

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**SOCIAL REPRESENTATION IN GHANAIAN CINEMA**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby, declare that this thesis is my own independent and original work produced under the supervision of Professor Esi Sutherland Addy and Professor Irene Odotei both of the Institute of African Studies. This thesis has not been presented in any form to another institution for the award of a degree and all materials, authors and sources cited have been fully acknowledged.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my daughter, NUBUKE AMA CRENTSIL



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To all who in diverse ways have been very helpful in the period this research was conducted. I appreciate you all.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to my family my dad and sister, especially my mother for being very helpful and understanding during the time of this research.

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## ABSTRACT

All societies tell stories. Story telling can take many forms like myths, histories, films and many others. Storytelling can be seen to serve many different social functions from entertainment to cultural, social or religious instructions. These stories are consumed by people of different backgrounds like, race, sex, age and class.

Cinema, television and the related media fascinate their audiences in a variety of ways, but entertainment is what most people want when they pay for leisure products.

However, most spectators want films to give them a buzz through the arousal of intense emotions. Spectators and audiences according to reception theory bring identities consciously or unconsciously to the cinema. Audiences have also been defined by their ethnicity, class and environment that inform them in their reading of films.

Over the years cinematic representations of Ghanaian society have lived up to the basic ideas that informed the setting up the film industry, to educate and entertain. But beyond educating and entertaining, cinema has also formed and nurtured an interesting relationship with society. Cinema is sometimes said to mirror society and vice versa. This is because somehow a thing seen directly or through some visual representation brings us closer to some actual reality.

The representation of the concept of class in Ghanaian cinema has become a topic for inquiry in the view of the fact that the industry has experienced paradigm shifts since its inception and the country also and has also experienced social changes since independence. The different perceptions about the existence of a class structure remain a debate even though the concept of class and status form the subject matter of most of the films made in Ghana. These concepts most often are useful for the development of the narrative. Ghanaian society and her understanding of a class structure has historical links from the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.

But in serving a dramatic purpose, what are the rules of engagement in the representation of class in Ghanaian cinema? This thesis will examine the concept of class in relation to Ghanaian films and Ghanaian society. Is what divides us more or less significant than what unites us? There will be a thorough investigation into the concept of class and status with Ghanaian social constructions of these concepts. The different types of filmmakers who produce film and their understanding and representation of the concept of social class. There are quite a number of ambiguities about the concept of class and status. Each filmmaker's social realities contribute to the understanding and representation of this concept. There is also a very interesting generational interpretation and representation of the concept of class in film. An important principle of representation is that the image is not the thing itself but a thing itself. The processes of representation reflect the social world - not a mental one. As many sociologists have stated, no society is flat neither do the individuals who exist in these function in vacuum. Where these individuals find themselves also influences their beliefs, thoughts and actions. People conform most often to their immediate environment. It is evident that society through its different constructions is responsible for the appropriation and prescription of class and status.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| <b>Contents</b>                              | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| DECLARATION .....                            | i           |
| DEDICATION .....                             | ii          |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....                       | iii         |
| ABSTRACT .....                               | iv          |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS .....                      | vi          |
| <br>   |             |
| CHAPTER ONE .....                            | 1           |
| INTRODUCTION .....                           | 1           |
| 1.0 Background .....                         | 1           |
| Ghana Film Industry- The Journey .....       | 4           |
| Image and Reality .....                      | 12          |
| Representation .....                         | 13          |
| Society .....                                | 13          |
| 1.1 Statement of the Problem .....           | 14          |
| 1.2 Significance of Study .....              | 16          |
| 1.3 Objectives .....                         | 18          |
| 1.4 Conceptual Frame Work.....               | 18          |
| 1.5 Methodology .....                        | 19          |
| Limitations .....                            | 22          |
| Structure of Thesis .....                    | 23          |
| <br>   |             |
| CHAPTER TWO .....                            | 25          |
| LITERARY FINDINGS .....                      | 25          |
| <br>   |             |
| CHAPTER THREE.....                           | 34          |
| US AND THEM: THE CONCEPT OF “OTHERING” ..... | 34          |
| <br>   |             |
| CHAPTER FOUR.....                            | 44          |
| DATA AND ANALYSIS .....                      | 44          |
| 4.1 Introduction .....                       | 44          |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Synopsis .....                                   | 45 |
| 4.2 Findings .....                               | 66 |
| “Othering” as Representation .....               | 70 |
| Social Change and Pictorial Representation ..... | 71 |
| <br>   |    |
| CHAPTER FIVE.....                                | 75 |
| CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....            | 75 |
| 5.1 Conclusions .....                            | 75 |
| 5.2 Recommendations .....                        | 79 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY .....               | 81 |

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background

There is a curious cliché that says “pictures don’t lie”. Somehow what we see directly, or through a visual representation, brings us closer to some actual reality. In film narrative the images represent ideas, ways of thinking, doing and feeling (Kolker, 1999). Cinema has the power to create images. This power of cinema sometimes determines our beliefs, attitudes and ultimately our behavior. *“The cinema is a popular language. To receive its message, there is scarcely the need for a modest grade school certificate the message is received and broached directly on the screen. The cinema is a universal language”* (Ki-Zerbo, 1978). Cinema like literature, storytelling, religion, and other aspects of culture reflect the natural world of things including the human community. Some African filmmakers proclaim themselves as modern day “griots” in the service of their people by using resources from their various heritages to create a cinema which engages a broad range of the personal, social, cultural, historical political experiences and challenges of their various societies. Ousmane Sembene the Senegalese filmmaker for example, has characterized cinema in Africa as a ‘night school’. The Ethiopian film critic Teshome Gabriel considers the cultural nature of film as an essential part of African cinema because the struggle to preserve the cultural make up of a society constitutes a major concern for African filmmakers.

Through the journey of film worldwide there have been a number of excellent works to prove that much can be learnt about the history of a people by looking at the films the people produce. Very recently in the year 2011, *“Iron Lady”* a film chronicling the life and work of

the longest serving British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was released. Even though critics said it was not exactly about Thatcher and only glorified her, an assistant of hers in an interview on BBC News Hour said the film was a good historical material for generations that did not live in her time or experience her and what she was about (ibid). There have also been films like “*The Last King of Scotland*” (2006) a film about the famous Ugandan head of state Idi Amin, “*Schindler's List*” (1993) a film about the Jewish Holocaust, “*Last Stand of Apartheid*” (2003) a film about the role of music in the struggle against apartheid and what music means to the people of South Africa and “*Titanic*”(1997) a film about the biggest and supposedly the safest ship that sank in 1912 after hitting an iceberg. This is what Wikipedia says about the Titanic,

‘Titanic has become one of the most famous ships in history, her memory kept alive by numerous books, folk songs, films, exhibits, and memorials. Historians have admitted for a long time that films are important pieces of evidence for any study of the twentieth century’.

As Arthur Marwick has pointed out,

‘One of the most important reasons for studying film is that it directs historians’ attention away from the traditional topics of high politics and macro-economics to matters which, affecting the ordinary mass of the people, and are also of great significance: lifestyle, moral values and culture in general’. (Marwick, 1989).

Societies worldwide are socially and culturally constructed because of the socializations of the individuals that make up these societies. Every individual is born into an objective social structure within which he encounters the significant others who are in charge of his socialization. These significant others are imposed on him. Their definitions of his or her situation are posited for him as objective reality. The individual is thus born into not only an objective social structure but also an objective social world. The significant others who mediate this world to him modify it in the course of mediating it. They select aspects of it in accordance with their own location in the social structure, and also by virtue of their

individual, biographically rooted “idiosyncrasies” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The influences of these significant others form and inform the individual’s construction. Therefore how this individual sees others and perceives the world is influenced by his or her socialization with these significant others. Social constructions like race, gender, religion, class and others are formed during the process of socialization. There are a number of concepts at play in our various societies during our socialization.

This thesis looks into social representation in Ghanaian cinema. It will focus on the representation of class and status in Ghanaian cinema in conjunction with Ghanaian society. The most basic understanding of class distinction is between the powerful and the powerless. Social classes with a great deal of power are usually viewed as the 'creme de la creme' within their own societies. Various social and political theories propose that social classes with greater power attempt to cement their own ranking above the lower classes in the hierarchy to the detriment of the society (Weber, Engels, Max).

Some film scholars think that movies open a window onto reality. The actors are living beings, they are pictured in actual surroundings and have parts in stories related to daily stories of people. Many theorists of film have emphasized the revealing power of films and proved that they are often fictional answers to urgent questions raised by the situation. In this discussion, cinema represents industry, film as art and the physical space where films are exhibited. The use of the word Ghanaian cinema is not to justify that there exist a “national cinema”, but rather to assume a uniformed name to work with. Cinema in Ghana since its inception during the era of British colonial rule has travelled its own journey till independence and post-independence resulting in the paradigm shifts in cinema as an industry. Ghanaian cinema in many ways is different from Senegalese or Malian cinema. The only cinema that shares certain commonalities with Ghanaian cinema is Nigerian cinema. A look at the journey of cinema from the era of

British rule to independence is to lay the foundation and give an understanding as to why the “style” of filmmaking in Ghana is not the same as other countries on the continent.

### **Ghana Film Industry- The Journey**

The medium of film was introduced to the Gold Coast by private businessmen, who opened cinemas in urban areas and employed cinema vans to tour the country side (especially the cocoa—growing areas) in the course of the 1920s. The *Information Services Department* of the colonial government actively engaged in film only in 1940. The Gold Coast film unit toured towns and villages to show films made by the colonial government, based on their (Western) way of life which most often was of the documentary genre (Sakyi 1996). Important aspects of this information service were propaganda films about the Second World War which were produced by the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) in London. The Accra film school was set up from 1948. The first batch of students were taken from Achimota Secondary School and some others from Nigeria, so at the time of independence these new filmmakers were already into film production. Similar film units existed in other parts of British colonial Africa, and their products were mutually exchanged and shown to audiences all over British colonial Africa. The unit also started to produce educational films and a number of feature films which were screened in Britain’s African colonies. There were also pre- independence classics like “*The Boy Kumasenu*” (1952), a film about city life and post-independence. Film thus was closely related to governmental and imperial interests and employed to create loyal subjects. (Diawara, 1992, Ukadike, 1994)

Different patterns of film production within the Francophone and Anglophone regions were derived from the different ideological pursuits of colonial French and British governments. While the French pursued the policy of assimilation, the British involvement with its colonies

was pragmatic business. When the French “gave” feature films to their colonies, the British “gave” theirs, documentary. (Ukadike, 1994).

At the dawn of independence, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah the first president of Ghana had become the epitome and mouth piece of the new African and Ghanaian promoting his African personality and socialist ideas. On assumption of power Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had an understanding of what the medium of film could do for a people on the journey to self-discovery and self-worth. Immediately after independence film production and distribution were nationalized. Nkrumah used to visit the workers when the film studio was being built. He used to encourage them that the studio they were building would present Ghana to the world so that people outside would also know about Ghana, just as they knew a lot about America, and other places, even though they had not travelled to those countries before. When the studio was completed, the tradition of newsreel and promotional films were continued. Films were also made for the centre for civic education on Electoral process, so every election that was held after independence was covered by Ghana films. (ibid) The Senegalese filmmaker and one of the foremost African filmmakers, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra said that the Ghana Film Industry had equipment capable of producing and completing a dozen films a year. It was also said that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had bought all the cinema houses that were owned by business men especially the Lebanese to become exhibition outlets for films made by the Ghana Film Industry Company, GFIC. Ghana’s quest to integrate film into its culture set the ground to the nation having an enviable and sophisticated production centre. (ibid)

When Television was launched in Ghana in 1965, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s idea was that the Ghana Film Industry Company would feed the Television station with all the films it produced. The industry was to bring economic growth to the country and aid as a tool for cultural and social development. The state was in control of the film industry, creatively

and economically. According to Rev. Dr. Chris Hesse, the premier cinematographer of the Ghana film industry Dr. Kwame Nkrumah most often would proof read the scripts of fiction or documentary before the film crew would go on location. In one instance he read a script the night before a shoot and sent it back to the crew with detailed corrections and suggestions. The film industry in Ghana then was fully state owned. The belief of the power of the arts especially performing arts of which film is a part came through when on the inauguration of the Osagyefo Players a drama group in 1965 at the Flagstaff House, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah mentioned the setting up of a film school.

‘As you know, I have initiated the establishment of the Institute of Arts and Culture, the Institute of African Studies, and the School of Music and Drama at Legon. We also hope to launch a film and television school for training producers and artistes’ (Nkrumah, 1965).

Ironically, however, after the independence of most African countries, Ghana and Nigeria were the only Anglophone countries who did not draw up a thorough cultural policy that paid great attention to film. (Diawara, 1992). The 1974 cultural policy has a very scanty write up on film. This is the write up on film in the 1975 Cultural Policy.

**The Ghana Film Corporation was constituted under the Statutory Corporation Act 1964,**

**The objects of the Corporation are:**

- (a) To produce newsreels, documentary films, feature films, commercial films and other films;**
- (b) To undertake the distribution and exhibition of films produced in Ghana or outside Ghana.**

**The Film Corporation has many quality films dealing with a variety of subjects including culture and adult education. Most of the *films* have been shown extensively both locally and abroad as visual aids for educational purposes.**

**The value of the visual media is particularly great in countries such as Ghana where the rate of literacy is low, the population is dispersed in small rural communities and where it is essential to social and economic progress that knowledge be widely disseminated.**

**Accordingly, most of the films are geared towards making the Ghanaian**

**Aware of: (a) *the* numerous problems surrounding him and the need to solve these problems; and (b) the need for people to depend on their own spiritual and material resources as much as possible and not to expect the government to provide them with everything.**

**The Film Corporation has an up-to-date infrastructure for film production and an all-Ghanaian staff of highly qualified personnel. It has also a programme for in-service training of technicians and artists.**

## **CUTURAL INSTITUTIONS**

### **FILM PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT**

**In October 1965 the GBC television service (GBC/TV) joined with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany to establish a training centre for the production of educational and documentary films for local programming as well as for export. This centre is now owned entirely by Ghana and has been named The *Film* Production Department of the GBC.**

A study of our cultural policy attests to the fact that the policy itself is a determinant factor of Ghanaian cinema. Even though Kwame Nkrumah lived and promoted a number of ideologies, the critic and writer on African cinema Ukadike, states that with Nkrumah's background it was expected that films from his country will be didactic and be more on the ideological path than that of popular cinema. The different methods of colonization informed the different but similar counter ideologies of Nkrumah and Senghor to fight colonialism and neo-colonialism. Irele proposes that the French policy of Assimilation informed the creation of Negritude and Nkrumah's encounter with Wilmont Blyden, Du bois and British colonial rule and also being a disciple of Marcus Garvey, made him use the term 'African Personality' as a slogan for his political campaign for emancipation and did so with its full racial connotations and it meant to him what it meant to Blyden, Du bois and Garvey. In the period of African nationalism, the use of such concepts served political and economic purposes, though he did not lose its African heritage and cultural nationalism which linked his vision to Senghor. But the departure here is that upon independence a new direction was taken to serve a political purpose than cultural (Irele, 1981). This is evident in the late drawing up of a cultural policy for Ghana though Nkrumah had instituted many cultural programmes and co-operations nationwide. A thorough look at the 1975 Cultural Policy and its thoughts on film makes the current situation speak for itself.

