Abubakar Muhammad YAHAYA
PhD Candidate, Department of Journalism
Gazi University, Ankara Turkey
abusallari@yahoo.com

FREEDOM OR SUPPRESSION: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN NIGERIAN CINEMA

Abstract
African cinema has been characterized, influenced and shaped by the infiltration of foreign cinema into the region since pre African independence era to date. Nigeria being an African country is also affected by this colonial impact. On the other hand, todays cinema is full of stereotypes with regard to the representation of different class of human being. Feminist critics at all levels condemn the female stereotype in the cinema, and call for the correction of such a patriarchal notion. This research work examines the Nigerian cinema and how it represents women on the screen to the audience. Two films from the two Nigeria’s film industries; Nollywood and Kanywood are selected and analysed using semiotics approach. Based on the result of the analysis of the two films, women in Nigerian cinema are being featured as diabolic, satanic, materialist, sexual materials, family breakers and victims of the cultural patriarchy of Nigerian societies.

Keywords: Nigeria, Cinema, Kanywood, Nollywood, Feminism
ÖZGÜRLÜK YA DA BASKI: NİJERYA SİNEMASINDA KADININ YENİDEN SUNUMU

Öz


Anahtar kelimeler: Nijerya, Sinema, Kanywood, Nollywood, Feminizm

Introduction

In his popular book Film Language, Christian Metz (1974) explained that cinema is an excellent phenomenon of art in which the signifier co-exists with the signified. However, Metz also cited Rosselini saying “Cinema is a language, if one means by that a ‘poetic language’ but the theoreticians of silent film saw in a real, specific vehicle” (Metz, 1974, p. 44).

To investigate the representation and images of women in Nigerian cinema, this research paper adopts a thematic and semiotic analysis of two Nigerian video films belonging to two different film industries in the country, namely, Nollywood and Kanywood. These two popular films belong to the melodramatic genre that characterizes contemporary filmmaking in Nigeria. The first film from the Kanywood industry is Gabar cikin gida [Enemies in the House] and the second from Nollywood is Two Brides and a Baby. Most interestingly, despite the films being from different regions of Nigeria that have different socio-cultural histories, they employ the same genre and revolve around similar themes in relation to women’s position in the narrative structure. The selection of these films is based on their popularity, which occurs due to the popularity of the filmmakers, the protagonists, and, more importantly, the melodramatic, heartwarming plot and narrative of the films. In fact, Two Brides and a Baby was first screened outside Nigeria, in the United States in 2012.

Theoretically, this research employs the feminist perspective to identify the images of women in the two selected films using the semiotics approach as its method. Syntagm, Paradigm, Denotation, Connotation, and other linguistics/semiotics concepts are applied when analyzing the films. Semiotics as originated from linguistics can be applied to cinema although care must be taken when doing so because cinematic language is not like the normal verbal language in everyday use. Metz argued that

“When approaching the cinema from the linguistic point of view, it is difficult to avoid shuffling back and forth between two positions; the cinema as a language; the cinema as
infinitely different from verbal language. Perhaps it is impossible to extricate oneself from this dilemma with impunity” (Metz, 1974, p. 44).

However, according to the feminist film perspective, most of the films produced in Nigeria reproduce and distort the images of women in comparison to their real social images and roles. While describing the way women are portrayed in Nigerian video films, akasharo argued that “there is a noticeable trend in the Nigerian film industry. the women in the films come as wicked, manipulative, loose in morals, diabolic and inferior to the men” (Adekunle, 2010, p. 1). The controversy here involves whether the films distort or reproduce reality. Some of the social situations reviewed in this research attest to the film images situating women as they are in real life. Nevertheless, although there is a bit of development toward the patriarchal ideology of Nigerian societies due to different campaigns of women empowerment within and outside the country, this culture is still embedded in these societies. Moreover, the Nigerian cinema reinforces these patriarchal ideologies through its representation of women and how they are related to men in the cinema.

An Overview of African Cinema

According to French film historian Georges Sadoul, until 1960 that when many African countries south of the Sahara got their independence, no really indigenous African film yet produced, i.e. one produced, directed, photographed and edited by Africans and featuring Africans as protagonists who communicate in African languages. Rather, only British, French, and U.S. auteurs had been making documentaries and fictional films in Africa and about Africans ever since 1900 (Diawara, 1992).

For centuries before their colonial experiences, Africans had their indigenous traditional forms of communication using traditional sophisticated communication methods. These methods were well developed so that they were effective communication channels; they included dance, songs, folklore, drawing, rites, and ceremonies (Frank, 1994).

Despite these traditional methods/channels, Africans still value Western media for information and communication development, especially in the wake of industrialization and the proliferation of technological devices for media communication. Africans could not themselves face the global media challenges and so borrowed ideas from the West for development policies and plans. This dependence/imperialism is perhaps one cause for Africa’s underdevelopment.

