

**Media Anthropology Network
European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA)
E-Seminar Series**

<http://www.media-anthropology.net/index.php/e-seminars>

E-Seminar 44

["Accept No Limitations"](#): Expressions of Diasporic Identity in Nigerian Idol.

By
[Tess Conner](#)
Independent

Discussant
[Stephen M. Lyon](#)
Durham University, UK

9-23 July 2013

Veronica Barassi <v.barassi@gold.ac.uk>

July 9th 2013

Dear List,

I am delighted to introduce you to the 44th Media Anthropology Network E-Seminar!

We will be discussing Tess Conner's paper titled "Accept No Limitations": Expressions of Diasporic Identity in Nigerian Idol.

If you haven't had the chance to read the paper, you can follow the link below:

http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/conner_diasporidentity.pdf

We'll start with an email from our discussant Stephen M. Lyon, who will comment on the paper. Then, when Tess Conner has had a chance to respond to these comments I will open the discussion to the list.

As always, the e-seminar will stay open for two weeks (until the 23rd of July) and then we'll get the transcript of the entire conversation posted online to the E-Seminars section of our website.

I am delighted to be chairing this section, and I am really looking forward to our discussion.

Best,

Veronica

Stephen M. Lyon <s.m.lyon@durham.ac.uk>

July 9th 2013

Thanks very much Veronica both for agreeing to chair and for the helpful guidance for the e-seminar!

Comments on Tess Conner, "Accept No Limitations": Expressions of Diasporic Identity in Nigerian Idol"

Firstly, I'd like to thank Tess for providing such an interesting paper, which provides the basis for a rich and useful conversation about diaspora and diasporic identity. Secondly, I have to admit that while I am a massive fan of Bollywood and Hollywood (I probably shouldn't really admit to liking the latter, but I don't pretend to have sophisticated taste in films or television), my knowledge of Nollywood (the Nigerian film and television industry) was considerably more superficial prior to reading Tess' engaging paper. So in addition to thanking Tess for providing the paper, I'd like to thank her for giving me a crash course in Nollywood-- something which I will now capitalise on when looking for good films to watch in the future!

Like many people on this list, I suspect, I have to admit to being something of an anti-fan of the Pop Idol genre. I have had friends who watched these shows over the years, however, so I am very familiar with the genre and am only marginally embarrassed to admit that I could even trot out a few names of some of the prominent contestants. What Tess describes sounds infinitely better than the UK version, however, and not only because she makes a compelling case that there is more going on than the equivalent of a cover tune open mic night. Where the British Pop Idol seems to have attracted rather unimaginative performers and judges (admittedly from my very limited viewing), who seek to reproduce fairly banal versions of past pop songs, the contestants on Nigerian Idol seem to be creatively playing with genres in both the musical and non-musical performances. Tess follows recent diaspora theorists, notably Tsagarousianou, in arguing that media are critical to an understanding of the complex processes of material, cultural and mental exchange. Tess argues that close examination of the performances of contestants and judges on Nigerian Idol allow a more nuanced understanding not only of how normative diasporic identity concepts delineate what a diaspora can and should look like, but also what a diaspora actually looks like through the interactions taking place between diasporic communities through media (p. 70-71).

I'd like to start the discussion by raising what seem to me to be two of the most intriguing ideas from this paper. The first relates to the idea that role of media in shaping diaspora

and diasporic identity and the notion that there might be diasporic identities, which are defined not by myth of common origin or homeland, but rather shared relationship to media. The second is Tess' examples of how Nigerian Idol contestants and judges demonstrate and transgress normative concepts of diasporic identity.

Tess argues that essentialised definitions of diaspora based on common origin, while not irrelevant, may be of little use in understanding how contemporary Diasporas are formed and maintained. The impact of Nollywood exports on pan-African, Caribbean and North American identity construction provide an interesting example of what she seems to be arguing. The audience for Nollywood films is not restricted to Nigerian migrants or people with some family history from Nigeria. Nollywood films are broadcast without sound to audiences who don't speak the languages used in the original films and they seem to resonate beyond any specific Nigerian diaspora (in the old fashioned sense that Tess is suggesting we must critique carefully). This is a fascinating idea and one that I think might provide a useful basis for other research. Clearly, there is something to what she says-- the export of Nollywood, Bollywood and Hollywood all resonate far beyond the national target audience that the producers frequently have in mind-- though of course they have all sought international audiences more or less explicitly in their products. In the case of Bollywood, the one that I am more familiar with, there has been a concerted effort in recent decades to spread the Bollywood influence beyond the South Asian origin communities around the world. Films like *Monsoon Wedding* are very clearly Bollywood products trying to appeal to non-South Asians. British South Asian filmmakers have also demonstrated a fairly reliable ability to capture diverse audiences, notably the films of Gurinder Chadha (*Bhaji on the Beach* and *Bride and Prejudice* being two of her most well known films which combined explicit elements of Bollywood). I'm sure that many on this list could provide a far more comprehensive and useful summary of the impact of Bollywood films on non-South Asian identity in Britain in particular and more widely in the English speaking world generally, so I won't try to make a full blown comparison here. I only want to note that I think that Tess raises an important and intriguing point about the capacity of these types of media to create, or at least impact on, identity. I think that Tess is right to say that such identity impact is not restricted to the traditionally bounded and identified diaspora populations with which such media are associated. Being a rather simple empirical fellow, though, my question on this point is how one might go about demonstrating that such identities are diasporic identities? I am entirely sympathetic to what Tess is arguing, but I think perhaps this point in the paper is largely suggestive and would need some more evidence to flesh out the point-- if indeed she wants to make this point in the way I've summarised here.

The real strength of the paper, in my view, is in Tess' detailed examination of the ways in which the contestants play with various linguistic and other cultural identity markers. It's interesting that the apparent primary audience of Nigerian Idol is the wider British population, and not solely those of Nigerian or African descent (p. 73-74). So presumably the producers have consciously played with cultural representations of Africans, Nigerians, Caribbean and African American to produce something which captures the imagination of people regardless of their own a priori knowledge about Nigeria or West Africa. The selection of judges is indicative of such a goal through the inclusion of an