Most of the staff of Ghana Film Industry Company, GFIC at one point sojourned abroad courtesy of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, to study one discipline or the other in film production readying them for a wholesome take off in feature film production. There were the Nkrumah era classics like *"Hamile" The Tongo Hamlet* (1964) a screen adaptation of William Shakespeare's play, "Hamlet".

The 1966 coup that ousted Dr. Kwame Nkrumah invariably created a vacuum in the management of the Ghana Film Industry Company, GFIC. A new director was appointed

called Mr. Sam Aryeetey. The Ghana Film Industry Company was set up to be economically self-sustaining which did not come to be. A policy of co-productions unfortunately was financially suicidal for GFIC. *Contact* (1976) was made in collaboration with the Italian Director, Giorgio Bontempi and *The Visitor* (1983). The takings from the box office of these films were total disaster pushing the GFIC to seek for financial assistance from government. After the coups had taken place all the governments that came after Nkrumah ignored Ghana films. The only time Ghana film was involved in any activity was when the Government wanted people to see their achievements or what they have been doing in government (ibid). This cost GFIC so much that the company was incapacitated and for over a decade could not produce any feature film. GFIC did still produce documentary films since it was easier to get funding for films about political development programs, public education or enlightenment. The GFIC has to her credit a number of films: “*No Tears for Ananse*” (1968), ‘*I Told You So*’ (1970) featuring Bob Cole a famous Ghanaian comedian and actor (concert party), “*You Hide Me*” (1971), *Do Your Own Thing* (1971), “*They Call it Love*”(1972), “*Struggle For Zimbabwe*” (1974), “*Angela Davies*” (1976), (Mbaye,1999). The GFIC also won the Golden Camera Prize for the documentary *Solidarity in Struggle* at FESPACO in Ouagadougou. When Ghana films had the opportunity to produce feature films they were not in a position to make films that criticized the government. Every one there was a public servant being paid by the government even though they were not under pressure by the Government, they just could not do it. Even after two decades, that Ghana private entrepreneurs have ventured into filmmaking no one has been able to make a film that criticizes a government or system. We find it easier and comfortable to produce the fantasy, glamour, love, witchcraft, rivalry etc. The coming of Television to Ghana in 1965 also in a way created a battle for the frames something that is still relevant. There is an almost silent battle between film and television in Ghana and one rubs off on the other. The vacuum created in the film industry was not felt as

much by audiences as felt by practitioners because of the role of television in the sector of entertainment. The popular TV series *Osofo Dadzie*, a series on social issues which started airing on GBC TV in 1972 made a huge impact on television.

The other battle was the use of the medium of television by the successive governments after Nkrumah to promote narrow interest of the regimes in power and also as a praise singing tool for governments (Ukadike, 1994). Didactic documentaries were commissioned for self-praise and propaganda sometimes denying the state owned film industry their share of the cake. But in the moments of nothingness the television station served as an educator and entertainer. Taking on this dual role made television popular. The state did not have a direct hand in the film industry after the overthrow of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. The Ghana Film Company Limited still had the state of the arts equipment to work with but not enough money to produce fictions of feature length films until certain independent producers and directors like Kwaw Ansah and King Ampaw sought for their services. It was at this time that VHS came in vogue and people started getting interested, and started making their own films. Then also, because the Government was not taking any interest in Ghana films, even the subsidies allocated Ghana films ceased. There was no money to run the affairs of the company. Ghana films then embraced the video format. It was during the Acheampong regime that the company was granted some funds to buy video equipment. (ibid) Moreover, in order to improve the productions made by non-professionals and, self-trained film makers, the GFIC offered editing services and other forms of advice to film makers in exchange for the right to show their films in its own cinemas in Accra first (Ukadike,1992, Diawara 1994). The first video film made under GFIC was "*Dede*" directed by Tom Ribero. The birth of the video format commenced the paradigm shift in cinema in Ghana, which also has led to new trends and genres in Ghanaian cinema. After producing "*Dede*" the GFIC successfully produced many more films using the video format. Working in parallel with the Ghana Film

Corporation, in the film industry were independent filmmakers and producers until GFIC was put under divestiture in the late 1990's and was bought.

Film officially was not under the management of the Ghana government. The politics of the film industry has constantly had an influence on the new genres, and trends being set in the Ghanaian film industry.

Cinema in Ghana is not based on highly ideological viewpoint like the cinema from French Africa. Based on the history of the film industry, being once state controlled and managed, as well as experts who worked in the film industry then were on government payroll, the industry was treated as another wing of the civil service especially the Ministry of Information. Film making in Ghana never took any radical stance as stated earlier, and no film was ever made to criticize any ruling government. The closest critique of the affluent in society, immediately after independence in Ghana was the Television series "*Osofo Dadzie*". James and Diawara in an essay mention that, the first films made by Kwaw Ansah and King Ampaw served as a sort of template for filmmaking in Ghana. This may be true to a point, but Ghana's first feature film was folklore "*No Tears For Ananse*". The famous concert party genre film "*I Told You So*" also contributed highly to what Ghanaian cinema has become today. Even in a film where political statements are made, these statements are subtle than overt. In other words, Ghanaian audience probably wants to be entertained, than queried. But the topic of a class structure is something that has never been done away with in Ghanaian cinema. To discuss the representation of class and status in Ghanaian cinema, certain key words must be recognized. Throughout this thesis there will be the use of certain terminologies to construct ideas and draw conclusions. These definitions will give a better understanding to these terminologies and inform their usage in this thesis.

## **Image and Reality**

The word image, when used in the circles of film or cinema or mass media can sometimes be very misleading and likely to confuse us. Image here is defined as anything palpable or not which enables us to get the world in perspective. The notion of image makes us get over the opposition of actuality and representation. Our relationship with events and people is mediated by images, some we produce for ourselves but most are assigned to us by the society we live in therefore common to virtually everyone. In a given community many systems of energy are at work. They overlap into each other but there are also noticeable differences between them. The cinema has much in common with theatre, literature, music, television and photography. Films are objects but objects of a certain kind industrially produced, sold to audiences and which buy them for pleasure. (Turner, 1999; Sorlin 1991)

“Image”: “imagination”, “imagery”, “imagining” are all related to image. The image allows us have a certain connection to the outside world. The image is here and there, and we love the visual play of subjective and objective (Sorlin, 1991). Images reproduce, what existed previously in the world but was not acknowledged as worth noticing. Those who make films live most often in the same societies as most of their future spectators or audiences the problems of whom they partially share; unless they indulge in pure fantasies they will include some of their concerns in their movies be it only to catch public attention. Reality like all other aspects of culture is a social construct. This implies that, through a complex integration of subjective and communal negotiations, we agree on the major elements of what we call real. The only dependable or simplified definition of real is that it is something a lot of people agree on (Berger & Luckmann, 1966)". How reality is understood at a given moment is determined by the conventions of communication in force at that time. The stability of social life determines how concrete our knowledge seems to be. Reality is socially constructed by interconnected patterns of communication behaviour. Within a social group or culture, reality

is defined not so much by individual acts, but by complex and organized patterns of on-going actions.

### **Representation**

Representations include perceptions, thoughts, language, beliefs and desires, as well as artifacts such as pictures and maps, and so include all the ways in which we could or do know and experience the world and ourselves. An important principle of representation is that the image is not the thing itself but a thing itself. We tend to look at an image or photograph not as the thing itself but a representation of the original objects and that acts as a trigger for any kind of emotional response. Processes of representation reflect the social world - not a mental one. The person is indistinguishable from its roles, culture and relationships, and is continually being constructed through language and other systems of symbolic representation. (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). Cinema like literature, storytelling, religion, and other aspects of culture, reflects the natural world of things including the human community (Ukadike, 1994). How these things are perceived profoundly affects their interpretation. But like the artist and the interpreter, ideological determinants combine class sympathies and beliefs to affect the production of art as well as the evaluation of the work.

### **Society**

In sociology, culture refers to the non- biological aspects of human societies, to the values, customs and modes of behaviour that are learnt and internalized by people rather than being genetically transmitted from one generation to the next. This general notion of culture is directly related to social behaviour through the moral goals of a society (values) the status position of its members (social roles) and the specific rules of conduct related to society's values and roles which are known as norms. The general values society holds in high esteem

are reflected in the values that govern them. Since there is biological method to culture, learning plays an essential part in creating social beings. In sociology, the process by which we learn the norms, values and roles approved by our society is socialization. Society not only controls our movements but shapes our identity, our thought and our emotions, (Berger, 1967). People communicate to interpret events and to share those with others. For this reason it is believed that reality is constructed socially as a product of communication. Our meanings and understandings arise from our communication with others. How we understand objects and how we behave towards them depend in large measure on the social reality in force" (Littlejohn, 1992).

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Since its inception African film making has been struggling to reverse the demeaning portrayals presented by the dominant colonial and commercial cinemas which blatantly distorted African life and culture as for example, the Tarzan jungle melodramas such as *The Wild Gesse* (1978), *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1984), and the ethnographic films by Jean Rouch, David MacDougall and others (Ukadike, 1994). African cinema has undergone a radical transformation by widening its scope and offering an expanded definition of the continent's cinema works which express the diversity and plurality of the cultures of the producing nations. Cinema from Black Africa do have one thing in common; the depiction of situations as they exist in their respective societies. In referencing Arthur Marwick, to support the statement just made, some of these filmmakers live in these societies they make films about and are able to tell their stories depicting the situation as they see it which justifies the depiction of societies. In Ghana, the new generation—young filmmakers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who were born into the video technology or who had the chance to live the dying years of the GFIC system but have moved on to embrace video and its new technologies - of filmmakers

are now focusing on broad – based contemporary issues, discussing new social realities and making films with the responses of audience as their backdrop. In assuming new roles, trends and genres in our cinemas, how have we represented ourselves since the making of the “Tarzan films”? Most often, for the sake of individual authorship by filmmakers, there are different understandings of representation especially that of concepts by which society is conceived and class and status is no exception. People have their own views and some others adopt their own ideological positions on the class structure and its existence in Ghanaian society. A thorny problem which has been quite difficult to examine with objectivity and detachment is the extent to which one might conceive the existence of a class structure in Ghanaian society. Social inequality can be seen from two rather different perspectives (Assimeng, 1999). It can be seen as a question of the actual differences that exist between individuals, in terms of their access to power and material resources, or, it can be seen as a question of values, example the set of “normative ideas” in terms of which the society is conceived and behavior evaluated, by its members. Though the concepts of class and status in society may be considered ideological, these concepts have come to stay and have been given life through our films. Adopting the sociologist Parson’s analysis of social systems of action, where an action is considered social when it is oriented to others and when the individual actor attaches meaning to it. This means, men are motivated to behave in ways which are systematically co-ordinated and dominated by roles. It is like being on stage or in a film where roles are given out for characters to play their parts. Through the process of socializations, constructions and deconstructions of relationships, filmmakers draw audiences into these co-ordinated differences.

## 1.2 Significance of Study

During the era of British colonial rule in the Gold coast specifically during the 1930's there emerged three classes of Africans bearing different degrees of allegiance and gullibility in relation to the colonial situation. These three classes of Africans were "*The Lawyer Merchant Class, The Intelligentsia and The Ordinary Salariat*" (Agovi, 1989). The Lawyer Merchant class regarded themselves as the 'natural heirs' to British rule, the Intelligentsia saw themselves as those learned people who will awake racial consciousness in Africa and the Ordinary Salariat who were made up clerks and school teachers who were once products of the accelerated educational programmes of the twenties (20's). During the period of 1945 to 1960, there emerged another class structure. The first group was; *The Capital class*: the *International Capitalist*; mainly British, who were interested in mining, import and export and the *Ghanaian Capitalist*; more nascent than emergent apart from a few established timber- transport interest and many more skilled capitalist. The second group was the *Intermediate Strata*, was made of the *Petit Bourgeoise* who were into trade, transport and construction *Bureaucracy*; Africanization and expansion of government administration. The *Intelligentsia* were mainly professionals, most in government service from 1957 onward. *The Proletariat* were urban wage labour, mines, docks railway construction and rural. *Wage labour*, mainly working on cocoa farms. *Peasantry*, were the rich peasants, mainly into cocoa farming. *Middle peasants* were independent producers both on cocoa farms and food farms. *Poor peasants* were shared croppers and wage laborer (Marshall 1972). These formal classes still exist and these groups have also experienced certain social changes. These groups have also influenced our social constructions and our socializations. As a student of film history, thanks to the Italian Neorealist Movement<sup>1</sup> or Cinema, films very often have mirrored

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The Italian Neorealism historically was from 1942 to 1952. This film movement was in some way a break away from the films made in the Italian motion picture industry nicknamed *white telephone* films made under Mussolini. These *white telephone films* were historical epics and upper class sentimental Melodramas. The

societies. Films have gone on to depict social issues and have sometimes been used as a source of social commentary. Over the years, what we see on the screen in terms of film narratives have been studied and known for the effects it has on the viewer. Since these class structures have, become part of our social construct they have found their way into cinema and we have to deal with the representation of these classes in cinema. The list of literature on Black African cinema indicates that the majority are in French, perhaps evidencing French Africa's lead in encouraging development through cinema. A large number of these texts emphasize context, styles, genres, ideologies and film theories or concepts, almost ignoring Anglophone cinema on the continent. The literature on African cinema does not say much about English African cinema especially Ghana but rather pays a lot more attention to French African cinema almost alienating the cinema of English Africa taking into consideration the fact that Nigerian and Ghanaian cinemas have been the most successful and most independent industry. Here are a few examples to back my claim. In his first book on African Cinema titled, *African Cinema; Politics and Culture*, Manthia Diawara had *only* a chapter dedicated to the film industries of both Ghana and Nigeria. The book "*African Film*" *again* by Diawara discusses many topics in African Cinema today. But on thorough scrutiny of the book one will find out that most of the films and filmmakers he speaks to are of French African descent and also the few he features from English Africa are from Nigeria, some countries from East Africa but not of Ghana. Frank Ukadike in his "*Black African Cinema*", discusses Anglophone cinemas but speaks more on Francophone films. In Mbaye Cham and Imururh Bakari's "*African Experiences of Cinema*", a large number of the contributors are either discussing French films or most of the articles found in anthologies are either about French African films or written in French and translated into English. The Ghana film

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Neorealist movement brought a distinctive approach to film style by using at the time actual locations instead of studios to film. The photography was rough and non-professional actors were used as the main cast. One of the most famous films made by the neorealist was De Sica's 1948 film *Bicycle Thieves*. This movement later inspired the birth of other film movement which have come to form the conventions in world cinema. Most importantly filming on actual locations.

industry only gets three lines of discussion in Roy Armes' *Third World Film Making and the West* and many others. Social concepts are discussed in French films but not in Anglophone cinema. In recent times, with the Nollywood phenomenon, Nigerian cinema is part of the African cinema discourse but literature on Ghana is still difficult to come by. A few Ghanaian intellectuals have written on Ghanaian cinema but this number is not encouraging, making information on this cinema almost unavailable. The new literature also ignores emerging trends, genres and styles of the "new cinema". Being an insider, I seek to investigate a group of people I identify with, filmmakers. But more importantly I will work with the backdrop of the Songhay proverb; "know yourself before others get to know you". This study is aimed at examining Ghanaian cinematic experiences or practices, which are in conjunction with traditional forms of communication and representation.