However, the cinema came to Africa as an indispensable propaganda organ of the colonialists; this is because film is a powerful visual medium with an extraordinary ability to influence the thinking and behavior of its audience (Frank, 1992). Moreover, the Europeans manipulated the cinema and imposed their cultures and ideologies on Africans, perhaps because the traditional African visual media were not sufficiently flexible. When the colonialists started to show films in Africa, people received them as an ultimate development because they were consciously and unconsciously influenced by the moving images of the films.

Since the cinema was not in the hands of Africans the content did not reflect African culture or ideology; rather it represented the views and ideologies of the owners, what classic Marxists termed a superstructure model. For this, Africans were seen as only carriers of Western values and ideology.
However, the colonial operations of cinema in Africa ended in 1950 when the British colonial film unit (CFU) and its central African counterpart (CAFU) ceased to exist. From that moment, indigenous Africans continued to run the affairs of the film industry (Obiaya, 2011).

Armes (1987) argued that the first black African feature film was The Money Order, produced by Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene. However, this film was produced with a low budget and substandard fictional works. However, Saul and Austin maintained that “African filmmaking first took off in the early 1960s, during the euphoria of decolonization” (Saul and Austin, 2010, p. 1).

During this period of euphoria, African leaders who succeeded the colonialists in leadership of the region should have supported the filmmakers, funded their productions, ensured that the situation was viable, and provided sophisticated modern production tools. Unfortunately, less effort was expended; that is why the cinema did not develop rapidly immediately after independence.

The Evolution of Cinema in Nigeria

The origin of film in Nigeria precedes the origin of the country as an independent federation. While the different Nigerian protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 to form Nigeria under colonialism, the first motion pictures were reportedly screened in August 1903 when Nigeria’s nationalist Herbert Macaulay in association with the Balbao Film Company of Spain introduced the new medium to an audience assembled in Global Memorial Hall in Lagos (Ebewo, 2007).

The Colonial Film Unit had three offices in Nigeria, left-behind laboratories, 16mm cameras, and studios. Moreover, Nigerian television had a large audience during the pre-independence era in 1958 when it was established. It had as its first director Segun Olusola. This man had wanted to develop a career when he co-produced Son of Africa with a Lebanese merchant in 1970.

In southern Nigeria, cinema going was accepted by all and sundry. Both males and females went to the cinema without any hesitation. There was no social trauma or immorality attached to cinema going. Moreover, the cinema was considered a leisure activity and modern form of entertainment. In contrast, the northern part of Nigeria had a different approach to cinema establishment. It faced many challenges from the Emirs, Ulamas (religious teachers), and society at large. Due to Islamic religious injunctions, the cinema was labeled as immoral and as such anti-Islam because it reproduced reality through sound and pictures, which is like magic, and magic is forbidden (Haram) in Islam (Larkin, 2004). Nevertheless, the northern Nigerian Muslim communities had enthusiastically consumed the Indian Bollywood films and a number of cinema houses were established in Kano. All the films screened at these cinemas were in video cassette form.

In contemporary Nigeria, there are two popular film industries, the southern Nigeria-based Nollywood and the northern-based Kanywood. The latter gets its name from Nigeria, referring to the Nigerian film industry but attaching the coinage to the word ‘ollywood,’ and the industry produces films in the English language. The former gets its name from Kano city, which is the center of Hausa film in Nigeria and produces in the local Hausa language. However, with Nollywood using English, the world lingua franca has gotten much recognition.
and acceptance and Nollywood is considered as the only Nigerian film industry. Oluyinka (2008) argued that

“Nollywood is the Nigerian movie industry whose acclaim was initially restricted to Nigeria and African audiences, but is progressively making in-roads on the global scene” (Oluyinka, 2008, p. 1).

The name ‘Nollywood’ became popular in the early 1990s. Since then, many English films have been produced. This has led to bringing many actors, producers, marketers, technicians, and other production crew members into the limelight. Nollywood video films have become popular audio visual entertainment for Nigerians (Ebewo, 2007).

Also in the 1990s, when the local Hausa filmmakers started film productions, they produced and imitated the way Indian Bollywood films are produced. This is because of the consumption and over dosage of Indian films by northern Nigeria societies. Moreover, they translated Indian films into Hausa using the same narration, plot, and dialogue. This culture of imitation is what labeled Kanywood as not sufficiently creative to conceive its own ideas and produce films that are Nigerian culture oriented. To receive acclaim, the filmmakers assumed that since foreign Indian films were already consumed, people would accept their productions if they mimicked the Bollywood way of filmmaking, including songs and dance, with mostly love narratives. According to Abdallah Uba Adamu (2007) more than 120 Hausa films were copied and translated directly from Indian films.

