

Lagos is a country: Slum, city, nation and globalization in *Welcome to Lagos*

Aghogho Akpome

*Department of English, University of Zululand
AkpomeA@unizulu.ac.za; aakpome@gmail.com*

Abstract

In this article, I interrogate the depiction of Lagos and its residents in the BBC's documentary, *Welcome to Lagos* for the ways in which these representations reflect, historicize, and critique cultural and economic responses to contemporary urbanization and globalization in Nigeria. Using a literary approach, I argue that it is implicated – by design or otherwise – in Western representations of Africa that continue to draw criticism for being reductive and negatively skewed. I show, in this regard, the ways in which the documentary's featured slums, the city of Lagos and the postcolonial nation as a whole are conflated as part of the film's overarching aesthetic and discursive strategy. A significant consequence of this conflation is that the image of the slum is made to operate as the default and totalized metonym not only of the city but also of the country. I demonstrate, furthermore, how the documentary reflects on Nigeria's recent socio-political transition from military dictatorship to civilian rule and how it highlights the role of politics (both during decolonization and after independence) in shaping the dynamics of modern urbanization in Nigeria in particular and in the global South in general.

Key terms: documentary, postcolonial slum, Lagos, Nigeria, representation

Welcome to Lagos is a three-part observational documentary series that was aired on BBC2 in the United Kingdom in 2010.¹ The series explores “life at the sharp end of ... extreme urban environments” (BBC2, 2010) using Lagos – the world’s fastest growing megacity – as a case study. The documentary follows the lives of about a dozen characters who make a living in three of the city’s poorest slums where there is complete absence of proper housing, social amenities, roads, basic sanitation and conventional opportunities for business or employment. Through its mainly “entertaining narratives” (Abubakar, 2011: 150) of the private lives, difficulties, and optimism of these characters, the film, according to BBC2 (2010), “celebrates the resilience, resourcefulness and energy of Lagos’s 16 million inhabitants and shows how successfully many of its slum dwellers are adapting to the realities of the world’s increasingly extreme urban future”.

I argue that the featured slums, the city, and the postcolonial nation as a whole are conflated within the overarching representational strategies by which the slums and slum dwellers are depicted. Through a close interrogation of the aesthetic and discursive choices of the filmmakers (i.e. their visual techniques and narratives, respectively), I demonstrate how it produces the abjection and precarity of life in the featured slum as the default and totalizing metonym for contemporary Nigerian society. In this way, it becomes associated, argu-

ably, with Western representational traditions that continue to draw criticism for portrayals of Africa that are deemed to be negatively skewed and pejorative. Such criticisms have been recently brought to the fore following the widely condemned comments by the United States’ president, Donald Trump about ‘shit-hole’ African countries and Nigerians living in huts (Peyton, 2018). It is important to state at the outset that the terms ‘slum’ and ‘ghetto’ are used interchangeably in this article as is the practice in urban planning studies to refer to informal settlements mostly located at the peripheries of many large cities in formerly colonized territories. These settlements are mostly characterized by shanties, abject “degradation of the local ecosystem” and “severe social problems” (Morakinyo, Ogunrayewa, Koleosho and Adenubi, 2012: 1).

Critical responses to *Welcome to Lagos* have been dominated by comments on how it highlights the challenges of contemporary urban planning on the one hand (Gandy, 2006; Smith, 2015; Revell, 2010). In this regard, it has been compared to other cinematic explorations of different postcolonial mega-cities around the world such as *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and *Slumming It* (2010) both of which are set in the ghettos of Mumbai (Jones and Sanyal, 2015; Abubakar, 2011; Revell, 2010). On the other hand, *Welcome to Lagos* has elicited conflicting views on its representation of Nigeria (Nwaubani, 2010, Abubakar, 2011). While some commentators commend the film’s ostensible praise of the resourcefulness of its impoverished protagonists (Ojumu,

¹ It ran at prime time on BBC2 on April 15, 22, and 29 in 2010 and on BBC1 on June 19, 26, and July 3 of the same year.

