

**TEMPERAMENTS AND MOOD COLOURATIONS IN
NOLLYWOOD COSTUME: BIYI BANDELE'S *ELESIN OBA*,
*THE KINGS'S HORSEMAN***

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Abstract

The task in this paper is to critically examine how temperaments and mood configuration in Nollywood film characters serve as cogent reflection of various shades of indeterminate actions, reactions and repercussions as core elements at the fabrics of life and existence in society. No doubt, actions in films reflect the essential human nature that should require in-depth critical study towards a better understanding of the mutable bearings that underlie human existence in society. Among the contemporary activities in the creative arts sector, filmmaking has continually functioned as vital instrument for cultural promotion, artifacts preservation and for the disclosure of human nature. Charles Cooley's theoretical conception of the Looking-Glass Self was adopted for this study. Also, the paper uses qualitative research method to evaluate the portrayal of the coloration of human temperaments and mood through costuming design in Bandele's projection of *Elesin Oba, The King's Horseman*. Findings show that temperament and mood are different and that both can be creatively encoded in the character's body gears to accentuate the generic consciousness that set the tone of the film. The sanguine, the choleric, the melancholic and the phlegmatic are captured in the costumes as unseen but immutable forces that predetermine the characters' mold in the society. Mood is spontaneous and ephemeral; the recurring ones are coded to reflect the various swings needed to thicken the social context and the thematic focus of the film. The paper concludes that the deployment of costume in artwork serves an important purpose deep-seated appraisal that elevates the cultural identity in film enactments nation's economy.

Keywords: Costume-design, Culture, Human-temperament, Mood-colouration, Nollywood

Introduction

The need to come to grip with human nature as often depicted in films has inspired movie makers to consider the overt representation of some traits that actually motivate a character to respond the way it does involuntarily in a film. As one of the fundamental tools that actor use to communicate in films, costume features as the prominent aspect for encoding or decoding the innate and, sometimes, acquired traits of characters in a film. The coding per se, reflects the inner psychic energies which Sigmund Freud identifies as “the unconscious (which) presents our unconcealed wishes (and being) through symbols” (Charles Bressler, 91). This shows a much more attempt to portray humans from the psychic motivations to the actions the motivations intone in the contemporary costume design, as often portrayed in some Nollywood films (Jacob, 2023).

A trait, however, is a factor that marks one person distinct from the other. In considering the human nature which the filmmaker intends to impute in his persons-in-the-film, and most often grounded on cultural consciousness of the people in the setting of the act (Udoiwang and Udoette, 2023), costume is currently deployed to situate this inner force. In the view of Godfried Asamoah, a Biblical representation of traits is captured in the human temperament, systematically patterns to the hot, the cold, the reserved and the unperturbed (157-158). According to David Rettew and Laura Mckee,

The concept of temperament dates back to ancient Greek philosophers, including Hippocrates and Galen, who postulated the cause of a person’s usual behaviour to be due to varying concentration of humour. Derived from the Latin *tempere*, which means, to mix, the word itself suggests a relationship between behavioural dispositions and basic biological substrates.... Some prominent personality researchers have argued that both temperament and personality refer to endogenous basic tendencies of thoughts, emotions, and behaviour, (16-17)

The above position may have been the reason Mary Rothbart *et al*, view temperament as a product of the mind (126). To Robert McCrae *et al*, it is temperament that rather configures the mindset (180); while Benjamin Lahaye maintains that temperament is a reflection of thought driven by emotion in which a regular form of behaviour is induced (90). Thus, temperament is not far from the marked individuality imputed by the human disposition that sustains specificity in response to challenges in life.

Mood colouration opens up to the idea of emotions within which galaxies of attitudinal responses to actions or gestures are brought to bear the character in an enactment. On what people put on, Eddiefroy Igbo acknowledges that it is possible to code the “human mental processes such as emotions, memory, perception, intelligence, attitude, motivation, learning, personality and thinking” (67) as aspect of culture. That means, one can look at someone’s dress and colour combination and nod that the person putting it on is intelligent. So would one observe another and conclude that the dressing or colour combination should be done in a different way. Thus, the clothe people put on can exhibit bright mood, warm mood, repressive mood, foreboding mood, hilarious or even downcast. That means, it can also evoke feelings and emotions a design in costume intensifies in viewers. Mood, then, suggests a dimension of feelings one’s dressing, speech or mindset stimulate. It is the feeling an information intones in the decoder’s psyche. However, in Effiong Johnson’s view, the prevalent model is the adaptability of costume to change of time, season, locale and most importantly, mood (160).