African American singer, dancer and DJ (Jeffrey Daniel). The contestants also do their part and take on musical and linguistic styles from an eclectic range of sources. One of the contestants she describes, Daniel Agagha, a 21 year old from Nigeria's south east Delta region chose a Jamaican musical genre and in his farewell interview adopted a Jamaican speech pattern that was compatible with his choice of musical style. Another example Tess provides is that of Glory Oriakhi, from Edo state in Nigeria. This is perhaps the more challenging and interesting test case for Tess' argument. Oriakhi was successful at getting to the final ten contestants. Throughout the run of the show she performed songs following various prescribed themes (disco, movie soundtrack, Nigerian, African, Michael Jackson and Abba were all used to define weekly themes, apparently). When she was finally voted out by the public she chose to sing a song called 'Joromi' by Sir Victor Uwaifo. Sir Victor Uwaifo is from the same state as Oriakhi, Edo State. Tess states that this is an expression of Oriakhi's Edo identity and her identification with Nigerian expressive arts (p. 77). This seems to me to be somewhat at odds with the production company's commercial objective of creating a show, which appeals beyond Nigerian and other African audiences. What made this expression of local identity all the more powerful was that the remaining contestants chose to join Oriakhi as back up singers. The song is apparently very well known and popular in Nigeria. Tess argues that Oriakhi demonstrates the hybrid nature of human beings. Oriakhi, Tess argues that such 'indigenous perspectives of identity represent a cultural vocabulary that is beyond a corporeal existence' (p. 77). She then goes on to say that Uwaifo, the author of the song 'Joromi', in a phone interview, says that 'tribal voices' can represent a 'unique expressiveness' of what is in people's minds (p. 77). The specific sentiments used by Oriakhi in the song, 'Joromi', are apparently not translatable outside of the indigenous language, but will be understood by members of Bini (Edo) culture. The idea that there are simultaneous messages being inferred does not trouble me. It is certainly entirely reasonable to suggest that diverse audiences may all be moved by particular performances in radically different ways. Let me play devil's advocate for a moment and suggest that the example of Oriakhi's final performance strikes me as somewhat undermining of the argument that the media produces a diaspora or a diasporic identity. Rather, it looks as if the media may well play a vital role in the processes of exchange which are indeed critical to diaspora, but that the media in the absence of all of the traditional stuff of diaspora theory is incapable of invoking what Uwaifo says is powerful about 'tribal voices'. In contrast, it seems to me that the example of films produced by South Asian diaspora, often in collaboration with Bollywood, may offer a less problematic example of precisely the point that Tess wants to make about the role of media in material, cultural and mental exchange.

I raise these two points by way of the start of what I am sure will be a very useful conversation about diaspora and media. I know that there are others on this list far more knowledgeable about Nollywood and African media industries more broadly and I am very much looking forward to reading what they make both of this paper and the implications of Tess thought provoking arguments for regional and continental media.

It remains for me to thank Tess once more and to hand over to her. She can, and I'm sure will, correct any misunderstandings I may have and will no doubt clarify my uncertainties

about how her arguments tie into what is obviously a much larger piece of work about diaspora.

Steve

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 10th 2013

Hello,

I wish to thank everyone in advance for participating in this e-seminar. My special thanks to Steve for agreeing to be the discussant and for providing us with a number of positions to unpack – on Nollywood, diaspora studies, culture and identity through media and diasporic identification in global television formats; Pop Idol (Idols) for us.

Let me begin my response to the comments and critiques Steve offers by providing some background on my paper. It was written for a contemporary volume on Idols - Adapting Idols: Authenticity, Identity and Performance in a Global Television Format. The book's introduction and table of contents provide additional context.

I would like to address Idols scholarship, my approach to exploring the first series of Nigerian Idols and the inclusion of Nollywood in my paper, then reply to Steve's question about how one might demonstrate identities as being "diasporic" – beginning with the joint performance that finalists entered into with Glory Oriakhi.

Prior to writing the paper I too (like Steve and I suspect many others here), was quite new to reality television formats in general and the Idols genre. Through my research on global Idols adaptations I found that much of the scholarship essentializes 'a' or 'the' winner as a basis for empirical research and as such, the basis for drawing conclusions from the research. On one hand this approach seems natural: a great many reality television formats (Strictly Come Dancing, Survivor, Big Brother, Idols) are linked to notions of a single winner. However, where my research on Nigerian Idols is concerned I place the approach into question.

A particular set of scholarship on the Roma winner of the 2005 series of the Czech adaptation of the Idols format grounded my pursuit of another approach. Václav Štětko's paper Globalization, Reality TV and Cultural Inclusion: the Case of the 2005 Czech Search for a Superstar takes the position that national Czech identity excludes Roma identity, leveraging Ladislav Holy's reading on Czech culture "in his anthropologically-oriented study of the Czech national identity." What Štětko then makes available for us to evaluate is the extent to which Vlasta Horváth's identity reflects an/his "integration" into a "Czechness" that is defined as a foregone and conclusive definition of 'culture' tied to geographic and ethnic delimiters. This said, the sole conclusion one can reach through the scholarship is likely the question of whether 'a' or 'the' winner represents or challenges normative constructs of culture and identity. My issue with reifying the primordial in pursuits of a wider understanding of 'culture' and 'identity' through media is that neither culture nor identity can be subject to acts that are self-defining or in-progress (some of

the scholarship from Hall and Fanon come to mind).

Štětka didn't interview Horváth: we don't have a line of sight into Horváth's lived experiences and this presents another challenge from an empirical perspective: the idea of media space as culturally meaningful dis-enables Horváth's voice in discourses of national and political identity through media. He slips into cultural domination as a 'minority'. I wondered what Horváth thought. I also identified academic work that was in direct contrast to Štětka's, featured interviews the author conducted with Horváth, and documented Horváth's constructs of his own identity – again, in opposition to readings of his identity that gave primacy to a minority cultural disposition. He is Czech and Roma, without experiencing inner crises about which identity to seize and when.

The issues above that I raise from the 2005 Czech adaptation of *Idols* reflect wider tenets found in *Idols* scholarship (national and regional about British, American, Australian versions). Namely tendencies to racialize cultural performance, expressions of identity, political identity and national and regional “insert x-ness.” This led me to decide to explore a range of performances from Nigerian *Idol* contestants and finalists. In short, my approach concerns a set of cultural performances and expressions of identity.

On Nollywood and my paper: Peer reviews suggested that I might have chosen to explore Nigerian *Idol* without exploring Nollywood. I disagreed with this direction – my central question in researching the first season of Nigerian *Idol* was: what happens when a global television format and a global media and culture industry collide? It would have been intellectually dishonest to (dis-)place Nigerian *Idols* outside of a Nollywood context because it is one of the top three media and culture industries in the world today from a myriad of angles – the development, scope and reach of Nigerian cinema and television programming, the number of film and television productions per annum, online cinema, online and subscription-based television broadcasts, legally produced and sold and illegally bootlegged CDs and DVDs.

There is also a great deal of existing scholarship on Nollywood, its rise and the relationship between Nollywood and African identity construction (Ekwuazi, Larkin, Bartlet, Okome, Esan, Ukadike come to mind). In *Towards the Decolonization of the African Film* Ekwuazi points us to important elements used to define a diaspora and through which to examine diasporic culture and identity. He points to a single element (linguistic in this case) to “sum up the whole cultural horizon” (p. 103), linking the language of indigenous African culture into a Nigerian and African film aesthetic.