Both the Kanywood and Nollywood film industries face challenges. Infrastructure constraint is the biggest problem of Nigerian cinema today. There are no highly sophisticated cameras or studios. The government also commits less to development of the cinema and talks less with individuals who should have harnessed the opportunity and invested in film production. Hynes argued that “the rate of production in Nigeria is at best about four 16mm features in a year - that is, films shot on negative film stock” (Harrow, 1999, p.1). The video industries in Nigeria are growing with minimal help from the government unlike other broadcasting media outlets. In addition, there is no subsidy or assistance from international non-governmental organizations today (Abah, 2008).

Moreover, Nigerian cinema has been criticized for its dominant themes although part of them is society centered, aiming to bring about development in the country. In his article ‘Reflections on Nigerian Video Films’ Emmanuel (2010) adopted the following as the dominant themes of Nigerian cinema: religion\hallelujah, cultural values and traditions versus modernity, tradition/leadership, modernization\upward social mobility, materialism, everyday life, regional orientation, folklore and folk tales, violent crime, sexism, love, occultism, stereotypes, melodrama, propaganda, and education.

Nollywood (produced in English) and Kanywood (produced in Hausa) films penetrate not only neighboring countries but also the entire continent. Africans in diaspora watch African films. This helped the Nollywood industry to be seen almost the same as Hollywood. Nigerian cinema has been considered a giant stride for Africa. Gantung argued that another cinematic evolution receiving acclaim on the African continent and spreading into international immigrant markets is Nollywood, a rapidly growing film industry in Nigeria (Gantung, 2008).

Postcolonial feminist film theory
Many competing approaches and theories guide film analysis, including anthropological theory, semiotics theory, neo-structuralism theory, feminist theory, and neo-Marxist theory (Ukata, 2010). My appreciation of Nigerian cinema, focusing on the representation of women in the two major film industries in Nigeria (Kanywood and Nollywood), will generally be informed by the post-colonial feminist theory and use semiotics as the methodological approach.

Examination of the present legacy of colonialism/imperialism is the major concern and focus for post-colonial theorists (Mills, 1998). She maintained that post-colonial theory deals with different perspectives such as development of thinking and behavior structures, not only economic and political structures. Mills is one of the post-colonial theorists who questioned the masculine-centered nature of colonial struggles. Furthermore, Mills examined the feminist film theories with regard to cinematic representation, which is the concern of this research. She argued that:

“The ideological forms of masculinity developed within the colonial context can be considered to be extreme and excessive; thus, British male explorers and administrators tend to be represented as adventurous, unemotional, courageous, hardworking, patriotic and resilient” (Mills, 1998, p. 3).

Moreover, in her counter argument to the masculine-centered nature of post-colonial theory, Anne McLintock argues that imperialism can be understood only when there is a theory of gender power. Gender power is not a superficial patina of an empire, an ephemeral gloss over the more decisive mechanics of class or race. Rather, gender dynamics were from the outset fundamental to securing and maintaining the imperial enterprise (Mills, 1995).

Feminist film theory emerged in the 1970s and is rooted in the women’s movement of the 1960s. The central discourse of the feminists involves how film texts are worked and constructed to impose patriarchal ideology on females. However, alternative feminist filmmaking in the 1970s by people like Laura Mulvey and Sally Potter is considered the beginning of feminist film theory (Hollinger, 2012).

Thus, feminist film discourses were born out of the female’s desire to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema, while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which women are given favorable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists. Additionally, in their bid to counter the masculine-oriented cinema, feminists even delved into criticism of the mainstream media representation of women, such as in television programs, newspapers, and magazines.

Moreover, New Day Films (one of the first US distribution companies for feminist documentary films) revealed what motivated feminists to start their films: They (feminists) found that women traditionally seen on the screens were the reproduction of the experience, imagination, and fantasies of male filmmakers. Additionally, Jan Rosenberg, in an interview with women filmmakers, disclosed that most of the young feminist filmmakers in the 1970s, such as Julia Reichert, Judy Smith, and Geri Ashur, started in film production to communicate their politics of feminism. Rosenberg quoted Reichert, saying “We made (Growing Up Female) to bring about some new awareness about women’s oppression to a broad audience”.

Feminists, both academics and radicals, at all levels are fighting to bridge the cultural gaps between men and women. Buikema maintained that within the general paradigm of equality, feminists works in the humanities have aimed both at eliminating the disadvantages that
women directors, authors, visual artists, and composers have in relation to their male colleagues and supplying missing historical information about women (Buikema, 1995). Additionally, McCabe maintained that the primary intention of feminist films is to understand the ways in which women are represented in film and to expose the sexist and women-centered content of cinema narratives as well as reveal the media construct of women as sexual objects for men’s pleasure (McCabe, 2004).

Feminists in film studies are also concerned about the sexist image of women in the works men produce, which led to coining of the term ‘sexual difference.’

