

## Feminist Aesthetics in Nigerian Home Movies

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### Abstract

This paper interprets two Nigerian films, *Danger Signal 1 & 2* (2004), produced and directed by Teco Benson, and *Reloaded 1 & 2* (2008) produced by Juan Amechee and Desmond Elliot, as directed by Duwa Imasuen & Ikechukwu Onyeka to reveal the main strong feminist's ideology presented vis-à-vis the implication for women's consciousness. The obvious feminist elements are suggested which lead to the recognition and identification of the demystification of patriarchal and hegemonic strands of reasoning. The demystification of patriarchy and hegemony in the two films here is viewed along the backdrop of the global women's rights movement which brought about new ideas concerning patriarchy. The radical feminist ideology that can be read into the films is the view that patriarchy signifies the cultural and social domination of women by men. Thus, the films question why sexual inequality persisted even after women had won their rights and achieved legal equity. Using radical feminism as the theoretical framework, this paper critiques the two films portraying female characters that have enough education, courage, strength, economic autonomy, and foresightedness to sustain their quest to break through the walls of traditional inhibitions imposed on women. The paper, therefore, is to make a clarion call on film producers and related agencies to make it a duty, using the potency of film as a genre to propagate a desired feminist agenda for gender equity and equality, which negate patriarchy and hegemony.

**Key words:** Nigeria; Feminist; Aesthetics; Films

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### INTRODUCTION

Globally, deep-seated cultural beliefs allowed women only insignificant roles in society. Many societies believed that women's conventional roles were as mothers and wives. These people considered women to be better suited for childbearing and homemaking rather than for involvement in the public life of business or politics. The general belief that women were intellectually inferior to men led most societies to limit women's education to learning domestic skills which is why men are hardly found reading courses like Home Economics and Catering Services. Well-educated, upper-class men, therefore, controlled most positions of employment and power in society.

As with literature which reflects reality, the two films *Danger Signal* and *Reloaded* present women in roles that conform to the dominant views of women as second rate; appendages to men at whose behest they exist. Today feminists seek to create a counter language to challenge literary production worldwide. Therefore, the fact that most Nigerian films place women as subject to oppressive and dehumanizing practices and conditions, the Nigerian feminist film as a genre for intervention has succeeded in drawing public attention to inequality between women and men, and to the structures within society that belittle and work against women. Despite this, some Nigerian film script writers and critics believe that women's struggle for equality is senseless and a breach of family and societal peace. The anti-feminists assert that African culture is gender sensitive and that women should be contented with their sociological construct instead of seeking equality with men. This challenge to the feminist movement has assumed a global dimension,

expressing dissatisfaction with the state of women all over the world. The Human Right Watch Organization reports with dismay that women throughout the world face a systematic attack on human rights and chronic, routinized and legal discrimination and violence, much of it justified through cultural and religious arguments. Even where discrimination is prohibited, it often persists in practice.

As a result, feminist aesthetics in Nigerian films are used to challenge the construction that identifies sex as an explanation for hegemony. For this reason, many feminists make it a lifelong goal to critique the rhetoric employed in films and other aspects of popular culture. In this manner, because of their potential to reinforce dominant hegemonic values which sustain the marginalization of groups like women. On account of its mass appeal and consumption, therefore, the Nigerian video/film falls within the ambit of popular culture and can be viewed and analysed from the feminist perspective (Haynes & Okome, 1998, pp.106-126).

Moreover, an examination of literary practice and scholarship shows the above claim by Haynes and Okome to be germane and premised on the fact that the presentation of Nigerian video films exposes the dogmatic positions of society and the authorities that shape sex representation. Thus, feminist critical aesthetics is a relevant technique of analysis aimed at discovering the fundamental meaning of the expression in the film and making the invisible struggle of the women in situations in which they are the invariable struggle of the women visible. Fundamentally, the approach works to give voice to women in situations in which they are invariably pessimistically presented in films and their voices submerged. The conventional representation of women in films and the tendency of the audience to succumb to hegemonic and patriarchal ideologies inform feminists' preference for perspectives which neutralize or challenge the popular cultural production/dominant ideologies. Thus, Nigerian video film is significant in interpreting and liberally negotiating sex relations, and in making visible the ideology entrenched in some aspects of Nigerian society.