2010; Cooke, 2010; Holden, 2010; Wollaston, 2010), others condemn it for the perceived disparaging portrayal of Lagos, and by extension, Nigeria as a whole (Versi, 2010; see also Nwaubani, 2010).

According to Abubakar (2011: 152-3), while the portrayal of how impoverished slum dwellers “endured (and ‘enjoyed’)” the harsh life of Lagos slums may serve as a source of entertainment to some Western audiences, it may also echo stereotypical depictions of Africans as “savages” in colonial narratives. This observation is important for interrogating the overarching representational schema of the series given the BBC’s position as the public broadcaster of Nigeria’s former colonizers and the specific discursive and spectator authority associated with that status. It is in this regard that the following comment by Will Anderson, the producer of the series, could become instructive of this article’s problematic: “Nigeria, and Lagos in particular, seems to have a terrible reputation in Britain. Everyone thinks of it as a noisy, dirty, dangerous city, probably because all we ever hear about it on the news is the corruption, religious violence, and dodgy email scams” (2010: n.p.).

This resonates with the concerns expressed by contributors to the collection of essays, *Film and the End of Empire* (2011), who highlight “the enmeshing of cultural representation” (Grieverson, 2011: 2) and neo-colonialist rhetoric in British cinematic productions since the end of World War II. In his introduction to the collection, Paul Gilroy (2011: 25) urges attention to the ways in which “the mili-

taristic, *spectacular* culture of empire and colony” articulated through cinema “was essential in highlighting the moral legitimacy of imperial rule” (emphasis added). Although Gilroy’s immediate focus is on depictions of violence and war, his point about the overarching role of spectacular cultural representations is applicable to this article’s interrogation of the possible discursive assumptions undergirding the narrative and aesthetic choices in *Welcome to Lagos* with particular regard to the reiteration and foregrounding of “iconograph[ies] of primitivism” (De Groof, 2015: 361).

These arguments are significant in view of Bill Nichols’ (1991: 14) description of the documentary film as

an institutional formation. Without taking on the firm outline of those institutions that pursue socially defined goals with specific budgetary commitments, legislative mandates, and criteria for membership such as academia, the priesthood, or the military, documentary filmmaking still displays most of the signs of institutional status.

Nichols identifies the institutional framework, alongside a body of filmmakers, a corpus of films as well as an audience as the four factors which define the genre. More importantly for this article is the tendency of the institutional nature of documentary filmmaking to “impose an institutional way of seeing and speaking” (12) as well as Nichols’ description of the documentary interview as a “coercive process

of interrogation” associated with particular institutional structures (146). These considerations are crucial to an understanding of the significance of the BBC’s institutional status within the political and historical matrices that frame cultural representations of non-Western subjects and cultures which are evoked in this analysis of *Welcome to Lagos*.

In interrogating the dystopian depiction of Lagos in the documentary series, I examine the deployment of the slum as a metonym for the city which in turn functions as a trope for the entire nation. In this regard, I highlight the ways in which the city is portrayed through a combination of specific visual techniques and narratives that render it as an exceptional space. To this end, I focus on the series’ protagonists, all of whom work and live in conditions of abject poverty, and who represent the flotsam and jetsam of an unprecedented wave of globalized capitalism and postcolonial misrule. In these ways, the article contributes to ongoing debates on the documentary’s apparent negative representation of Nigeria as well as the ways in which the transition from military rule to democracy in 1999 is reflected in the portrayal of the “out-of-control” (Wollaston, 2010: n. p.) urbanization of its biggest city.

Welcome to Lagos focuses on living conditions in the poorest and most deprived slums in Lagos ostensibly in keeping with the producer’s avowed interest in “life at the sharp end” (BBC2: 2010) of the city. It is filmed mainly in three slums – the Olososun rubbish dump, Makoko which is located on the wa-

ters of the lagoon as well as the shantytown in Kuramo beach. These overcrowded settlements are characterized by ecological pollution, filth, abject poverty and the total lack of social amenities. Using a systematic combination of visual techniques, personal narratives and commentaries, the documentary highlights the squalid conditions in these slums as well as the psycho-social concerns of selected residents. In the process, it focuses extensively on the filth and environmental degradation of the physical surroundings of the slums.