Feminist studies have focused on establishing a female aesthetic independent of the cultural norms and values set by men (Buikema, 1995). Nevertheless, Haskell (1973) and Rosen (1993) argued that feminist arguments on films are about representation and spectatorship, the stereotypes of women in cinema, and the distortion of women’s images from reality; thus, they called for positive images of women in films (Anneke, no date). In her conclusion, Anneke maintained that as a result of the agitation of feminist critics, more women filmmakers have emerged and been able to produce several films in different genres (Anneke, no date.). Moreover, feminists are accusing the media of misrepresenting women, portraying them in a stereotypical manner, denigrating them, and always showing them in the home and subordinate to men (Nelmes, 2007, p. 227).

However, Smith proffered a solution to the problem: The film industry and auteurs should have a variety of roles for women in their films. Smith doubted this would be effective until new thinking emerged (Thornham, 1999). Additionally, in her article ‘The Image of Women in Film, Some Suggestions for Future Research’ Smith maintained that “women, in any fully human form, have almost completely been left out of film. This is not surprising since women were also left out of literature” (Thornham, 1999, p. 14).

At this juncture, Sharon also stated that women should be shown in a variety of roles; they should be depicted as heroines, not only in the roles of loving a man, homemaking, and bearing children. She further maintained that women should be represented as active. They should not face ridicule or unhappy or tragic endings; women should be given high positions, depicted

Sharon argued that the role of women in film is almost always related to their physical attraction and the sexual roles they play with the male protagonist. However, Sharon maintained that films in the 20th century exploited the female body, as women just appear as sexual objects for men; even if they are the main protagonists in a film, at the end women become subordinates to men. Men present their fantasies in films. Sharon said the sexualization of women in film started slowly but is increasing. Moreover, films use all their power to persuade and reinforce not only the status quo, but some mythical Golden Age when men were men and women were girls. Traditionally, the entire human race is male, ‘man’ means the whole human race and ‘woman’ is just a part of it (Thornham, 1999).

To sum up, the arguments and discourses of feminists in all spheres and disciplines revolve around three basic perspectives: representation, spectatorship, gender and sexual difference.
**Semiotics**

Semiotics is a method used for textual analysis in social science disciplines and linguistics. It is concerned with how combinations of signs communicate and make meaning in a given text. The text can be sound, image, or a combination of the two. Semiotics is the study of the means that can be used to communicate, such as words, images, traffic signs, flowers, music, and medical symptoms (Taylor & Willis, 2007; see Berger, 2000). Saussure (1916) maintained that semiotics is a science that deals with study of the life of signs within society (Noth, 1995; see Lapsley & Westlake, 1998).

However, semiotics can be said to come out of linguistics as some early semioticians borrowed certain concepts of semiotics application from linguistics structures. Buckland argued that “early semioticians borrowed from structural linguistics the communication test, a deductive method of analyzing how the underlying level lends structure to surface level” (Buckland, 2004, p. 36).

Chandler (2000) maintained that Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was a pioneer who regularly referred to semiotics. According to Chandler, the other key role players in the early development of semiotics are American philosophers Peirce (1839-1914) and Morris (1901-1979). Chandler also acknowledged Eco, Barthes, Kristeva, Metz, Jacobson, Halliday, and Greimas as leading contemporary semiotic theorists. Moreover, semiotics cannot be separated from structuralism; Levi-Strauss in anthropology and Lacan in psycho analysis are also considered important in the field (Chandler, 2000).

In addition, semiotics also deals with how meanings are produced within a given media text. Seiter (1999) identified the benefits of semiotics analysis thus, “It allowed us to describe the workings of cultural communication with greater and enlarged our recognition of the conventions that characterize our culture” (Taylor & Willis, 2007 p. 19). Moreover, Berger argued that “semiotics helps us to understand how to decipher the messages we are sent and understand better the messages we send about ourselves to others” (Berger, 2000, p. 43). Moreover, Vanzonen (1994) defined semiotics analysis thus, “semiotics analysis can be seen as formalization of the interpretative activities ordinary human being undertakes incessantly” (Taylor & Willis 2007, p. 19). Fiske maintained that when dealing with semiotics we concentrate on terms like denote and connote (Fiske, 1990). He further argued that semiotics systems “concentrate on analyses of a structured set of relationship which enable a message to signify something. Moreover, semiotics works tend to contribute in demystification and neutralizing representations and making them as constructed signs” (Westlake & Lapsley 1998, p. 33).

However, early moves to regard film semiotically were first made in the 1960s and 1970s following the general linguistics turn and developments in structuralism occurring at that time (Bateman, 2013).