In a bid to unearth the ideological underpinnings contained in some Nigerian films, this paper therefore, explores two Nigerian films, *Danger Signal 1 & 2* (2004), produced and directed by Teco Benson and *Reloaded 1 & 2* (2008), produced by Juan Amechee & Desmond Elliot, and directed by Duwa Imasuen & Ikechukwu Onyeka. The choice of these films is anchored on the representative themes of heart-rending deceit, betrayal and backstabbing. The films are centred on the sub-theme of infidelity in marriages and relationships. The aim of this paper thus is to reveal major feminist ideologies that are presented in the films and analyse the relevancies and aptness of the films in raising women's consciousness.

## CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Feminism is a collective term for systems of belief and theories that pay special attention to women's rights and women's position in culture and society. The term tends to be used for the women's rights movement, which began in the late 18th century and continues to campaign for complete political, social, and economic equality between women and men. Thus, feminists are united by the idea that women's position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men to the political, social, and economic detriment of women.

Feminism advocates for equality between people in all areas, including economic, political, and social realms. As a movement, feminism arose in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United States and the United Kingdom in reaction to the contradictions of femininity and the various inequalities women experienced. These included women not having the vote, not having widespread access to higher education, not having access to many professions, and not having a property rights. By the mid-twentieth century, feminist movements were pushing for cultural changes as well. People refer to the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century feminist movements as first-wave feminism and the mid-twentieth-century movements as second-wave feminism (Hilary Neroni, 2016, p.3)

However, feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities and have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities and there are marked geographic and historical variations like feminism. Thus,

Feminist film theorists, especially from the 1970s and 1980s, argued that identification—created through camera positioning, editing, and narrative structure—solidified the dominance of the male position. They argued that spectators identified with the male character and that filmmakers built the entire structure of the film around this initial identification. Others, including black feminists, queer feminists, and third-wave feminists argued that the film's address to its spectator was much more contradictory, flexible, and multilayered than early feminists had suggested.... The ideological contradictions within femininity had particular expressions but also resonated because of their relationship with universal ideas about identity. Feminism takes as its primary task the investigation of these relationships between the particular and the universal female identity. In this light, the questions of where spectators entered the text, how this occurred, and what effect it had on spectators were essential questions for how film interacts with ideology (Hilary Neroni, 2016, p.18).

This follows a conception of the feminists (the first and the second waves) that with time some prodding societal attitudes would catch up with the legal and political equity women had achieved. Other, more radical feminists argued that patriarchy would not diminish, and women should either live in separate societies or secure legal and political protection from men's violence against women, which they believe is prevalent. Still, others believe that the differences between the sexes are determined by the

culture of society, and therefore can change, they believe that winning political equality alone will not alter cultural beliefs about the roles of the sexes and that feminists must take action if they want to change those attitudes. Hence, attempts to theorize this paper brings to the understanding that

there is, of course, neither one type of feminism nor one type of feminist film theory. Most major ideas within feminist film theory inspire various competing positions. Nonetheless, it is this very struggle among feminist film theorists to analyze how cinema interacts with a gender that constitutes its vibrancy and urgency. The contradictory ideals of femininity (sex object on the one hand versus mother on the other) inform the vast majority of representations of women throughout the history of film. Feminist film theory works to highlight this contradiction as well as debate its effects. Identification, framing the woman's body, and the importance of the female auteur are three concepts that have been lightning rods for debate within feminist film theory. Additionally, these three concepts mark the concern in feminist film theory with how the female body has been employed to sell an ideology. Feminist film theorists often look to female filmmakers who similarly grapple with this question and can provide new insight into it (Hilary Neroni, 2016, p.17).

