyi (2016) citing Andrew Sarris explains that the significant thing that makes one an auteur is: the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value... a great director has to be at least a good director’. The second premise is, ‘the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value. Over a group of films, a director must exhibit certain recurring characteristics of style, which serve as his signature. The third premise is a more mystic interior meaning (p. 246). For these reasons, *Arugba* (2010) is discussed alongside other notable films such as *Saworoide* (1999) and *Agogo Eewo* (2002) as a means of establishing auteurism in the persona of his work. First of all, it should be established that *Saworoide* is a published literary work which is written by Akin Ishola. *Arugba* as stated earlier is written

by Ade Adeniji and Agogo Eewo is written by Akinwumi Isola. In all these, it must be stated that Kelani is only the cinematic auteur but not the main writer. How he then transposes this to the scene is based on his philosophy, ideology and his understanding of mise-en-scene. This is without admitting the fact that the original writers had their artistic ideas.

Cinematic Language and Auteursm

The film has its language embedded in its cinematic styles and expressions. Apart from producing his films using Yoruba dialogue (some of his films are also in English), Yoruba costume and indeed Yoruba Ifa and Babalawos, there are other ways through which TK uses language. Most of the dialogues are aphorisms, sarcasm, and metaphors and are mostly poetic. One would notice from the film, *Arugba*, that Adetutu's (Bukola Awoyemi) performance titled, *Vain Braggart Loses all to conceit*, is pregnant with TK's philosophy of freeing Nigeria from corruption.

The songstress Adetutu shares: *Don't be too hasty, fame is not for eternity. What goes up surely comes down. Lest a warrior gets consumed in battle. Lest the deft swimmer gets drowned in water, lest one suffers quick reversals, the self-conceited makes himself a public fool. In the long run, he outwits himself. Lend me your ears (Arugba, 2010).*

This appears to be sober advice to the corrupt, the proud and the deceitful but presented poetically. The songstress critiques tow a more political or pan-African line which often characterises how people scramble for power in most of Tunde Kelani's films. Adetutu, goes on: Adetutu: *Exercise restraint, if you must join partisan politics, as you will reap what you sow*" (*Arugba*, 2010). She then advises that situations in life are not permanent when she shares:

Adetutu: *The commonplace was once a wonder. Current wonders in time will become commonplace. Time and tide wait for no one. Nobody is immune to hunger. Even the stomach anticipates hunger. It's incessant. Don't sell your birthright for a bowl of porridge. Even when well-fed, hunger returns. The sage learns to rise after a fall. Redeem your ways to avoid future regret. Social status is but a pendulum (Arugba, 2010)*

And the Ifa Priest, who again detects that Adetutu is worthy of carrying the Osun calabash says of Adetutu: "If she can't find anything, then we are in search of what isn't lost" (*Arugba*, 2010).

The Consistent Themes against Corruption

Nigeria since independence has been plagued with incidences of violent military takeovers and authoritarian regimes. Apart from kidnappings, and assassination of top critics of the court of Kabiyesi (*Yoruba meaning, He who cannot be questioned*) in *Arugba* (2010), TK details that the king does not grant any latitude to divergent views. Continually, as Omoera and Anyanwu (2020) explained there has been a “brutal muzzling of dissenting voices” (p. 187). It is not by chance that Tunde Kelani will make corruption or societal sanity a thematic concern in his films. Looking at the political setting of the film *Fasan* (2016) correctly notes: *Arugba* offers social commentary on Nigerian politics in the immediate aftermath of military rule in 1999. It is specifically a filmic representation and contemporary reinterpretation of the Osun Osogbo festival that serves as a framing device to critique the civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo, the former military ruler who became Nigeria’s elected president in that year after 16 years of unbroken military rule (p. 287). TK mixes the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on indecency and sexual misconduct in the very opening scene in the market.

