

REVUE ÉLECTRONIQUE SEMESTRIELLE



Revue

Infundibulum-scientific

Revue Scientifique des Langues,
Lettres, Civilisations, Sciences sociales
et Humaines

Numéro 7
Août 2024
ISSN: 2789-1666



Domaines

Langues, Lettres, Civilisation, Sciences Sociales et Humaines

Éditeur: département d'Espagnol de l'UFR Communication, Milieu et Société (CMS) de l'Université Alassane Ouattara

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<https://aurehal.archivouverture.fr/journal.read/id/411675>



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À propos de la Revue

La notion de science fait penser indubitablement à plusieurs disciplines. En ce sens, nous disons science de la vie, science du langage, science historique, science économique, etc. Ces différents types de sciences que nous énumérons ne constituent pas des éléments compacts, indissociables. En effet, la Science est un conglomerat de ce que nous pouvons qualifier de sous-sciences ou branches qui, mises ensemble, forment l'élément global qui n'a qu'une seule visée : La Connaissance.

La Revue *Infundibulum Scientific* n'est rien d'autre que ce vecteur Sciences-Connaissance. Elle se veut un carrefour, un croisement de plusieurs disciplines. Notre revue *Infundibulum* a pour objectif, de diffuser la quintessence des travaux des Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs de tous horizons, issus des langues, des lettres, des sciences humaines et sciences sociales.

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ÉDITORIAL DE LA REVUE

Nous portons sur les fonts baptismaux une nouvelle revue scientifique, *Infundibulum-Scientific*. Pluridisciplinaire, elle entend couvrir le vaste champ des Langues, Lettres, Civilisations, Sciences Sociales et Humaines. Certes, il existe déjà un certain nombre de revues scientifiques dans ce créneau en Côte d'Ivoire et en Afrique. Mais précisément, *Infundibulum* naît pour encourager l'émulation dans la quête de la qualité. L'ambition que porte *Infundibulum-Scientific* est d'offrir aux chercheurs et aux enseignants-chercheurs Ivoiriens et au-delà, africains, un espace d'échanges d'expériences, de débats et de collaboration, en prêtant une attention particulière aux besoins spécifiques des sociétés africaines aux prises avec des maux qui les déshumanisent.

Quand on enseigne dans une université, il est légitime de mettre ses productions scientifiques au service de sa promotion. Ainsi, nos chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs, dans de nombreux cas, font leurs travaux scientifiques les yeux rivés sur le CAMES. Il faut inverser les choses. Les travaux destinés au CAMES doivent être conçus comme des contributions pour enrichir les connaissances scientifiques. Le développement de notre pays dépend dans une large mesure de la qualité de ces productions scientifiques, de la pertinence des solutions qui y sont proposées. Alors il faut sortir des sentiers battus pour ouvrir des routes nouvelles si nous voulons arriver à bon port. Il revient aux chercheurs africains de renforcer leur système de recherche confronté à

de multiples défis. Mais il ne faut pas démissionner pour autant. Il faut s'armer de courage et de persévérance pour avancer.

Les sociétés africaines, du fait de leur histoire, sont aux prises avec des défis qui ont pour noms, violences politiques, système de santé défaillant ou inexistant, injustices sociales criardes, chômage à grande échelle...Le monde rural est livré à lui-même, privé de la moindre protection sociale, tel l'environnement dans lequel les chercheurs africains exercent leur métier. Ils ne sauraient continuer à fermer les yeux sur les situations dramatiques qui nous entourent et constituent le quotidien de nos peuples. Sociologues, historiens, géographes, politologues, philosophes, théoriciens de la littérature peuvent orienter leurs réflexions vers ces horizons plongés dans des ténèbres. Quant aux linguistes, ils ont le vaste chantier des langues nationales en voie de disparition. Dans le camp des sciences sociales et humaines les chantiers sont nombreux et urgents.

Évidemment, ces types de travaux exigent un engagement, du courage et de la persévérance car il s'agit de la quête de la connaissance destinée à modeler l'environnement humain et social. La qualité intrinsèque d'un ouvrage, d'un article ou d'une communication constitue en soi un passeport y compris pour le CAMES. C'est dire que la qualité est dans le domaine scientifique ce qu'est une panacée pour une maladie donnée ou une clé universelle pour ouvrir le monde.

La revue Infundibulum Scientific se donne pour mission, sans prétention aucune, la tâche d'apporter sa contribution à améliorer les productions scientifiques des chercheurs ivoiriens et africains ; et même d'ailleurs. Elle se veut particulièrement exigeante sur la qualité des travaux qui lui sont soumis pour publication. La vocation de cette revue est d'incarner l'excellence. Tous ceux qui veulent collaborer avec Infundibulum Scientific doivent s'inscrire dans cette ligne.