### **1.3 Objectives**

This research generally is to construct knowledge. But more importantly this research seeks to:

Investigate whether Ghanaian cinema mirrors Ghanaian society and also assess the changes and continuity in Ghanaian cinema;

Investigate the extent to which the Ghanaian filmmaker understands the concept of class and status in Ghanaian society.

Analyse how pictorially the concept of class and status is represented.

### **1.4 Conceptual Frame Work**

The concept of reality as an image is from the argument that reality is always a mutually agreed upon social construct (Kolker, 1999). Andre Bazin, the man in the center of the realist

approach and founder of the journal, *cahier du cinema* propagates that, the intrinsic nature of film lies in the composition of shots and its specific representation of the real world. For Bazin, this is because it is the real world which is the subject of the film. For meaning to be generated from a film, Bazin was of the opinion that the movement and arrangement of elements in shots within a frame must be examined. This takes us to the concept of ‘mise-en-scene’ in film. What makes film seemingly close to reality is not just the narrative for which an individual or the audience can relate to, but the appropriate use of mise-en-scene. The film’s construction of a social world is authenticated through the details of the mise-en-scene. People’s ideas about truth, morality, sexuality, politics and other social constructs are determined by a complex process of education, assimilation, acculturation and assent from birth. The photographic image is one of the ways in which we use the “lens” to interpret the complexities of the world. When the film critic and theorist Andre Bazin said that the history of art is equal to the history of people's desire to save an image of the real world, he quickly modified this idea, that desire to capture reality is in fact the desire to give significant expression to the world. The blurring of the boundaries between the imaginary and the real is at the heart of the cinema experience. Representation appears as perception and (Metz, 1982) has called the filmed image ‘the imaginary signifier’ to the fact that the reality which the film images call up is always absent and, ‘present’ only in our imaginations.

## **1.5 Methodology**

My approach to this research is from a sociological point of view. This research has been conducted on the basis of film and society, therefore, film’s relationship with society and society’s relationship with film, form the core of this research. Thus, the approach to this study is not that of a typical comparative analysis, but rather an analytical and critical discussion of class representation in film.

The films were selected according to their categorization from the Ghana film industry. These films date from the late 1970's through to early 2013. The films assessed were from the category of the 'narrative feature films' or 'fiction' in Ghanaian cinema and formed the primary text read, serving as the main instrument for analysis. A total of eight films were read as primary text for the thesis. Out of the eight films, five were produced using the English language and three were produced using the Twi language. These selections were made based on the fact that majority of local films produced in Ghana are either in the English or Twi languages, as these two languages make the films economically viable.

Presently in Ghana, the film industry is divided into three major categories. They are 'Ghallywood' and 'Kumawood' and those who do not owe allegiance to any of the 'woods' but make their films in Ghana. The first two are defined by their places of production. Ghallywood refers to films generally made in Ghana and is made up of independent film producers who want to be at par with their Nigerian counterparts who also have 'Nollywood' which refers to films produced in Nigeria. Producers under the 'Ghallywood' code, produce English language films mostly set in urban centres. The 'Kumawood' group is also made up of local independent producers whose location of production is from Kumasi, with the Twi language as their main medium of communication in the films.

The third group, that is, those who are not defined by any of the above mentioned terms or categories. This group includes new generation, veteran and retired film producers and directors. Films from each of these groupings were selected and read as primary text. Analyzing both the Twi and English languages films gave the research depth and a fair representation of the industry.

Another compelling reason for selecting the particular films was to compare and contrast the representations of class and status from the different filmmakers since language as a cultural

tool through its usage has its own impact on its users, their way of life and their philosophies and ideologies. In cultural studies it is known that when one takes on language or speaks a language, the culture of the society from which the language comes is taken on by the new speaker.

This study focused on the comprehensive analysis of the films from their narrative perspective. The study did not read the films based on their technical approaches like the cinematography, editing, sound or the directing technique but rather the film's representative of the concept of representation of class and status.

In-depth interviews, recorded electronically were conducted with four persons, one female and three male. The respondents were recruited by both the random and purposive sampling method. The respondents were picked at random but were people with film backgrounds and an understanding of the practice. Three of the respondents were filmmakers and the fourth respondent, a film critic. The three filmmakers were selected as a result of the number of years of practice within the industry. This enabled the research to have a varied response to the topic being researched. Moreover, while the history of the industry is relevant to the research the selection of the respondent also took cognizance of the generational differences relevant to the study.

The first filmmaker respondent was chosen because of his relationship with the Ghana Film Company Limited (GFIC) and how long the person had been practicing. This first respondent was a film director and had been practicing since the 1960's as film director at GFIC. The second respondent has been in the industry since the early 90's and the third respondent has been practicing since the late 90's and is also a film critic. A focus group discussion was also organized, moderated by the researcher. The researcher led discussions on class and status representation in film. Each member of the group made a seminar-like presentation with a

follow up discussion from the group. The group consisted of 6 persons all with extensive film backgrounds. There were three film directors, two editors and a script writer.

The approach to analyzing the data took the form of a comparative analysis of the films and responses from the interviewees. The analysis focused on the presence of concepts of class and status representation and how these concepts played out in relation to the categories (industry wise) under which these films fell. The reading and analysis of the film texts took a stand point on the reflection of the concepts on society or the mirroring of society through film and the social constructions aiding the process.

### **Limitations**

The first limitation encountered in conducting the research was access to film data. There was great difficulty in being able to access films made after independence through to the late 1990's. Some of the very early films from GFIC were difficult to get because of the divestiture that plagued it and when it was sold. The new owners could not manage film archive causing loss of films. The films from the 1990's were difficult to access too because most of the directors and producers were independent filmmakers and probably could not afford the cost of film and video preservation, causing the loss of most master copies of the films.

Another limitation was the dates these films were released. This was a general problem even of recent productions. Film producers and directors do not state year of release of the productions and this became problematic in the attempt to use dates for classification and as part of the research.

## **Structure of Thesis**

This thesis is in five chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to the background of study and definitions that are used as guides for the development of the research. The background study discusses the journey of the Ghana film industry from a new perspective, with an appendix illustration to show by number and genre of films made by the Ghana Film Industry Company after the over throw of President Kwame Nkrumah. This helped to understand what the GFIC was up to before the introduction of video. This chapter takes a relook at some narratives that made statements that African cinema was born out of the fight for independence or liberation and total politics. Although there is a certain amount of truth in these narratives due to reasons of colonization, there are several classifications of African cinemas, as the emergence of the art of filmmaking differed from country to country. In the period immediately after independence there were films that fell under popular cinema and others under didactic cinema or militant cinema. Even though Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, lived and propounded a number of ideologies, there is a school of thought from the critic and writer on African cinema, Frank Ukadike that states that with Nkrumah's background it was expected that films from his country will be didactic and be more on the ideological path than that of popular cinema. But the answer is that English colonization was not the same as French colonization. Therefore their ways of making films surely will not be the same.

The second chapter is dedicated to the reviewed literature on the topic in discussion. Literature on the topic, concepts, ideas and definitions driving this thesis are reviewed to construct and deconstruct certain notions by film critics, psychologists and film philosophers and writers about the different rhetoric's on cinema. The ideology of self and the acquisition of new identities caused by the constant social changes in the world with class and status will form the backdrop.

The third chapter looks closely at narrative feature films or the fiction genre in Ghanaian cinema. Films were the primary text read and served as the major instrument for analysis. Analysis of the conversations with filmmakers, critics and audiences forms the second instrument used for analysis. Critical examination of the conversations, focusing on the realities and contradictions of the immediate post independent Ghana and contemporary Ghana is made, while taking into consideration the different social changes that have taken place.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the discussion on the concept of “Us and Them”. Are you with us or against us? Is what unites us much more or less significant as to what divides us? Through politics to religion the world has not stopped trying to justify or dispute the different human and social classifications. How we are seen and how we see others affects various domains of our lives and the lives of others; from the types of jobs we have, the amount of money we make, the kind of friends we make, the places we live, the social circles we belong to and others. There is also the way we see the world and how we are invited to see the world. For the purposes of the topic in discussion the “Us and Them” concept cannot be ignored for in the stratification of society and the existence of the different class structures the “Us and Them” concept plays a pivotal role.

The fifth chapter contains conclusions and recommendations. The topic under research is socially oriented. The analysis drawn from the films and interviews conducted and the concepts and all other discussions that have taken place in this research is used to draw the conclusions that meet the objectives of the thesis. The conclusions drawn were used to further generate recommendations in the area of research and to promote new research into new ideas.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERARY FINDINGS

Social inequality can be seen from two rather different perspectives. It can be seen as a question of the actual differences that exists between individuals, in terms of their access to power and material resources. Or, it can be seen as a question of values, for example the set of normative ideas in terms of which the society is conceived and behavior evaluated, by its members. The existence of social inequality, in the distributional sense, is probably a common condition of all human societies (Marshall, 2000). Social anthropologists, who have studied the governmental structure of traditional communities, have usually divided the pattern of such governments into two, centralized and non-centralized societies. In centralized societies, there are administrative organizations that are used as the frame work of the political structure and its functioning.

In the political and social systems of non-centralized societies where there exist not a well-defined power structure, the members of these societies are not accorded the same status. There is leadership in the different segments of these societies, which makes room for a certain kind of inequality because leaders of the different groups in these societies are accorded certain privileges courtesy to their leadership status even though, these societies are said to be non-centralized. (Middleton and Tait, 1958). No society is flat and so can be deemed classless as wished by Karl Marx (Assimeng, 1998), but the way in which inequalities are perceived may vary enormously. A number of sociologists regard modern industrial societies as being stratified on the basis of social class. According to Marshall, (2000) the inequalities that exist in societies, have always required explanations and these explanations most often tend towards justification or condemnation and as such can be regarded as ideologies than theories. Another popular notion with sociologists and society at

large is that, the social position of an individual was fixed by custom, law or inherited status but in recent times, there have been certain social changes that have affected this view. According to Bruce (1995) over the twentieth century (20<sup>th</sup>) the shape of the class hierarchy has moved from the pyramid (small service class; large working class) to a lozenge as the number of people involved in manual work decline and the white collar and professional sectors grow rapidly. As a result of this change, everyone has had a better chance of moving up the social hierarchy, but the *relative* chances of someone from the bottom of the pile and someone from the top ending up the top remains much the same.

Critically studying the concept of class and status as reflected in Ghanaian cinema, I would say, the process of defining this concept is made possible due to collective acceptance, agreement, and imposition. The audience through film and social construction, is invited to perceive the world in a certain way and in agreeing to what they see and perceive. Notions are formed and new identities negotiated. Taking Frantz Fanon's position on race to support my argument, Frantz Fanon and his notion of socio-therapy, as developed in *Black Skin, White Masks*, advises that in order for racism to cease, society must abandon the notion of race. Fanon believed that only after society has realized that race is not *real*, would it overcome racism. Fanon is *logically* correct in assuming that racism will end when we no longer see through a racial lens, yet he is wrong in assuming that race is not real and that removing the lens is possible. Since race is a social construct and is ontologically subjective, it continues to work only in virtue of collective agreement and acceptance. Many people may object that they are not part of the collective agreement and acceptance but as social beings, our invitation to see the world sometimes stems from the theories and concepts conceived from the "collective agreement and acceptance" making us liable to these social like race and class.

Essentially, social groups are communities of people who share similar lifestyles and gather communally to celebrate their chosen style of life. While Frantz Fanon contends that, people of different classes can mingle together in status groups, the possibility of a dock worker going to a gala event at a country club is rare. In most cases a person's lifestyle is determined by their economic status, but monetary reasons are not the only method of creating a lifestyle. According to Assimeng, an enduring society requires a network of interdependence. It also requires a conviction among the interacting personalities and social groups that they appreciate.

Mast and Cohen (1987), exponents of the realist aesthetic in film, contend that, the motion picture is unique in its ability to represent nature and that if the ideal of film is to imitate reality, then the motion picture made it possible to achieve this in an unprecedented way. Kolker (1999) agrees to this and also adds that in the ability to represent nature, the response one gets from the audience is the suspension of disbelief, refusal to question credibility in what is seen or projected on screen. At such moments the cinema apparatus disappears and any thought of mediation is banished by the fact that one's body is telling one that this is 'really' happening. This is why Metz (1982) refers to film as the "imaginary signifier" referring to the fact that the reality which the filmed images call up is always 'absent', 'present' in our imaginations. This analogy is said to have similarities with dreams. Dreams do not really happen, even though we experience them as if they did. The content of the dream may not have happened but the *dream experience* did. Baudry (1974) alludes that cinema, like dreaming, is regressive, in that, it calls up the unconscious processes of the mind and favours what Freud calls the principle of pleasure over the reality principle. Without wanting to delve deep into Freudian theories of the structure of the personality, Freud's theory implies that a slip back into the childish, immature version of the self -where our wants and desires - dominate our personalities at the expense of contextual, ethical and social

considerations (the reality principle). With such formulation, film is dangerous, and this view has been used to support anxiety about whether it is healthy to expose children to the medium. Metz (1982) argues that, film narrative itself possesses some of the characteristics of dream and that it is dealt with by its audiences in similar, if unconscious ways. The dream analogy is not the only way to understand the operations of film, because the process of decoding film languages is as much conscious and social as it is unconscious and pre-social. This is where sometimes film is said to be dangerous.