Neroni's assertion is also an affirmation of the fact, there are many strands of feminists; the conservative feminists, the Marxist feminists, the radical feminists, the liberal feminists, humanist feminists, and here in Africa, the African feminists. Therefore, this paper chooses to consider liberal humanist feminists, an eclecticism of liberal feminists and humanist feminists. The liberal feminist is chosen because it is characterized by the attitude, philosophy, or movement that has its basic concern in the development of personal freedom and social progress in women, which social change is conceived of a gradual, flexible, and adaptive, that social change is seen as fundamental and based on new principles. Liberal feminism sees all people as equal, therefore; there should be equality for all. While Humanist feminists seek to civilize women, realize their potential powers and gift and reduce the discrepancy between potential and attainment. This is an opposition to a proposition that

the object of man's power is external to himself - a power which he exerts on others. A woman's presence expresses her attitude toward herself and defines what can and cannot be done to her. The presence of a woman is so intrinsic to her person (as an object of men's actions) that men tend to equate it with her body. To be born a woman is to be born into the keeping of men. We can still see vestiges of this in the traditional Christian wedding ceremony, in which the father, having been asked by the groom for permission to marry his daughter, officially 'gives her away' to the keeping of her husband. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her image of herself. From her earliest childhood, she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually. The surveyor and the surveyed within her are the two constituent elements of her identity as a woman. Her sense of being in herself is supplanted by a sense of being appreciated as herself by another. Men survey women before treating them. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relationship between women to themselves (Terri Murray, 2019, p.20).

Thus, these theoretical frameworks are capable of countering the above prevalence of patriarchy and how it is been reinforced through the family ad culture, notably in films and other genres of communication.

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## SYNOPSIS OF THE FILMS

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*Danger Signal* presents a woman who has been conscientized such that she attempts to demystify the hegemonic tendencies in man. In the film, Mrs. U.K. Morgan, the first lady of the governor, His Excellency, Dr. C.K. Morgan decides to checkmate her husband, whose desire is to take a second wife, Brenda who is younger than her. Whatever step the governor would want to take to achieve his desire is thwarted by the first lady. This attitude of the first lady is contrary to the conventional ideas of patriarchy that enhance the cultural and social domination of women by men, especially in Africa. The first lady is fond of frankly and directly speaking to her husband. She is also not emotional and weeping as women are known to do in some films and literary texts. Due to the braveness of the first lady and her security aide, she can face her husband to the end. With the help of Harry, Brenda's university boyfriend, Mrs. Morgan succeeds in getting the room number where her husband is with his new wife. In the end, the first lady decides to kill her husband and Brenda, her supposed co-wife.

On the other hand, the film reloaded presents four ladies who are facing different problems in different relationships with men, either as wives or wives-to-be. These women, from the beginning of the film, have decided to challenge the ideology of male domination and superiority and female subordination. In a montage, the film presents these female characters; Tayo, Omazi, Chelsea and others as icons of the feminist crusade.

Bube, one of the male protagonists, attempts to cheat on his girlfriend who he has dated and courted for a long. For eleven years, the lady and Bube have courted. The lady who is prepared to marry Bube later discovers that her fiancé is not ready for commitment. After the sixth abortion in eleven years, the girl is reliably informed by Bube's mother that her son Bube is to wed another village girl whom he has impregnated. Out for vengeance, the lady finds a way of putting off the wedding by getting Bube abducted. What she does, is quite at variance with what Mrs. Morgan did in *Danger signal*, although she has all the time and opportunity to kill Bube, she refused doing too. Instead, the point she seeks to make is to let Bube, and men in general, know that women should be treated by men as fellow human beings. What is the goal of the producers in using this theme? The film tells the story from the female perspective, suggesting a new dawn for a new woman in this contemporary era where women are expected to be defined, and treated positively.

One of the most radical among the ladies in the film is Omoze, Femi's wife, Femi is portrayed as a sexually lustful man who cannot control his sexual emotions, his wife Omoze is a strong woman capable of checkmating him. On many occasions, she accosts him in his attempts to sneak out and have a free good time with some of his numerous lady friends. On one occasion she follows and abducts a lady supposedly her husband, Femi's lady friend at a hotel where they are to lodge. The lady who is Femi's office colleague is severely mishandled as Omoze brings her back home with the assistance of the family driver.

Another act of infidelity is when Osita is set up by Tayo, his wife who uses her cousin to entrap him; her cousin who appears as an applicant looking for a job is employed to work under Osita who in the end seduced him into make-believe sex that places Osita naked before his junior colleagues and his boss which later cost his job.