Ekwuazi also addresses the productive dimensions of cultural markers that are inherent in indigenous languages: “The significance of the indigenous language here is that it is made as pure a reconstruction as possible” and: “In an oral culture, speech is golden; no less premium is placed on seeing than on hearing...” In this context, claims of indigenous and linguistic cultural markers from the early scholarship on Nollywood are immediately recognizable in Oriakhi's performance of Joromi in the first season of Nigerian *Idol*. That she elects (through self-agency I suggest), to perform an Edo song that is based in oral Bini culture begins to build the case for a definition of diasporic culture that includes

indigenous identity.

My research on Victor Uwaifo's rendition of Joromi revealed that this song is and remains a regional West African classic. When it was first introduced more than thirty years ago it garnered a lot of radio play and was a must-have at house parties in Nigeria and Ghana. Today it has been reinterpreted, sampled in rap music from Nigeria. My interview with Uwaifo about Joromi and Oriakhi's performance of it on Nigerian Idol articulated the same cultural markers as Ekwuazi's: identity construction and reconstruction through oral culture (for Oriakhi, Edo culture to which she belongs). Finalists joined in as a way of supporting Oriakhi, her self-identification with the story of Joromi (a warrior who had slayed many devils to which she equated her weekly ascent to the top set of finalists), and they joined in because they knew Uwaifo's song (making a nod to the influence of Edo culture on national Nigerian and regional West African culture). This performance in the Nigerian adaptation of the Idols format shows us representations of indigenous identity that are at the nexus of a Nollywood media and culture industry that Ekwuazi examines. The performance also represents indigenous, national and regional expressions of African culture and identity.

Exploring a number of performances enabled me to explore the wider range of cultural markers that are available to consider for research on Nigerian Idol.

I will end my comments here, keeping in mind that in starting this e-seminar there will be opportunities to expand upon representations of diasporic identity in Nigerian Idol beyond indigenous expressions, and discuss Nigerian Idol as Nollywood media through which material, cultural and mental exchanges take form in line with Tsagarousianou's work.

Kind regards,

Tess

Veronica Barassi <v.barassi@gold.ac.uk>

July 11th 2013

Dear All,

Following Steve's comments and Tess's response I am happy to open the discussion to everyone.

All the best

Veronica

Veronica Barassi <v.barassi@gold.ac.uk>

July 17th 2013

Dear All,

This is a gentle reminder that our E-Seminar is still ongoing and that the discussion is open to all. We really would welcome your comments, questions and suggestions!

You can find Tess Conner's paper 'Accept No Limitations: Expressions of Diasporic Identity on Nigerian Idol', here http://www.media-anthropology.net/file/conner_diasporidentity.pdf. If you scroll down you can also read Steve Lyon's comments and Tess's response.

I have few comments and questions for Tess.

First of all I would like to thank her for this interesting paper, which explores some of the cultural complexities of a too often under-rated genre such as reality TV.

As Steve Lyon mentioned in his response, one of the key ideas of Tess's paper is the understanding that diasporic identities can be defined (or constructed?) not through the myth of a common origin or homeland, but rather through a shared relationship to media.

I find this idea intriguing and convincing.

However, I have two questions. Firstly I would like Tess to elaborate and explain her research methodologies. From reading the paper it seems to me that Tess focused mostly on the analysis of the Nigerian Idol as a case study, with a particular emphasis placed on 'discourse'. Is this true? Did I understand this correctly?

If this is the case, my question is on methods. Whilst I believe – as the paper shows – that 'discourse analysis' can highlight how particular cultural discourses on identity are constructed within the media, my question is: how do we know for sure that viewers in the UK and elsewhere in the world identify with these discourses? In other words, where is the empirical evidence that diasporic identities are defined through the media?

Another point. The theoretical discussion is fascinating, as Tess draws on different works on diasporic studies. I was surprised, however, to notice that Tess chose not to engage with the scholarship that explores the connection between media and identity and the social construction of a common 'we'.

Two works come to mind. One is Anderson's (1991) discussion of the nation as imagined community and his understanding that printed media played a central role in the construction of a sense of national identity. The second is Couldry's Media Rituals and especially his understanding of the 'myth of the mediated centre' (2003). But I am sure there are many others.

I am interested to find out whether the choice of not engaging with the theory on media and identity was deliberate, and whether this choice was motivated by the belief that diasporic identities are somehow different.

All the best

Veronica

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 18th 2013

Hello,

Thank you for your questions and comments Veronica.

You are correct: my analysis of Nigerian Idol was as a case study of Tsagarousianou's approach. In reading *Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in Globalized World* (2004) I was immediately engaged by the fact that this approach was relevant as a case study pursuit and provided a set of concepts that represented the opportunity to examine nuanced and contemporary elements of diasporic culture and media. While I considered the work of other diaspora theorists (Kim Butler's diasporan framework focused on "illuminating patterns, other-wise obscured by traditional monographic approaches") I opted to leverage Tsagarousianou's work because she convenes concepts of media, culture and identity through connectivity and mobility in diasporic contexts.

Let me address Steve Lyon's response on diasporic identification through media, which I might have explained in more detail in my paper and in my earlier reply. Then I will provide detail on my methodology.

In today's era of media interactivity and mobility (which I define as transnational and transcultural media flows, as well as the devices through which people interact), conceivably, diasporic culture can be examined through media. The clarification I wish to make is that the cultural exchanges Tsagarousianou presents us with represent interactivity and mobility (of media and culture). Geographic 'movement', which is a key feature of the earlier scholarship on Diasporas, becomes 'media connectivity' and 'mobility'. I might have more deeply explored and explained the points at which Tsagarousianou departs from Cohen and Safran. At the same time, a body of work on the rise and reach of Nigerian cultural product - first in Nigeria, then regionally in Africa and finally throughout the world, points us to the notion that identity is constructed through media. This includes diasporic identity. Perhaps I should have stated this as "identity construction in media" with reality television as the context.

This being said, there is a case to be made for diasporic identification being defined as a shared relationship to media. Nollywood media through which material, cultural and mental exchanges take form, have been as Ekwuazi states, material to "African identity construction" and while his references to identity construction through media concern "doublings and redoublings" of indigenous culture in early Nigerian film, Onookome Okome describes Nollywood in this way:

"...the cinema culture, which is very, very Nigeria, though it is now global, it is also pan-African; there's element of pan Africanism in Nollywood that it cannot be ignored at all.

These elements you will find in the connection that Nigerian filmmakers are having with people in Kenya, Malawi, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, in terms of reception and consumption, also Africans in the Diaspora, in St. Lucia and the Caribbean, the films are very popular..."