Kolker also propagates that film at certain moments can be exploitative and manipulative. “We tend to believe in the presence of reality and images that we take them at face value. People invest in them with their emotions that they forget they are “images” (Kolker 1999). Arguing in favour of the notion that the motion picture is able to represent reality, Raymond Durnat suggests in his book “A Mirror for England” that, conclusions about British society can be arrived at, on the evidence of British films. Raymond Durnat's classic study of British films from the 1940s to the 1960s, first published in 1970, remains one of the most important books ever written on British cinema. Films, the author suggests can be understood as a “reflection” of the society that makes them. They also actively explain, and interpret the way in which the world is perceived and understood. Hill (1986) also in *Race, Class and Realism* though opposing Durnat's view also discusses certain films made within certain contexts of British social, political life, and history to have been said to be projecting British society at particular moments. This means, for Hill, the films did not simply reflect or reproduce the dominant ideological attitudes and assumptions of the period. Films were themselves active in the construction of ideological meanings and with the results that were often less consistent and coherent than the dominant ideological thesis may sometimes suggest. For Hill, the issues that were discussed were not creations of cinema alone but were also identified and elaborated upon outside cinema. Film in the period under discussion was

constricted and constrained to certain limits. Certain perspectives to the social world were predominated while others were ignored or marginalized. For Hill it is problematic for Durgnat to draw the conclusion that one could know about British society through British films.

Bazin (1967) also insists on the unique realism of film from a different viewpoint. He says that the history of art is equal to the history of “peoples’ desire to save an image of the real world”. He then modifies this by saying that the desire to capture reality is in fact the desire “to give significant expression to the world”. The key idea here is *significant expression* because it is not the world we see in the image but its significant mediated expression. For Bazin, cinema achieves its fullness in being the art of the real because cinema, to him, relies on visual and spatial reality; the real world of the physicist-physical reality. Andre Bazin for this reason believes in the concept of the *mise-en-scene*, - arranging the elements of the scene and the camera’s relationship to them - so as to preserve their physical reality. Kraucer (1960) agrees with Bazin and argues that because film literally photographs reality, it alone is capable of holding the “mirror up to nature”. For Kraucer because film reproduces the raw material of the physical world, within the work of art, it is impossible for a film to be the “pure” expression of the artiste’s formative intentions or imaginative expressions of his emotions as argued by Arheim. Kraucer believes that the film art actually redeems the world from its dormant state. An example from his country, Germany, was during one of his studies when he traces the decline of German political culture as reflected in the history of its cinema. His view is that, the German film’s concern for artistic design and its dedication to values actually prepared the way for Hitler’s rise by subtly diverting the audience from a serious appraisal of social realities. This era in German film usually considered one of the greatest periods in the history of cinema where the expressionist film movement emerged. German Expressionism in 1927 was a greatly respected film movement marked by a strong

visual style which employed low-key lighting, geometric shapes, oblique camera angles, and sharp juxtapositions of light and dark. In the era of German expressionist, very few films were direct references to German domestic politics. For Kraucer, an example of all that cinema must avoid, is to ignore the claims of the camera reality.

But there is the anti- realist school of thought that disagrees with the ideas of Kolker, Metz, Mast, Cohen and other realist exponents. For the anti-realist theorists, to make a film is not simply to copy the world but to add something else or a very special object to the world. This object may be valuable to the world because it offers an interpretation or idealization of the world or even because it creates another wholly autonomous world. The anti –realist also suggest that the value of the object may be that it expresses the feelings of its creator and the result purely becomes imaginative. According to Arheim, an exponent of the anti-realist theory, if cinema were the mere mechanical reproduction of the real, it could not be an art at all. Bazin's myth of total cinema is Arheim's fallacy of complete cinema. Perkins (1972) tries to incorporate the insights of both the realist and anti-realist traditions. According to Perkins the medium of film is capable of both documentation and fantasy of copying creation. But the central achievement of film is to be found in fictional narration and this type of movie achieves a synthesis of films two tendencies. Film, to Perkins, achieves its unique blend of photographic realism and dramatic illusion. The consideration of films' relationship to reality has powerfully influenced evaluations of fictional narrative films.

Whatever side of the argument one finds him or herself, there is one dominant notion that film has effects on its viewers. In a general context Perkins' suggestion on film's two tendencies of photographic realism and dramatic illusion should be the conclusion we should arrive at in theorizing film. As world cinema develops and new genres emerge, one cannot always read films and conclude that, film always has very realistic tendencies making it possible for film to mirror society. As stated earlier, cinema from Africa most often attempts

to tell the “situation” as it is (Ukadike, 1994). Linking this to my introduction about filmmakers being living beings and for the fact that they live in a society and attempt to make films about their societies, Dugart’s principle of film reflecting society is deeply rooted.

The reason why the Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene called the cinema a night school and gave up writing for filmmaking is that, throughout his travels in Africa, he noted an avid film public solidly existed. Cinema, then, could serve as an effective means of awakening consciousness and be used as a formidable weapon in the struggle against underdevelopment as well as against post-colonial oppression and injustice. Furthermore, it could constitute an important means of information, spreading ideas, and mass mobilization (Vieyra, 1972). Accordingly, for this thesis, cinema in Africa constitutes a way of spreading information and ideas. Certain African filmmakers consider themselves modern day “griots” in the service of their people. Using whatever resources they have available via their societies to transmit different messages.

All messages are part of a culture. They are expressed in the language of culture and conceived as well as understood in the substantive cognitive terms of a culture. (Vansina, 1985). Every culture has its imagery collectively held and understood by all. This links the discussion to the use of clichés and stereotypes by societies and filmmakers and sometimes how symbolic the use of clichés and stereotypes are for the process of representation. Like literature, clichés in film designate various realities. Clichés must be interpreted symbolically because they cannot be accepted as they stand. As human beings, we respond not to physical objects and events themselves, but to the meaning of events. Meaning is the product of the prevailing cultural frame - of social, linguistic, discursive and symbolic practices. Meaning is a construction (Vansina 1985).

The strength of the cinematic language relates to its symbolism. The films from Black Africa in this context, Ghana or Nigeria, deliberately mingle the esoteric and the sociological gazes. With critical reasoning, the viewer is invited to participate. Symbols do not merely represent, they suggest a meaning and ultimately create a unity, a participation in the play of vital forces that rule the world. (Vansina, 1985 and Barlet, 1996). According to Harding (2006), the new and very popular video-movies from West Africa especially Ghana and Nigeria have provided a second and completely different genre of moving picture. They use a very broad brush representation of characterizations, narratives and images to present entertainment which ensures for their producers and lead performers a substantial income. As a genre, collectively, they throw up new and interesting images of middle class aspirations and wealth but also rely heavily on presenting explicit images of violence and the supernatural and in which sex provides a major visual and narrative thread.

The Nigerian video feature film industry is sometimes colloquially known as **Nollywood**, having been derived as a play on Hollywood in the same manner as Bollywood from Bombay, India. Ghallywood is to the Ghana what Nollywood is to Nigeria, but, like both countries not, all stakeholders in these film industries are aligned to the “woods”. Nollywood and Ghallywood do not define the totality of the film industry in their respective countries. Nollywood is currently the second largest local film industry after Bollywood. Discussing representation, Diawara, in his study of Nollywood, discovers that in conversations with people he met both in Ghana and Nigeria, conclusions about Nigerian society could be drawn by Nigerian films. Meaning, Nollywood is a reflection of Nigerian society. Though this statement could be a fact, it would be fair to state that the Nigerian industry is not all about Nollywood, since there are the Yoruba and Hausa films. The Yoruba films come from the long tradition of Yoruba theatre but Nollywood over the years and in recent times has become recognized internationally, therefore almost muting the other existing industries. The

collective narrative on Nollywood is *“Nollywood is described as nothing but an inferior derivative of the soap opera with too much melodrama. Nollywood is bad because it is based on zero degree of narrative. It is filmed and edited in a raw manner with no reflexivity and no effort to distance the spectator from the reality of the world of the film”* (Diawara, 2010) though the above statement is true to a point, in recent times some Nollywood films have produced very impressive pieces. The most significant characteristic of Nollywood videos is the garage or gate openings, characters getting out of luxurious cars, into beautiful houses and plush living rooms (Diawara, 2010).

So far, many arguments have been made about the different concepts and definition that aids the progression of this discussion. Since the most basic statement of this thesis is film mirroring or reflecting society, discussing society and certain concepts in sociology is inevitable.

Concepts and ideologies are formed because society has decided and accepted these ideologies which indirectly become norms. Reality a terminology used loosely both in film and sociology, and it is a social construct. It makes reality differ from culture to culture, making symbols of representation different.

## CHAPTER THREE

### US AND THEM: THE CONCEPT OF “OTHERING”

Are you with us or against us? Are you with them or against them? Is what unites us much more or less significant as what divides us? Through politics to religion the world has not stopped trying to justify or dispute the different human and social classifications. As social beings, how we are seen and how we see others affects various domains of our lives and the lives of others; from the types of jobs we have, the amount of money we make, the kind of friends we have, the places we live, the social circles we belong to and others. There is also the way as social beings we see the world and how we are invited to see the world. How is the world dealing with the constant but variant social classifications societies are assuming for themselves? Since this research is on representation of one of the major sources of division class, it would be prudent to dedicate a chapter to concept of “Us and Them”. In referring to this concept, is a word that has gained currency in scholarly circles will be used. The word is “(Other)ing”.

A person's definition of the 'Other' is part of what defines or even constitutes the self (in both a psychological and philosophical sense) and other phenomena and cultural units. It has been used in social science to present the processes by which societies and groups exclude 'Others' whom they want to subordinate or who do not fit into their society. The concept that the Self requires the “Other” to define itself is an old one and has been expressed by many writers. Hegel was among the first to introduce the idea of the “Other” as constituent in self-consciousness. According to Foucault (1990), “Othering” is something people have always done, and it is something that people will continue to do as part of human nature. “Othering”, means simply making note and being aware of different people, whether they be racially, politically, socially, sexually, or in any other way different from you. Foucault (1990) also

contends that, “Othering” is strongly connected with power and knowledge. When we “Other” another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy, and it serves to keep power where it already lies.

This psychological tactic may have had its uses in our social past. Group cohesion was crucially important in the early days of human civilisation, and required strong demarcation between our allies and our enemies. To thrive, we needed to be part of a close-knit society or group who would look out for us, in exchange for knowing that we would help to look out for them in kind. People, who live in the same community, are more likely to be closely related to and consequently share genes (Rismyhr, 2011). As a result, there is a powerful evolutionary drive to identify in some way with a group of people who are “like you”, and to feel a stronger connection and allegiance to them than to anyone else.

For the most part, the person doing the Othering considers themselves normal and the other person to be abnormal. The knowledge of this sheds much light on historiographies of other cultures created by the dominant culture, and by the discourses, whether academic or otherwise, that surround these written and oral histories. The cultures that a supposed superior ethnic group deems important to study, and the different aspects of that culture that are either ignored or considered valuable knowledge, rely on the judgment of the ethnic group in power. Distortions in the writing of history have carried over to the post-modern era in the writing of news. This is one of the reasons why David Cannadine in *‘The Undivided Past’*, challenges those who believe that all history is the history of conflict, whether over class, as Marx and Engels proclaimed, or over religion, nationality, race, gender or civilization. As Cannadine succinctly puts it, “humanity is still here. Cannadine, has taken it upon himself to admonish the historical profession for setting up a series of unhelpful oppositions in its narratives of the past, emphasizing division rather than collaboration,

conflicting identities rather than a common humanity. He chides historians for not writing about the boring bits in between, when people got on with each other; instead, he accuses society of always chasing after the newsworthy moments of the past. According to Cannadine history and the uses to which history sometimes is put should be questioned. The most problematic of these categories is “civilisation”. Cannadine insists that historians have been responsible for taking an approach to the past (and the present) that has divided humanity into broad aggregations based on the idea of separate and identifiable civilisations, which, almost by definition, will be antagonistic and which, in the hands of generations of Western writers, have been contrasted with the “barbarian”. We should according to Cannadine also discourage society’s rhetorical extravagance and responsibility which often results in the ways we are asked to see the world in simple black and white terms . It turns out that people think they have a single identity and there have been conflicts on those separate single identities. The very way in which people identify themselves as social beings is that people know they have single separate identities which are very complex and it is rare to claim that one of these identities are important than the other.

Simon de Beauvoir made use of Otherness in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir calls the Other the minority, the least favored one and often a woman, when compared to a man, "for a man represents both the positive and the neutral, as indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity" (McCann, 2003). Betty Friedan supported this thought when she interviewed women and the majority of them identified themselves in their role in the private sphere, rather than addressing their own personal achievements. They automatically identified as the Other without knowing. Sarojini Sahoo, an Indian feminist writer, agrees with De Beauvoir that women can only free themselves by "thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them,

she declares herself their equal." She disagrees, however, that though women have the same status to men as human beings, they have their own identity and they are different from men. They are "others" in real definition, but this is not in context with Hegelian definition of "others". Othering is not always due to man's "active" and "subjective" demands. They are the "Other", unknowingly accepting the subjugation as a part of "subjectivity". Sahoo, however contends that whilst the woman identity is certainly constitutionally different from that of man, men and women still share a basic human equality. Thus the harmful asymmetric sex/gender "Othering" arises accidentally and 'passively' from natural, unavoidable inter subjectivity. In an effort to dismantle the notion of the Other, Cheshire Calhoun proposed a deconstruction of the word "woman" from a subordinate association and to reconstruct it by proving women do not need to be rationalized by male dominance. This would contribute to the idea of the Other and minimize the hierarchal connotation this word implies.

One way we identity ourselves as social beings is that we have many identities that are very complex. The power to define is a hazardous tool to have, and we see that this authority resides in historical texts, films, and museums. These spaces, movies, books, or museums, have the power to define what is and is not considered history. We see the act of "Othering" Africa and people of color as an all too common occurrence in these spaces. This act of "Othering" is not just limited to these sites of information; it is widespread in all forms of representation. European, Asian and African films are sufficiently different from American films. The observation made here is that European film is high in culture. The observation is always made that European films and Asian films are high in culture and American films are high in pop culture. Asian and European films are cultural and American films entertainment. Bell hooks in *"Eating the Other"* states that the commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal

ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice a seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. She discusses Otherness as in race, ethnicity, white supremacy, gender and sex. According to hooks, representation of whiteness in the black imagination has been stimulated by classroom discussion about the way in which the absence of recognition is a strategy that facilitates making a group the Other.

This myth of sameness by white people states how shocked white people get when they get to know they are also seen as the “Other”. Hall blames this creation of differences within same cultures on postmodernism’s ambivalent fascination with sexual, cultural, racial and most importantly ethnic difference. There is nothing that global postmodernism loves better than a certain kind of difference a touch of ethnicity, a taste of the exotic and as the English say a bit of the “Other”. Both hooks and Hall find it intriguing the dual meaning purpose of the Other in English society. The Other in England has a sexual and ethnic connotation. The concept of “the Other” is a complex one, and it is hard to pinpoint exactly what it means.