To understand the significance of this overarching imagery of filth and disorder in this documentary, it is important to explore how it deploys the ethnographic genre of the documentary while mimicking the *cinema vérité* technique that presupposes ‘truthful’ depictions of narrative objects (Ponech, 2008). Of particular importance are the ways in which the visual and narrative aspects of these specific cinematic techniques work together to produce the dominant representation of the slum as a spectacle and as a totalizing trope of the city and the nation in the series. In this regard, Fatimah Tobing Rony’s *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle* (1996) offers a helpful point of departure into this article’s analysis of the aesthetic and narrative choices of *Welcome to Lagos*. Rony’s work is recognized as one of the more insightful critiques of the imperialist and racist orientations of anthropological and ethnographic film (see Litzinger, 2000), and it provides a compelling analysis of different cinematic modes – “inscription,” “taxidermy,” and “teratology” –

to describe the ways in which non-European subjects and cultures are historically depicted in Western ethnographic cinema (Rony, 1996: 45; 101; 234). Rony uses the notions of ‘taxidermy’ and ‘teratology’ to account for aesthetic strategies that depict subjects as spectacular through the accentuation of monstrosity and hideousness while ‘inscription’ (“accompanying commentary” [45]) relates to the narrative dimensions of ethnographic representations.² This analytical frame can be applied to the reading of the overarching representational schema of *Welcome to Lagos* provided in this article. Indeed, the subjects of the documentary are rendered in ways that illustrate Rony’s notion of taxidermic imagery that combines with scripted inscriptions to produce the film’s distinctive visual and narrative effects.

In terms of the discursive and literary aspects of this inquiry, Adèle Nel’s “The Repugnant Appeal of the Object: Cityscape and Cinematic Corporality in *District 9*” (2012) is useful in interrogating some of the key tropes in *Welcome to Lagos* in spite of the fact that the focus of her analysis is a fictional representation. Nel explores, among other things, the textualization of abjection as it manifests in the depiction of the Chiawelo slum of Johannesburg in Neil Blomkamp’s science-fiction thriller, *District 9*. Invoking Julia Kristeva’s (1982) notion of the abject, Nel (2012: 548) argues that the box-office success of *District 9* may be linked to “the repugnant attraction (as with horror films) of that which is shocking, frightening and horrible”. There is there-

² Details of Romy’s analysis are outside the scope of this article.

fore a strong sense in which the entertainment value of the documentary is associated with its depiction of images and narratives of abjection that evoke shock, disgust, and surprise rather than, or as well as, those representations of the characters’ industry and determination that have reportedly attracted the admiration of many western audiences (see Abubakar, 2011).

Similar ideas are articulated in Jones and Sanyal’s (2015) analysis of dominant depictions of Dharavi, one of the largest slums in Mumbai, India that has featured in several recent films and documentaries in the United Kingdom. In their article, “Spectacle and Suffering: The Mumbai slum as a worlded space”, Jones and Sanyal interrogate the ways in which the production of the “slum as spectacle becomes part of a fluid representational stock of images and experiences that circulate, with the potential to be picked up and acted upon by diverse actors” (433). Focusing on the role of guided tours, arts, and television documentaries, they argue that “the production of space is dominated increasingly by images and events” (433). In particular, they show how documentaries³ “use the devices of familiar-strange, and exceptional as mundane, and juxtapose the lives of outsider with the ‘reality’ of poverty and suffering” (436). They observe furthermore that the slum

has become the locale through which concerns for the human condition are

³ These include the following BBC productions – *Welcome to Lagos*, *Famous*, *Rich and in the Slums* (2011), *Welcome to India* (2012) and *Slum Survivors* (2014).

expressed, its residents representing the “universal individual, a particular group whose fate stands for the injustice of today’s world” (Žižek, 2004: 2). This claim provides slums with a representational significance far greater than an immediate concern with housing conditions or service provision. This is nothing new. They have long been a popular subject for novelists, journalists and academics, but slums are increasingly also the site and the subject of tourism, art, film and documentary. (434)