In *New Developments in Black African Cinema* Frank Ukadike evaluates "cultural production within the African diaspora" by (1993, 246-88) through a lens of native and Western cultural expressions, which he argues include "oral traditions and other cultural codes" that form a part of diverse expressions contained in and shared through African cultural product. Though his key questions in the work I mention concern whether emerging (late 1980s and early 1990s) films represent a new African cinematic genre and the implications of a mix of African and Western cultural affirmations in this genre, Okome's body of work creates a wider understanding of the development and reach of Pan-African content.

I chose to engage with the scholarship that specifically explores African diasporic cultural connections between media and identity and the social construction of a common 'we', which as I suggest in my paper has "fewer of 'us', and therefore less of 'them' to resolve" as its foundation. Here, I am suggesting that the 'we' is more nuanced because of media connectivity and interactions and also, in the case of African diasporic culture and expressions of diasporic identity in Nigerian Idol, less rigid than the earlier scholarship attempts to portray.

My focus on Nollywood scholarship was a nod to a vast historical body of work on African cultural representations and how these representations take form through media that is often under-represented. The resources I used were books, articles, online news and press releases, videography (Nigerian Idol performances and interviews), discography (original versions of finalists' song choices and their versions), information from the web sites of the networks and television stations that aired Nigerian Idol which described audience intent (i.e.: providing the most exciting entertainment from Nollywood to audiences in the US).

The emphasis of my methodology is on discourse analysis. Specifically, where some of the scholarship on Idols is focused on evaluating what I believe are "reports" on identity (primarily from news sources) and written interviews with contestants and winners, I focused on examining elements of interaction within performances: sounds (three of the "international artistes" Nigerian Idol's web site for applicants mentioned come to mind – Asa, Rihanna and 2Face Idibia), lexicon and intonation (particularly useful in my analysis of Daniel Agagha's audition performance and his response to the judges' comments and decision), lexicon, song style (with an orientation towards media stylistics), conceptual meanings (possibly Saussure is relevant here because he points to signs and signifiers that are not readily understood by someone outside of a native speaker have the potential to be understood, if I may take this position), and speech and speech patterns (i.e.: English, pidgin English, Yoruba).

On one hand, I researched and wrote about a diaspora to which I belong. I

use/select/employ a number of each of the elements mentioned above. This includes English, French and Spanish and a number of dialects (Black American English, two or three Caribbean versions of pidgin English (from Barbados, Trinidad and Jamaica), another Caribbean dialect based in English, Arawak, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese). One example of how this lens became activated concerns Nigerian Idol's stated aims. My personal lens enabled me to easily identify with, evaluate and suggest that these aim defined a diaspora that featured indigenous, national and foreign languages as well as regional (African and Caribbean) dialects. Another example concerns my analysis of Daniel Agagha: not only was I familiar with the meanings inherent in Jamaican dancehall and in his use of English but the fact that he employed several speech patterns within the timeframe of a few minutes was not new, again, from my lens.

Here is his audition video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DR3WT-v2mlE>. Based upon his background as a former child soldier dancehall was a natural choice for him to make through his own self-agency (meaning, a number of cultural representations are available to him at any given moment and the ones he chooses to express possess unique cultural meanings). Donna P. Hope's work *Inna di Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica* is a fascinating study of inner city Jamaican culture, violence and political identity. This particular work directly maps to Agagha's song genre, identification (leaving a violent life as a former child soldier, embracing a Caribbean-based culture with ties to Africa as a feature of reggae). Some of the comments on the YouTube video are from Nigerians others are from Jamaicans.

I struggled to understand the meaning of Joromi. Victor Uwaifo explains this Bini myth and story of Joromi – a warrior. However after I reviewed his explanation (on YouTube), and listened to the song and read reviewer posts, I needed to interview him on specific meanings and cultural representations in order to explore translating these (if possible) into the cultural rationale for Glory Oriakhi's final performance and expressions of Bini (and Nigerian and pan-African) identification. I recall that Uwaifo shared the story of Joromi cutting off the heads of twelve devils, and yet, when I asked him if the number of devils was significant in any way, my question was confusing and possibly irrelevant. However, when I asked about the sounds Joromi used as he cut of each of the devils' heads, Uwaifo was able to explain the use of sound and place into context the role of sound in diasporic culture and identity.

To the question of how we might or might now know that viewers identify with these discourses, let me comment on national (Nigerian), pan-regional (West African) and international diasporic communities (in the context of a single diaspora) form Nigerian Idol's key audiences. One way we know that viewers identify with these discourses is evidenced in the broadcasts of Nigerian Idol throughout Nigeria, West Africa, in the UK and in the US. Contestant auditions aired in Canada. These audience markets are significantly documented by a number of Nollywood scholars, beginning with the success of the Nigerian video industry in Ghana, Zambia, the DRC, Uganda, and in the US and Europe (Cartelli's *Nollywood Comes to the Caribbean - 2007*, Larkin's body of work is significant, and some of the scholarship by Ogundimo and Becker also come to mind). Esan's work in particular is focused on analyzing and understanding Nollywood audience

consumption in the UK. Her article *Appreciating Nollywood: Audiences and Nigerian 'Films'* (here: http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%201%20-%20special/5_01_esan.htm) explores a number of Nollywood broadcast channels and audiences.

The choice I made of not engaging with the theory on media and identity was deliberate but not motivated by a belief that diasporic identities are somehow different. Rather, I found the breadth of scholarship Nigerian media, culture and identity to be more relevant to the pursuit of understanding expressions of diasporic identity in Nigerian Idol. Yet, the question of my choice does make me ask myself if this choice was determined (or pre-determined) because of my cultural orientation and constructs of identity (national and diasporic). Again, I think Hall's work and Fanon's work are foundational to my understanding of culture and identity.

I look forward to hearing from e-seminar participants. Thank you again Veronica and Steve for your comments and questions.

Kind regards,

Tess

John Postill <jrpostill@gmail.com>

July 18th 2013

A very interesting paper and first round of exchanges on Nigerian Idol. I have a couple of questions for Tess, namely:

1. I'm wondering about the role of geography (as in real-world physical location) in the argument. I've always had a problem with notions such as 'deterritorialisation' that to me seem to distract us from the continued centrality of geography to cultural production --technological advances notwithstanding. Here I'm reminded of Allen Scott's (2000) fascinating comparison of the entertainment industries in Bangkok, Paris and LA, "The Cultural Economy of Cities: Essays on the Geography of Image-Producing Industries". As you might expect, conditions on the ground in those three cities - and their national environments - are radically different.