Moreover, semiotic analysis of film narrative was first developed by Raymond Bellour in 1972, when he studied The Birds. After Bellour, in 1982 Peter Wollen analyzed North by Northwest. Both Bellour and Wollen applied different approaches to their analyses but within the premise of semiotics. Bellour did his work shot by shot, while Wollen followed Proppian analysis of the whole film. However, they are criticized due to the assumption that there is one narrative meaning, not simultaneous meanings (Hill & Church, 2000).
Metz argues that:

“The semiotics of the cinema can be conceived of either as semiotics of connotation or as semiotics of denotation. Both directions are interesting, and it is obvious that on the day when the semiological study of film makes some progress and begins to form a body of knowledge, it will have considered connotative and denotative signification” (Metz, p. 70-71).

Semiotics has been criticized because its approach tends to be subjective based on the researcher’s level of perception of what he or she is analyzing. If two people are given the same text to analyze, their results will differ, particularly at the connotative level. Nevertheless, semiotics provides researchers with unifying concepts and sets of methods. It is the approach that made available different methodological terms to follow in analyses. Semiotics serves as a textual analysis method that gives more room to researchers to express their thoughts, while also giving them the chance to dig beyond the surface and manifest meaning of a text. However, the problem of film expressiveness as Metz put it is that cinema is not like a language system because it contrasts important linguistics facts, while a language is a system of signs with rules used for inter-communication (Metz, 1974).

In the upcoming sections, the syntagm/paradigm is used to determine the structure of the two films selected for analysis.

Analysis of Gabar cikin gida (Enemies in the House) and Two Brides and a baby

A. Gabar cikin gida (Enemies in the House)

Aesthetically, Enemies in the House is a film that presents intense enmity within a polygamous matrimonial home of a royal family. The different kind of syntagma used in the film to suture it made it a heartwarming and popular melodramatic film in 2013 in Nigeria among the audience of Kanywood films. Moreover, the background music, different types of shots, verbal language, popular and charismatic protagonists, and, above all, location made the film stand out among other films. Because the cinema-going culture is not so much appreciated in the northern Nigerian Hausa community, it was marketed by distributors in other areas across the country.

Enemies in the House, as the name implies, is the story of an intra-family feud between two co-wives and their male children. This feud came as a result of a young girl with whom both the male children in the royal family fall in love. First, the theme of the film, feud as a result of a woman, connotes that women are positioned as sexual objects and subsequently cause family disintegration rather than bringing unity and peace in the royal home. Although culturally women in most Nigerian societies are assumed to be home-keepers and children-breeders, this film reinforces the patriarchal ideology. According to Ezumah (no date), right from infancy, girls are considered in the light of their future matrimonial life where they become potential housewives and mothers, but with positive materialistic optimism. She cited an example in some communities like Igbo where at birth a baby girl is referred to as ‘Akpa-Ego’ (bag of money) or ‘Obute’ (scores of wealth). Similarly, in northern Nigeria, since before girl reaches puberty, her mother will save money in preparation for her marriage. This signifies that the film somehow reproduces the reality in some Nigerian societies.

Additionally, the two wives (Hajiya and Umma) are portrayed as domesticated by their husband (Alhaji), who is a traditional ruler. They are always at home serving their children and...
husband and receiving commands from him. The film here also reinforces the patriarchal culture of Nigerian societies.

However, this patriarchy does not exist in Nigeria alone; the entire world today is patriarchal. It is a global phenomenon. Johnson (2004) contended that the world is patriarchal because everything is perceived from a man’s perspective. It is the man who commands, disciplines, and assigns roles and duties for the woman based on his fantasies, based on his needs or desires of the woman. Thus, there is no respite for women in film. Burstyn argued that women remained tied to their homes with very few social experiences to divert their thoughts, and they dwelt in misfortune in a way unknown and unsuspected by their active partners (i.e., men) (Mohammed, 2004).

These assertions by different women writers are further reinforced by Ukata (no date) in her studies of Nigerian video films. She maintained that in the film August Meeting, different women from different places organized an event to take place in the month of August. These women struggled to get the money for clothes to wear on the event day. As they came to the village where the meeting would be held, they found that the male elders in the village had canceled the event despite many of them coming from faraway places and suffering much to get the money for the event (Ukata, 2010, Okunna, 1996; Ogunleye, 2003; Eziego, 1996). Azeez argued that “Nigerian films portray and position Nigerian women stereotypically and negatively. In line with a feminist ideological perspective of the media then, the films position women at the bottom of the power hierarchy in a way that reinforces their domination and suppression” (Azeez, 2020, p. 1).

However, audiences of the Nigerian video films have also held that the films are products of men to dominate women. In his study, Azeez discussed the audience perception of the portrayal of women in Nigerian home videos:

“Responses from both the male and female audience members in this study conform to the idea of mass culture, agreeing that Nigerian films, as a form of culture industry, are devoted to controlling and dominating women and they do this in such a way as to make the control and domination seem natural and given, but with the power to propel women to internalize their objectives” (Azeez, 2010, p. 201).

