**BOOKREVIEW**

**Title of book: Gender Terrains in African Cinema**

**Author: Sr. Dominic Dipio**

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Gender and empowerment of women are themes that are crucial to understanding the daily lives of women and men in the global society. Gender has a power influence on the socio-cultural and economic wellbeing of our lives. Artists from social sciences and humanities have often used art to present inequalities in society and show the constant struggle for human existence. **Gender Terrains in African Cinema** is an analytical portrayal of gender relations in African Cinema showing gender inequalities and the struggle to change the position of women. The author’s main point of interest is how Cinema and filmmakers, themselves located within the patriarchal hegemonic structure, deal with gender-related issues and in particular the position of women in African society. The central question is how women and gender discourse are represented in cinema and how the filmmaker handles these issues.

From a theoretical perspective, the author explains the challenges of categorising African film and argues that despite the diversity in style, content and form, artistic visions and cultures, African cinema draws from its rich oral and varied cultures which gives it authenticity. She observes that it is the filmmaker’s use of African oral tradition that makes African film context specific.

In focusing on the gender question, Dipio argues that filmmakers use children to express their radical views and the need to transform gender relations. The girl child offers a paradigm shift because the filmmaker uses her to question and challenge gender discrimination in society.

The author explains the principles of male dominance, male identification and male centeredness and obsession with control and how women constantly struggle to change their status quo. The author argues that the filmmakers present both females and males as victims of patriarchy which ensures that power remains in the hands of a few men. Dipio analyses the over-powering image of the mother and how the concept of motherhood presents women in a special and privileged position in society and is used to discriminate against those women who do not have biological children. The author discusses how filmmakers show a growing resistance against patriarchy by both young females and males; how male involvement may be used to dismantle patriarchy and empower women, and how male involvement may be the only hope for a better community.

Dipio clearly argues that the filmmakers show elderly women as a group that enforces adherence to the status quo but at the same time enjoys a lot of power in communities and sometimes has more power over males. She re-echoes the centrality of motherhood in African culture and mothers’ authority that unites and cements family relationships and argues that the attachment and veneration males have for their mothers negates the patriarchal principles.

The author’s interest in analysing representation of women and the gender discourse focuses on cinema, critiquing the position of women, critiquing gender roles played by the girl child, the young women and the elderly women and the critical role of mothers in communities; and the role of the filmmaker as a gender activist and a transformative agent in challenging women’s status quo.

The use of film excerpts to show women constantly proving themselves in the male-dominated society is a very powerful and vivid tool. The selection of the films was well thought out making the analysis more visual, vivid and interesting, showing the metaphors and satire and how they shape the image of woman in the community.

Dipio deserves hearty congratulations for achieving academic excellence in this book. I strongly recommend this book to the fields of African Cinema, gender and cultural studies, social sciences, and psychology for its tremendous insights into gender issues.