Since its inception African cinema has been trying to change the worldview of Africa through film just like Chinua Achebe with literature in *Things Fall Apart* which was writing back to Conrad’s *Hearts of Darkness*. According to writer Aminata Forna on the BBC world service programme (The Forum) Conrad’s book has had a very huge Othering effect on the world where through reportage and mass media there is the constant use of the ‘*Heart Of Darkness*’ to represent Africa and her people. Although Conrad’s ‘*Heart of Darkness*’ was representative of Belgium and not the Congo, the fact that the Other was mute and was given no agency, the world presumed that the *Heart Of Darkness*’ referred to the Congo and that has been the understanding till date. Achebe’s urgency to write back was to give the mute Other a voice (Forna, 2013). hooks notes that,

Moving from silent into speech is for the oppressed, colonized, the exploited and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that brings new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech of “talking back” that is no mere gesture of empty words that is expression of or movements from object to subject the liberated (1989).

Writing and talking back are both empowering and liberating. It is seizing the opportunity to have one’s voice heard and to present an alternative version.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967:17) Fanon is particularly interested in investigating the movement of racism through culture, particularly language. He states that, “to speak is to exist absolutely for the other....To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture...” (1967). When the colonized speak the language of the oppressor, they co-opt the racist ideologies of that world that are woven into speech. To co-opt the language of the colonizer is to co-opt racism and to “betray” one’s own self and culture, and to internalize one’s own inferiority. Through this historical process, this gradual loss of language and hence, culture, the history of the colonized is buried in the past, its great accomplishments and thinkers lost. To use the language of the colonized is to enter their world, a white privileged world. By virtue of the concept of representation in cinema, Othering is a constant occurrence. Barlet in “*Decolonizing The Gaze*” criticizes the paternalistic way Western viewers and practitioners are invited to African cinema especially Black African cinema and through his book aims at appreciating the advantages of another way of seeing. His concern is with his own way of looking. Africa and its cinema, that is to say, the way that the continent looks at itself and the world helped him to root out from my own *looking* an aspect which was unwittingly concealed within it. According to Barlet the aesthetisation of the world leads us to look for seductiveness rather than understanding in the image of the Other. Films from Africa are

most often considered flawed but at the same time seen as culturally eventful or beautiful. African filmmakers though, for the last fifty something years have rejected the dual western gaze; abject poverty and exoticism. The superior Others with their gaze find films from Africa exotic. This is what Malian director Souleyman Cisse says on colonial projections in a conversation:

Those who come to film us never showed the people here as human beings. They came to show us their audiences as though we were animals. They saw us with their eyes. They filmed us any old how. We know the camera can give a positive image of human beings. This white cinema shows Africans as not belonging to the human community. They film wild animals with more respect. (ibid)

Jean Rouch, the French visual ethnographer after spending many years in West Africa especially in Niger, filming the way of life of the Dogon, raised a fierce debate on Rouch's practice given how easy it is for involvement to serve as an alibi for manipulation. Whereas French critics hailed his films, as the first collaboration between the filmed and the filmmaker, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra from Senegal and filmmakers from other African countries saw Rouch's work as a distortion which was the more dangerous, for having all the outward trappings of authenticity. The fascination with "exotic cultures" and the crossing of cultural boundaries provides some of the most striking ways in which a colonizing culture articulates its self-identity and asserts its authority. Fanon's *White Skin Black Mask*, (1967) examines the representational dynamics of colonizer versus colonized in the African and Indian writing of Henry Haggard and Rudyard Kipling exploring the interface of the native Other as reflection and as a point of address. Haggard and Kipling were praised by their friends for their presumed knowledge of the alleged ability to speak from within native cultures of India and Africa. Their works exhibits the Other's ambivalence as challenge and fortification of colonial and imperial narrative authority and also attest to a persistent fascination with the visual image of the Other in the imaginative reconstruction of costume

and body image. Low has described how the trope of the mirror may offer a useful way of reading the representation of other cultures. Because the activity forging cultural identities seems to take place in relation to the dialogic construction of Otherness. Identification according to Silverman (1992) is not only grounded in vision and visual images but is also activated discursively, in so far as it is based on a point of address.

Othering is what happens when Western scholars write without drawing from African sources on their debates and studies. An example is Roy Arme's "*Third World Filmmaking and the West*". This critic and scholar does not site a single source published in Africa. Armes writes about African cinema as an individual artistic expression rather than from the perspectives of African gnosis and its emphasis on group. But in scholarly writing on African cinema, Western scholars are not the only culprits. One will find that there is Othering to a large extent amongst African scholars and critics because French African critics and scholars write more on francophone cinema than they do on Anglophone cinema. Most of the examples they draw on are from their own societies while muting the Other. It is probably not quite as simple as the just-so story we are describing here but francophone filmmakers and their Anglophone partners are rarely in conversation. If there is a chance for any conversation very little or sometimes no agency is given to the Anglophone Other.

Ghanaian cinema, in this context assumes the role of industry in a very complex position. One sometimes gets the impression that Othering in this industry in a way is to give a better understanding of how this industry operates but this is not always the case. The categorization of films in the Ghanaian film industry borders on the concept of the Other. The films made in Twi, are called local films or Kumawood productions and some of the films with English as the main language is categorized sometimes under Ghallywood (*an umbrella name that is in contention by industry players because it is new and a copy of part of Nigeria's industry*) and the last category is of films whose directors or producers refuse to fall

under any group. This categorization goes as far as the Ghana Movie Awards. Where there are awards allocated for the local films (Twi language films) and films in English. There is also another form of Othering where filmmakers in the category of local films also have their awards which is the Kumawood industry awards. We could say that language is one of the factors that drives the concept Othering in the Ghanaian film industry. By categorizing these films, we have indirectly negotiated new identities for films made in Ghana drawing social lines for corresponding audiences and giving them single identities.

For Fanon, race is not a biological trait but, rather, a historically constructed phenomenon and culturally mediated artifact. Fanon's work offers a genealogy of race, a history of decolonization, illustrating how the (wealthy, white) colonizer exists only through his relationship with the (poor, dark) colonized (2004). For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man...his inferiority comes into being through the other. (Fanon, 1967) Each exists only through the other and the nature of their relationship constructs their ontological polarization. Wealth exists in relationship to poverty, indeed is predicated upon poverty and whiteness exists only through the social construction of blackness.

According to De Beauvoir, in taking a walk one should try and observe if by just opening their eyes and looking at people passing by one can demonstrate that humanity is divided into two classes of individuals whose clothes, faces, bodies, smiles, gaits, interests, and occupations are manifestly different. Because to De Beauvoir, perhaps these differences are superficial, perhaps they are destined to disappear. What is certain is that they do most obviously exist. We cannot get away from the concept of the other, as it is too crucial for an understanding of the self. What we can do, though, is to limit the ways in which we group people up and construct them as something entirely different from an imagined "us". The

power of definition is a strong one, and when used in the context of Othering, it continues to reinforce discrimination. People's consciousness needs to be raised about Othering behaviour, to make them more alert to these thought patterns, and to encourage alternative ways of addressing the problems that we often seek to avoid by dehumanizing any one group.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This is the most important chapter of the research, because the “vehicle” that carry the tools of representation will be critically examined and analysed. Marx, one of the foremost individuals to be associated with the class concept, had no spelt out theory on film. At the heart of Marxism is an unwavering support for the primacy of matter over mind. It is the economic as far as Marx is concerned that governs, moderates, and defines the basis of every relationship. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* Marx and Engels posit that man’s consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and his social life.

To aid the process of analysis the films that will be analysed as primary text will be categorized. I would like to state that the categorization of films in the Ghana film industry is new. This categorization did not exist when the Ghana Film Company Limited was set up. This is because the industry then was owned by government. In the recent past, there have been some new changes in the industry thanks to television. Ghana has a number of private or independent television stations who are in competition with each other and would want to have the largest percentage of viewership. As part of their efforts at gunning a larger viewership, new programmes are constantly being produced and scheduled for viewer consumption. Some of these programmes include the screening of Ghanaian and Nigerian films. In very recent times films in Kumasi emerged and have found their way to television. This has resulted in creating a sub film industry. In an attempt to classify these films for viewer consumption, independent classification methods were instituted by the television stations. The films from Ghana and Nigeria who had language as English were classified as “*African films*” and the films from Kumasi with language as Twi were classified as

*“local films”*. For the records, it is not all films made in Kumasi that have Twi as the main language of delivery. There are also films from Kumasi produced in English. These classifications slowly became acceptable and have been incorporated into the Ghana Movie Awards for instance, for nomination and awards.

Since some of the film texts were authored and published in periods where these classifications did not exist, the films will be read and analysed on their own merit. One limitation in collecting this data is to do with dates. Most of the films made are not dated for easy identification by dates or periods. The information on dates, is also useful for analysis because it is one method a person can use to understand trends and social changes of the time(s) especially when conducting research that has a hypothesis of film mirroring society and vice-versa. *“Love Brewed In the African Pot” (1981), “Kukurantumi - Road to Accra”(1983), “Rain”, “3Some”, “House Of Gold”, “Adams Apple Chapter 10 (2012)”, “Kumasi Yonko, Part 1, 2 and 3” (1999). ” “Sunkwa Part 1, 2 and 3” “Ohia Asuma Wo”*.

### **Synopsis**

*“Love Brewed In the African Pot”*, is the story of love between two socially unequal people. Aba a high school educated and trained dressmaker falls in love with Joe a semi-illiterate auto mechanic and a son of a fisherman. Aba’s father a retired civil servant opposes to Aba’s relationship. Aba against all odds marries Joe. The reality about their social backgrounds rears its head and Joe’s impatience which triggers a series of unfortunate events results in Aba also losing her mind.

*“Kukurantumi- Road to Accra”*; Mr. Addy a hard working lorry driver who shuttles between the village and the city is plagued with a series of mishaps. Instead of staying in the village to help his wife and daughter take care of their farm, he decides to go work in the city. He also refuses for his daughter Abena to marry Bob a palm wine tapper but is ready to give Abena away to a rich friend

of his, in the city. Abena refuses and elopes to the city with Bob. Faced with the harsh realities of urban life, Bob decides to go back to the village but Abena refuses, breaks up with Bob stays in the city and ends up like her friend Mary the prostitute.

*“Rain”*, Stanley and Franklina who are of different social classes fall deeply in love with each other. Franklina whose father is a wealthy business man finds the relationship appalling and unfit for his daughter and himself. Stanley is too poor to be associated with. Through different schemes and foul processes they are separated but they eventually find each other and this time they will stop at nothing to be together.

*“3Some”*- Due to an inexplicable fear, Eva in her long distance relationship with David has been using her younger sister Goldi’s Facebook identity. David is back in the country for good and on seeing him Goldi decides to be with David. The two sisters through their actions and inactions begin to battle for David’s love. David on the other hand realizes the mistake and decides to be with Eva whom he “knows” and loves. The ride gets rough but love does conquer all. David and Eva get together.

*“House of Gold”*- The powerful and influential Dan- Ansah in his dying days sends for his children, who are from the different women he has been with, in wherever in the world he finds himself. These children with their differences are to spend seven days together under one roof. Events that unfold in these seven days open the eyes of the Dan-Ansah children with a new invitation to perceive the world as human beings, have respect for each other and humanity but not as spoilt rich kids.

*“Adams Apple Chapter 10”*, The Adams family made up of three daughters and their mother the widow of a diplomat are at it again. The no non-sense Jenifer is back after an AIDS scare with a long list of qualities for her ideal man. In a bid to pursue new love Albert seeks divorce from an early marriage while Ivy his daughter, attempts other ways of building her relationship with her ex Gerald. Baaba fights tooth and nail to get her husband back. Although the odds were against everyone the end did justify the means.

*Kumasi Yonko, Part 1, 2 and 3”* A three chapter film, set in Kumasi, in a compound house, takes us on a voyage of the lives of five women, exploring what friendship means to these women and the rules of engagement in a Kumasi friendship.

*“Sunkwa Part 1, 2 and 3”* A man is left with a baby whose origin he does not know because his dead wife’s story of where she got the baby was untrue. This child called Atsedie grows into a very beautiful woman. In her quest for a better life, she leaves her father’s house without a trace, hustles a bit in the city and eventually is married by a well to do man. As the story unfolds by fate Atsedie finds out about who her true parents are.

*“Ohia Asuma Wo”* Agya Ntow in his attempt to elevate himself from a certain state of poverty decides he will not let his daughters marry men in the same social class as he finds himself or social circle as them. When Emelia his eldest daughter decides to marry a newspaper vendor, he wages war on her and the man.

To critically analyze these films, one must understand what goes into writing for film. Apart from a good narrative style and plots, the most important element is characterization. This thesis is built on the premise that due to the realistic tendency of film, film has the ability to mirror society. This makes it important that, every encounter by the audience with film must be believable. Characterization is very crucial to the art of suspending disbelief in storytelling and accentuating the concept of representation. Films that remain vital to a person long after they have been seen are films whose characters have remained lodged in the minds of the audience. Whether a story with an ensemble of characters, a single protagonist or a buddy centered story, characters are central to the success of the story. If the audience does not believe in the existence of a character, or cannot identify with a character, the story will fall flat, (Johnson, 1995). Just as humans sum their experiences, characters, too are the culmination of their experiences. Constructing a history for one's character is very important and here are some traits to look out for whiles constructing this history. The physical, the intellectual, psychological, spiritual and social. Since the thesis is looking into social representation, the social trait in characterization would be discussed. Under the social trait is; social class, environment, education, income, employment, friends and family history. This means that in constructing a believable character, social trait in characterization is very important. Another issue to be considered in creating characters is the use of stereotypes and clichés. The relationship of the script writer with the main characters is not always straight forward. The writer is to be involved with the characters, to identify with them, see them physically and emotionally, sympathize with them, and watches their obsessions; the writer becomes implicated with the characters and shares their guilt that is what most often characters are to writers and the audience. (Dancyger and Rush, 1995)

In writing for film, it is not wrong or mediocre to use stereotypes and clichés as a guide to building characters but it is how much one relies on these stereotypes that can become problematic. The use of stereotypes and clichés sometimes depends on the reference point of many filmmakers (writers,

producers and directors), is from their social constructions, realities or how by certain events they have been invited to see the world. As stated in the introduction, some the filmmakers live in some of the societies they portray and so try to depict what they have observed or know. These films corpus will be analysed with the backdrop of class representations. There will be no analysis of any technical form or format. For example, cinematography, sound, editing or directing of these corpus will not be analysed. The analysis will be made in context with class representations. This analysis will study how filmmakers understand and are able to represent class distinctions in Ghanaian cinema.