M. Théophile KOUI
Professeur Titulaire des Universités CAMES
Ex-Directeur de publication
de la Revue Infundibulum Scientific

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STIGMATIZING TO EVANGELIZE? A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF DEMONIZED WOMEN IN AFRICAN PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIAN FILMS

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Abstract

This article focuses on how proselytizing Pentecostal Christian film directors vilify African women depicting them, in the mysterious and spiritual realm, as demonic agents to contend with. In this realm, constructed through the power of patriarchal ideology and enhanced film technology, “lies the power of religion [...] to assume a reality of its own” (B. Meyer 2003 p. 1) to propagate evangelization. This article draws its major theoretical backbone from an in-depth ethnographic study of African women/demonology and Pentecostalism. From a purely ethno-feminist literary standpoint, the paper explores the representation of the spiritual roles given to African female characters in *Yatin* (2002) and *Fierce War* (2017), two films from francophone and Anglophone Africa. One question stands out in the course of this research. Why must films directors rely on depicting female characters as forces of darkness, whose characters must be sacrificed as devil advocates to ensure new converts to Pentecostal Christianity? Drawing from the compelling significance of Pentecostal evangelism, the paper argues that in the films under study, female characters are mostly accorded evil roles such that cast them as the demonic ones that occupy the axis of evil, torment fellow characters and thus deserve to be vanquished before evangelism could take place. The paper concludes by advocating for a re-consideration of strong anti-feminist patriarchal inclined culture in film evangelism. It calls for an informed and neutral gender sensitive scripts in the process of apportioning roles to female characters in evangelical films.

Keywords: Women, African, demon, evangelization, born-again, Pentecostal, film.

Stigmatiser pour évangéliser ? une évaluation critique des femmes diabolisées dans les films pentecôtistes chrétiens africains

Résumé

Cet article se concentre sur la façon dont les réalisateurs chrétiens pentecôtistes prosélytes vilipendent les femmes africaines en les représentant, dans le domaine mystérieux et spirituel, comme des agents démoniaques avec lesquels il faut lutter. Dans ce domaine, construit grâce au pouvoir de l'idéologie patriarcale et de la technologie cinématographique manipulée, « réside le pouvoir de la religion [...] d'assumer une réalité qui lui est propre » (B. Meyer 2003 p. 1) pour propager l'évangélisation. Cet article tire sa principale base théorique d'une étude ethnographique approfondie des femmes africaines/démonologie et pentecôtisme. D'un point de vue littéraire purement ethno-féministe, l'article explore la représentation des rôles spirituels accordés aux personnages féminins africains dans : *Yatin* (2002) et *Fierce War* (2017), deux films d'Afrique francophone et anglophone. Une question ressort au cours de cette recherche. Pourquoi les réalisateurs des films s'appuient-ils sur la représentation des personnages féminins dont les rôles doivent être sacrifiés en tant que défenseurs du diable pour assurer de nouveaux convertis au christianisme pentecôtiste? Ayant le débat de l'importance convaincante de l'évangélisation pentecôtiste, l'article soutient que dans les films étudiés, les personnages féminins se voient principalement attribuer des rôles maléfiques, ce qui les présente comme des êtres démoniaques qui occupent l'axe du mal, tourmentent les autres personnages et méritent donc d'être vaincus avant que l'évangélisation puisse avoir lieu. L'article conclut en plaidant pour une reconsidération d'une forte culture patriarcale antiféministe dans l'évangélisation cinématographique. Il appelle à des scénarios informés et neutres, sensibles au genre, dans le processus de répartition des rôles entre les personnages féminins dans les films évangéliques.

Mots clés. Femmes africaines, démon, évangélisation, naissance de nouveau, pentecôtiste, film.

Estigmatizar para evangelizar? Una evaluación crítica de las mujeres demonizadas en las películas pentecostales cristianas africanas

Resumen

Este artículo se centra en cómo los directores de cine cristianos pentecostales proselitistas vilipendian a las mujeres africanas proyectándolas, en el ámbito misterioso y espiritual, como agentes demoníacos con los que hay que luchar. En este ámbito, construido a través del poder de la ideología patriarcal y la tecnología cinematográfica mejorada, “se encuentra el poder de la religión [...] de asumir una realidad propia” (B. Meyer 2003 p. 1) para propagar la evangelización. Este artículo obtiene su principal columna vertebral teórica de un estudio etnográfico en profundidad sobre las mujeres africanas, la demonología y el pentecostalismo. Desde un punto de vista literario puramente etnofeminista, el artículo explora la representación de los roles espirituales otorgados a personajes femeninos africanos en: *Yatin* (2002) y *Fierce War* (2017), dos películas del África francófona y anglófona. Una pregunta se destaca en el curso de esta investigación. ¿Por qué los directores de cine deben confiar en representar personajes femeninos como fuerzas de la oscuridad, cuyos personajes deben ser sacrificados como abogados del diablo para asegurar nuevos conversos al cristianismo pentecostal? Partiendo del significado convincente del evangelismo pentecostal, el artículo sostiene que en las películas bajo estudio, a los personajes femeninos se les asignan en su mayoría papeles malvados que los presentan como los demoníacos que ocupan el eje del mal, atormentan a otros personajes y, por lo tanto, merecen ser vencidos. Antes de que la evangelización pudiera tener lugar. El artículo concluye abogando por una reconsideración de una fuerte cultura de tendencia patriarcal antifeminista en la evangelización cinematográfica. Requiere guiones informados y neutrales con sensibilidad de género en el proceso de asignación de roles a personajes femeninos en películas evangélicas.

Palabras clave: Mujeres, africanas, demonio, evangelización, nacidos de nuevo, pentecostales, cine.