The negative images of women in Enemies in the House are both implicit and explicit; typical of this negativity is that all the stories about Kamal’s situation are revealed by woman. The female nurse is first depicted telling her male colleague that Kamal’s heart was damaged. She is similarly used to expose the evil plot between her boss and Kamal’s stepmother of writing the fake medical result. This is despite there being a male nurse; a woman is used in these scenes to tell bad news. This connotatively shows what gossips women are because in both the scenes her actions show that she doesn’t want the doctor to hear. In contrast to this negative image of women is when Kamal’s whereabouts are unknown; both his mother and the co-wife are shown worried, confused, and bewildered. Similarly, when he appears, they become happy.

In another film Basaja (Camouflage), produced by Tahir I. Tahir (2012), young women are situated as machinery for and tools for fraudsters in duping their parents. However, the women’s greediness is what makes them so easily manipulated and cheated. The man who dupes people goes from city to city meeting girls and using them to defraud their fathers. The first girl he dupes is Safiya; he dupes her father for one hundred million naira. Another girl is Ummi; the
fraudster cunningly plans and dupes her father for one hundred million naira as well. This film is a typical example of the melodrama genre. The third girl who is used to dupe her family of twenty million naira is featured terribly insulting the fraudster as she learns that he has done something similar in Kano. However, this fraudster uses three different names, Ameenu, Kabiru, and Mukhtar, in the different cities of Katsina, Kano, and Minna, respectively. Additionally, he goes to Bauchi with another name, Ameer, and defrauds a girl who cheats on her friend and is the first to fall in love with the fraudster. Even worse, the fraudster, the multi-named young man, engages in this evil business as a result of greediness and betrayal of women who have rejected him in preference for a rich man.

However, in Enemies in the House, Hajiya’s facial and verbal expressions are hypocritical as she is inwardly happy that Hassan has not been seen for a day. Moreover, although Hajiya and Umma are always featured fully clad in Islamic dress, they are ridiculously portrayed as jealous and wicked.

In a popular Hausa film, Ibro jega, women are positioned as just political campaign machinery for the male contestants in the film. Additionally, among the elites of the state and the officials of the electoral commission, there are no women. Women only appear as housewives and carriers of the contestant to their fellow women. More devastating is that the wife of the chairman of the electoral commission even encourages her husband to take bribes and manipulate the votes in favor of one candidate over the rest.

In another film, Ina Mafita ga ‘Ya’yanmu (what is the way out for our children), women are depicted as victims of indecent dressing, despite their victimization by men. One of the protagonists in the film is raped and becomes pregnant; during the merciless and foiled process to abort the pregnancy, a traditional medical doctor is seduced by her indecent dress and has sex with her, infecting her with HIV.

Another feature of women in Enemies in the House is that of seeking revenge and being unforgiving. Hanadi pledges to retaliate for what Kamal did to the family as she was psychologically irked with his act. Her vengeance complex leads to all the chaos within the family. Here, women are placed as unforgiving and agents of men’s victimization. In the analysis of August Meeting, a Nigerian video film. (Duru no date)

In addition, women in Enemies in the House are also labeled as untrustworthy because they don’t keep secrets. This happened in two instances; when Alhaji tells the wives not to tell their children about Kamal’s heart condition, Hassan’s mother calls him and tells him everything and Alhaji becomes very angry about this. In some Nigerian films, women are portrayed as traitors and unfaithful to their husbands out of greediness and ingratitude just as Duru in the analysis of August Meeting suggested.

Women are also shown as unpredictable, feeble, and fickle. For example, this is demonstrated when Hanadi within a day changes her stance from resistance to leaving Kamal for Hassan to acceptance of Hassan.

Similarly, the sexual objectification of females for men’s pleasure is conspicuous in the film. Two ladies are featured (Hanadi and Salima), both loved by two brothers. Both the ladies accept the offer, and their acceptance causes enmity between the blood brothers. This signifies how dangerous life with women is as well as their overly ambivalent nature and unreliability. Verbally, Kamal calls Hanadi a traitor, hypocrite, and lover. He also tells Salima that he wants
to tell his mother that he loves her but because women are not reliable he has delayed telling her. These two different verbal statements decrease the social status of women. Another sexualization of women’s bodies is when Hassan meets with Hanadi at the house’s compound. They exchange greetings and as she moves he stops looking at her, chilling, and even dances using his hand to picture her body structure. Additionally, special romantic music is used here to reinforce the scene.

The core greediness of women is also depicted in the film. Hassan’s mother plots against her stepson out of greed and jealousy, just to possess the wealth of Hanadi’s father. Similarly, Salima loves two brothers because of their father’s riches.