In recent Nollywood films, much attention is given to the temperament human beings embody which manifests in the emotional outlooks and the intermingling of feelings flashing from both determinate and indeterminate actions. To this effect, temperament may be seen to recur at random, maintaining the tempoin various incidences, while mood requires a specific occasion to flash its ephemeral intensity as human nature varies in varying human needs and action in life (Affiah, Udoinwang and Amaku, 2023). This paper examines the coding of temperament and mood colouration in the costume design of Bandele’s *Elesin Oba, the King’s Horseman*.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is premised on Charles Cooley's theory of "The Looking-Glass Self Theory". The theory was propounded in 1907. The tenets of the theory are that human beings conceive of themselves based on others' remarks on them. They waste much time to ascertain what others think, feel or make of them as displayed in their cues, gestures, reactions and even direct comment on their disposition. They take time to evaluate what people say or think about them. When someone conceives that he is spoken well of, he may begin to evolve a strong social outlook that presents a positive self through disposition; but if he guesses he is negatively conceived, he may begin to recoil to somber or withdraw from others. The interpretation people make from other people's judgment about them predetermines their attitude which temperament and mood are emboldened.

In viewing the temperament and mood colouration as captured in costumes used in Nollywood films, the actor is only so costumed to bear a message encoded in the costume. The actor becomes a glass for the audience to see himself or herself through. Based on the activity and actions of the actor: actions for glory, for pomp, for regrets, for hilarity, for sorrow or for shame, the costume is put together to communicate the unseen creative force in the characters. According to Igbo, the concept of 'looking-glass self' says that we see ourselves through the eyes of others. Other social factors are our mirror, the looking-glass through which we see ourselves' (120). Based on the way a persona is costumed, information on the person's feelings may be deciphered in a film. It is culture that marks out people for who they are, and their perception of reality that might as well affect their mood and responses to situations (David Udoinwang, 2012). Thus, "what is important is that without group experience, without society or social interaction there cannot be a self" (Igbo 122). Among other creative factors in a film, costume is a significant craft "embodying the cultural idea and the codes they are represented with to make communication flow in a film" (Udofia, Atakpo and Udoinwang 45). Human feelings, attitude traits and swings of mood can surface in the costume of an actor.

Human Temperament

Temperament as used in this paper suggests a dominant human behavioural dispositions. As Tim Lahaya puts, "temperament is the

combination of inborn traits that subconsciously affect all our behaviour. These traits, which are passed on by our genes, are based on hereditary factors and arranged at the time of conception” (2). They affect human actions. In the view of William Sheldon cited in Nzebulam and Nwuzor, temperament is equivalent to the human personality which defines the inborn attitude of people who are fat, those who are massive and muscular and those who are frail, elucidated further as ‘endomorph, mesomorph, and ectomorph. The endomorph are soft, calm, slow but heavy people who like food and rest. They hardly protest but easily adapt or conform to circumstances around them. The mesomorph are basically huge, massive and domineering. They are often sociable, engaging more in outdoor activities which make them everyone’s persons. The ectomorph are usually fragile people who are reserved and introverted. They are very analytical and critical of situations around them, and would prefer solitude over the bustle of social life. This attributes the innate human behavioural dispositions to the person’s outlook or body-build (93). On the other hand, Sachi Saraf corroborates that “these traits are internal properties of a person that cause their behaviour... (and) a descriptive summary of a person's relatively permanent aspects of behaviour” (273).

Another way of viewing temperament is based on Carl Jung’s idea of introversion and extroversion in human nature brought to aliveness as a repeated memory. According to Bressler, “Jung is of the view that such memories exist in the form of ... repeated human experiences” (92). However, a more concise expose to the two behavioral disposition is elaborated thus:

An introvert, according to Jung, is an individual who habitually thinks, feels and acts in a way that demonstrates that he is motivated chiefly by his own ideas and self-principles than by objective or material values in their behaviour... They are quiet, aloof and prefer solitude. They are rigid and live by rules and ideas – emotionally reserved and self-analytic.... Extroverts habitually think, feel and act in relation to external object. (Their) behaviours... talkative, good mixer, confiding and prefer company, indifferent to

criticism... emotionally uninhibited, warm-hearted, impulsive and rarely self-analytical. (Bressler 94)

From the position above, temperament is conceived to be either the warm or the cold or what would be commonly described as “the going-out type” and “the not-going-out type”. On the other hand, some scholars see temperament as a complex factor that exists in galaxies and shades. For instance, Kylie Rymanowicz writes thus:

Temperament refers to personality traits that determine how someone reacts to the world. Are they quiet or rambunctious? Easygoing or apprehensive? The traits of temperament are mostly innate traits that we are born with... there are nine different traits of temperament: activity level, biological rhythms, sensitivity, intensity of reaction, adaptability, approach/withdrawal, persistence, distractibility (and) mood. Each person has their unique combination of personality or temperament traits. (16-17)

Rymanowicz’s position has indicated that temperament is equally a trait and that it is not just the cold person who is introverted or the warm person who is extroverted but a galaxy of them in warm or cold temper discharge.