*“Love Brewed In the African Pot” (1981)*, was directed by Kwaw Ansah, though this film was his first it is internationally acclaimed. This film deals with a lot of issues like, acculturation, alienation, elitism, inequality and others. In this film, Aba Appiah’s father, Mr. Appiah wants his daughter a Cape Coast trained dressmaker to marry a man from the upper middle class even though she is in love with a semi-illiterate auto mechanic. This film is set in the 50’s and the emphasis put on her being trained in Cape coast was one of the overt representation of class. Here formal education and where this formal education took place was one way of representing class. The class lines were drawn when Joe talks of his semi-illiterate background and the fact that he is the son of a fisherman. Through characterization and use of dialogue the two classes in contention here are represented. Mr. Appiah is a retired civil servant and would have wanted his Cape Coast trained daughter to marry from a more prestigious family. For Aba to turn down the proposal of Benson the lawyer and son of another counselor was a recipe for disaster.

Another way in which class and status were represented in this film was the constant wearing of Western suits and hats by Mr. Appiah and the lawyer Benson. When Joe’s family came to see Aba’s family to ask for her hand in marriage, they brought locally brewed gin Akpeteshie whiles

the Benson's family brought imported "schnapps". The use of the drinks were representative of the social class the two families belonged to. Aba's mother in her attempt to change Aba's mind about Joe in dialogue uses the two different drinks (akpeteshie and schnapps) to advise Aba on the liberties she will be giving up by marrying Joe. One subtle way in which class representation was again used was the use of the cutlery. When Joe was invited to lunch by Aba's parents, their insistence on the use of cutlery at table showed class distinctions between Joe and Aba. Joe's social status and probably his lack of formal education did not allow him the knowledge of cutlery usage. Joe not belonging to Aba's social class, which may probably reflect in her status group cements this statement by Weber, "status groups are a way to achieve social honor depending on basic societal conventions". Essentially social groups are communities of people who share similar lifestyles and gather communally to celebrate their chosen style of life. While he contends that people of different classes can mingle together in status groups, the possibility of a dock worker going to a gala event at a country club is rare. In most cases a person's lifestyle is determined by their economic status, but monetary reasons are not the only method of creating a lifestyle. According to Assimeng, an enduring society requires a network of interdependence. It also requires a conviction among the interacting personalities and social groups that they appreciate. In this film Joe is not from abject poverty neither is Aba from opulent wealth. But their social constructions are different because they come from different social classes. In this film, class representation is not about excessive wealth and since this thesis is built on the hypothesis of film mirroring society, what Kwaw Ansah gives us here is that for the period in which the film was set, 1950's his representations of class were what the society then also associated with. According to Judith Marshall the period of 1949 to 1957 onwards saw the emergence of new additions in social class. This is how this new class structure is represented in "*Love Brewed In the African Pot*", Aba's family belongs to the *Intelligentsia* mainly professionals many in government service from 1957 onward.

*“Kukurantumi- Road to Accra”(1983)*, Addy a hard working driver lives with his family in Kukurantumi and shuttles between the village and Kukurantumi. This film is about class relations, status, rural-urban migration, unemployment, assorted social hardships among many others. In this film the concept of class distinctions was most often used to generate dramatic conflicts and as representation of society at the time. Addy’s daughter Abena is in love with Bob a farmer and palm wine tapper. Though Addy knows about his daughter’s relationship with Bob he pretends not to notice and when Abena’s mother tells Addy about Bob and Abena, and why Abena should not be forced to marry Mr. Mensah, Addy retorts by saying;

Addy :Bob is only a palm wine tapper.

Abena’s mother: Yes and what are you?

Addy: I have my own lorry now, you understand, Lorry.

Here the emphasis is on lorry. For Addy even though they all live in Kukruntumi his owning of a lorry puts him in a different social class than Bob who is a palm wine tapper and brings grass for the sheep. This film was set around and after the 1981 revolution. Owning one’s car whatever form it came in was with a lot of pride. When Addy worked for Alhaji driving his Bedford bus, he was still accorded a lot of respect by the people in the village. This is why a palm wine tapper is not the best suitor for his daughter Abena. In this film the representation of class and status was effected through the ownership of a lorry. Lorry here became the class metaphor. The lorry is a huge catalyst or the metaphor for class distinction or status change. One should understand that the colonial encounter and engagement affected people’s socialisations, so products manufactured outside our geographical space are accorded a lot of respect. The revolution also brought certain

social changes in Ghanaian society. Therefore to personally own a lorry, means ones social class and status has changed and this was very important. The lorry will bring in more income and one's class and status will change because money comes with some power.

Cigarettes in "*Kukurantumi*" is a commodity that was personified and its acquisition and smoking came with a sense of class and acquired status. In the film we find out that cigarettes could be used to bribe people. The 1979, revolution had happened and the social order had changed. Certain consumable products like cigarettes had become scarce and considered luxurious. Anyone in possession of certain luxury products was considered very important. When Bob suspends smoking the cigarettes Mary, Abena's friend from the city gave him, Abena becomes very furious....

Abena: You've got to smoke one now. Just imagine the others faces when they see smoking cigarette

Bob: No may be later

Abena : No! Now Bob please...

Bob: No I said later

Abena: No, then if you won't smoke give them back to me I'll smoke it myself.

Bob: (laughs) Since Mary came, here you've completely gone crazy

Abena: Am not going to the river bank if you don't smoke...

(Abena is furious and walks off)

To Abena, if Bob smokes in front of people openly, he will be seen as "hip" and important. A status which will rub off on her by her affiliation to him. She wanted the pleasure of seeing how jealous

the others would be of her Bob. It may be inferred that even though during the revolution, social lives of people had changed, cinema was not alien to Ghanaians and the “Western genre or Cowboy” films were still very popular. Most of the heroes in these films smoked cigarettes. Some tobacco companies internationally also used stars or person’s with the cowboy film profiles to sell their products.

The influence of cinema is reflected in some characters in Sembène’s fiction. After watching a film on ancient Rome, Diagne in *O pays mon beau peuple* (O Country My Beautiful People) subsequently greets his friends:

‘I salute you, People of Casamance,’ and one of his friends remarks:

‘Here comes the crazy one! Yesterday he went to watch a movie on ancient Rome, the whole week he will be a Roman, but after a cowboy film, he will be a cowboy and act tough...’

In *God’s Bits of Wood*, Magatte and his apprentices are passionate about movies: (Sembene, 1962, pg. 154). Their discussions were invariably concerned with the same subject – the films they had seen in the days before the strike. They told the stories of every one of them, over and over again but never without feverish interruptions:

‘You’re forgetting the part where...’ or ‘No, that’s not the way he killed the Indian.’

Next to Western films, war films were their favorites. (*Sembène, 1972*)

Bob’s refusal to smoke the cigarettes in public had curtailed any chances of their new status being noticed by others and Abena was not amused.

The concept of *mise-en-scene* was used to show that Addy and Mr. Mensah did not belong to the same class. Mr. Mensah and Addy drove in Mr. Mensah’s private car to the village, for Mr. Mensah

to meet Abena, both were dressed wearing cloth. Addy's cloth was wax print and Mr. Mensah's was "kente". The use of kente for Mr. Mensah was very symbolic. Mr. Mensah's house in the city was big and beautiful with neatly mowed lawns and gardens. He had a monkey for a pet and he had a large bottle of fruit juice in front of him that he drank with Addy and a young girl dotting on him. Mr. Mensah unlike, Mary, Abena, Bob and other people in the village smoked cigars not slim cigarettes. Just by this visual representation we know that Mr. Mensah is rich and did not share the same social class with Addy. In trying to convince Abena to marry Mr. Mensah, her father went as far as using the television set Mr. Mensah owns to let Abena see "reason".

In the period in which the film was set owning a television set was not for ordinary people. One had to be rich and well connected to own one. Abena and Bob do make it to the city but were unable to keep their relationship. Abena by some coincidence met Mr. Mensah and recognizing how hard city life is decides to become his lover. Abena's association with Mr. Mensah changed her social class and status. This is represented by us seeing Abena wear prettier clothes than the ones Mary her friend gave her when she arrived in the city. Abena whiles living in the village sport an afro, but on her arrival to the city, and becoming Mr. Mensah's lover, she is taken to the saloon to do her hair. She sports braids (then called rasta) styled in a fringe and she is seen wearing make – up. Abena's association with Mr. Mensah has changed her social class.

**"Rain", This** film is a class centered film. The subject matter is about class distinction and social class difference is what provides drama conflict for the film from beginning to the end. The audiences' first encounter with which class is represented is by skin color or complexion of the main character and her biological sisters in the film. These three characters Franklina, Karen and Sheba are all *very light skinned* even though the complexion of the man playing their dad is chocolate and though their mother is deceased we do not get to see any photograph of her that will attest to why they are of very light complexion. What this film insinuates is that, there are certain

skin tones that are more associated to people of a certain class : “*Light skin tone equals upper class*”. Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie*, establishes a revealing relationship between skin color and opportunity among the so called free slaves and their descendants. The light skin color syndrome has not completely vanished in spite of the new modes of thought among Black people. It is an intuitive gravitational force that draws the average black male towards a light skinned female that keeps on hammering home to him infinite desirability of a straight hair and aquiline nose. (Awoonor, 2006).

Through the concept of “Othering” one gets the understanding of how class is represented in this film being that people of the same kind stick together or stay together. There is a consensus amongst the affluent in this film concerning *how they are seen* and who *they* associate with. In a conversation with her sister Karen, Franklina talks about her new found love Stanley and how she thinks they are a match made from heaven. Franklina being in love is not what was important to Karen, but the social standing of the man her sister claims to be in love with.

Karen: So whose son is he?

Franki: Nobody really important. As a matter of fact Karen.. he is very poor but he is everything to me (sarcastically) (*Karen’s expression begins to change from pleasant to disgust*)....

Karen : Franki be careful

Franki : Of what?

Karen: Of nobodies.

Franklina’s father’s house is situated on a big plot of land. The house is a mansion by Ghanaian standards not the mansions owned by Lords and Ladies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century or Hollywood stars. The outside floor is tiled, beautiful landscaping, a couple of cars. The interior of the house is plush, the

décor very sophisticated, well arranged nothing done in excess, the rooms were painted with very matured colors, white and wood brown. Franklina's father is always dressed in a kaftan made from expensive linen fabrics. For the writer and director of the film the use of the concept of mise-en-scene visually gives us an idea of the social class Franklina's family belongs to.

On the introduction of Stanley to the family the concept of Othering was largely manifested. This type of Othering is the discriminative kind. Franklina's father was very rude to Stanley. He goes on a name calling spree just to embarrass Stanley and make him feel very unwelcomed. In that same moment Chief, Franklina's father rudely interrupts Franklina's introduction of Stanley by introducing, another rich young man from an affluent home like. The rich young man is apparently the catch of the century and one cannot fault his pedigree and would make good addition to the family.

Chief: What work does your father do?

Stanley: He is a farmer

Chief: And your mother

Stanley: Well she dedicated her life to taking care of us.

*Father laughs hard accompanied by sister Karen*

Chief: A house wife!!!!

Franklina's father chides Stanley for even thinking of starting a relationship with his daughter. According to Chief, the fact that his daughter and Stanley find themselves in the same university does not mean they belong to the same social circle and class. Franklina's father is a very obnoxious and dismissive man and has no patience for people who are not within his league.

Chief: My girl was raised all her life in *Opulence*. Go check the word, *o p u l e n c e* something you can never understand let alone have the means to sustain.

Franklina in this film drives a Mercedes Benz, her younger sister Sheba drives a Cooper. Franklina got admission into Harvard to study Industrial Relations and her, father is able to afford it. She goes off to study at Harvard. Franklina's father pulls every plug possible to make sure Franklina does not marry Stanley.

Franklina takes Stanley to a resort with a Golf Course to relax. Golf stereotypically is a game for the rich and affluent. When Stanley resurfaces in the film, he is a rich man and what has made him rich is farming. Ironically his produce feeds Chief's factory. This time Stanley drives a very nice car and lives in a big, well-furnished house though not as magnificent as Franklina's father's. In "*Rain*" formal education is important and it is needed to part of the upper class. Having a formal education is not the ticket to an upper class. This is because of the disregard Franklina's family had for the teacher she wanted to marry. When Franklina decides to marry a teacher, this is what her sister Karen tells her.

Karen: A teacher! Why do you always open yourself to poverty stricken men to enrich themselves of you.

One would say that if this is a reflection of society then it means certain occupations cannot put one into certain kinds of social classes. *Rain* is set in the 21<sup>st</sup> century may be in the year 2011. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Primary school teacher has no place with the upper class. Stanley from his demeanor to what he wore did not portray him to come from abject poverty. One thing that is clear here though is that, certain professions work better with the elite than others.

The most suitable form of Othering pertaining to class difference which was represented in this film, is Othering that makes societies and groups exclude 'Others' whom they want to subordinate

or who do not fit into their society. Othering is strongly connected with power and knowledge as suggested by Foucault. When we “Other” another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy, and it serves to keep power where it already lies. So Chief would prefer Franklina and the rest of her siblings to mix with power so power can be retained than give power or share power with the “*powerless.*”

“**3Some**” This film though a love story borders on class. Class is one word used very often by the main character in this film. The recurring of the word class in the film shows the main character Goldi’s obsession with class distinctions. The film opens with Goldi a teenager tongue lashing another teenage boy for proposing love to her and her anger is not about being loved by a young boy her age but because the boy did not wear expensive clothes like her and that the boy cannot afford her. Goldi, as a university student, only mingles with a certain group of girls she considers her (classy) kind. All these girls come to school with their own cars. Goldi loathes any of the friends of her friends who do not belong to the same class as her. Goldi is most often rude to those she finds “*inferior*” to her.

Goldi, lives with her mother and sister Eva in a very big house with a very large clean, compound. The compound is lined up with a fleet of cars including a *Range Rover*, a *Hummer*, a *Mercedes Benz*, a *BMW* and others. In representing class to the audience, Goldi has a time table as to which car she drives each day of the week to school. Goldi and her friends like to go shopping a lot since Goldi has a timetable for what she wears every day of the week. The show of the love and importance of class to Goldi is her quick association with David the returnee surgeon, who was the young boy she tongue lashed when they were children for not being rich enough. This film also reiterates the notion that certain professions are given better acknowledgment than others by persons in the upper class or by the affluent in Ghana. Because David is now a surgeon, Goldi is of the

assumption that he can afford and sustain her expensive lifestyle. A relationship with the surgeon will rub off her the prestige that comes with the profession. Eva, Goldi's elder sister also in her attempt to bring a man home, arranges with her friend who is a lecturer and author to assume a different identity.

Eva: Remember if they ask you what you do, tell them you're a business man.