Introduction

Apart from the propagation of religion in many societies, the demonization of women is an age-long global practice from early European societies to contemporary African belief systems. From the 15th to the 17th centuries, Europe and North America have their histories steep deep in accusations of demonizing women as forces of darkness. For example, the Salem demonization trials of the 1692 in the United States and the 16th century witch hunting upheavals in France attest to the universal durability of the phenomenon. (S. Mutaru, 2018, pp. 254, 267; O. O. Ashaolu, 2017, p. 24). While this trend is considered a fraught denial of human rights, M. K. Roach in (*Six Women of Salem: The Untold Story of the Accused and their Accusers*) avers that “in Western culture most witch suspects were women” (2013, p. x). Agreeing with Roach, Mutaru asserts that “in most African countries, women are the group of people most vulnerable to being exposed to witchcraft accusations for several reasons (and) women usually bear the brunt in the form of witchcraft accusations” (2018, p. 257). Given that patriarchal gender roles expect men to assume a superior position under imperialism, the advent of Christianity via European missionaries contributes to the depiction of African women as

occupying the demonic stead than men. Long after the end of European missionary/imperialism, for instance, Africans continue the imperialist style of evangelization by sustaining the ‘sermon’ from the pulpit to the stage and to the screen. The world view of such evangelists hinges on the Christian ideals against African cultural values stigmatized as demonic, a binary opposition that pits Pentecostalism against the local religion and the people, especially the women, who manifest traditional faith.

While African literary texts provide a means of reading violence and oppression of women in the society, popular culture, especially the film creates a stronger lasting impression that imprints stereotypical images and condemnation of women in the minds of the larger audience. It is on the above premise that this study interrogates the cinematic portraits of francophone and Anglophone African women in Pentecostal films with emphasis on, *Yatin* (2002) by Christine Madeleine Botoku, a Beninese female director and *Fierce War* (2017) by a Nigerian male director - Francis Ike. Leaning more on feminist literary criticism than religious standpoint, this paper argues that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christian film evangelizes the audience by focusing exclusively on the demonic, arcane, yet impalpable roles accorded to female characters. The evangelization approach under analysis here emphasizes the traditional patriarchal prejudice to castigate and demonize indigenous African women. It argues that through graphic images and discourse of demonism, women mostly are unduly stigmatized as agents of the occult, forerunner of misery, enemy of the gospel and thus merit suppression.

Via a compelling significance of Pentecostal evangelism evident in the films, this paper argues that the roles accorded to the female characters are archetypal images of the femme fatal, the diabolical and the demonic in francophone and Anglophone African religious settings. Given therefore that the directors of these African Pentecostal movies display a penchant for castigating African tradition and ethnography as demonic, it is compelling to interrogate the mysterious roles ascribed to African women in the films under study. What is the justification for depicting mostly women in demonic roles where their morality and spirituality must be tarnished, stigmatized and tamed before evangelization could take place? What cinematic message do the directors seek to send about women and Christian evangelization in African context? It is pertinent to note that there is a widespread critical works on African women in Nollywood and Pentecostal African movies (A. Ukata 2010, and B. Meyers 2015). However, the study of similar topics in the francophone African Pentecostal Film Industry is rather inadequate. The present work is therefore an attempt to bridge the gap.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1 African Pentecostalism Evangelization: An Overview

In the 1980s, Pentecostalism, a neocharismatic Christian doctrine, emerged out of the imperial orthodox churches e.g. the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Anglican Churches in major West African countries. The attendant Pentecostal movements appeal to the majority of the people because they offer a firebrand Christianity which has the ability to transform their lives. Allan Anderson puts it succinctly that:

Pentecostal and charismatic churches see themselves as God's people, called out from the world around them with a distinct mission [...] 'Church' for them [...] is a caring therapeutic community and at once a refuge from the storms and difficulties of a new life and an advice center for every possible eventuality. (66)

These newer Christian movements offer possibility for a transformed life that guarantees an enabling capacity through faith in Pentecostalism. They promise improved lives to individuals struggling with unprecedented severity of socio-economic hardship such as the Nigerian's Structural Adjustment Program, introduced in the 1980s. With terms like being 'born-again' after which the new converts 'will never be the same again', Pentecostal evangelization recommends a convert's renunciation of his traditional ways of life considered sinful and a hindrance to humans' access to a holy God.

A popular feature of African Pentecostal evangelism emanates from foreign evangelists with American, German, Korean and even Brazilian mega-evangelistic crusades aimed at "depopulating the kingdom of Satan" (Hackett, 2003, p. 63). These new Pentecostal movements present strains that counteract the perspectives of the orthodox Christians and African traditionalists seen as the unholy, not 'born-again'.

Neocharismatics are merciless toward indigenous religious practices. These are bluntly referred to as 'demonic' or 'satanic'. Consequently, they express profound reaction against any Christian Church which has connections with these traditional practices such as might be found in the Aladura Churches.... (S. J. Komolafe, 2013, p. 149).

Knut Krio et al aver that as a remedy against an opposing force different from their spiritual world view, Pentecostalists

have designed a form of evangelism that might be termed confrontationist, which has at its foundation a direct attack on the power of the invisible realm itself through 'spiritual warfare,' [...] they enter into a hidden world of sorcerers and witches as matters of life and death (2017, pp. 3-4).

Pentecostal Christianity for instance leaves nothing to chance, it does not give scientific explanation of bad occurrence. Virtually every human encounter is explained off from the spiritual perspectives which makes demonology a force to contend with in Pentecostal

evangelism. African Pentecostals revile traditional African beliefs in divine spirits. Their stance highlights how Christian evangelism derogates demons as universal concerns of life and death, good and evil (Krio et al 6).