## FEMINISM AND NIGERIA HOME MOVIE

In Nigeria, film culture could be traced from the first movie exhibition in Nigeria which took place in 1903 (Hygenius Ekwuazi, 2001, p.70). This development was an extension of British cinema where films were employed as channels of propaganda. This is affirmed that;

As the world War experienced the widespread use of film by the British government in its wartime propaganda effort. Mobile cinema vans operating in the open air travelled all over Nigeria bringing the war and news of the success of the allies and defeat of the German to the people (Opubor Alfred, et al, 1979, p.2).

In Nigeria, during the colonial era, film as an artistic genre for propaganda was relatively new and devoid of professional hands. This brought film production under the control of the colonial masters who were using mostly documentaries in projecting the documentary films which the colonial government used as means of public relations, films started gaining recognition as school premises, civic centers, village halls and open spaces later became cinema viewing centers (Arinze- Umobi Somtooo Obiefun, 2010, p.57). Subsequently, after Nigerian independence, films were found a useful means of mass media. This is also authenticated by Dul Johnson's (1997) assertion that; "Film is the most efficient medium for the promotion, propagation and even preservation of culture. Many cultures of the world have used its potentials to their advantage...." (97-125). This end therefore, the Nigerian government employed documentary films as means of educating the citizens on issues concerning politics, economy, culture, and on topical matters relating to national agenda and developmental projects.

However, film making this time was less developed in Nigeria than in other African countries such as Senegal and Egypt that had produced films for decades, filmmaking generally began to develop on the continent of Africa only after the 1960s, in the period of nation-

building that followed the withdrawal of European colonial powers. Motion pictures were also generally less vibrant than Nigeria's other arts.

This is due to poor funding and distribution, the popularity and availability of television, and state censorship. During this time, Nigeria's leading filmmakers were Francies Oladele, Eddie Ugbomah, Sanya Dosunmu, Ola Balogun, Sadiq Balewa, and Bankole Bello. Notably, one of the best-known Nigerian films is Oladele's *Kongi's Harvest* (1971), a political drama about an African dictator's abuse of power, based on a Wole Soyinka play by the same name. the *Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyemusi* (1977), which tells the story of an armed robber in Lagos, and the *mask* (1979), which is about a plot to rescue African artefacts from the British Museum, are the best-known films by Ugbomah, Nigeria's most prolific filmmaker. Since the mid-1990s Lagos has become the center of a thriving industry producing low-budget dramas for video, aimed at the home VCR market (Sklar Robert, 2008).

While the blockbuster dominated the economics of motion pictures screened in theatres in the years after 1975 worldwide, the advent of home entertainment delivery systems and an equally profound effect on movie culture-perhaps the most striking impact of any technological change in the medium's history. The first new system was the videocassette recorder (VCR), which could play pre-recorded videocassette recorder programs shown on television for later playback. At the same time, cable television systems vastly with access to recent movies. As these new technologies came into widespread use, on the horizon loomed the computer, offering possibilities for home viewing and as a tool in media production. The digital video disc, or call it DVD, became one of the major techniques for viewing movies on computers and also began replacing videocassettes as the major format for home viewing globally. With this evolution, the Nigerian film industry became a fully commercialized venture, transforming into a national art, creating its version of the world and attracting the serious attention of the government.

It is therefore, not an overstatement to say that, the production of *Living in Bondage* in 1992 and subsequently, the *Glamour Girls* in 1994 ushered the production and release of numerous Nigerian films today and the beginning of popular TV Sop opera (Barclays F. Ayakoroma, 5 & Arinze-Umobi, 2010, p.57). From the humble beginning, Nigerian film is ranked as one of the largest film industries as it has maximally developed. According to Barclays Foubiri Ayakoroma,

as it is with every business opportunity, the success of living in Bondage saw all Idumota (Lagos) and Upper Iwaka Road (Onitsha) traders- electronic, cement and spare parts dealers - abandoning such business and pooling their resources into Igbo Language video films production (2010, p.6)

These films are often geared towards entertainment with little emphasis placed on the projection of culture, image-making and moral lessons without actually considering the plight of women. Considerably, the film

could be considered one of the most viable and useful ways of advancing feminist aesthetics in all its varying forms. This is with Ahmed Yerima's assertion that

In serious aesthetic considerations, a question such as what makes a playwright (script writer) write? What moves him? What form has he chosen to represent? What is the relevance of immediacy of the illusion he has created on stage (screen) for his audience? These are the reactions in the process of developing and presenting a well-thought-out idea (2003, p.73).