Prophet (Kayode Odumosu): *Stop indecent exposure of your bodies so, that these maladies may not lead us astray. Repent!*

First woman seller in the market (Idowu Philips): *There seems to be some truth in what he is saying.*

Second woman seller in the market (Yinka Ariyo-Martin): *Some truth?*

First woman seller in the market (Idowu Philips): *Is it not true that our leaders are behaving like robbers? Or are we not threatened by incurable diseases?*

Second woman seller in the market (Yinka Ariyo-Martin): *Truly mother, incurable like the intrigues in the king’s palace; no solution (Arugba, 2010).*

Having set the narrative hook, TK takes us to the king’s palace where we the audience would be treated to the intrigues. In *Agogo Eewo*, the prominent people whom we may in African politics call the greedy cabal or caucus, support the political candidate Bosipo with the understanding that he will be a puppet through whom they will amass wealth. To the disappointment of the cabal, this was not to be the case. Once Bosipo assumed power, his focus and commitment were on doing what the masses expected of him. Tunde Kelani warns through his films,

that the consequences of displeasing the corrupt cabal can be debilitating and grievous. As Onikoyi (2016) affirms the political elites, the most prominent of them being the chiefs, having lost much of their power and prestige, try as much as they can to hinder the progress of Bosipo. They used idle youth to commit various social atrocities to discredit his government (p. 248). The situation is far worse in *Arugba* (2010). For fear of losing his political office to his more popular and incorruptible brother, the Kabiyesi sent hoodlums to assassinate him. Aside of this, Chief Onikoyi, whom the Kabiyesi describes as: “*His Insolence is becoming intolerable*” is stripped of his title while bootlicking praise-singers are allowed to endure as elders and sub-chiefs.

Chief Alasa who summoned the rest of the chiefs such as Abinikoge, Baale, and Onikoyi to speak of the corruption of the Kabiyesi, is simply assassinated. Drawing the comparison, the signature of Tunde Kelani which makes him an auteur is his frequent emphasis on the debilitating canker of corruption in high places. It should be remembered that Aigoro (Kareem Adepoju) the chief’s praise singer was dismissed because he tried to outsmart the Kabiyesi who indeed presided over corruption. Whereas Bosipo’s concern is about stopping the squandering of timber money, the Kabiyesi’s corrupt practise is about the World Health Organisation (WHO) intervention in tackling HIV/AIDS of which Aigoro connived with the doctors to share some of the money. This theme of looting from national coffers during pandemics is ever-enduring. Most governments in Africa, including Ghana and Nigeria, have been recently accused of either overpricing Covid-19 vaccines or conniving with foreign forces to dupe the state (Gwaibi, 2022; Ackah, 2021; Addo, et al.; 2021). Earlier in *Saworoide* which is a prequel to *Agogo Eewo*, the issue of corruption is still highly raised against the timber merchants and the Kabiyesi and council whose sole interest is to amass wealth at the great detriment of the masses most of whom have had their lands destroyed. As is rightly shared by Olayiwola (2018): the real conflict is, The recklessness of the timber merchants in causing environmental pollution and the depletion of Jogbo’s Flora and Fauna pitches King Lapite (aided by the timber merchants and some self-seeking members of his cabinet) against the youths, who demand a more transparent and humane economic order. (p. 247)

It is important to recall that in *Arugba*, the chiefs are bitter because even though the Kabiyesi is argued to have instituted economic reforms, and even though they are in the ‘mist of plenty’ as one chief protested,

'poverty is glaring and staring them at their faces'. Nigeria is a country with high corruption index and Tunde Kelani has never ceased to either point it out clearly or signpost it in his films. As Olayiwola (2018) states Tunde Kelani is: unarguably, the most prominent of all Nigerian filmmakers of the video-film era. His films carefully reflect a rich blend of the complexities and dynamics of the diverse experiences of cultures, art and politics, religion and development issues that define Nigeria as a nation. He is no doubt a contemporary example of a passionate and committed cineaste who adopts the motion picture genre as a tool for engaging critical issues that espouse the African experience in the arena of politics (pp. 60-61). In *Arugba*, the Kabiyesi always attempt to make people believe he cares for the state. This is not true. After some hired killers have assassinated Alasa for not being interested in the appointment given to him by the king, the king's daughter ("Yejide") comes to ask about the incident from her father.