The foregoing views highlight the ways in which the aesthetics of the figure of slum serve discursive purposes as a powerful trope – both in literary and non-literary contexts – with which a range of existential questions and contemporary realities may be thematized (see Arendt, 1998). Furthermore, it exposes the ways in which socio-political realities are imbricated in the human and environmental dilemmas of slum life. In particular regard to *Welcome to Lagos*, I have argued elsewhere that:

Although the squalor and deprivation that dominate the documentary relate more specifically to slums, the title of the series implies that it is an overarching representation of postcolonial urban dystopian spaces. It also implies that this representation extends to every part of Lagos, a city that is so often deployed as both metaphor and metonym for the

entire country. (Akpome, 2017: 106-107)⁴

Like several other postcolonial littoral cities in a variety of representational situations, Lagos operates in *Welcome to Lagos* as “a fluid icon for representation, an emblematic space that can mirror the flux many subaltern figures may experience when they are forced to negotiate the social conditions and hegemony as a result of colonization” (Jeffrey, 2010: 99). Also, as a stock socio-spatial feature of Nollywood films, the city has become “by far the most powerful purveyor” (Haynes, 2007: 131) of cultural, social, and economic conditions that are nationwide in scope. Similarly, Ayo Kehinde (2007: 232-3) has noted how Lagos – as well as other African cities – operates as “a topos, a theme, a trope, a metaphor and a symbol” in fictional texts that use different versions of “mimetic realism and naturalism” to explore the social and environmental factors that impact the living conditions of urban Africans. Although the immediate object of Kehinde’s analysis is fiction, the symbolic and signifying features that he identifies are equally relevant to this discussion of *Welcome to Lagos* especially in view of the series’ interest in the city’s most acute social and environmental deficiencies.

It is also significant, in terms of the reception of the series, that it was released in 2010, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of Nigeria’s independence from British colonial rule. At that moment of sustained reflections

⁴ In that article, I focus on the ways in which the documentary highlights links between late capitalism, urbanisation and slum life in postcolonial mega cities such as Lagos.

on the history and state of the nation, *Welcome to Lagos* represented a symbolic, even if unintentional, discursive contemplation of the nation's recent social, political, economic, and cultural conditions in a way that reinforces one of the key features of the documentary film as a genre that "proposes perspectives on and interpretations of historic issues, processes, and events" (Nichols, 1991: ix).

The documentary focuses unrelentingly on slum areas in Lagos to the almost complete exclusion of better endowed parts of the city. Upmarket business districts and affluent suburbs – what the narrator calls "the swankier parts of town" – hardly appear throughout the entire three hours of the documentary's total running time. More often than not, these suburbs only feature in fleeting panoramic cityscapes in which individual neighbourhoods are not differentiated. By focusing almost exclusively on slums, the film translates the slum into the city's dominant, and possibly its exclusive, representational icon. This portrayal is underpinned apparently by the narrator's repeated claim that three-quarters of metropolitan Lagos consists of slums. Although the filmmakers do not provide a source for this estimate, some studies do suggest that up to "two-thirds" of the city's population live in slums (see Agbola and Agunbiade, 2009). However, some of these studies distinguish between central areas of the city and peri-urban settlements. For example, as part of their discussion of urbanization and slums in metropolitan Lagos, Agbola and Agunbiade (2009: 79) refer to "the illegal slum and squat-

ter settlements, *as well as the city*" (emphasis added), while Gandy (2006: 372) refers to the metropolis as "a loose federation of *diverse* localities" (emphasis added). No such differentiation is made in the commentaries that accompany *Welcome to Lagos*. This apparently deliberate lack of nuance and detail recalls Rony's earlier mentioned comments on the nature of taxidermic Western cinematic representations of non-Western subjects. It also illustrates James Clifford's (1986: 7) argument about the "inherently *partial ...and incomplete*" (original emphasis) nature of ethnographic narratives such as those provided by the series.

