

Oğuz Kayır
Bilkent University
Department of Communication and Design
oguzkayir@outlook.com // kaan.kayir@bilkent.edu.tr

Feminist Praxis in African Cinema: Politics of Rungano Nyoni's Transnational Authorship

Building upon the theoretical writings of the late author bell hooks and the activist Beti Ellerson's critical suggestions on African women's cinema, this study will be illuminating how the feminist practices in African cinema fabricate a filmic vocabulary to reclaim female subjectivities on and off-screen. Through conducting a textual and directorial analysis of Zambian-born and UK-based director Rungano Nyoni's film *I Am Not a Witch* (2017), this research seeks to explore the politics of women's authorship, their discursive strategies, and creative practices in the emerging national and transnational film industries.

The financial limitations in independent filmmaking force films to be made in co-production methods, to receive multiple fundings from European and American-based production companies, and consequently, foreground the politics of "transnationality" in film theory and practice. This practice of transnational film production, evidently, has been subjected to criticism in the existing scholarship on African national cinemas with many critics dwelling on the restricting nature of such practices on an African director's creative freedom. Proposing a counter-argument to this understanding, this paper will closely examine the authorship of Rungano Nyoni's feature debut *I Am Not a Witch* (2017) and argue the ways in which she orchestrates a feminist and postcolonial vision, regardless of the transnational production of her film.

The seldom-explored terrains that Rungano Nyoni steps her foot into in *I Am Not a Witch*, therefore, calls for textual and industry-based research to unpack its politics of transnationality, feminism, and film practice. In an effort to provide that, this study will pose questions on how a female African filmmaker can manifest her directorial autonomy regardless of the transnational production dynamics of her film, and how the feminist film practices in African cinema can be reconfigured in the light of transnational film production.

Keywords: African Cinema, Rungano Nyoni, authorship, feminism, transnationality.

Selected Bibliography

Dipio, D. (2019). *Gender Terrains in African Cinema*. South Africa: NISC (Pty) Ltd.

Ellerson, B. P. (2016). African Women on the Screen: an Agenda for Research. *Africana Studia*, 26, 9-15.

hooks, b. (2015). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mhando, M. R. (2015). Globalization and African Cinema: Distribution and Reception in the Anglophone Region . In E. N. Sahle, *Globalization and Socio-Cultural Processes in Contemporary Africa* (pp. 149-168). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Staiger, J. (2003). Authorship Approaches. In D. A. Gerstner, & J. S. (eds.), *Authorship and Film* (pp. 27-57). New York: Routledge.

Author Bio

Oğuz Kayır is an MA student and Teaching Assistant in Media and Visual Studies program at Bilkent University. He received his BA degree in Film and Television department at Istanbul Bilgi University, where he wrote a senior thesis titled “Narration as a Resistance: Formation of Postcolonial Identities in Senegalese Cinema”. As a continuation of his undergraduate studies, his current research focuses on feminist authorship, transnational cinema, continental philosophy, and postcolonial visual culture.