Yejide (OriadeMorenike): *Kabiyesi, is it true that Chief Alasa was assassinated?*

King: *That was how it happened o. It was the most gruesome. His murderers were not assassins; they were robbers.*

Yejide: *But how can you be so sure they were robbers when you didn't conduct any investigation?*

King: *So, I should take over the police work and neglect the state's duties because Alasa is dead? (Arugba, 2010)*

Religious Practices in Tunde's Works: The Case of the Ifa

In Nigeria just like other states in Africa where religious and sectarian politics pose a threat, Tunde Kelani aspires strongly to create a shared and harmonious bond. A bond that positions his audience to identify that there are some societal ills that are no respecter of any religious or ethnic affiliation. One of these is the HIV/AIDs pandemic prevalent at the time the film was made and the non-commitment of African governments to fight the canker head-on. In the first market scene, Tunde Kelani introduces a Christian preacher who preaches about the coming of the Lord, and against nudity. Seated in the market are Muslim beggars who exclaim and assert their Islamic faith to the preacher's message against nudity saying *Lailah Ilalahi!* Tunde Kelani is advocating religious harmony in a country where sectarian and religious divides are a serious threat to national sovereignty (Çancı & Odukoya, 2016; Langer, Godefroidt, & Meuleman, 2017). Having extolled Christianity and Islam

of their values, Tunde Kelani appears to have a problem with how Africa's indigenous forms of knowledge and traditions are relegated to the background, and in some cases depicted as fetish and agents of Satanism. It would be noticed that consistently and effectively he uses the Ifa priest in a very redeeming way in almost all his films. TK in an interview with Esonwanne (2008) stated thus:

I work primarily in Yoruba, my mother tongue. Therefore, I explore things that have a strong Yoruba cultural base. You know, it is a pity that we were not taught these things in school. Perhaps the colonists, especially the Christians, didn't want the competition in ideas. So they smashed local religions, declared their faith the true path to Paradise, and prohibited instruction in oral discourse in the schools, virtually all of which they controlled. Ifa, a compendium of Yoruba history, literature, and science, was not taught. So now we have to re-educate ourselves. (p.30).

Having established that Tunde Kelani's auteurism is also hinged on the beliefs, ideology, the artistic signature of the filmmaker reflecting the Yoruba cosmology (Adeduntan 2018, Balogun 2018), it is important to add that he was expressing his Africanness. This is what Onikoyi (2016) will conveniently call '*Irreducible Africanness*' "where African traditional essentialities, signifiers, tropes, features, codes, icons, symbols, motifs and belief systems are allowed to influence our various works of art, despite the employment of Western toolkits" (p. 244). This is important, especially at this current time when most indigenous film productions strongly regard indigenous forms of worship, knowledge and its priestly institutions as demonic. An examination of the dialogue below offers us insight into the beliefs of Tunde Kelani.

King: *Let's choose another bearer from the royal house and forget Adetutu who's been long in the University environment.*

Ifa Priest: *Hmmm, this is Ifa's message o. We should not distort it.*

King: *Ifa didn't say this o. It is the girl who expressed her willingness. (Arugba, 2010)*

In the above, even though Adetutu expresses her wiliness, the king who had earlier on wanted to have intercourse with her thinks otherwise of which the Ifa Priest, incorruptible as he is, insists that Ifa finds Adetutu worthy and his truth should not be distorted. The subtext in the

dialogue upholds not only the sanctity of the Ifa oracle but also the impeccable and incorruptible nature of the traditional priest. This priestly institution is further complemented by Adeduntan (2018) who states, "Ifá or Ọ́ rúnmilá , to whom the babaláwo is priest and diviner, is the Yoruba deity of divination and wisdom" (p. 294). Also in *Agogo Eewo*, in order to vindicate those who have not soiled their hands in corrupt political deals, an oath was to be taken at the shrine out of which the culpable will die. The corrupt sent killers to assassinate the Ifa priest and steal the oath effigy. The priest who was expecting them prepared and fortified himself. With a powerful incantation, the assassins were charmed, become instantly powerless, transfixed and were arrested the next morning. This positively indicates that the Yoruba and African traditional institutions do not just harm people needlessly but are protectors of the innocent and the just.