The effect of this is that conditions in the slums, as well as the personal situations of individual slum-dwellers, become consistently associated – directly or indirectly – with the city and its larger population. A good example is the narrator's comment about one of the characters who processes and sells cattle blood at the Oluwanishola cattle market: "All around Lagos, you'll find millions of others like Gabriel" A few become wealthy, but the vast majority earn just enough to live on." Two other examples are particularly instructive for the ways in which these representations enable or reinforce the production of certain kinds of knowledge about Lagos and Nigeria (Jones and Sanyal, 2015). In the first example, the narrator states that the rubbish dump is "the place to start" as "an *example* of everything that's fantastic about" the city (emphasis added). And on the second occasion, he says the cattle market offers viewers "a good

idea” of how the city’s 16 million residents are fed every day. This becomes a discursive pattern by which conditions in the dump are subtly portrayed as representative of conditions in the city and country at large.

One clear instance where the slum is used directly as metonym for the country is the scene where a suspected thief is apprehended at the dumpsite and brought before the leader of the slum dwellers. The suspect is subjected to a primitive informal trial in which there is little or no regard for human rights or the basics of modern jurisprudence. Close-up shots of the suspect show him bound hands and feet and with blood dripping from his ears while he is being tortured by a mob of scavengers, one of whom announces that: “*This is Lagos*. If you’re a thief, we are going to kill you, and burn you up. *This is Lagos*” (emphasis added). This idea of an alternative ‘Lagos’ form of justice is subtextually reinforced later on when the same leader of the dumpsite successfully resolves a dispute which the formal courts have failed to settle. These episodes in the documentary are significant for the ways in which they contribute to the production of certain narratives about informal social organization in the slum, the city, and the country in general. The particular narratives used here portray informal social organization as both exceptional and primitive (see Gandy, 2006).

In similar ways, social, economic, and cultural features that are more commonly associated with Lagos (as well as Nigeria and

indeed the entire developing world)⁵ are invoked to link slum, city, and nation via synecdoche and metonymy. This is what happens when the narrator asserts, in the opening sequence of the first episode that, “despite its reputation for corruption and poverty, Lagos is not all like that you know. *These people* will show you what ghetto life is really like” (emphasis added). The expression “these people” can be simultaneously understood in at least two ways. It either doubles as, or slides between, two possible immediate referents – ghetto dwellers in particular, and the inhabitants of Lagos in general – such that the two are conflated. In this way, the slum dweller figures both as slum dweller and city dweller. It is important to note furthermore that the discourse of corruption and poverty invoked in relation to the city in this scene are actually more commonly associated with countries rather than individual cities. In this case therefore, the reference to corruption and poverty applies more plausibly to Nigeria as a whole than to Lagos or its slums in a way that re-echoes the producer’s earlier-cited comment on the generally negative British perception of “Nigeria, and Lagos in particular” (Anderson, 2010: n.p.).

This representational schema is further illustrated in the narrator’s reference to the

⁵ In several instances, the ghetto dwellers in the documentary are compared to people in the ‘developed’ and ‘western world’ regarding how each group is adapting to the extremities of contemporary urban life. Although the term ‘developing world’ is not used expressly, a subtextual representational scheme based on the binary between developed and developing or underdeveloped is implied. The implications of this are however, not a concern of this article.

problem of epileptic power supply, one of Nigeria's pressing, and most iconic infrastructural deficiencies. The narrator calls it "the city's problem". However, one of the slum dwellers refers to the electricity crises more accurately in terms of "the Nigerian factor" (emphasis added). In yet another episode, brief but notable mention is made of the largely moribund and almost non-existent national railway service. By highlighting the fact that Lagos, the country's largest city, commercial hub and administrative capital for several decades has only one operational railway service a week,⁶ the series draws attention to the city's celebrated traffic jams as well as the transportation chaos that continues to plague the entire country. Thus, while the film's aesthetic focus is on specific slums in Lagos, its narratives invoke and evoke social, economic and political realities that apply, unmistakably, to the whole of Nigeria.