So where is Nollywood? How does it compare to other media production hubs? How important is Nigeria's huge domestic market compared to its overseas market for Nigerian Idol producers? Take Hong Kong's film industry a few decades ago. With a tiny domestic market, Hong Kong had no choice but to cater to the vast Chinese diaspora and to non-Chinese audiences around the world, including Africa. By contrast, Nollywood and its Indian and USA counterparts have gigantic domestic markets.

2. I get the impression that there may be a conflation in the paper between the notions of audiences and diasporas, e.g. in statements such as "Haynes (2007) articulates a diaspora whose communities are indigenous, pan-African, Black and African (residing outside of Africa) and non-African." Surely ethnic Chinese New Yorkers who watch Nollywood

DVDs will engage with these products in quite distinct ways from African Americans?
How elastic can the notion of diaspora be before it is no longer useful?

Best wishes

John

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 18th 2013

Hello John,

What great questions.

The notion of Nollywood's "place" or location is contested in some circles: Lagos being central to many, Kano also being uniquely important to understanding Hausa cultural product and media, with the latter also possessing Bollywood influences.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss geography and as well as domestic and overseas markets that consume Nigerian cultural product. There are legal and illegal (bootleg) markets - and each is a key part of Nollywood's cultural economy if you will. In fact, the illegal distribution channels play a crucial role in audience consumption of Nollywood content.

Allow me to familiarize myself with Scott's work and reply to your questions tomorrow - including the question you raise on elasticity and a meaningful concept (and practical application) of a diaspora.

Best,

Tess

Kerstin B Andersson <tinni.andersson@telia.com>

July 19th 2013

Hi Tess and the list!

Thanks for an interesting paper, and excuses for a late contribution. Its summer holidays here now, and it is really difficult to find time to spend in front of the computer when the weather is nice!

I've read your paper with great interest since it is touching my own research area, diaspora and media and also my work on satellite media in India. Actually, I have a lot of thoughts on this paper, however, I will restrict it to a couple of brief comments.

I have to state that I agree with Steve's point on media and the impact on Diasporas and diaspora identity. As far as I can see, your argument in this paper is purely hypothetical and not at all grounded in any empirical facts. To make this a solid proposition, it would

be necessary to back it up with studies on actual experiences in diaspora groups and identity construction among groups belonging to the diaspora.

I would have appreciated a fuller discussion on the concept “Diaspora”, which I find rather sweeping. Some interesting contributions are for example Vertovec’s (1999) categorisation of Diasporas and Burbaker’s (2005, 2006) point diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices. Further, I’ve read Bauböck and Faist (2010) and my interpretation of the text is that they mainly are concerned with delimiting differences and similarities between the concepts diaspora, transnationalism and globalisation, and not produce a definition of the concept of diaspora.

The topic of diaspora and media, and diaspora, media and identity construction are quite well researched areas. Maybe it should be relevant to acknowledge this in your discussions. The importance of media in construction of diasporic identity is for example implicit in Hall’s “new ethnicities” (1991) and he further declares that diasporic identities are formed within media, media provide points of identification for displaced subjects (1994). Just to mention some of the other scholars working on this topic; Bhaba 1994, Appadurai 1996, Naficy 1996, Tuftte 2001, Karim 2003, Wood and King, 2001, Aksoy and Robins 2002, Ogan, 2006, Yu Shi 2005, Georgiou 2011.

I want to close with some comments on Steve’s contribution on Bollywood. Bollywood has a long tradition of popularity outside of India, with a great spread in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Caribbean. It was not at all limited to the South Asian Diaspora. At this stage, it existed an interest for Indian art film and focus from Western festivals. What happened in the beginning of the 90-ties, with the opening up of the Indian media scene was that the Bollywood production increasingly targeted the diaspora population. Further diaspora filmmakers, depicting diaspora conditions, got an increasing interest both within and outside of India. Also, I would hardly call Monsoon Wedding a Bollywood production. Mira Nair is a diaspora filmmaker, based in New York.

Kerstin B Andersson, PhD in Social Anthropology

Stephen M. Lyon <s.m.lyon@durham.ac.uk>

July 19th 2013

Hiking a quick comment. Kerstin is completely correct that Monsoon Wedding cannot be called a Bollywood film. I just meant that it is one of a growing number of films that tap into Bollywood motifs. I recently watched an episode of The Big Bang Theory in which the Indian character, Raj, has a Bollywood dance dream sequence. I'm not suggesting everyone is familiar with the big group dance scenes in Bollywood, but clearly enough people must be to include it in a mainstream American television show like that. So what I was trying to say, rather less skillfully than Kerstin, was that Bollywood has long moved beyond the traditional target audiences of either Indians (South Asians) and South Asian diaspora.

Sorry if I misled anyone or gave the impression that Diaspora produced films should necessarily be lumped in the same category as things we call Bollywood films!

Best

Steve

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 19th 2013

Hello Kerstin, Steve! Very exciting feedback and comments. I will reply to John's questions later today and hope to reply to yours by or before tomorrow. Thank you for taking this discussion forward.

Best

Sent from Tess Conner's iPhone

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 20th 2013

Hello,

Apologies for my delayed reply to John's comments on the role of geography in the form of a real world location where cultural production is concerned, constructs of deterritorialization that account for as well as challenge this role and his question on elasticity and concepts of diaspora.

On the role of geography, let's consider a few of the strands of scholarship on Nollywood where the cities of Lagos and Kano contextualize 'place' – as independent cities of image-producing Nigerian media and culture, and as a/the national (or single) location of Nollywood. Key positions concern the cities of Lagos and Kano (the latter is Nigeria's Hausa cinema hub). Bollywood has significantly influenced Hausa film (for example, in representations of male-female relationships and by an increasing inclusion over time of music in cinema). The same cannot be said of Lagos-based productions, however it is important that I note J.U.D.E. because it is widely identified as the first Nollywood-Bollywood co-production <http://blogs.indiewire.com/shadowandact/nollywood-meets-bollywood-in-first-co-production-between-both-industries-j-u-d-e>.

So where is Nollywood?

If we use film as a meta-narrative to define a Nigerian media and culture industry, some scholars locate Nollywood in Lagos, identifying this city as the major production center of English and Yoruba cinema and cultural product. It is one of the largest (if not the largest) city in Sub-Saharan Africa and a hub of the Nigerian film industry for many who cite Lagos as the location of most film studios, artists' residences, hotels where people who are on a film shoot stay, and the primary office locations of marketers and distributors. Beyond this city's scope of inhabitants (>15 million), scholars also cite the city's socio-economic gap between rich and poor (a common theme in Nollywood films). Haynes documents many of these elements in Nollywood in Lagos, Lagos in Nollywood

Films (2007).