Notwithstanding these discussions, Okwuowulu (2016) argues that it would be abysmally insufficient to merit Tunde Kelani as an auteur based on the simple reason that his films represent Yoruba culture and philosophy but most importantly, his unique technical skills most of which are not always discussed or talked about. Critically speaking the bigger encompassing component of auteurism is the, "particular philosophy, idea, thought, notion, beliefs, value and concept" (Okwuowulu, 2016, p. 12) which must be recognised to be consistent in his works. For example, with what familiarity and consistency do he uses *mise-en-scene*? Typical of TK is the use of metaphysical forces or characters such as Yemoja, the sacred goddess of the river of Osun as indicated in the opening scene where Adetutu dreams. This is also seen in *Agogo Eewo* where he would be the assassin of the chief priest was spiritually apprehended by the Ifa deity and handed to the community youth.

The Use of Music, Dance and Folkloric Language

The use of music and dance to enhance the ideological and political themes is expressively used in the *Arugba* (2010). Note that the songs of Makinwa and Adetutu speak of communalism—an antithesis of capitalism, greed and corruption. The spiritual music and dance at the river further reinforce Tunde Kelani's repetitive belief in the *irreducible Africanness*, which Onikoyi (2016) further elucidates to "involve language, environment, music/song, masks, and other motifs, indigenous language plays a major role in reflecting daily life, and literature and film that come

in the form of proverbs, idioms, and incantations and rhetorical speeches” (p. 245). The re-enactment of the ceremonial procession that accompanied the rituals of the Gbonjubola, the *Arugba* or carrier who leads the ritual procession from the king’s palace to the banks of the Osun River is characterised by elaborate Yoruba rituals. In most of the scenes, TK uses the songs to serve as breathers, visual pauses and most importantly to convey his ideological stance against plundering and kleptocracy leaders. He uses poems to criticise and condemn the delusions of African leaders.

Makinwa’s (Segun Adefila) performance lyrics states: *To our deluded leaders watching the country drift. The country drifts yet you watch. Yet you have been forewarned. I’m the committed bard and will keep warning. They confuse education with academics. Excessive power courts disgrace.* (Arugba, 2010)

The ‘political bard’—Tunde Kelani is issuing a political and ideological statement against powerful drunken leaders and the corrupt. The same theme of corruption is accentuated in the character of Bosipo the righteous leader who has to battle the corrupt timber merchants and their native collaborators whose aim is to deprive the local people of their livelihood. As mentioned above, an auteur has peculiar signatures to their works. One of Tunde Kelani’s signature is his use of folk narrative. In the opening scene, the poetic and folk narrative eulogising the river goddess is used as:

Chorus at the river: *Yemoja the gorgeous one who extracts no promise of reward for her service. Unique aquatic being. Your magic touch turns the river into a flowing herb. Homage to Yemoja.* (Arugba, 2010)

Adetutu is also praised as: *We are happy to be the cynosure of all eyes. It is only appropriate to bargain with a good trader. Call the merry in time of merriment.* (Arugba, 2010)

The Use of Mise-en-scene as an Auteur Signature

Mise-en-scene is also known as put into the scene. What does the director put into the scene? Take for example Ousmane Sembene, who hardly frames his pictures without adding anything pan-African. This could be pictures, market scenes and so on. In TK’s work, his appropriate use of crowd scenes such as the market, the Osun procession, the dance at the mystical river in honour of Yemoja, and the picture paintings in the room of the artist Makinwa is all part of the choice he made for the film.

Consistently, our eyes cannot be taken away from the large posters talking about the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These pictures are carefully done and arranged with the visual elements of the story to communicate an idea to the audience.

Conclusion

A film auteur has what we call an artistic signature which audiences and film critics use as a conduit for identifying works of cinematic expression. The auteur filmmaker would have had to produce the same genre of films using a lot of unique cinematic representation and expression over a sustained period. Tunde Kelani's films have been one of the efficient and elaborate mediums through which he consistently transposed the Yoruba tradition, communalism, cosmology and personal philosophy in his films. This is evident in how he maintains most of this in a recurring nature in his films.

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