The article will now conclude with a brief discussion of the ways in which the depiction of urbanization in Lagos in this documentary reflects on Nigeria's socio-political transition from military dictatorship to civilian rule in 1999. I also highlight how this portrayal comments on the role of politics (both during decolonization and after independence) in shaping the dynamics of modern urbanization in Nigeria in particular and in the global South in general. Writing about Johannesburg in this regard, Sue Parnell (1997: 899) notes that the

dependant relationship between an efficient state and the development of urban government (generally municipalities) who were responsible for overseeing the implementation of sustainable standards and a viable urban financial base is critical to understanding both decolonization and the nature of the city in the rest of the colonial world, especially Africa. For the same reasons it would be useful to revisit urban African political and administrative representation....

The current decay in infrastructure and the socioeconomic crises in Lagos have been similarly traced to political and administrative developments from the colonial era (Agbola and Agunbiade, 2009; Ilesanmi, 2010). During that period, social amenities were provided on the basis of the discriminatory policies of racial segregation whereby the minority population of colonial administrators was favoured while the vast majority was almost completely neglected. This is what laid the foundation for enduring inequality. In the years and decades that followed independence, political instability and increased rural-urban migration (which accelerated after the 1967-70 civil war) "neutralized" the "initial optimism" of independence in 1960 (Ilesanmi, 2010: 246). Ilesanmi goes on to observe that the global recession of the 1980s and the introduction of IMF and World Bank sponsored structural adjustment programmes in 1986 "further intensified the spread of poverty, resulting in declining levels of investment in public services and many

⁶ This was the case at the time of filming in 2010 and although more services were later introduced, they still remain grossly inadequate for the city's population (see Adamu, 2014).

abandoned projects” as well as “near-complete infrastructural collapse” (2010: 246). Most formerly colonized countries follow a similar political-economic trajectory resulting in the continuous drift of citizens from impoverished rural areas to ever expanding squatter settlements in mega-cities (see Dawson and Edwards, 2004: 14).

These inclement local and global factors have resulted, over time, in the proliferation of slums all over the world but especially in Africa where slum conditions are marked by extreme forms of environmental decay and are increasingly represented, in both literal and cinematic mediums, using iconographies of filth. It is important to note that the focus of this article in this regard is slightly, but significantly, different from those studies whose interest in the literary functions of waste relates mainly to (post)modern cultures of consumption, materialism, and wastefulness (see Esty, 1999, for example). The representational orientations under consideration are those which portray Africa “as a ‘remnant’ of globalization – a waste product, trash heap, disposable raw material, and degraded offcut of the processes that have so greatly enriched, dignified and beautified their beneficiaries” (Lincoln, 2008: 99).⁷ In regard to *Welcome to Lagos* therefore,

[t]he sustained and intense focus on filth can be understood in both literal and figurative ways ... as a trope for the socio-economic status of the slum

⁷ Kenneth Harrow (2013: 1) demonstrates how trash is deployed as a trope in African cinema to “define the lives of the poor” and to link their material conditions to “psychological, sociological, and political” issues.

and the postcolonial mega-city not only within the context of globalized neoliberal capitalism but also that of postcolonial socio-political dystopia. (Akpome, 2017: 108)

Since the movement of the administrative seat of Nigeria’s federal government to Abuja in 1991, political responsibility for the development of Lagos has resided with the government of Lagos state which launched the Lagos Mega City Project in 2007. The final episode of *Welcome to Lagos* focuses mainly on the implementation of this ambitious programme which aims to transform the city into a modern and efficient metropolis. In this episode, the narrator follows the operations of an overzealous government official who leads a special committee – a ‘task force’ – involved in the implementation of the city’s planned infrastructural upgrades. Through this, the documentary draws attention to the continued militarization of governance and civil life even after the official end to military rule in 1999. The operations of this ‘task force’ (which includes gun-toting, battle-ready policemen) are a graphic reminder of the era of military dictatorship. In this regard, Cyril Obi (2011: 372) has argued that Nigeria’s “post-military transitions demonstrate the contradictions embedded in a democracy authored by military generals and their civilian political allies ... [which] included the transfer of a ‘militarized’ political culture that reflected a command-and-obey ethos to the democratic arena.”