Another elaborate breakdown of temperament is in Tim LaHaye who identifies the Sanguine being hilarious, the Choleric predominantly workaholic, the Melancholic being down-earth but analytical, and the Phlegmatic being critical yet indifference as the identifiable types (*Why You Act the Way You Do* 1984). In *Spirit Controlled Temperament*, he further observes that a person can embody more than one temperament, yet a dominant one predetermines the person’s personality. This gives way to such blends like ‘Sanchol, Cholsan, Sanmel, Melsan, Sanphleg, Phlegsan, Melchol, Cholmel, Cholphleg, Phlegchol, Melpheg and Phlegmel (*Spirit Control Temperament* 1982). These blends give a clue to what Anietie Udofia identifies as “a quirk in the personality (from) a gamut of impressions... in one immutable frame” (663-664). All these are subjective human conditions that come alive in the Nollywood film costume design currently.

Mood Colouration

The idea of mood evolves from feeling or emotion. According to Thomas James, “mood doesn’t mean moodiness, the condition of being gloomy or sullen. In drama, mood is a particular state of persistent emotion that includes the whole range of possible human feelings” (142). From this angle, mood is the aura created by the artist’s design. In the view of Ellen Winner, “all that is important to note are the dips and peaks of the line... We turn our attention to more of properties of the line, such as its thickness, brightness, or colour” (7). To this effect, mood colouration is the atmosphere a specific design intensifies in the prevalent emotion.

Another way of observing mood coloration is that it is “a complex response involving feelings, internal bodily changes, and outward responses that may facilitate or interrupt on-going behaviour” (Gilmer cited in Nzebulam and Nwuzor 97). Nonetheless, from the angle of creative arts like drama or filmmaking, Ellen Winner avers that “art of all cultures expresses moods or other qualities through formal properties, such as lines, colour and rhythm” (8). Mood colouration, from the views of these scholars, is the variance in feelings, emotion or state of mind established by design.

However, other ways of observing mood are in utterance or responses in verbal statements. To David Eka “mood refers to a set of syntactic and semiotic contrasts signaled by certain forms of verbs – such contrasts could show the indicative mood and the imperative mood” (103). Along the line, Sunday Adewuyiet *al* corroborates that “a mood is an emotional state. Mood differs from emotions in that they are less specific, less intense, and less likely to be triggered by a particular stimulus or event... Mood differs from temperament or personality traits which are even longer lasting” (25). Based on this, mood colouration is the changes in feelings stimulated by communication.

Synopsis of *Elesin Oba, The King’s Horseman*

Elesin Oba, The King’s Horseman is a Nollywood film written and directed by Biyi Bandele and produced by Mo Abudu. It was release to public view in 2022 Netflix. The film is an adaptation of Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman*. Many Nigerian and foreign actors such as Odunlade Adekola, Shaffy Bello, Jide Kosoko, Kevin Ushi, Jenny Stead, Mark Elderkin, Langley Kirkwood, Olawale Ibrahim,

Joke Sylver, Taiwo Ajai-Lycette and Omowumi Dada feature in the film. The central idea is cultural obligation.

Elesin has just a night to live as he is expected to commit suicide to accompany his boss, the dead Oba who would be interred in the morning, to the land of the dead. Elesin spots a beautiful damsel and resolves to marry her immediately. This choice repudiates Iyaloja and the people but he presses on, lamenting that he should be shown love and appreciation since he is dying that night. Iyaloja obliges his request. Attention shifts from the obligation of dying to the obligation of love-making and the festivity of marriage overrides the sobriety of his death to be buried with the king in the morning. A police officer reports the situation to the British District Officer that a high chief is committing suicide at night. The European, out of reasoning that he may have been coerced by his people out of barbarism, intervenes by sending police to arrest Elesin. Elesin is busy making love to his newly married wife leading to his delay to kill himself, until the police come and arrest him in the circle of the ritual. This sacrilege Elesin throws himself into dampens the morale of the community. Olunde, his son, who studies Medicine abroad has also come to bury his father and the king the following morning as customs demand. He feels the disgrace and takes his life to expiate the frailty of his irresponsible father, by escorting the Oba, while Elesin, his father condescends from the heroic death to win his people's admiration to the fools' death to risk their curses forever.

Human Temperaments in *Elesin Oba, The King's Horseman*

Costume design in the film is practically harnessed to communicate salient cultural and global realities but the prominent factor is the ability to reflect the various human temperaments and mood colourations in the film. The temperaments portrayed are the sanguine, the choleric, the melancholic and the phlegmatic.