To combat the perceived demons, these Pentecostals project evangelization as a warfare against unseen evil forces usually emanating from within the family and environment of converts. Their sermon is usually delivered by highly articulate preachers who come forth with pronouncements that fight forces of darkness. Leaders of these Churches are mostly men, they say violent prayers directed against the ‘strong hold’ of enemies, they write books with titles and themes directed against satanic elements capable of putting Pentecostal members in spiritual bondage. It is significant that these spirits are cast in feminine gender and as such, Pentecostal leaders operate evangelism in a similar manner to the colonial anti-feminist crusade movements – the West African Tigere and Atinga. The latter launched spiritual, political and cultural crusades that tortured, massacred women and scattered women’s group throughout Yorubaland up until 1951 in Nigeria (A. Kumari, 2014, p. 165).

1.2. Women and Demonic Spiritual Power in African Beliefs¹

The demonic casting of female characters emerged out of many debates that surround the spiritual identity of African women who are considered to possess diverse spirituality. Traditional Yoruba women are active in the practice of beliefs in cults from Orisha deities, to Egungun ancestral reverence, to mysterious children (egbé èwe), divinatory guild, marine spirits and so on. Thomas M. Ilesanmi in his anthropological account of Yoruba women accords great powers to them whether sexual, psychological, or spiritual; but the climax of these powers begins with their inclinations to esoteric traits. Besides, some of them are considered to possess magical powers that could make or mar, invoke curse or blessing on the lives of others or their community (T. M. Ilesanmi, 2013, 93-94, 97).

The claim that some women belong to cults that possess diabolic powers such as marine spirit has also gained the attention of several critics. The cultural ideology about West African women and demonology among the Yoruba (Nigeria, Benin and Togo) and the Akan/Mossi, Bambara tribes (Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso) illustrates our understanding of the concept. Drawing data from Yoruba folk songs to Ifa mythological incantations and societal panegyrics, Ayo Opefitimi in *Women in Yoruba Culture: A Dozen of Articles* (2009) explains the ideology behind the supposed supernatural evil qualities of the demonized women seen as people who afflict fellow human beings at will. They are feared for their assumed capacity to destroy the

¹ The present work is strictly from the perspective of a feminist literary/film critic.

chances of their human victims. These qualities explain why the Yorubas give them the sobriquet, *Ìyàmi Ajùbàbà* – literally translated as “my woe mysterious-flying-beings” (A. Opefitimi, 2009, p. 49). Besides Evans-Pritchard’s (1937) work about women and demonology among the Azande in the Central African Republic, Edward Geoffrey Parrinder (1951) foregrounds the prevalent anthropological beliefs of the Akan, the Mossi and the Bambara that some women possessed with diabolical spirits are capable of turning the tides of events against their victims who might be family members or acquaintances. They are said to destroy, maim, or afflict their victims with bad luck or kill them. Parrinder in his study shows that: “The Akan believe that witches [...] are thought to use various methods for destroying those upon whom they prey” (E. Parrinder, 1951, p. 160). Meanwhile T. M. Ilesanmi warns that “most women are ignorantly called witches while in reality, they may be ordinary women” (2013, p.74).

The traditional anthropological and ideological African beliefs about the diabolical power of women have to a large extent informed the proselytizing practice of Pentecostal movements. Their obsession to fixate on rooting out demons is obvious in their prayer patterns/deliverance sessions, sermons, and crusades. These patterns aimed at promoting evangelism have been documented into books, tracts, drama and especially film. Religious accounts in West Africa attest to the cinema as a powerful mechanism of evangelization “that promises new beginnings and a mnemonic device that renders accessible the ideas about the inefficacy of traditional religion and African powers, albeit in a distorting and temporalizing manner” (B. Meyer, 2015, p. 10). Most of African Pentecostal films portray female characters in roles and identities of evil forces of whom the evangelized audience must be wary.

2. Demonized and Afflicted Women in Francophone Film.

2.2. The Afflicted Daughter-in-Law: *Yatin*

In Christine Botoku’s *Yatin*, the main narration is about Agossi, a young barren woman afflicted with urinary incontinence. Her mother-in-law, Ssika had cast a spell of infertility on her and constantly humiliates her for inability to procreate and for ‘bed wetting’. Her husband, Tegbe, beats her at the slightest opportunity, holding her responsible for her barrenness. From *Yatin*’s very first scene, African Pentecostals’ penchant for demonizing women is foregrounded. The scene shows a fiendish and gory ceremony where Ssika is being initiated into occult powers at the village shrine. Immediately after, Ssika’s all-female group members clad in dark robes emerge in a profoundly dark scene, Minona the leader charges in a thunderous manner:

Je viens après une réunion tenue avec notre seigneur Lucifer et il vous salue tous. Il nous a demandé que nous devons être plus courageuses et devons doubler Satan car le travail est plus qu'avant, car la tâche qui nous est impartie est très lourde. Il nous a demandé de causer beaucoup d'accidents, de briser beaucoup de foyers et de tuer beaucoup d'âmes et de causer beaucoup de maladies à plusieurs personnes. A cet effet, il nous a donné assez de pouvoir [...]

Metétan, où sont nos victimes? [...] Ammène-les ici pour qu'elles soient jugées.

(I am coming from a meeting held with our lord Lucifer and he sends you greetings. He instructs us to be more courageous and increase Satan's will because the work is more than before, because the task assigned to us is very heavy. He asked us to cause many accidents, to break many homes, to kill many souls and to afflict many people with diseases. For this purpose, he has given us enough power [...] Metétan, where are our victims? [...] Bring them here to be judged.)