The film focuses on this point in the nar-

rator's description of the 'task force': "Made up of hand-picked policemen and state paramilitaries, the task force operates on a mandate all of their own. They have the power to arrest, seize goods, and even destroy property without providing any compensation." This commentary accompanies chaotic scenes in which members of the committee operate in commando style, confiscating merchandize and assaulting hapless citizens. Similarly, squatters at the shantytown on Kuramo beach live in constant fear that their settlement could be razed by the authorities at any time and without warning. The pervasive sense of despair and uncertainty is articulated most evocatively in the melancholic circumstances of one of the slum dwellers named Esther, a young lady whose romantic relationship breaks down as the series come to an end. These narratives of loss and distress combine skilfully with images of environmental degradation and physical disorder to produce a specific representation of social and political dysfunction that unset-

tles Nigeria's official post-dictatorship narrative of democratization.

In literary terms, the overarching depiction of contemporary Nigeria in *Welcome to Lagos* echoes the "rhetoric of disillusion" (Lazarus, 1990: ix) that marked the country's literature in the mid to late 1960s. Through the symbolisms of the series' representations schema, a range of the macrocosmic economic, environmental, social and political issues confronting the vast majority of post-colonial subjects are dramatized using slum life as a more or less totalizing trope for the entire country. The effect is that the slum is reinforced as the default icon of contemporary African urbanism (see Nuttall and Mbembe, 2008). In this way, the documentary film highlights the power of visual information as a foremost mode of contemporary knowledge production "which makes understanding the complex construction and multiple social functions of visual imagery more important than ever before" (Kellner, 2002: 81).

Works Cited

- Abubakar, Abdullahi Tasiu. 2011. *Media Consumption amid Contestation: Northern Nigerians' Engagement with the BBC World Service*. PhD thesis. University of Westminster, UK.
- Adamu, Sani. 2014. "Reviving Nigeria's railways: The Jonathan approach". Available at: <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/07/reviving-nigerias-railways-jonathan-approach-2/>. Accessed 11 November 2015.
- Agbola, Tunde and Agunbiade, Elijah M. 2009. "Urbanization, Slum Development and Security of Tenure: The Challenges of Meeting Millennium Development Goal 7 in Metropolitan Lagos, Nigeria". In: De Sherbiniin, A., A. Rahman, A. Barbieri, J.C. Fotso, and Y. Zhu (eds.) *Urban Population-Environment Dynamics in the Developing World: Case Studies and Lessons Learned*. Paris: Committee for International Cooperation in National Research in Demography (CICRED), 77-106.
- Akpome, Aghogho. 2017. "Late Capitalism, Urbanisation and Cultures of Economic 'Survivalism' in the BBC's *Welcome to Lagos*." *Africa Spectrum*, 52(1): 101-113.
- Arendt, Hannah. 1998. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- BBC2. 2010. *Welcome to Lagos*. London.
- Clifford, James. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths". In: Clifford, James and Marcus, George E. (eds.) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. 25th Anniversary Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1-26.
- Cooke, Rachel. 2010. "Lessons in Life". *New Statesman*, 45-46.
- Dawson, Ashley and Edwards, Brent Hayes. 2004. "Introduction: Global Cities of the South". *Social Text* 81, 22 (4): 1-7.
- De Groof, Matthias. 2015. Review of *Film and the End of Empire*. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 35(2): 361-363.
- Esty, Joshua D. 1999. "Excremental Postcolonialism." *Contemporary Literature*, 40(1): 22-59.
- Gandy, Matthew. 2006. "Planning, anti-planning and the infrastructure crisis facing metropolitan Lagos". *Urban Studies*, 43(2): 371-396.
- Gilroy, Paul. 2011. 'Great Games: Film, History and Working-through Britain's Colonial Legacy.' In: *Film and the End of Empire*, (eds.) Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe. London: British Film Institute.