Specific streets are identified as distribution centers (for example, 51 Iweka Road, Park Road, Ereko, and Edidi Streets in Lagos, and video shops in the Alaba international market). Nigerian Idol is produced in Lagos and in English (as was Idols West Africa – a past pan-regional adaptation of the Idols format). However, as Uwah (2011) points out in *The Representation of African Traditional Religion and Culture in Nigeria Popular Films*, Nollywood texts “call for a more nuanced analysis” than 'place' makes available to us in part, due to the complexity of the cultural representations that are available to and activated in film – whether religious, class-based, gender-based.

Uwah’s definition of Nollywood is broad: “...popular films produced in Nigeria, by Nigerians in the culture industry” and his intent is to raise two issues: The first is that the Nollywood phenomenon makes it possible for us to consider that a media and culture industry has not one, but several cities (urban centers and rural areas possessing a range of productive dimensions that include indigenous, national and pan-regional cultural realities). He looks at Nollywood through a lens that de-urbanizes the industry in Nigeria by pointing us to the fact that Nollywood themes reflect lived experiences in indigenous, national and pan-African contexts that resonate with audiences.

I argue that Uwah shies away from the argument of a single central hub that captures Nollywood (citing Kunzler 2007, Haynes 2000, and Dul 2000), while at the same time acknowledging the historical significance of geographic location as a factor of the industry’s rise. He refers to Kunzler’s position that Nollywood films represent “an industry...that can roughly be divided into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo video films which designate their production centers in the South-West, North and South-East of Nigeria, respectively” (2007). In this sense, ‘a city’ as well as its numbers of producers, or number film studios, marketers and distributors represent possibly a more static role in the development, production and distribution of cultural product. Nigerian cultural economy is intrinsically more dynamic than one of the centers alone can define.

In *Anticipating Nollywood: Lagos Circa 1996* Adesokan’s analysis of the film *Owo Blo* uncovers more challenges in defining ‘where’ Nollywood is. While he recognizes Lagos as an important urban site that can be more widely critiqued in the scholarship on Nigerian cinema, he underscores what he describes as a risk reflected in a focus of analysis on English-language Nigerian films. The challenge he raises involves a sole or dominant representation of the cultural product that Nollywood develops, produces, distributes and exports. If I apply this logic to Yoruba, Ibo or Hausa cinema, the same challenge exists. Like Uwah, he calls for a more nuanced contextualization of Nollywood as a media and culture industry that is more diverse than Hollywood, but comparable to Bollywood. Here, his observation (much like Ekwuazi’s), is that Nollywood and Bollywood share distinct aesthetics and scales compared to Hollywood.

In *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (2009), Brian Larkin presents us with a series of issues through “radio, cassettes, television and cinema” concerning cultural production and media technologies in the city of Kano –

which is the geographic base from which Muslim Hausa cinema originated and the economic center of Northern Nigeria. For Larkin, radio, television, film represent infrastructure through which “cultural goods” flow, generate audience desire for them and audience consumption. Larkin bases a portion of his definition of ‘infrastructure’ – cultural and economic “networks with which a city is involved, and indeed the physical shape of a city emerges over time” on Harvey (2000), Graham and Marvin (1996 and 2001) and Lefebvre (1991). He describes the city of Kano in detail (p. 5). His description of “open air” cinemas as the norm in Kano represents a striking difference to the cinemas of Lagos, placing into context a particular ‘real’ space, which he also compares to the organized special structural that binds television viewers (pp. 146-153).

There is much in Larkin’s book that I can offer in response to the question of geography and its centrality (or diffused centrality), where Nollywood is concerned. But I wish to offer a specific chapter from this text “Extravagant Aesthetics: Instability and the Excessive World of Nigerian Film” (pp. 168-216). In this chapter Larkin explores melodrama and its iterations (notions of corruption in Southern English-language films and notions of love and romance in Northern Hausa films), which he argues are “intensified by the intertextual presence of Indian cinema.”

Larkin’s Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities (1997, pp. 406-440) http://humanities.wisc.edu/assets/misc/Larkin_Parallel-Modernities.pdf is another text on the relationship between and trajectory of Indian themes and Hausa themes in a variety of media. On one hand he examines the popularity of Indian films among Hausa viewers. He also places into context the specific stories and characters, personal circumstances and lived realities that make their way into Hausa audiences and the ways in which these realities resonate with the audiences. This article may not represent an exact comparison of Bollywood and Nollywood, however the article does account for the nature of a cultural economy that is rooted outside of a geographic location.

I argue that if we are to research and evaluate Nollywood, conceivably there are cases to be made for Lagos and Kano (the latter is also referred to as Kannywood) as places through which to contextualize cultural production and distribution, and cultural economy. However, I suggest that the notion of a single urban geographic place has decreased currency as a useful tool of analysis for an industry whose cultural representations include indigenous, national and pan-African themes, rural realities and Bollywood influences in the case of Hausa cinema that are challenging to map using one city (or one culture).

While I question the merit of canonizing the urban as sole site of Nigerian cultural economy, certainly Lagos is a recurrent cityscape for many Nigerian films – but not in Hausa cinema. I take the position that Nollywood includes Lagos-based and Kano-based productions, but more importantly, I argue that the agents (and agencies) underpinning Nollywood, and its rise and reach are indigenous, national and pan-African themes. It is the themes which resonate with audiences that are indigenous (Yoruba, Ibo, Edo), national (Nigerian), pan-African (Ghanaian, South African), and international.

How important is Nigeria's huge domestic market compared to its overseas market for Nigerian Idol producers?

The first season of Nigerian Idol was a national franchise of the Idols format: its search for a 'star' required that contestants and participants be citizens of Nigeria, voting was restricted to national viewers and the show – which was produced in Lagos, aired to viewers and voters from a Lagos-based production studio and in broadcasts throughout Nigeria. For the producers, the importance of Nigeria's domestic market was crucial – Optima Media Group (OMG) delivers entertainment and business content in Nigeria and throughout Africa. The key sponsors of the show's first season were telecoms (Etisalat), and beauty products – the former aimed at younger audiences with and/or desiring mobile communications devices and the latter aimed at female audiences. The bid for the Idols franchise was an important win for OMG.

At the time OMG were bidding for a number of reality television formats <http://olorisupergal.com/nigeria-idol-debuts/> and M-NET <http://mnet.dstv.com> of South Africa had cornered the early Idols franchises in Africa. These franchises were Idols South Africa (a national adaptation), Idols East Africa and Idols West Africa (pan-regional adaptations), with the latter having been produced in Lagos, and an ethnic adaptation of Idols South Africa (season 3) that was produced and aired in Afrikaans. Where reality television content is concerned, shows in many countries air during key viewing hours where audience capture is highest.

