300-WORD ABSTRACT FOR PRACTICE-RESEARCH OUTPUT TITLED OLOIBIRI (2015)

BY

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The screenplay for the feature-film, Oloibiri (2015/2016), was commissioned by Right-angle Productions, Nigeria, and Theatron Media, Canada, to address exploitative oil-explorations by multinational corporations in Nigeria’s Niger-Delta. Data for the story accrued from interviews with victims of oil-spills in the village of Oloibiri (which inspires the title), and a workshop involving some Niger-Delta stakeholders. Other data stemmed from records of martyrs of the cause - Ken Saro-Wiwa and Isaac Adaka-Boro – in addition to texts on Igbo folklore, postcolonialism, Africana womanism, and transnational cinema. These helped construct a relatively balanced narrative targeting local and international audiences, and projecting oil-spill victims, their big-brand abusers enabled by governmental neglect, as well as the resultant extremities of anti-exploitation militancy. The screenwriter’s experiences of the Niger-Delta, her ancestral homeland, was also useful to the processes.

The screenplay holds dual significance: Firstly, it was data for answering two questions of the screenwriter’s doctoral research into vestiges of simplistic filmmaking techniques of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) still present in typical transnational (neo-) Nollywood films, rendering them unattractive to mainstream Hollywood distributors. Secondly, the producer desired the narrative style to enrich its market potentials, locally and internationally. This therefore instructed combining Igbo folklore – popular amongst diverse African audiences - with Aristotle’s three-act structure, a mainstream storytelling style of the West.

Oloibiri premiered at Cannes (2015), screened across Nigeria and in selected U.S cinemas, provoked a public apology from Nigeria’s Ex-President (Yakubu Gowon) to Niger-Deltans, won “Best Screenplay” at NAFCA1, and “Best Foreign Film” at San Diego Black Film Festival (2016). The screenwriter’s reflections on Oloibiri, detailed in an interview, was published in the Journal of African Cinemas (2017). In 2017, following its successes, the screenplay was requested for archiving by the Margaret Herrick Library in Hollywood, the repository of film materials managed by the Oscars Academy Awards.

1 Nollywood and Africa Film Critics’ Awards