



**CAMERA, COMMERCE & CONSCIENCE:**  
**AFROWOOD AND THE CRISIS OF PURPOSE**

**A BOOK IN HONOUR OF TUNDE KELANI**

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**Foreword by Prof. Kole Omotoso**

# FOREWORD



Every re-interpretation of a work of art is an enrichment of the culture that inspired that work in the first place. The artist of the re-interpretation is truly blessed not only by the initial artist but by the community and the culture called upon to see itself in another light, a new might. It is in this way that Tunde Kelani is blessed and a blessing to Yoruba culture and the Nigerian community.

TK's films, unlike other films of Nollywood notoriety, are quintessential victories of the communal art form involving the writer, the film script writer, the actors male and female, the camera men, the grip holder, the make-up artists, the costume makers, the musicians, the post-production crew of editors and voice over contributors, all under the supreme director-creator TK. Any wonder then that the films of Tunde Kelani are such delights to the eyes and the ears of his audience.

The essays in this book of appreciation speak to these joys that the films of Tunde Kelani (and those of a few others explored in the book) bring to the heart and the mind. The magic of translating and transforming a verbal narrative to a pictorial narrative is indeed a re-awakening to the ever-evolving wonder of further-creativity.

On a personal note, I had a wonderful opportunity once in Durban South Africa, to enjoy the company of TK all to myself, alone in the house to the delightful aroma of home from Nigerian home cooking. South African wine, excellent jollof and goat meat and pleasant conversations. Always sumptuous for the consumer, a smile of achievement from the chef-director is the meals that TK puts together for us all in his gorgeous films.

The languages of the film are always adequate, just as the master chef chooses the amount of salt, pepper, kán-ún and other ingredients, adequate for the food in preparation. Whether in Yoruba or in English,

enough said is what matters.

Beyond the works of Tunde Kelani, a few of the essays here also focus on the works of other filmmakers. This indeed is a delight. My fear is that these fine essays take us back to the world of verbal narration! I hope reading them return us to the pictorial narration of our master film director!

Ire ó! È má a gbádùn!

Kólé Omotoso,  
Akure, Nigeria  
January, 2019

# PREFACE



## TUNDE KELANI: ONILE ORITA

We did not intend to publish a book on the works of Mr Tunde Kelani. We intended to honour him with a book that focuses on the film in Africa and how it is grappling with the opposing forces of commerce and commercialisation on the one hand, and devotion to the liberation of the continent from the greed of a self-serving leadership, and from the violence, poverty and misery that that leadership produces on the other hand.

Mr Tunde Kelani deserves honour: not only has he blazed the trail in the production of a certain kind of film, in preserving the challenged cultures of the people, and in speaking truth to power through his camera, he has also nurtured many younger people who are in different ways walking in his practical and ideological steps. Tunde Kelani dedicates almost each of his films to persons who value humanity, freedom and culture, some well known, others quiet achievers. He delights in celebrating people. Yet his case was becoming like that of the proverbial Magudu, which “took care” of the corpses of both the elephant and the buffalo, but when deceased had no one to take care of its own corpse.

Our pursuit of a book on the film in Africa in honour of Tunde Kelani soon led us to an *orita*: “the place” in Ola Rotimi's words, “where three footpaths meet”. The footpaths of the film, commerce and conscience crossform an *orita* at the centre of which perches Tunde Kelani, as the legendary *Esu, Onile Orita*. Through the film, TK resists the lure of mindless commerce, and pursues the ideals of conscientious liberation. Therefore, it is impossible to talk of the film in Africa without talking of the works of Tunde Kelani, of commerce and of what we call conscience. Like *Esu, Onile Orita*, the mega trickster, TK uses filmic trickery to

confuse yet enlighten, equip yet disarm, provoke yet soothe. Wole Soyinka called him “camera with a conscience”. This explains why this 12-chapter book which did not set out to focus on TK's works, ended up with a third of its chapters on those works.

Gathered from Austria, Canada, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, the United States and Tanzania the contributors to this volume explore the film in Africa concluding in different words that the film is shaping and being shaped by the realities of the continent, and that the story of the film is an evolving one. As a result, some of them map out the pathway to an Afrowood that strikes a balance between commerce and conscience.

This is the Preface to the book; but who would have read it if we had titled it *Preface*?

We wish to thank our reviewers and all other assistants for their contribution.

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