OMG's overseas markets for Nigerian Idol were important for a number of reasons. While the license from Freemantle Media was national, the productive dimensions of the show were diasporic, and included OMG's goal to capture viewers in Canada, the UK and the US. In one respect OMG (like M-NET and other pan-African and Nigeria-based production companies and distributors) have an interest in securing distribution rights within and outside of Africa. Here is some recent news from OMG/Bloomberg on a new alliance to deliver business-related content throughout Africa: <http://www.technologytimesng.com/bloomberg-nigerias-optima-media-to-deliver-african-business-content/>. I also suggest that the audiences outside of Africa that OMG sought to capture contained many of the same audiences drawn to Nollywood films. This is a natural desire for a company that wishes to be seen as an international distributor of many types of content and it aligns to distribution channels of Nollywood content that precede reality television.

John, allow me to expand upon your comments on deterritorialization along with the question of elasticity and concepts of diaspora in my reply to Kerstin. I will endeavor to respond by Monday.

All the best,

Tess

Dear All,

We decided to extend the E-seminar.

The discussion will be open to all until Tuesday the 30th of July, 00:00 (GMT).

We look forward to receiving your contributions!

All the best

Veronica

Hello,

I wish to extend my appreciation to John, Philipp, Veronica and Steve for extending this e-seminar.

Kerstin,

“I would have appreciated a fuller discussion on the concept “Diaspora”, which I find rather sweeping”. I could not agree more with you. The concept of diaspora deserves fuller discussion. The short section on diaspora I wrote was sweeping: the authors of the book's chapters were asked to focus the scope of their work on introducing and evaluating Idols adaptations and their productive dimensions. This included broader topics each of the chapters were designed to contribute to.

I am familiar with Hall, Bhaba and Appadurai, along with the scholarship on the realm of identity construction, including constructs of African diasporic identity in media (Ekwuazi, Bartlet, Larkin, Uwah, Okome).

See Uwah (2010) http://doras.dcu.ie/14914/1/Part_b_-_Main_Thesis.pdf in which he states, “Primarily this thesis focuses on the Igbo area of Nigeria and its rituals as represented in Nollywood films, but also makes allusions to Nigeria and Africa in the wider contexts occasionally because of some identifiable cultural commonalities across black African nations. This definitely can be problematic as well but suffice to say that instances of them [commonalities] exist.”

The central question I raise in my chapter on Nigerian Idol is: what if we examine expressions of identity and evaluate these constructs of culture that take form through (in) media to conceptualize what a contemporary diaspora does look like?

Bauböck and Faist acknowledge that producing a definition of the concept of diaspora is

challenging and I agree with them. My issue with the text concerns agents and agency. Many of the actors framing that which is available for diasporic identification (the state, migration and labor trends) place cultural agency within a dominant set of 'host' and 'home' delimiters. The findings that can be drawn are therefore from 'migrant' communities whose cultural agency is in response to or a result of these agents.

As John said earlier, how elastic can diasporic culture and identity be? It must be contextualized. I believe I might have contextualized my research in more detail.

Nollywood is young compared to Hollywood and Bollywood. The development of media technology in the 80s and 90s is endemic to its development, reach and rise. As an industry whose role in African and diasporic identity construction among Black audiences outside of Africa is widely researched and well documented, Nollywood (and I suggest expressions of diasporic identity in Nigerian Idol) challenge diasporan frameworks that the earlier scholarship posits as being the foundational starting point in the project of understanding a diaspora.

A great deal of empirical data on Nollywood film and television audiences throughout the diaspora exists.

Some studies are here: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/ferguson-centre/nollywood-uk/bibliography/journal-articles.htm>

This is a solid review of Esan's work:
<http://www.daiwebsolutions.com/nigeriantv/bookreviews.shtml>

Obono and Madu (2010) support many of the findings from my research on the national, pan-regional and international broadcasts of Nigerian Idol (on station aims and audiences) which did not make it into the final paper:
<http://www.ec.ubi.pt/ec/08/pdf/EC08-2010Dez-05.pdf>

All the best,

Tess

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 24th 2013

Hello Vered, John and Kerstin,

I quickly reviewed the wider set of resources I've gathered over time: the interview below with Brian Larkin may be of interest to you.

<http://pad.ma/MP/info>

Broadly, he discusses writing African (Northern Nigerian, or Kano) and Indian (a Malegaon version of a Bollywood film) media, infrastructure and culture into the

scholarship on media and culture.

Does his interview and its discourses mean a Malegaon film represents Bollywood, or Kano cinema represents the global phenomenon we refer to as Nollywood? Possibly the answer is not entirely.

It does suggest that contemporary scholarship on diasporic identity through (in) media may be remiss in leveraging the prior scholarship on cultural economy (infrastructure and therefore actors, agents and agencies) and on media, culture and identity, where the research reflects representations of inter- and intra-cultural influences whose interactions can be contextualized but not geographically mapped as the most relevant basis for research.

For Nigerian Idol, the above provides us with these optics: the media interactions a diaspora (within and outside of an identified community or set of global communities), show us that cultural agents and agencies - whether Agagha's representation of Jamaican dancehall, Oriakhi's expression of Edo identity, weekly themes, and the construction of the series' judges' panel, support the case for a more dynamic imaginary of diaspora than the earlier (including Western) scholarship proposes.

Thanks!

Tess

Veronica Barassi <v.barassi@gold.ac.uk>

July 30th 2013

Dear All,

This is just a reminder that the E-Seminar will be ending tonight at 00:00 (GMT).

You are still in time to share your final thoughts and suggestions!

All the best

Veronica

Kerstin B Andersson <tinni.andersson@telia.com>

July 30th 2013

Hi again Tess,

Thanks for your answers. However I have to say that according to my point of view, they in no way solve the problems encountered in your paper.

I've checked out your paper again, and you state throughout the paper that Diasporic identity is constructed in/ through the production and screening of "Nigerian Idol". Still, there is no connection or relation between the TV show and Diasporic people/ identities/

experiences in the paper. You refer to the producer's aim to target an African and international audience and draw a lot of assumptions from this statement. However, it is a wide difference between target groups / audiences and a Diaspora and there is no empirical evidence that Nigerian Idol in any way is appreciated by people in the Diaspora, nor that it in any way affects or influences people or people's identities in the Diaspora. I would state that what you are discussing is more in line with a media discourse, mediascape (Appadurai) or "global discourse" (Hylland- Eriksen).

Another thing that should be pointed out is that the argument that Tsagarousianou (2004) puts forward in her paper, and that you rely heavily on in your conceptualisation of Diaspora, is suggestive and she states in the article that the argument needs to be validated by empirical research in Diasporas. So, it should only be taken as an indicator on connectivity and Diasporas and not as a fact.

A final comment, taking the producer's point of view as starting point for you discussion, shouldn't you also include the producer's goals and aims included in this. For example, the introduction of satellite media in India in the end of the 90-ties included very conscious strategies and plays with different strategies by the producers to adapt to the new audiences and increase ratings.