Women have no freedom to choose their spouse, as Enemies in the House connotes. Hanadi is forced to love Hassan instead of Kamal, whom she loved first. All the family coerces her to accept Hassan in place of Kamal. This is a deprivation of the personal rights of women. While justifying feminism as a tool for women’s rights campaigns, he argues that:

“In Sukuni film, Hussaini Ali Koki, the father of Hadiza Kabara, persistently demanded that his daughter should come up with a suitor, at the end of the narrative the girl was forced to marry someone other than the one she chose; then eventually the marriage had to collapse” (Mohammed, 2004, p. 172).

Another typical instance of this women’s rights suppression is in the film Gyale where Bashir Nayaya forces his daughter to marry somebody unknown to her because the father has rejected the one (Ali Nuhu) she proposed to him for marriage (Mohammed, 2004). A similar instance is in the film Kuskurena, where Fati Ladan gets herself in a dilemma as her father has chosen a husband for her, despite another man she loves. Such instances of women’s rights suppression are numerous in Nigerian film productions.

The extent of women’s jealousy is easily noticed from the way they (Hajiya and Umma) talk to one another. As Alhaji tries to comfort Kamal’s mother Umma, her co-wife Hajiya instead of praying for Kamal’s quick recovery, says that Umma should stop crying and just pray for her son to rest in peace when death comes. A kind of suspicious gaze at her by Alhaji emphasizes the extent of the jealousy.

Another bad feature of women in the film is close to infidelity. Although they are not married, Hassan tells Salima why he should come and meet her with his brother in her house when there is nobody there except them. He passes by the sleeping gateman. Their loneliness is not questionable, but rather the language Hassan uses. Another position in which women are situated in the film is comparing them to money in terms of dangerousness. When Hassan meets Kamal at Salima’s house, Kamal apologizes and says, “My elder brother, neither money nor woman can separate us.” This comparison demeans the image of women and reinforces the notion that women create friction in families as a central theme of Enemies in the House. A similar feature of women in Nigerian film is in the Omata women, as Ukata (2004) contended. In the film, women are shown with an insatiable character.

This negativity attached to women in Nigerian films was also observed by Mohammed (2004) in the film Sunduki. A mother is shown abandoning her newborn baby and her husband just because of a disagreement. According to Mohammed, this is an insult to motherhood as she reiterates that no woman would be so merciless and irrational if sane.
Ni da ke mun dace (I and you match), co-produced by Ibrahim Bashir Nuhu and Usman Muazu (2013), embodies a typical film that appeals to female emotions and fosters a total suppression of women’s rights. The main protagonist, a young undergraduate student named Raliya, finds herself in a dilemma as her family has chosen a husband for her against her wishes. This dictatorship has ruined her life.

However, Nigerian video films have been questioned for their romance, feuds, love, and other peripheral themes and narratives. This is because today critics globally use Hollywood cinema to judge other cinema in the world. While criticizing the Nigerian Hausa (Kanywood) home videos, Adamu argued that

“Critical audiences from both academics and the public sphere always use Hollywood as a template for determining quality and competence in filmmaking. They also use the very concept of representation as a basis for judging storylines. When filmmakers sacrifice art for commerce, these two templates were likely to clash – leading to public outcry, it is this outcry strident in the commercialization of the Hausa film industry that leads to soul-searching as the current one” (Adamu, 2009, p. 1).

In an effort by Nigerian scholars to intellectualize Kanywood films, Abdallah Uba Adamu created an online-based forum (Yahoo group) where he collected different views and criticism. Most of the participants had negative attitudes toward production of the films. The filmmakers even called their critiques ‘Mahassada’ (those who wish ill) (Adamu, 2009).

Makahon gida (2013), produced by Usman Mu’azu, is a Kanywood film that positions women in lower social positions and with negative images of womanhood. The central theme of the film is the family life style whereby a woman is featured as the cause of her husband’s death. Their only son Nasir is taken and nurtured by his uncle and is also ruined and seduced by his uncle’s second wife. Hajiya, wife of the deceased Rabi’u, is featured as an infidel breaking all the marital protocols.

Feminist narratives are a significant part of media studies that revolve around the plight of women, particularly in the way gendered norms are presented and upheld in film. All of the discourses within the three waves of feminism from the 1960s to date have concerned how to achieve gender parity between males and females in all socio-cultural and political public spheres.

According to Stuart Hall, representation is the production of meaning via the means of language. Hall has divided representation in to three different perspectives; constructionist perspective, intentional and reflective (Hall, 1997). This mapping out representation looks at the last two out of the three approaches given by Hall, as the positioning of women in this film to some extent reproduces social realities; and it is also according to the fantasies of the film producer.