Minona's charges pander to an evangelism that castigates female characters of possessing devilish traits. Her reference to Lucifer pits her directly against the Pentecostal God. Her mandate from Lucifer reinforces Opefeitimi and Parrinder's description above about African ethnographic beliefs that evil women perpetrate evil deeds and afflict other people. *Yatin's* next scene authenticates the efficacy of Minona's occult assignment when, Ssika, on her way to the farm meets Assiba, a teenage girl. After exchanging greetings with her, a streak of lightning flashes out of Ssika to Assiba who suddenly jerks, slumps and dies. Bewildered, a couple Baba and Mama Comlah working at a nearby farm rush to help her. Even though the couple knows nothing of her encounter with Ssika, they automatically ascribe her predicament to a diabolic attack. It is particularly interesting that in panic, Baba Comlah carries Assiba shouting in the Naago language: "Sagbotun da pada! Awon mama ki won ma je. Eyin mama e o le je eleyi o!" (Sagbotun (a local deity), resuscitate her! Don't let the old women (witches) eat her. Witches, you cannot eat this one!). This man's fear lays bare the ideological beliefs that demonized women, coded here as the 'old women', are responsible for Assiba's plight. Opefeitimi (48) reiterates this point about 'mama' a.k.a. "Ìyá àgbà- old women" as the witches who eat human flesh. A similar perspective echoes in another francophone film by Christine Botoku titled *Le retour de la pierre* (2007) where a male traditional healer swears "aux noms de mes mères osorongá" (in the name of witches, my osorongá mothers) to show reverence to 'demonic Old women' before attempting to treat a sick 'pagan character'. The 'Old women', witches are believed to be inherently evil and must be placated even by their adherents before performing any good deed. Reference to witches underscores the fear of women in patriarchal settings that Pentecostals contend with. Their fear elicits gender reversal of power as these men defer spiritual supremacy to the 'osorongá/Old women', in a social setting where physically, it is the female gender that is disparaged. It is with this cultural belief of subjugating 'Old women' that

Botoku prepares her viewers' minds to justify evangelization by Pastor Philippe (from the city of Cotonou) in *Yatin*, a rural setting that doubles as the film's title.

2.2.1 Demonized Mothers/ mothers-in-law: Affliction of infertility.

Most of the storylines in Pentecostal movies feature women against patriarchal-inclined women. In most cases the demonic female character is either the mother or the mother-in-law against the innocent not born-again daughter or daughters-in-law. Characters of mother/daughter, mother-in-law/daughter-in-law happen to be the mostly featured. These demonized women are depicted as adversaries of their daughters-in-law and are usually responsible for the affliction that befalls their victims. However, there are instances where the roles are reversed - daughter against her mother or a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Either way, it is the women that are demonized.

Because Africans lay much premium on motherhood and the ability of a woman to procreate, infertility becomes a very serious issue which the directors of Pentecostal movies draw on to depict the affliction of female victims. *Yatin's* film script writer appears to deliberately suppress biblical valiant women like Jochebed, Miriam, Mary, Priscilla etc. Rather, African ideology about women and witchcraft occupies the central focus in *Yatin's* narration. Many scenes show Ssika in her occult demon group under the fearful Minona. To show that Agossi's problem is caused by the oppressive spirit of Ssika's group members, the director employs *mise-en-abyme* to reinforce their evilness in a scene that shows Agossi's spirit (and other afflicted characters) writhing in pain, chained to a tree at Ssika's occult meeting place. Agossi becomes liberated in a scene after she converts to Christianity through Pastor Philippe's preaching. After she becomes 'born-again', another *mise-en abyme* takes viewers to see how only Agossi's chains break free from the tree at the coven, leaving the other victims still bound. Her spiritual deliverance signifies her release which becomes manifest in her physical self-fulfillment and healing. Afterwards, she becomes pregnant, her urinary incontinence stops. Her Pentecostal faith becomes heightened in a demonic night attack during which she and her husband shout "Le sang de Jésus" (blood of Jesus), only for the demons to cry in pain and varnish. Agossi's victory insinuates her embrace of evangelization as an empowerment that stalls the demon's attack. It illustrates her spiritual immunity against the demonic mother-in-law who, at dawn, confesses in agony to the Pentecostal Pastor Philippe:

Ssika: Pasteur, priez pour que j'aie la paix.

Pasteur: Il n'y a pas de prière pour le méchant à moins que tu acceptes et confesses ce que tu as fait.

Ssika: Je vais confesser, je vais confesser.

Pasteur : Dis-moi quelle était ta mission cette nuit dans la chambre de ton fils?

Ssika: J'étais là-bas, c'était pour tuer la grossesse.

Pasteur: Tuer la grossesse? Est-ce bien ce que j'entends? Tu es donc une sorcière?

Ssika: Oui, je suis une sorcière. Mouiller ses lits. J'ai aussi bouché son ventre.

Je suis devenue sorcière parce que je voulais protéger mon fils.

(Ssika: Pastor, pray that I have peace.

Pastor: There is no prayer for the wicked except you accept and confess what you have done.

Ssika: I will confess. I will confess.

Pastor: Tell me, what was your mission at night in your son's bedroom?

Ssika: I went there to kill the foetus.

Pastor: Kill the foetus? What am I hearing? Then, you are a witch?