All the best

Kerstin

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 30th 2013

Hi Kerstin,

Thank you for your comments, which reflect three important questions: what does a diasporic identity look like?, which strands of the scholarship on media, culture and diaspora are critical to evaluations of identity in Nigerian Idol? and: is a reliance upon Tsagarousianou's positions on cultural "mobility" in mediated contexts problematized by a lack of empirical research to validate these positions?

My chapter documents and analyzes several aspects present in the first season of Nigerian Idol to arrive at conclusions concerning the first question: the show's stated aims, the producer's objectives concerning the show's audiences (national, pan-African and international), and the composition of the judges' panel. As evidenced in the distribution of this season's television and subscription-based cable station broadcasts and online on-demand content to these audiences (throughout Nigeria, eleven countries in Africa and in the UK and US), theme weeks that included 'Nigerian', 'African' and 'American Legend' weeks, and demonstrated in contestant and finalist performances, the findings from this show point to the research and body of work on diasporic Nollywood productions, the cultural representations of an African diaspora in Nigerian film and television content, and this diaspora's consumers.

I have a deep appreciation for Appadurai's work on global cultural flows where "mediascapes" and "ethnoscapes" converge. The fact is that the early and contemporary scholarship on the relationship between Nigerian media, culture and identity construction is well researched and its currency as a body of scholarship within media and culture studies, as well as diaspora studies while possibly under-represented, is not based on assumptions. The scholarship is critical to evaluations of film and television formats produced in Nigeria.

Expressions of diasporic identity in Nigerian Idol present us with a diaspora whose 'culture' is drawn from throughout a diaspora. In this sense, Tsagarousianou is on to something: cultural mobility and its processes of exchanges include for example, the influences between several communities throughout a diaspora: Agagha's Jamaican dancehall performance, the composition of the judges' panel and Oriakhi's performances during the show's theme weeks and her final performance of Joromi.

Beyond the aspects of Nigerian Idol that I elected to evaluate, certainly the opportunity exists to take Tsagarousianou's positions forward through empirical research. While I might have focused my paper on the show's audiences (national viewers and voters, mobile and online votes, numbers of viewers related to one or any combination of the broadcasts which totaled more than 70 channels, and viewer interviews), the volume's direction was to explore the show's productive dimensions as an adaptation of a global television format.

Here is the volume: *Adapting Idols: Authenticity, Identity and Performance in a Global Television Format* <http://www.ashgate.com/isbn/9781409441694>

Again, many thanks for your comments.

Best,

Tess

Ayobami Ojebode <ayo.ojebode@gmail.com>

July 30th 2013

Hello Tess,

I was wondering if you could also take this along with Kerstin's comments. As a Nigerian working and living in Nigeria, I found reading your paper a particular delight. I am a bit skeptical of my anthropological skills -- which is why I have remained an invisible lurker in this group since 2008. Thus, my comments may appear a bit out of place.

I am particularly concerned about the definitive agency given Oriakhi in your paper and your interpretations of her actions and choice of songs. Given how conclusive and definite these interpretations are, I wonder if you had any interaction with her in which she linked her performance and utterances to her intention to appeal to a Diaspora.

Ayo

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 30th 2013

Hello Ayo,

You raise an interesting question: did any of the contestants or finalists specifically intend to appeal to a diaspora?

While Uwaifo was very clear on a rationale for the appeal of his work across a diaspora and the popularity of Joromi with diasporic audiences, his intent was not to create a diasporic cultural representation, rather, he did believe that Edo culture and Joromi had (and still has) appeal to an African diaspora.

I interviewed Glory Oriakhi briefly over Facebook, and asked for her review of the interpretations in my chapter prior to publication. These exchanges happened after I conducted my interview with Victor Uwaifo. In Oriakhi's case, I don't believe that she intended to appeal to a diaspora: the show's aim was to find an "international artiste" of the caliber of Asa or Rihanna, in Nigeria. I believe contestants were seeking to become such a star, nominated by a national voting audience.

The detail and conclusions on Oriakhi are drawn from interviews she gave that appeared in online, print and television media. When I first contacted her she was shocked that a North American was aware of Nigerian Idol let alone her performances. My determination is that during the show's first season, few if any of the contestants noted comments online or on YouTube from audiences around the world. Similarly I suggest that contestants were likely unaware of the online audience outlets discussing Nigerian Idol, or the fact that the show aired in 'prime time' slots in so many countries through broadcasts that targeted Black and African audiences and wider British and North American audiences.

What I can say is that she clearly defined her agency and its relationship to her choice of songs in the interviews I drew from. My paper documents this agency in her own words. I would have preferred her confirmation of my research and findings and her comments on Uwaifo's interpretations. I can say that she did not challenge any of the evaluations or conclusions.

By the way, Oriakhi (Glow Glow) recently returned to the music scene with a gospel debut. <http://www.360nobs.com/2012/11/get-familiar-nigeria-idol-season-1s-glory-debuts-single-believer/>

All the best,

Tess

Tess Conner <tessconner@me.com>

July 30th 2013

Hello,

I wish to extend my appreciation to all of the participants of this e-seminar. Many thanks to Steve Lyon for organizing the e-seminar and for his discussants' comments, and to Veronica Barassi for moderating.

Looking back at the series of posts I find the issues raised on my selection of the scholarship, and on concepts of culture, identity and elasticity in defining diaspora very interesting. My thanks to Veronica, John Postill and Vered Amit (whose work I read following John's comments), for pushing me to leverage foundational work on media, culture and identity.

Some of the other comments mentioned concern a topic emerging scholarship on Nollywood, culture and identity is addressing: the extent to which the scholarship has been taken up by and legitimized in media and culture studies, and in diaspora studies. I suggest there is space to incorporate more of the scholarship, particularly where contemporary Nigerian television media and media technology that enables diasporic audience interactions are concerned.

Lastly, some of the newer work on Nollywood that has implications for diaspora studies explores productions that are taking form outside of Nigeria and within the diaspora. A new book "Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of a Video Film Industry" is one example of this work. On my end, I am researching Amharic culture and identity in modern Ethiopian cinema (DVDs) that is being produced in Ethiopia and in the diaspora (Canada, the US). I project that the implications of looking at what is happening in a diaspora from outside of traditional global media and culture industry centers will yield new findings that expand the scholarship.

To all of you who contributed, reading your comments and replying to them was personally and professionally rewarding.

All the best,

Tess

Veronica Barassi <v.barassi@gold.ac.uk>

July 30th 2013

Dear All,

The E-Seminar is now closed.

Thank you for your comments and thoughts. A special thanks also to Tess for her interesting paper.

Looking forward to the next E-Seminar.

Veronica

E-Seminar Closed