In this case, Nigerian filmmakers cannot divorce the reason behind their creativity and socio-political milieu. The central focus of creative artists is, by showing the ills of society and "suggesting possible ways such ills can be surmounted for societal growth" (Idegu Emmy, 2019, p.158). Idegu's assertion is not far from the feminist aesthetics in Nigerian home movies being justifiable and topical, as it is an alternative medium at the time there is a global upsurge in the demand for the empowerment of women which speaks of personal autonomy where the women can make their own choices beginning from the realm of the family, politics, economics and the society at large. Feminist aesthetics as found in recent Nigerian films are synonymous with a reaction against the concept of post-feminism, is no need for further activism. The main emphasis in this context has been on women gaining greater power and freedom without constraints. This angle of reasoning is maintained by Philips who states that

it is the freedom to decide her destiny, freedom from sex-determined roles, freedom from society's oppressive restrictions: and freedom to express her thoughtfully and convert them freely into action. feminism demands the acceptance of women's right to individual consciousness and judgement. It postulates that a women's essential worth stems from her common humanity and does not depend on another relationship in her life (1983, p.68).

To this end, the feminist aesthetics in Nigerian films under discourse is, therefore, a commitment to the achievement for women of fully legal, political, social, economic and educational equity with men, or struggle for women's emancipation. The main objective here is strongly to raise the consciousness of both men and women regarding gender issues. This means that the main thrust of the Nigerian films being examined is also a new fashion in the artistic genre to interrogate the ideas of patriarchy and hegemony with their characteristic antecedents which are inimical to natural justice of fairness, equity and equality.

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## CONTEXTUAL DISCOURSE

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The two Nigerian films in question can be read from the feminist perspective of particular interest is a radical feminist variant which advocates female forms of culture. The films, *Danger signal 1&2* and *Reloaded 1&2* are a replay of the reverse of a society that upholds patriarchy and other hegemonic values. They are concerned with how men have controlled and subordinated women.

From a male-centred point of view and definition of what power is, it is easy to be misled into thinking that a female form of power does not exist at all. Moreover, when female power is recognized, it is easy to dismiss it as an inferior type, just because it is not hard, aggressive or boastful like the highly visible male form. However, an appraisal of the actions of Mrs Morgan as she catches the husband with the lady in dispute does not fit the above distinctive qualities. After these murders, she ends up killing herself. Her reaction is melodramatic and the point is very difficult to comprehend as far as African reality is concerned. The picture of a woman as portrayed in the film is in line with concepts of liberalism and humanism. It is humanistic and liberally accepted as the first lady is after her husband to maintain her status as the first lady, and for her to go as far as eliminating her husband and Brenda; her supposed co-wife is not questionable as it is a warning to men. "Feminist research has tended to relate women who kill to domestic violence, thus justifying the murder as self-defence, as in the case of "the vengeful wronged woman and the maternal protector" (Cristelle Maury & David Roche, 2020, p.3). Thus, the Nigerian film, therefore, should be seen as a means by which an alternative ideology such as feminism could be used to counter patriarchy by negotiating gender relations, as well as making visible the ideology entrenched in some aspects the Nigerian society by revealing inhumane practices against women, and such interrogation brings about social change. A rejection of a notion where a woman is habituated with stint and training to admit the fact that she is not interested in major aspects of life, development, work, decision making, and that she was only good to oblige as underpinning images or social symbol to the dominant of man.