***“House of Gold”*** The representation of class and status in this film leaves room for more enquiry into the concept. The use of mise-en-scene provides commentary and on the concept of class and status. Visually like the other films Mr. Dan Ansah has a very big and beautiful house situated in a plush residential area in the city. The Dan Ansah's house has beautiful landscaping and very clean environment. The type and number of cars parked in this house represents the class of the Dan Ansah's. The Dan Ansah house looks like a mansion. This household is made up of a butler, a footman, a cook, a number of maids and a chauffeur. There is also a general overseer of the Dan Ansah house who is a lawyer. Mr. Dan Ansah on his death bed, is consulted with issues of choosing presidential candidates and other political matters. In this film more material possessions are used to represent class and status. Mr. Dan Ansah has six children, one adopted child and a very young wife his second daughter's age. These children are from six different women and these were women he encountered in different parts of the world. The eldest son is a pilot and only wears Rolex watches. The second daughter owns a business in Nigeria, the third daughter a world class high fashion model, the fourth son has his own business in Cameroun and the fifth son is an academic. In the case of the sixth his occupation is not made known but rather his sexuality. He is gay. When the pilot son falls in love with one of the maids in the house, the whole family is at his neck and for reasons of class, because this maid from a lower class has no business being their equal not even by

virtue of marriage. It would be interesting to want to know the reference point of the filmmaker because this representation is quite on the extreme side.

*“Adams Apple 10”*, is in chapters from one to ten. *Adams Apple* the ten-chapter movie is for the middle class to upper class audience. The main characters of this ten-chapter film are from the upper class. Three daughters and a mother. The husband and father is deceased but was a diplomat. These three daughters have been all home schooled while the family moved from country to country. These films have all characters well dressed and always looking stunningly. The characters hang out in the most luxurious places and drink very expensive cocktails, wines and champagne. Jennifer the oldest daughter has her own real estate company. Baaba, the second daughter owns and runs a spa. She is also married to a middle class man. The third daughter Kukua fondly called Kuks works in an advertising agency and is the creative director. This advertising agency is worth millions of cedis. She is also married to the son of a co-partner of the agency. The professions of the other characters include, lawyers, doctors, teachers and businessmen. For dramatic reasons and creation of conflicts, a few characters are given roles that either made them belong to a lower social class.

*“Kumasi Yonko”* is not a film directly about class and status. It is about unhealthy friendships that have disastrous endings. But in the creation of conflict and in plot development the inequalities that exist socially among people and also the concept of Othering is put to good use. This film is set in a compound house in Kumasi, an urban centre. This film is a “trilogy”. The main language in this film is Twi and but there is the occasional use of the English language. The larger percentage of this film takes place in this compound house. The tenants in this house until all the drama began co-existed peacefully with each other. The representation of class distinctions in *“Kumasi Yonko”* is interesting and intriguing. Since this is a compound house, it is reasonable to infer and conclude

that the social classes of people being represented do not belong to the upper or middle class. But even in this house, some tenants are better off than others. The main characters of this film are women and the hidden class war amongst the tenants is fought by these women. Chop money or housekeeping money is the main class signifier in "*Kumasi Yonko*".

The main character Akyaa is married to Collins who is handsome and comes across as a perfect gentleman, although he is stingy, a cheat and an opportunist. Akyaa is of a middle class background. Her mother who is obsessed with having beautiful grandchildren, forces her to stay with Collins while he maltreats her. Akyaa's mother gives her money to take care of Collins. Akyaa always looks good and lives the "*keeping up appearances life*". This is possible courtesy her mother and sister who lives abroad. Collins likes to look good but finds it difficult to give Akyaa enough money to take care of the house. The hidden class war starts with Akyaa's praise songs for her husband and how much she is given as "chop money". To all of Akyaa's friends she was very comfortable and well off. Nana her friend on hearing the amount Akyaa gets as "chop money" confronted her husband and in fury the man left the marriage. Dufie is not a "Kumasi girl" urban but lived for a while with her uncle in the same house as Akyaa and later marries Ben a taxi driver who is also a tenant of this same house. Dufie is constantly teased by Akyaa and Nana for marrying a taxi driver.

When Akyaa and Nana found out that Dufie's taxi driver husband gave her a lot more money for "chop money" than their white collar job husbands, they are shocked and instigate her against her husband. From chop money the class war went to whose husband buys the best cloth, clothes and shoes. Akyaa again parades goodies sent to her by sister abroad as gifts from Collins. Akyaa seems to be winning the class war within their class. Dufie who wants to "belong" begins to taunt Ben her taxi driver husband for increase in "chop money" and whenever Ben buys her something new she dashes off to show her friends so she can get their approval and she is always disappointed.

These women belong to the same class but for reasons of the hidden class war created by Akyaa, Dufie has been pushed to a sub- class of the same class and she now must strive to get into the main class in this compound house. Class distinctions in this house is also determined by who has travelled abroad or has any association with a “been to” or a “returnee”. Sylvia has just moved into this compound house with a claim that she is on vacation and just returned from America. Because Sylvia is preaching America, Akyaa has ceded her position to Sylvia. The fact that she has travelled and is building her own house somewhere in Kumasi means she is of a totally higher class. Even Akyaa’s husband begins to associate with Sylvia and starts an affair that sent Akyaa packing out, all in a bid to travel to America with Sylvia. Sylvia in her attempt to show she had travelled sometimes resorts to speaking English with an accent. This is consistent throughout the film. The next representation of class and status is the use and ownership of the mobile phone. Owning a mobile phone was prestigious so Collins used all his savings to buy one with a camera feature. This film was released in 1999 and during this time in Ghana mobile phones were a novelty. Owning a mobile phone in that era automatically shot one up the class ladder. Women were also very concerned about the status being with a man afforded them. This comes out through dialogue as well as forms of symbolism showing what social change was happening. For example women bought rings and put on their finger whiles they lived with men who have not performed their marriage rites but are just boyfriends. Being married was a very sought after status. All the women wanted to be married.

**“SUNKWA”:** The subject of class and status forms the major theme of this film. The main language used in this film is Twi. It starts ironically with the complexion of the main character, Akyedie. Akyedie is fair in complexion with the skin tone of a mixed race person. In a moment of

grief and disillusionment Akyedie's father recounts to his sister how he came into possession of Akyedie and his uncertainty about Akyedie's future. His sister consoles him by using Akyedie's complexion and beauty as his card to good fortune.

Akyedie's Aunt: "Don't worry, she is beautiful, she will marry well and give us nice children".

(Translated from Twi).

This is one indication of the class struggle from within. Though people find themselves in the same social class, some are declared better off than others by many factors. In this film, skin colour or complexion is a class measuring tool. This concept of skin colour as a mark of superiority and symbolic class distinction was played on throughout the film. Atakora, Atsedie's friend who was constantly mistaken to be her lover, was once accused by Atsedie's father as not being fit to marry his daughter. Because he is not handsome and has no viable job. Atakora, the village buffoon is Akyedie's bosom friend but sought to use her in the city for good fortune. For Atakora, Akyedie's beauty and complexion was their ticket to the good life.

Akyedie and Atakora after all their hustle in the city found good will that turned into good fortune. Akyedie is discovered by a young medical doctor who later marries her. Class lines were again drawn when the profession of medical doctor was introduced. To show that the doctor's social class and status is not entirely credited to his profession, the audience is introduced to his family. All his immediate relatives are abroad. His father is a retired chief justice, his mother a retired army officer and some of his siblings are lawyers. The doctor has a big and beautiful one storey house, spacious rooms, and a jacuzzi in one of the many bathrooms in the house.

The most intriguing and interesting representation was the metaphorical use of fast food, French fries and Grilled chicken or chicken and chips as its fondly called in Ghana to show class

differences. Akyedie's inability to eat French fries on her first and second encounters with the food, makes food symbolic in the representation of class and status. Exposure, access and affordability of fast food was only possible if one belonged to a certain class and definitely not a lower class. Language in this film played a symbolic role in class distinctions. The use of English as language by the doctor, drew class lines between him and Akyedie. The doctor sometimes in conversation with Akyedie or Atakora keeps switching from Twi to English. This transition is so subtle and smooth that, Akyedie and Atakora are always mesmerised. The poise with which he delivers his lines in English creates an air of sophistication and finesse. Akyedie had also stopped wearing her natural but chemically relaxed hair and now sports artificial hair called weave. In this film the kind of hair one wears also determines their class and status in society. Her wardrobe had changed, she would often go to the boutique to buy new clothes. By marrying the doctor, Akyedie's social class and status had changed. She is not an ordinary girl from the village but the medical doctor's wife.

***Ohia Asuma Woɔ***, This film's main language is Twi. The film is set in the city but Opanyin Krobea's house is located somewhere in the suburbs. By the description of his son the house is like a chicken coup too small to house all five members of the family. Opanyin Krobea's household does not look like one blighted by abject poverty, but this household could be classified as the urban poor. Opanyin Krobea in his attempt to elevate himself from a certain state of poverty decides he will not let his daughters marry men in the same social class as them. They will have to be rich, they should smell of money, have servants and house helps at their beck and call. The way class and status represented in this film, is quite interesting. A man who makes a living by selling newspapers is not a good marriage material according Opanyin Krobea. This kind of man will take a lifetime to achieve any form of financial breakthrough and so can never belong to the middle or upper class. Emelia Opanyin Krobea's second daughter is in love with the newspaper vender and her father will not allow such a relationship to be nurtured. When Emelia eventually married her

newspaper vendor lover, she incurred the wrath of her father. He could not forgive her for moving from poverty to poverty.

Opanyin Krobea is very fond of his daughter Amanda because she is very fair in complexion and to him she is his future pocket money and passport to a better life. So her skin should be kept well for a rich man. She has to keep looking fair.

Opanyin Krobea: Who touched my “body sardine”? (Transliteration)

Language again in this film was used as a metaphor for class. When people want to show class they speak English.

## 4.2 Findings

The representation of class and status varies from filmmaker to filmmaker. In as much as film is said to mirror society the levels of representation differ. The representation of class and status in Ghanaian cinema in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is not the same as the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A critical look at the films “*Love Brewed In the African Pot*” and “*Kukurantumi, Road to Accra*” one can draw the conclusion that though economic independence and wellbeing contributed to a person’s class and status it was not the only defining factor. The representations of the class distinctions did not come with overt and grandiose display of material possession. The gap between the upper class, lower class and middle class were not too huge. The filmmakers of this era in agreement with one of my respondents were well aware and had a better understanding of the use of the concept of class and status in their films. The concept was used to weave the narrative and create subplots, subtexts and create conflicts. The filmmakers we would say had some consciousness about the concept and what to make out of it. During the era of British colonial rule to come from the merchant class was an indication of affluence. Because when you talk about a merchant the person had money, access to the European way of life, formal education and other luxuries. In “*Love Brewed In The African Pot*” Mr. Appiah Aba’s father did not belong to the same class as Joe’s family but he was not a very rich man either. His class then was determined by his formal education and profession as a civil servant. In this film those who were educated with white collar jobs were the ones who were considered to be of middle class. Some attributes or indicators visually of the middle class was their Europeanization. For example they lived in a cement houses, they were always at table anytime food was served, used appropriate cutlery to eat and they drank tea from tea cups. They had a preference of European drinks over locally brewed drinks and many others.

The new generation of filmmakers responsibility towards their audience in managing this concept is different from the former. Today's representation of class and status in Ghanaian cinema borders more on financial success, affluence and being ostentatious. The new generation of the Ghanaian filmmaker, is not too different from his or her audience. Success on its own is not quantifiable and in the lay man's understanding the indicators of success are at least, to own a house, a car and other material things. But the most important is to own a house and a car. In "*Kumasi Yonko*" for the rest of the tenants to be sure if Sylvia had truly been to Europe and also was successful, she was asked why she is living in the same compound house as the rest of them who have not travelled. This is based on the premise that when one travels to and comes back from America there should be enough money to build a house at least to live in.

The new generation of filmmakers is being influenced by a number of other factors in their attempt to understand the concept of class and status and its depiction. They are influenced by western representations of class and status an example is from the film "*House of Gold*" the presence of a butler, a footman, different degrees of maids in uniforms, is like being in a home of a British aristocrat or a Lord. One of the Western indicators of success is the habit of wanting to go on a shopping spree for shoes and clothes sometimes evident in films from Hollywood. This has become the norm or the way to represent class and status and could also be stated under the indicators of success. The second external influence is the contact with Nigerian cinema especially Nollywood. The ostentatious display of wealth in Nigerian films has also influenced the representation of class and status in Ghanaian cinema. Nigeria and Ghana may have their cultural, social, religious and other differences. But they are certain similarities and the various encounters between the two countries have left certain influences. In retrospect, a look at the films made in Ghana before the turn of the millennium and a few years after, were much more circumspect about their representation of class and status.

Most of my respondents were of the view that Ghanaians are not known for ostentatious display of wealth and the superficial way of life. But the encounter with Nigeria through cinema has caused some social changes. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, most filmmakers live in the same societies as their audience. They share almost the same realities, problems and aspirations as their audience and sometimes what they put on screen is their own understanding of the concept of class and status. What they have been putting across is that the white man's way of life, is always the best. They end up re-emphasizing the idea that the western way of life is superior to the traditional way of life. Because for this new generation of filmmakers, the more traditional you the lower you are on the social ladder. The more Western, the higher your level, and this is a common depiction in our films.

Class and status is an important ingredient of storytelling. They propel the plot and, and create drama. But one fact is that most filmmakers appear not to have properly grasped the concept. Today in Ghana because of the video boom there are a lot of "uneducated" film makers who also have not grasped the understanding of class and status and how it is used in film. These filmmakers in a bid to make films and recoup their monies choose the easy way out by relying on stereotypes and using this over used stereotypes to tell their stories. One can gather too that, some of filmmakers do not always understand the stereotypes they use. On critical reading of these films, questions are raised on the functionality of certain elements you find in the film that are not useful to the story or subject matter.

Out of the films read as text earlier, there is a conscious and yet unconscious use of skin colour as metaphor for success and class appropriation. It is more evident in the local language (Twi Speaking) category of films. These filmmakers weave their stories around skin colour sometimes. The English language films also use these stereotypes. A more critical audience will get the subliminal images and messages being projected through the films. It is quite significant that

though stereotypes are useful in drawing character sketches for stories its use and representation can give the audience different impressions (not so positive) about class and status because of the aesthetic of realism, in film. (Kolker, 1999 and Metz, 1975). This issue of light skin and power stems from the long history of interaction between the Black African and the European.

During the encounter with slavery and colonization the established scale of valuation gave a social advantage to the Negroes with white blood and an economic advantage to the master who could claim higher sale price for slave property that had white features. Later the house slaves versus the field slaves distinction was established partially by the percentage of white blood and this became the basis of the earliest “blue vein” societies in the northern cities. (Gaines). This is also evident in the film “Sankofa” by the Ethiopian director Haile Gerima where Joe the son of Nunu a black slave is given preferential treatment and is most often made to maltreat the other slaves or hunt down the ones who want to escape because he has some white blood in him. He was the son of the white priest on the plantation who raped his mother. As black society observed preferential treatment and absorbed white cultural biases, it came to embrace the same physiological ideals. This connection between light skin and economic success was borne again during reconstruction when the first profits in the black economic ventures were handed to those who bore the greatest likeness of whiteness. This has carried on till date in our society. Children born to Europeans during the era of colonialism were the first choices for formal education lending credence to the perception that elite families exist because of white heritage. The Europeans then made the slaves domestic servants. The concept of the “Mullato” class in the Gold Coast was consciously created. The descendants of the slaves were treated differently. In fact because the Europeans did not operate through the chiefs but rather the common people, they trained some of them in Europe to speak their language. Those people who were sent abroad came back as clerks, headmasters, priests etc. They considered themselves different from the rest of the people. This situation came with its own evils in the society.