The Sanguine

This temperament belongs to the hot or warm type. People who are sanguine are lively and they pursue elation and warmth, devoting much of their time to winning social appraisal. Their spirit is always hilarious filling every moment with the bustle and aliveness of life. This temperament is situated in Elesin Oba, Resident's wife and Iyaloja. This costume below denotes one whose "heart is red"



Elesin enjoys everyone's love (Bandeled 2022)

The Choleric

This temperament is a warm or hot one and it typical of people who are always duty-bound and purpose oriented. They devote time to activate their resolve without minding side comments. They are risk takers and law breakers. "Choleric are daring speed demons who dart in and out of traffic constantly. They always try to get more accomplished in a given period of time" (Lahaye 9). This temperament is reflected in the costume of Iyaloja and Simon Pilking. The costumes denote those whose "spirits are hot"



Simon wants Result (Bandeled 2022) Sergeant is Result Oriented

The Melancholic

This temperament is a cold trait. Those who wield it are often the calm-down-to-earth type. They assess situations to depth before yielding; they are perfectionists; and they can sacrifice to extreme for others. This temperament is viewed as the mature trait among all. According to Control Paul, “maturity is seen in a person who can see himself as he really is with both his strengths and weaknesses (this is) the richest of all temperaments: analytical, self-sacrificing, gifted, a perfectionist... He is usually an introvert, given to moods and varies in his moods” (17). The cool/blue/purple costume denote one whose “mind is calm and deep in thought”. The costume of Olunde reflects this trait.



Olunde is Calm/Analytical/Self-sacrificing (Bandeled 2022)

The Phlegmatic

This temperament is the coldest of all. Those who embody this force tend to be overtly introverted and they totally shy away from the bustle of life especially that which may inspire changes. They recoil to a more somber mood but are very cooperative and obedient in services they undertake. The phlegmatic is not a dunce. “He has a sense of humour... He teases a lot, but usually has good sense of timing with humour... He is not a perfectionist, but he does have high standard of accuracy and precision... He opposes a change of any kind, good or bad because it requires effort” (Contrel 23). The cool/brown costume is designed to denote a cynical but unperturbed one. This trait is situated in The Praise Singer.



Praise Singer is faithful but hilarious (Bandeled 2022)

All these temperament aptly represented in the costume design situate a single sustainable trait that appear dominant in the film. From the design of those costumes, the audience can easily read the dominant personality of Elesin, Olunde, Pilking, Sergeant and Praise Singer.

Mood Colourations in *Elesin Oba, The King's Horseman*

Moods in the film are quite different from temperament. In the view of James and Eka “mood is an outcome of the action from the

unseen or seen force” (103). In *Elesin Oba, The King’s Horseman*, many moods and their variances (colourations) are established through costume design.

Funny/Erotic

There is a common saying that in times of danger such as war, pandemic or mortal-execution which death hovers, the urge for sex usually rises. This has come to play in the character of Elesin in the evening of his death. Elesin will die in the night, on seeing Omowumi, the mood to lay a woman tickles in him. As LaHaye puts, “sanguines eat everything in sight” (8) His confiding in Iyaloja evokes fun but it results to sex.



**Funny Mood changes to Sex
(Bande 2022)**

Heroic/Furious

The moods of pomp saturate Iyaloja over the excitement of satisfying everything needed to have a successful royal burial is spontaneous. As Elesin delays to perform the cultural ritual of killing himself, which she almost brings her status to disrepute for by offering him Omowumi who has already been betrothed to a man, her mood changes from the heroic to the furious. A swing from excitement of fulfillment to the ire of furious is mood colouration.



Excitement results to Wrath (Bande 2022)

Erotic/Terrible

Elesin makes people conceive of him as a hero who will boldly strangle himself in the night to accompany the dead king set to be buried in the morning. The elation mingles with the desire for sex. After making love to Omowumi, his new and last wife, the elation wanes. He now feels the phlegm of self-destruction to impress others. The ember of fear begins to simmer in his mind. The erotic mood swings to the terrible.



Sex Mood changes to fear for Death

Conclusion

The use of costume in a movie has proved to be quite educative and symbolic in the reflection of human values such as time, status, profession, mood, theme, age and gender. As human nature gets complex, the design of costume in films changes to capture the intricate factors like the human temperament and mood colouration as a fundamental thrust towards arts promotion and preservation in the society. However, the analysis of *Elesin Oba, The King's Horseman*, has reflected that human concerns such as the biological trait in the outlook and alterations based on the upheavals in the society can be coded to deepen the mood and style of Nollywood filmmaking. A culture in creativity projected from the praxis of human nature may elevate a nation's identity and creative pedigree in the global view.

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