In the present time, this is the picture that each African playwright (scriptwriter) sees as he or she is born and grows in Africa. If, however, the African playwright (script writer) later becomes a "feminist", or modernist" in his or her thinking or creative mind, especially with regards to the place of women in society, this is usually a major resultant effect of the interaction with white men and his "queer" ways of giving women prominent roles in everyday life. Secondly, sometimes the authors/scriptwriter's transformation is a personal reaction to the place or position of the woman within contemporary realities. Whichever way the playwright (script writer) chooses to present the woman, it is basically his/her duty to select what deserves to be presented, and how it will be presented to highlight his or her aesthetics and even conflicts within the drama/film script. Yet one fact remains that the presentation must be done in such a way that the audience finds it dramatically entertaining, intellectually challenging and culturally plausible (Yerima, 2003, pp.60-61). This is the basis on which I question the believability and the authenticity of the African background or context in the film, *Danger signal*. Murder is not a preferred

liberal and humanist method of settling marital conflicts in Africa. Having committed the double murder, she is unable to face the consequences of murder, and the difficulty of widowhood is also culturally unacceptable. Her behaviour in resolving marital problems connotes negative feminism which according to Obadiegwu Chiduo “stands for the radical and militant transformation of a patriarchal institution in society, an attitude to social change and stability, which hardly makes for sanity, peace and progress in human society” (2009, p.107). A change could be transformational if it brings positives effect, not if that breeds chaos.

Thus, what is expected of Mrs. Morgan is a positive feminist approach which is capable of fostering the idea of gender complementary and compliant as well as harmony and human relations. This could therefore be referred to as feminist activism which does not only focus on women’s issues but has spread throughout many other movements including (but not limited to) environmental issues, body politics, identity issues, reproductive rights and gender issues. This is the current feminism, the focus of which has shifted to encompass a desire for equality for all identifying oppressive systems and forces around the world that affect all types of beings. Feminist activism as employed by Mrs. Morgan explores the intersections of social, political, and cultural histories (among various other denominators), and their implications, and dedicates time and energy to the liberation of all people from injustices.

Despite their observation and shortcoming, the character of Mrs. Morgan reflects a rational belief that men and women were created equal and that, like men, women were born with certain natural rights, she also negates the assumption that the concepts of liberty, equality, and political representation apply only to men. For example, it is morally and traditionally wrong for a housewife to be unfaithful to her husband. In Nigeria, to be specific, there is no form of marriage in which a woman has more than one husband or mate at the same time, on the contrary, and most affecting women is a form of marriage in which a person has more than one wife at a time. Again, in all communities which make up Nigeria, there is still the notion that women’s position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured in such a manner as to benefit men to the political, social, and economic detriment of women, similarly, women are used as objects for some desired purposes and disposed of once the aim for which they are kept is achieved (Sarah Lwahas, 2006, p.131). This is exactly what Mrs. Morgan experiences as her husband, as her husband; Dr. C.K. Morgan has decided to cling to Brenda who is young, and more attractive than she is in her prime. The first lady seems to romance with the powerful strand of feminism that is concerned with how men have controlled and subordinated women’s bodies.

To this end, therefore, they maintained that patriarchy has coerced women into heterosexuality, using violence to suppress women’s powers and sexuality. They have also argued and concluded that sexual and domestic violence are not isolated incidents but are central to the subordination of women by patriarchy. This approach of presenting a female character in such a liberated form counters the negative conclusion of patriarchy about femaleness as it gives women a voice and freedom to think, it therefore, introduces innovations, boycotts obnoxious cultures that constitute hindrances to women and creates modern women in outlook. Another unpleasant feature concerning women is that the male-dominant society has made it in such a way that, there are many “wives” outside waiting for a married man, but the stigma of having married a second husband sticks on the women. The traditional African man is deemed free to marry as many wives as he can keep. The wealth of a traditional African man is also measured by the number of wives he has. The governor, Morgan, despite his level of exposure, is still found to be an extreme anti-feminist as he cheats on his wife without remorse. What a scandal it would have been, had the first lady, Mrs. Morgan been discovered dating a university student considering her status in society. Despite Mrs. Morgan extreme reaction, it points to the fact that the time has come for man to understand that a woman is not a slave therefore; she should be understood as having emotions. Thus, a thorough study of the film, *Danger signal* exposes man’s Idiosyncrasy that is at variance to the positive approach in the delineation and solution of problems encountered by women in a predicated society.