- Grieverson, Lee (ed.). 2011. *Film and the End of Empire: Cultural Histories of Cinema*. London: British Film Institute.
- Harrow, Kenneth W. 2013. *Trash: African Cinema from Below*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Haynes, Jonathan. 2007. "Lagos in Nollywood Films". *Africa Today*, 54 (2): 131-150.
- Holden, Michael. 2010. "Africa through my television". Available at: <http://africaresearchinstitute.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Africa-through-my-television.pdf>. Accessed 12 March 2013.
- Ilesanmi, Adetokunbo O. 2010. "Urban sustainability in the context of Lagos mega-city". *Journal of Geography and Regional Planning*, 3(10): 240-252.
- Jeffrey, Karima K. 2010. "Litoralia or the Littoral as Trope: Developing a Paradigm of Postcoloniality". *C.L.R. James Journal*, 16 (1): 99-126.
- Jones, Gareth A and Sanyal, Romola. 2015. "Spectacle and Suffering: The Mumbai slum as a worlded space". *Geoforum*, 65: 431-439.
- Kehinde, Ayo. 2007. "Narrating the African city from the diaspora: Lagos as a trope in Ben Okri and Chika Unigwe's short stories". *African Identities*, 5 (2): 231-246.
- Kellner, Douglas. 2002. "Critical Perspectives on Visual Imagery in Media and Cyberculture". *Journal of Visual Literacy*, 22 (1): 81-90.
- Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lazarus, Neil. 1990. *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Lincoln, Sarah L. 2008. "Expensive Shit: Aesthetic Economies of Waste in Postcolonial Africa". Available at: http://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/10161/696/D_Lincoln_Sarah_a_200808.pdf?sequence=1. Accessed 11 June 2015.
- Litzinger, Ralph A. 2000. "Review: The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle by Fatimah Tobing Rony." *American Anthropologist*, 102(3): 608-610.
- Morakinyo, Kolawole O, Ogunrayewa, Michael O, Koleosho, Bili O and Adenubi, Olufunmilola O. 2012. "Urban Slums as Spatial Manifestations of Urbanization in SubSaharan Africa: A Case Study of Ajegunle Slum Settlement, Lagos, Nigeria". *Developing Country Studies*, 2 (11): 1-10.
- Nel, Adèle. 2012. "The repugnant appeal of the abject: cityscape and cinematic corporality in *District 9*". *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 26 (4): 547-569.
- Nichols, Bill. 1991. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

- Nichols, Bill. 2017. *Introduction to Documentary. Third Edition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nwaubani, Tricia A. 2010. "Nigeria's anger at the BBC's Welcome to Lagos film". Available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/may06/nigeriaresponse-bbc. Accessed 6 July 2013.
- Nuttall, Sarah and Mbembe, Achille (eds.). 2008. *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Obi, Cyril. 2013. "Taking back our democracy? The trials and travails of Nigerian elections since 1999". In: Crawford, Gordon and Lynch, Gabrielle (eds). *Democratization in Africa: Challenge and Prospects*. London: Routledge, 92-113.
- Ojumu, Akin. 2010. "Welcome to Lagos: how Nigeria's dirt poor scratch a living in a city teeming with business flair". Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/04/documentary-film-welcome-to-lagos-nigeria>. Accessed 4 November 2012.
- Parnell, Susan. 1997. "South African cities: Perspectives from the ivory tower of urban studies". *Urban Studies*, 34 (5-6): 891-906.
- Peyton, Nellie. 2018. "'Africa is no shithole': proud immigrants answer back to Trump". Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-immigration-trump/Africa-is-no-shithole-proud-immigrants-answer-back-to-trump-idUSKBN1F11XF>
- Ponech, T. 2008. "Work and play: the 5-O game". In: *Dekalog 1: on the five obstructions*, ed. M. Hjort, 76–94. London and New York: Wallflower.
- Revell, Kristy. 2010. "Working with Informality: Increasing resilience in the cities of the Global South". Conference paper presented at the 46th ISOCARP Congress 2010, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Rony, Fatima Tobing. 1996. *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Smith, Richard G. 2015. "Satellites: Cities from Space". Available at: <http://theoryculturesociety.org/richard-g-smith-on-satellites-and-cities-from-space/>. Accessed 17 September 2015.
- Versi, Anver. 2010. "Unwelcome portrayal of Lagos". *African Business*, 9.
- Wollaston, Sam. 2010. "Welcome to Lagos". Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2010/apr/16/welcome-to-lagos-sam-wollaston>