Ssika: Yes, I am a witch. I made her bed wet. I also blocked her womb. I became a witch so I could protect my son).

Ssika's loss of power and confession imply the subordination of her demonic power under the much younger patriarchal icon - Pastor Philippe, a male, city dweller and especially an evangelist. As a demonic character, Ssika's confession condemns as well as humiliates her; it pits her against the godly side. Her debasement justifies her punishment in Pastor Philippe's words that "there is no prayer for the wicked except you accept and confess" giving her a penalty of confessing to malevolent roles. The pastor's predominance in the presence of his converted congregants subdues Ssika's evil power. Though, a female director, Christine Botoku casts and condemns Ssika's roles as emblematic of patriarchal-inclined women against innocent women. Furthermore, Ssika's confession that she oppressed Agossi to protect Tegbe, her son, calls attention to the paradox in the casting of demonized women in *Yatin*. By afflicting Agossi, she unwittingly renders her son barren.

In *Yatin* Christine Botoku pitches Ssika, an old woman as ill-omened and pernicious being who turns the tides of younger characters. Ssika's stigmatization draws out of her the evilness that gets her subdued by the superior evangelical Christian power. The superiority of Pentecostal power and the efficacy of evangelization feature after Agossi and her husband become evangelized and empowered to resist Ssika's affliction. Besides, the fact that Ssika afflicts other characters indicates that she represents the devil, she is under Lucifer's mandate as stated earlier by Minona. By depicting Ssika as tormenter of younger people's lives, Botoku implies that only evangelization can save and heal non-occult characters of their health challenges. After all, Assiba's death suggests that she never had the opportunity to meet with and accept Pastor Philippe's preaching which could have healed her like Agossi. The latter's deliverance through evangelization underscores her physical and spiritual victory over a life of woes and anguish. It allows for reading evangelism as a must-have kit given that Assiba the not born-again victim of Ssika did not survive. In the two circumstances it is Ssika, a woman, who

becomes stigmatized and demonized to show the urgent need for evangelization that yields deliverance. Thus, Agossi's deliverance indicates the potency of her embracing evangelization and its necessity among the villagers.

Ssika's subjugation to Pastor Philippe's power makes him, the male Christian an accepted gender, the protagonist who solely has the capacity to subdue Ssika, the antagonist – and an unrepentant old woman. Further, that Agossi accepts Pastor Philippe's faith which leads to her deliverance hints at the Pastor becoming a deliverer who has the capacity to rescue the erstwhile sick, infertile but now born-again, fecund Agossi. Pastor Philippe's evangelization places him on a holy superior spiritual terrain which enables him to juggle power over women, binding the demonic one and loosening the evangelized born-again other. No wonder then that *Yatin* becomes a template for the village evangelism led by male characters in Botoku's other film, *La retour de la pierre*.

3. Demonized and Afflicted Women in Anglophone Film:

3.3. Demonized Daughter and Afflicted Mother: *Fierce war*.

Fierce War, directed by the Nigerian Francis Ike, presents another form of demonization in which it is the mother who becomes the victim of her daughter, contrary to the storyline in *Yatin*. In *Fierce War*, Clara's father, Bro. Sam, is the leader of his Church's prayer warrior group. Raised in a Christian family, Clara joins an occult group where her first assignment is to kill her mother. At her initiation Marine Queen, the head of the evil group, empowers Clara diabolically:

Marine Queen: So that you will have the heart to work [...] Now you must sacrifice your mother, because she will be a source of your greatness in our kingdom.

Simultaneously in a dream, Clara's mother sees her daughter's intent and continues to plead:

Clara's mother: Please don't kill me my daughter, my daughter. Please don't kill me. I am your mother, I carried you in my womb for good nine months, I didn't kill you. Please. Please, don't kill me.

Marine Queen: [Instructs Clara] Don't listen to her. Kill her!

Clara inserts a knife into the evoked picture of her mother, blood bubbles up. The sound of an eerie laughter from her occult members drives home their approbation of Clara's murdering role. Their demonization becomes intensified as both the leader and members of the group accede to the killing. Here Clara is portrayed as her mother's murderer. The Marine Queen evokes Clara's wickedness as a way of her promotion in the occult group. Through Clara's

killing of her mother, the director of *Fierce War* suggests that Clara's mother is not born-again, hence she lost her life. Clara's killing of her mother suggests that younger women can also torment older female characters. Her murderous role that makes her kill her mother buttresses Ogundipe-Leslie's indictment of the "trend in Nigerian society and the arts to demonize women, to make them the devils who plague the society" (1994, p. 96). Through Clara, the film director paints girls and daughters even in Christian homes as capable of practicing demonology regardless of their background.

3.3.1 Demonized Women against Men

Pentecostal film writers go beyond family ties in the demonization of women, they project satanic women in the Church, a supposed holy setting. The demonization of women against male members of the Church occurs in *Fierce War*, it draws on the social setting to show how evil women attack male pastors. Bro. Leo, an astute younger member of Bro. Sam's prayer warrior group, faces fierce battle against the occult powers from Clara and her two occult partners. They meet Leo at his doorstep:

Clara: Brother, we are here to see you, are you going to the Church? There is no fellowship today o.

Bro. Leo: I am aware, I am aware. I want to catch up with some appointments. Besides, I can't remember having any appointment with any of you.