Since independence, although Ghanaian society has moved on, the political aesthetic of skin colour has not changed. Some of the films analysed have their narratives woven around skin colour. The skin colour of the main characters was the pivot of the story. The achievements of these characters were based on their skin colour. Opanin Krobea in *Ohia Asuma Woɔ*, accords more respect and favours his light skinned daughter Amanda over his dark skinned daughter Emelia because Amanda is his “*daakye sika*” literally translated as his “*future money*” her light skin in the film is also nicknamed “*honam sardine*”. There are the filmmakers who constantly fall on stereotypes and social clichés in their attempt to represent class and status in their films.

Another interesting discovery, is gender relations and representations in the use of skin colour as a characteristic of representing class and status. In playing the politics of skin colour especially for all the films analysed, affluence from the male gender side is not characterized by skin colour. The male who belongs to the upper class is not necessarily light skinned. This means that the use of skin colour to represent the concept of class and status in Ghanaian cinema is very gendered affirming the concept of Othering from De Beauvoir’s point of view in “The Other Sex”.

### **“Othering” as Representation**

Othering is a social construction and the height a society or groups of people decide to take the concept is also very crucial to the way these various groups and their members are invited to see the world. Most often in film, how we make our audience perceive the world, how we invite our audience to see the world and the identities they decide to take on after this voyage is constructed by the filmmaker and vice versa. We need *something* that in some degree is different from ourselves to actually constitute a self. Still, how do we bring meaning into a term that refers to absolutely everyone? By accepting that as social beings we do not have single identities, any new location we

find ourselves determines our new “Other”. Agreeing to a single identity is living in denial or still perceiving the world from a superior point of view.

“If you’re not with us, you’re against us” is a simple heuristic people often use to decide whether someone is part of their group or not. If you are, then you can be expected to toe the line in certain ways if you don’t want to be ejected; if you’re not, you can be dismissed and hated as an “other”, the *enemy*. (In the film “*Ohia Asuma WoƆ*”, Opanyin Krobea’s daughter goes against his wishes of marrying a wealthy man and marries a young man who makes a living as a newspaper vendor. Emelia’s father refuses to attend her marriage ceremony, refuses to give her any form help in very dire moments, subjects her to all forms of abuse. He has declared her the enemy because to him she did not marry a man who would have changed the family’s social class and status.

Other research into, for instance, the Benjamin Franklin effect, shows that we have a startling tendency to come to hate people who we treat badly. If we are experiencing guilt about our treatment of some person, or group, or class, and having trouble reconciling that guilt with our notion of ourselves as good people, our brains are extremely adept at resolving the situation by *Othering* the people we feel that we have wronged. If we dehumanise someone, and distance our empathy with them, then we would not have to feel bad about the shabby way we have treated them. This happens within families, nuclear or extended, friends or even fathers and daughters. This we would find in films like “*Ohia Asuma Wo*”, “*Kumasi Yonko*”, “*3Some*” and “*Rain*”

### **Social Change and Pictorial Representation**

Reading the film text and analyzing the conversations with respondents there is the admission that social change to a large extent has affected our representation, appropriation and understanding of class as a social construct. There is also the understanding that there is a generational influence on the representation and the interpretation of the concept of class and status in Ghanaian cinema.

Analyzing certain causes of social change in Ghana would give a better understanding of why and how class and status is represented in Ghanaian cinema.

Conversations with some filmmakers reveal that we are susceptible to external pressures, external cultures, lifestyles and socio economic factors and that this will affect the class structures and their descriptions. For example what is termed upper, middle or lower class in the 20th century cannot be compared to that of the 21st century. According to Assimeng (1986) the question of social class became more accentuated largely as a result of the December 1981 revolution in Ghana. During this period there was the categorization of people in to the “oppressed” and the “oppressor”. Immediately after the uprisings, Ghanaian society was classified into “citizen” (that is to say the affluent) and “the people” (poor). Under military rule, Ghanaians were unable to overtly display their wealth. By the second term of democratic rule by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) representation of class in Ghanaian society had experienced certain social changes especially where class distinction is concerned. At the end of the eight (8) year term of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) self-expression had more grounding than before. In this period class and status was represented differently but Ghanaians were not really ostentatious.

The Golden age of business which was used to classify the era of the Kuffour administration of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) from (2001-2008) brought some social changes into Ghanaian society and this also reflected in film. A lot more people owned properties, and were open about it, the markets were opened, there was open acquisition of property, wealth was easily displayed. Material wealth was used to measure success as well as very high formal education. After the departure of the Kuffour administration there has been no drastic change in the social order of Ghanaian society. Information, especially external information appears to be much more accessible. But the most pertinent question is how are all these social changes affecting our socialization and social construction where the class structure is concerned? In an attempt to summarize the differences in

representation of class and status in film from the 20th century to the 21st century this is what one respondent had to say;

This is what one of my respondent's said, "At first in the high class, we have a big house of twenty bedrooms, in the village. That was a man of a high class with some scanty chairs in the sitting room. But today an upper class person can be in a two bedroom flat at some place like Airport and that is high class. In those days the high class people were wearing the best suit, you know the pointed shoes. And they were driving very big cars, today check out the high class people, he may not be wearing a suit but a simple shirt, simple trousers with some nice African slippers, he is driving a car which only two people can sit in and that is high class man". In the olden days, the affluent man, is the man with fufu and with plenty meat, today is not like that. Otherwise all the taxi drivers will be high class. Today he goes, he just takes a small cup of rice some three pieces of meat, and sprinkles some sauce on it and eats and this is a high class man." So our pictorial representation, is changing that is why am saying that, we are able to tell our stories better. And give meaning to our stories because our interpretations of class is changing".

But there is also a great concern because the submission made earlier can only be attributed to certain filmmakers. Some filmmakers are partially interpreting and representing the concept of class because these filmmakers are also creating certain new classes per their understanding of the concept and what their realities ." Over the past ten years or so, what has been in Ghanaian films has been more of a copying act. There is the believe that there is a bit of copying from Hollywood and Nigerian film. The overt display of wealth, being ostentatious, the desperate attempt at social upgrading, the want to belong to a certain group has become the popular form of representation. This ostentatious representation of wealth, an imagined country, class, status; kingship, and royalty status are not based on Ghanaian social reality. These filmmakers and their audience are under extreme fantasy. Some of these filmmakers have some form of formal education yet do not have an

understanding of the concept. These category of filmmakers aspire to live the fantasy from Hollywood and Nollywood. So, they copy the westerner and hold on dearly to that illusion of life.

The films termed local films as established earlier also play certain social cards in their representation of class and status. Most of the filmmakers in this category come from villages near and around Kumasi or sometimes the suburbs of Kumasi. Some have formal education and others do not but have the means to make films. In their narratives, the stories are set in some of the places just mentioned. They also try to represent their way of life-how people cope with riches and how people cope with poverty. In the pictorial representation of concept of class and status, the level of consciousness of a filmmaker is very important.

This research brings us to the realization that some of the filmmakers only see film, as a craft and not an art. Otherwise they would have understood its implications on the audience. Art takes a lot of planning and forethought before execution. Most of the filmmakers produce films because they feel that is what the audience must watch but they do not consider the effects on the audience. This could be the manifestation of the collective unconscious of media illiterates as one of my respondents put it.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusions

No society is flat and so can be deemed classless as wished by Karl Marx (Assimeng, 1998), but the way in which inequalities are perceived may vary enormously. A number of sociologists regard modern industrial societies as being stratified on the basis of social class. According to Marshall, (2000) the inequalities that exist in societies, have always required explanations and these explanations most often tend towards justification or condemnation and as such can be regarded as ideologies than theories. Reflecting reality in African Film initially meant denouncing the corruption of the elite and their mimicking of western ways. In order to decolonize the screen the African audience had to be offered a new vision of its own space. A territory was to be reclaimed so audiences could identify with it. Black African cinema is infused with an infinite variety of subjects and styles as diverse as the lives of the people it portrays but with “Hollywood” in our living rooms, bedrooms, offices and on audiovisual gadgets in Ghana, our visions of the world in consonance with the reclaiming of the image leaves room for critical inquiry. The presence of American cinema or “Hollywood” since its arrival on the “Gold Coast – Ghana” soil has in many ways affected the people’s way of seeing and thinking. What makes film seemingly close to reality is not just the narrative for which an individual or the audience can relate to, but the appropriate use of mise-en-scene. The film’s construction of a social world is authenticated through the details of the mise-en-scene. The understanding and representation of class and status raises as many issues regarding social change and social constructions. The phenomenon of an image on screen speaks about the power of mediation. It is already known from the first chapter the emotional attachment of the audience to the fictional characters and their journey with them

in their world. Sociologists such as Andrew Tudor (1974) have argued that the intensity of the image make the viewer more susceptible to the power of the message. Because of the concept of *mise-en-scène* in film to authenticate reality and suspend disbelief, whatever the audience see when they watch a film is not always thoroughly analyzed, but rather taken at face value. To attract these audiences, and make high gains in money, some filmmakers tend to make films in which many social concepts are underplayed, oversimplified and sometimes misrepresented. The use of stereotypes in film can be very problematic. Some writers or filmmakers can accentuate these stereotypes by creating them and misusing them, re-affirming certain ideologies or social constructions that may not be too healthy for that society. Sometimes in giving no agency to “the Other” by creating stereotypes, filmmakers add to the existing social constructions on Othering. But in giving agency to the “Other” cinema can be used to dispel these concepts. The question of who the other is might seem useless, because in some way we are all “Others” to someone, and everyone else is an “Other” to us. What becomes very important is to realise that the other is not mute and but has a voice. The concept of Otherness has occupied a central role in discourses on cultural productions in Africa and its diaspora whether film or literature. These claims articulated both by “Western” and “African” critics and consumers means that particular criteria and standards are adopted in relation to cultural production in Africa which is consumed judged and analysed in terms of “Africanness” (Baaz and Palmberg, 2001). There is some truth in this statement where the question of authenticity has been raised but for purposes of this study and for the delicate nature of the concept of class and status representation in Ghanaian cinema, there is the need to use Ghanaian society as a mirror and a measuring instrument for clarity or questioning of ambiguities in representation. In the earlier chapters Otherness was represented in both scholarly work and in film production. The appropriation of gender, skin colour type and certain professions to class and status in Ghanaian films makes it curious to

further investigate but state that Ghanaian society, probably has her own prescriptions or definitions to who and what makes one or a situation eligible for class appropriation.

There is also the realization of a generational understanding and expression of class and status among the different generation of filmmakers. The older generations understanding the concept of class and the type of film language used to express this concept differs from the new generation of filmmakers. This means the social constructions that the older generation experienced is totally different from the new generation even though they all still have certain common denominators. Which re-affirms the notion in sociology that, society does not only control our movements but shapes our identity, our thought and our emotions, (Berger, 1967). People communicate to interpret events and to share those with others. For this reason it is believed that reality is constructed socially as a product of communication. Our meanings and understandings arise from our communication with others. How we are invited to see the world and how others see as is greatly influenced by society...

Film has come to stay, if you look at the films that were made for instance in the mid 1990's and being made now, there is an improvement to a certain extent. Even in terms of representation and storytelling, even those who started as amateurs have improved, because there is a certain interaction between the audience and the filmmaker. So if there are trained individuals in the discipline of film, who have some formal education and can afford the money to produce the films that would well represent Ghanaian society, certain social constructions will become a thing of the past. With time as the society grows mentally and disabuse our minds of Western Supremacy notions of representation it will be reflected in our films. In film, the concept of *Other* has lived so long it has become immortal. The perceptions of situations in Othering where the Other is to be "*silenced*" and to be "*silent*", the former as an imposition and the latter as a choice

Durgnat's decision in "*A Mirror For England*" where he states that conclusions about British society can be arrived at on the evidence of their films alone is true to a point. But as Hill (1986) concludes that films do more than just reflect the society which makes them. They also explain and interpret the way in which the world is to be perceived and understood and also that the view a film may be suggesting do not necessarily correspond to those the society as a whole.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The ability to represent nature, the response one gets from the audience is the suspension of disbelief, refusal to question credibility in what is seen or projected on screen, the moments where the cinema apparatus disappears and any thought of mediation is banished by the fact that one's body is telling one that this is 'really' happening. Metz (1982) refers to film as the "imaginary signifier" referring to the fact that the reality which the filmed images call up is always 'absent', 'present' in our imaginations. This analogy is said to have similarities with dreams. Cinema, like dreaming, is regressive, in that, it calls up the unconscious processes of the mind and favours what Freud calls the principle of pleasure over the reality principle (Baudry, 1974). Dreams do not really happen, even though we experience them as if they did. The content of the dream may not have happened but the *dream experience* did. The process of decoding film languages is as much conscious and social as it is unconscious and pre-social. This is where sometimes film is said to be dangerous. On this premise I would recommend that Ghanaian filmmakers must make it a point to be conscious of certain social constructions they represent through their films. The filmmaker who decides to play with the concept of class and status in his or her film should be class "aware" and class "conscious". The Ghanaian filmmaker should also be very aware of the relationship between film and society and film and its audience. If filmmakers disregard all these relationships or themselves are media illiterate, their representation of certain social constructs may mislead the audience and give them the wrong social education. If what Ousmane Sembene says about African cinema; "is like going to night school", whatever we allow our audiences to consume may very well affect our society, our history and will lay down the road map for future misrepresentation. Filmmakers should also make the effort to get some education and know the philosophies about the art of filmmaking and also understand reception theory in whatever form they can. Film is not just visual pleasure or entertainment. It is a social and

cultural process. Hill (1986) and his compatriots may disagree with Durgnat when he states that people can draw conclusions or figure out British society just by watching their movies. But this unique relationship between film and society can never be ignored. Reality like all other aspects of culture is a social construct. This implies that, through a complex integration of subjective and communal negotiations, we agree on the major elements of what we call real. The only dependable or simplified definition of real is that it is something a lot of people agree on (Berger & Luckmann, 1966)". How reality is understood at a given moment is determined by the conventions of communication in force at that time.

The stability of social life determines how concrete our knowledge seems to be. Reality is socially constructed by interconnected patterns of communication behaviour. Within a social group or culture, reality is defined not so much by individual acts, but by complex and organized patterns of on-going actions.

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