Comparatively, *Reloaded* is one of the Nigerian films that has shocked the viewers with the ‘Game Men play’ (GMP). The producers of *Reloaded* employed the Brechtian narrative style, which is called ‘epic theatre,’ that is directed against the illusion created by the traditional theatre of witnessing a slice of life. In the film, the narrative technique encourages spectators to watch events concerning the ‘game men play’ on-screen dispassionately and to reach their conclusions. The film is an experiment carried out by women on men. Consequently, the film is dominated by gender attitudes which, are expressed through female characters who portray gender stereotypes as well as the images of the “. These characters in the film challenge patriarchy, not only by demanding equal civil rights but also by defying social conventions and choosing their lifestyles devoid of men’s presence. In this process, they deconstruct and challenge the status quo while claiming their rightful position in society as human beings. The film in general is a work that addresses such issues as society’s double standard for men and women, and cheating by both sexes.

The characteristics icon in the ladies of Tayo and Omoze is in line with the assumption that, if even by these

sinister methods society persuaded women, by working on their feelings/ psyche, to say at home, and fulfil the duties of a mother and mistress of a family, it should be well understood that women also have the right to human dignity and ownership of their lives. Even though this film is produced and directed by men, it does not present what Salami-Agunloye would refer to as “picturing the African woman as accepting the role cut out for her by society; and that collectively the role of women in home movies perpetuate a patriarchal order which inhibits women” (2006, p.144). This is to say that the producers of this film can present dynamic attributes of women as opposed to the complacent portrayal. On watching the character of the women in the film in discourse, one may express that the women as portrayed are senseless, mindless, jealous and irrational. But on a serious note, how many men can condone the excesses of their wives when it concerns infidelity, infidelity on the side of a man is not seriously taken as in the case of a woman.

Therefore, feminist film producers, film scholars and film regulators in Nigeria should take a U-turn in bringing up a new idea to draw attention to neglected female concern issues by exposing the patriarchal assumptions that underlie traditional approaches to the movie industry. This dimension is plausible because the movie is capable of influencing culture, resulting in greater coverage of women’s interests and concerns, particularly by the mass consumption and universal patronage of Nigerian films nationwide and beyond. Chelsea, the anchor-woman in the film from several issues linked to violence and emotional abuse by their partners. Through her characterization, we can see women’s inability to negotiate and demand their rights as the men are not prepared to listen and reason that “silence is a virtue because a woman needs no voice to bear children or perform domestic work”. This can best be interpreted from Bube’s definition of a woman in the film. According to Bube, a male anti-feminist in the film, ‘W’ stands for washing, ‘I’ stands for ironing, ‘F’ for a fool,’ & ‘E’ for etcetera... It is against men’s pessimism about women that the women in the film have decided to call for a radical change from the old definition of woman or wives to a modern and objective conceptualization of women.

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## CONCLUSION

There have been attempts in the Nigerian film industry to challenge our moulded beliefs on gender. This is more apparent when one reviews previous or earlier films when the plight of women was not seriously treated. In the mid-eighties, Women’s rights and women’s being had in the past been taken for granted, shrouded in the cloak of patriarchy. However, the Nigerian film industry has recently been enriched by the voices of women and even men expressing such concerns. From the 1990s to the

present, various inhibitions and encumbrances to women exercising their human rights have found expression in Nigerian films. Often, their portrayal of the female characters in various reactions to challenges posed to their actualization has been informed by different variants of feminist ideology.

It does appear that male chauvinism makes no such distinctions; both categories of women come under the masculine yoke. The only difference is that educated women can free themselves from these constraints quickly because of the economic empowerment education bestows on them. This is evident in the educational and economic autonomy of the women in the films discussed in this article, therefore, this means that when women’s education and economic viability are emphasized as means of women’s emancipation, there is optimism for success in liberating the women folk. There is need also to remove the immoral and murderous options in women strive for rights because the presence of only two genders leaves no room for mediation so it becomes rationally expedient that both have to come together in mutuality and work out their differences.

From the above discussion, it does appear that women’s dependence on men, husbands or paramours is economic. Most of these women sufferers have neither education nor viable means of livelihood. Thus, this should encourage feminists, particularly Nigerian feminists to continue to chastise the ideology of domination and possibly eliminate it.

In sum, I believe that women must adjust their mentality for winning because the frustration of the past led to many of them pegging their aspirations low. They should grant themselves intellectual liberation and cast away timidity while expressing informed and enlightened boldness and confidence. The filmmakers, therefore, have to make these assumptions come to reality.

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