Girl two: (shyly) Yes, brother. Sorry for coming to you without informing you. But the thing is, we are actually led to come so that you can counsel us in some things, hum?

Girl three: Yes brother. We seriously need serious prayers and your assistance to counsel us on issues that are affecting err [...] us.

Bro Leo: You were led? But I was not led to do that in my house!

Clara: Haha! Bro Leo! (she pats his shoulder) Haha! You can see. We are three, nothing will happen, nothing.

Bro Leo: Did I say that something was going to happen before? As a matter of fact, I have stopped counseling people in my house. In fact, I don't allow sisters to be coming to my house. If there is any need for us to see, we meet at the church. Please, I am running late. (He closes his door and walks out on the girls.

Girl two: Bro, are you leaving us?

Clara: What an insult! Did he just walk out on us?

Girl two: (chuckles) Don't worry, he feels he is strong, but we are going to ooo pull him mmmm.

Girl three: Down!

These three girls combine the demonizing characteristics of occultism and immorality, the film exhibits both traits as vibrant tools for stigmatizing Clara's group. As a young single man, Bro. Leo refused to yield to their demand that he 'counsels' them in his house. Later they attack him, he slumps and faints.

At his hospital bed, Clara's spirit-girls appear, floating in the air in loose black gowns, but Leo's prayer group members begin to pray, shouting "Holy Ghost fire, Holy Ghost fire".

Thereafter, a counter male figure appears in a sparkling white gown, also floating in the air. Suddenly the demonic girls become weary and varnish. While the concealment lasts, the apparition and the disappearance of the evil and godly spirits allow the audience to tease out the director's message through the role of the prayer warriors. They repeat "Holy Ghost fire. Jesus, Let God arise, Let God arise. By fire!", using ferocious expressions in their prayers against the occult. Their prayer suggests a warfare encounter with the devil which is followed by the disappearance of Clara's group.

3.3.2 Cinematic Technology: Tool of Demonization.

Technology - sound, color, and accoutrement reinforce Clara and her group's stigmatization such that they evoke eerie sound, bizarre accoutrement, and devilish color. These qualities create a flagrant effect of binary opposition that promptly allows the audience to read the condemnation of evil characters on gender line. First, the demarcation of the good and bad characters are done based on their accoutrement/color. Through color and type of accoutrement, the director demarcates the holy characters from the evil ones still working on the gender lines that represent men as holy and women as demons. In Leo's hospital room, godly spirit and the mainly male prayer warriors don white raiment and westernized clothing, shirt and trousers. As prayer warriors, they identify with holiness. By way of contrast, black clothes and fiendish look accentuate the evilness and occultism in Clara's and her female evil friends. The accordance of white clothes to the prayer warriors connotes holiness, pure spirit and prayerfulness on the side of the male characters while the demonic group members are females cast with dark color or blood red garb that suggests they toe the line of the devil.

Second, the oceanic setting of the dream encounter between Bro. Leo and the Marine Queen lets out life-threatening sounds like drowning distorted waves which intensify the terror coming from the Marine Queen. Response to circumstances can also be read through the sound produced by the two groups. Leo's prayer warriors are fervent, they quote freely biblical verses to confront and conquer the occult forces. Clara's group members are representatives of the forces of darkness who produce gibberish and bizarre laughter, evident in their presence at Bro Leo's hospital room and Leo's encounter with the Marine Queen. Bro. Leo, a male character, also symbolizes the victim of the demonic women but his and the prayer warriors' Pentecostal pronouncement as born-again characters accord them deliverance and victory over the female demons. The prayer warriors increase their prayer tempo as Leo's spirit meets with the Marine Queen under the sea:

Marine Queen: You!!! [pointing at Bro Leo] You [...] You must die like others.

He wards off the Marine Queen's enchantment with a personalized biblical scripture saying:

Bro Leo: "I shall not die, but Jesus says I shall live, to declare the works of the Lord" (Psalms 118:17). And to live to see my children's children (Psalms 128:6). Therefore you have nothing to do over my life. I shall live!"

As Marine Queen and her group yell a sarcastic laughter, their hands send fire waves against Bro Leo, he struggles and shouts

Bro Leo: In the name of Jesus Christ!!!

At his pronouncement, the Marine Queen and her members stagger, varnish and Leo's spirit walks out, causing him to gain consciousness in the hospital. The prayer warriors' violent intercession indicates an attack on Clara's group and the Marine Queen; it implies that brutal prayerful expressions are required to conquer Clara's members of evil marine spirits.

In its representations, *Fierce War* grants superior spirituality and power over the devil to male characters via Bro. Leo and the prayer warriors. Interpretation of such binary opposition undermines gender equity in apportioning biased roles to female characters. Both the vanquished Clara's group and the victorious Bro Leo's prayer warriors serve to illustrate gender compartmentalization that apportions holiness to male and evilness to female characters. The gender reading is that men represent prayerful, holy, and godly people while women are depicted as evil, unholy and demonic. Here lies Francis Ike's gender biased pattern of Pentecostal-Charismatic evangelism; he portrays the female characters alone as demons and their male counterparts as holy and godly.

3.3.3. Demonized Women in Animal roles

The film directors under study extend the use of technology by portraying danger through animal characters. Where demonized female characters are not depicted as supernatural evil spirits launching attacks on innocent people, they are portrayed in the form of certain animals either as birds, cats or most especially as snakes. Ssika is depicted as a snake that tries to attack Agossi in *Yatin*, while in the Anglophone movie *Fierce War*, Clara's father Bro. Sam, also has an encounter with a snake while reading the Bible in the daytime. When the snake charges, Bro. Sam shouts:

Bro Sam: [startles] Jesus! Jesus! Blood of Jesus, Blood of Jesus Christ! Holy Ghost fire! Holy Ghost fire! Blood of Jesus Christ! The Bible says I overcame you serpent with the blood of Jesus Christ and the testimony of my mouth (Rev. 2:11). Blood of Jesus! Holy Ghost fire! Holy Ghost fire come upon you! Where has it run to? [the snake disappears and reappears and heads towards Bro Sam]

Bro Sam: Blood of Jesus Christ! Blood of Jesus Christ! Destroy! Destroy, destroy. I plead the Blood of Jesus Christ. Blood of Jesus Christ on you. Blooooood of Jesus Christ on you! [The snakes varnishes].

Bro Sam: Thank you, Jesus!

By implication, Bro. Sam's biblical prayer disempowers the snake that could have bitten and killed him. Francis Ike's call for evangelism becomes intelligible when the true identity of the snake is revealed as it goes out to reappear in Bro. Sam's yard. There, it lunges out as if it wants to attack before it metamorphoses into Clara in human form. She later enters the living room to discountenance her father's horrific narration of encountering a snake. A justification behind Bro Sam's experience with the snake is embedded in some West African panegyrics of women occults who transform into snakes at night (Opefeitimi, 2009, pp. 50-51). Birgit Meyer laments the likening of snakes to women by citing the use of snakes as occult characters in the Ghanaian/Akan film *Deliverance from the powers of Darkness* where a Pastor delivers a "woman from demons – depicted by a snake coming out from between her legs – and she becomes a born-again Christian" (B. Meyer, qtd. in Opoku Onyinah 2019, p. 172). Thus, in *Yatin* and *Fierce War*, the directors' use of women transforming into snakes serves to reiterate in viewers' mindset the demonization of women whose recondite roles are deadly and can be likened to snakes' bite. Then, allusion to snakes suggests the metaphor of demonic women as ferocious animals to be subdued in order for characters to embrace evangelization.

Conclusion

The portrayal of demonized women in *Yatin* and *Fierce war* is rather complex. It transcends the fictitious genre of the film by allowing African patriarchal ideology to dominate evangelization. As a result, the films downplay the aesthetics and entertainment work of art to assume the weapon of condemning African women. Their critical examination defies a simple call for female emancipation typical of critical analysis of women in African feminist studies. Through technology in cinema, the francophone and Anglophone film directors under consideration demonstrate their power over the audience; they heighten the patriarchal effect of disparaging women to the point of vivifying the women's esoteric realm which is difficult to unravel by a regular audience. The directors show undue obsession to zero in on female occults alone as the root cause of every evil that befall other characters that are not grounded in Pentecostal evangelism. It is pertinent to consider how Botoku and Ike use demonization of women to flip unequal gender relations such that the protagonists are the pastors, the evangelist and born-again male characters. They are persevering, holy, on the side of God, and prayerfully strengthened to resist diverse torments from women stigmatized and cast as demons. By consequence, the demonized female characters' traits are accentuated because the scripts restrict them to roles of satanic antagonists of fellow characters. The pervasiveness of

demonizing women requires to be read as a form of entrenching gender violence via imbalanced and fearful portrayals of African women. Granted that “For *ALL* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23, emphasis mine), why should Botoku and Ike depict women alone as satanic agents in evangelization films?

In general, the casting of roles requires neutrality, unbiased perspectives that take into account the good and bad traits of men and women. It is important to avoid the depiction of African culture and women as the demonic opposite of Pentecostal evangelism. Pentecostal film directors should take care not to tailor female characters’ identity towards misogynous ideology that justifies biased patriarchy. Female characters should be accorded epic roles that project them in a positive light in evangelical films. Because the cinema profession is forcefully masculinized the world over (Marie-Josée Saint-Pierre, 2024, p. 3), it is pertinent to sensitize film directors - especially the female ones, script writers, producers and particularly the actresses to challenge apportioning demonic roles to female characters. Writing the storylines of evangelical films will benefit from presenting scripts with balanced physical and spiritual portrayals of men and women, focusing on the evangelical contribution of biblical women like Phoebe, Pricilla, Mary [...] and dousing the attendant representations of evil in female characters’ roles.

Script writers should address caution not to create violent scenes that will sow the seed of fear and hatred of African women in the mind of the audience. These scripts should also water down the attendant horror scenes accredited to the demons, lest evangelization becomes a propagation of gothic films. Obviously, demonizing women is not the only way to encourage conversion into any religion. Though this study is a purely literary feminist inquiry, it does not contest the existence of demonic power in human beings - men and women. However, the paper argues for ensuring the equity and balanced portrayals of men and women in Pentecostal evangelical films.

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Filmography

Fierce War (2017) dir. Francis Ike, Famous Films, Lagos Nigeria, 1 hr 44 minutes. CD

Yatin (2002) dir. Christine Madeleine Botoku, Stedafilm International, Cotonou, République de Bénin. 1hr 50 minutes.

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=yatin+film+complet+2

La retour de la pierre, (2007) dir. Christine Madeleine Botoku, Stedafilm International, Cotonou, République de Bénin. 1 hr 35 minutes.

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=le+retour+de+la+pierre+film+complet+2+