To sum up, the male filmmakers in the Kanywood film industry manipulate the content of films in ways that reinforce patriarchal dominance. Ideologically and aesthetically, the Nigerian Hausa films are significant expressions of traditional Hausa society, providing insight into the local and regional gender politics (Mohammed, 2004). Women generally condemn this patriarchal world as almost everything is linked to men’s creativity and fantasies. Lecrere in Mohammed argued that nothing in existence today is not said to be made by men: thought, language, and words. She further maintained that a new world should be called the women’s world.
Lecrere added that everything invented by men is deceitful and oppressive to women, capable of killing women (Mohammed, 2004).

B. Two Brides and a Baby

According to the plot and narrative structure of the film, Two Brides and a Baby is a melodramatic mode of Nigerian Nollywood film which revolves around a strong rivalry between two different women who fall in love with one man. The narrative of the film also presents how deep women find themselves in dating relationship and the fact that they couldn’t withstand any interference against the relationship. Their impatience leads them to resolve to plot against those knocking on them.

In most of the Nigerian films, women are portrayed negatively. This might be because of the male domination in the film industry. However, despite the fact that some films are produced and directed by those women who dare to establish their film production companies, negative images of women and patriarchal ideologies are still discernible in these films. Ukata maintains that

“The issue of male dominance in film production has been identified as one of the reasons for the portrayal of negative images of women in Nigerian videos. However, such depictions are not peculiar to Nollywood and they can be traced back to Hollywood’s visual iconography as well” (Ukata, 2010, p. 47).

However, this examination of the way women are depicted in Nigerian Nollywood films would be done from the perspective of feminist film criticism, which according to Noel Carroll “Feminism is the most visible movement in film criticism today, and the most dominant trend in that movement is psychoanalytically informed” (Noel, 1996, p. 268). He however, maintains that “it is necessary to analyze the way women are depicted in films adding that “the investigation of the image of women in film begins with the rather commonsensical notion that the recurring images of women in popular media may have some influence on how people think of women in real life” (Noel, 1996, p. 268).

First of all, sexualizing women’s body is one of the most explicit feature in which women are situated in the film. The first scene of the film starts with a close up shot of woman, shooting from down to top. This woman is also half naked as half of her laps are bare. The camera lens pan upwards slowly from her feet up to head, while she walks majestically and swaying her body. As she approaches the main building, the camera’s focal point centers on her. This is a sheer exploitation of women’s sexuality.

Women in this film are represented as mare complement of men’s life and pleasure fulfillment. Ketchè is viewed sitting in front of a mirror doing make up. She sits waiting for her fiancé Kole to come. But on the other hand, Kole is not shown doing anything make up just because is meeting his fiancée. This is in addition to the patriarchal ideology which positions men as superior to women in a relationship. This also reinforces a social disparity between men and women.

In Onyekachuku Ayube’s film Escort Service (2013) Love and date relationship is the central theme of the film. Cheap digital technology is explicit in the film, based on the lighting, camera quality and sound. However, the film represents women having a prostitution organization under Dayan as the leader. The indecent men seducing dress is explicit in the film, which signifies fetishism of women’s body. Nadia has strongly opposes her brother to marry Cliff who
belongs to the classic prostitutes organization. Nadia describes Cliff as tacky, dirty, smelling, useless and indecent. In response, Andria vows to take all measures against Nadia.

Female’s hypocrisy is visible as Nadia quickly changes her mood as her brother Cliff gets in when she insults Andria. Women are also featured as fierce in the film as Nadia leads another thugs group of Men despite being a woman. Nadia too possesses a gun and threatens Andria if she doesn’t leave Cliff. Another armed women group hunts Nadia’s life in the film. Females’ terrorism and criminal tendency as a result of love relationships is the plot of the film. In the long run, Andria is stabbed and killed by armed men led by woman. Additionally, Dame vows to take the last breath of Nadia.

Another image of women in Two Brides and a Baby is lack of respect for their spouses whenever they have a misunderstanding or when they need something from men and couldn’t get it. This can be inferred in several places in the film. Firstly, Ketche blasts Kole just because he made some changes at the wedding saloon with regard to the decorations. Additionally, Ene quarrels her husband several times because he supports Kole over her friend Ketche. More devastating is when she even broke their enlarged picture and asking him to give her their wedding ring.

Barren Women film, Sylvester Obadigie’s film (2013) represents how evil women are in cheating the husbands just because they want to have children. The first scene of the film features a young woman at soothsayer’s shrine; she puts her baby in Mortal and squeezed with pestle. This is the highest negative image of women for a mother just because of the wealth she might have, she kills her baby mercilessly. I don’t think a real mother can do this to her child. But in the film, it occurs. Worst images of women in Barren women are how they become expert in pretending pregnancy, lying to their husbands. They connive with a medical doctor and buy children from him. One of the protagonists of the film lost her live as a result of abortion she had at the embattle doctor’s hospital. Additionally, the doctor dismantles the young ladies he employs working for him as nurses. He sexually harasses them and they even fight over him. Exposing female sexuality is also one of the characteristic of the film. Young ladies, drinking appear indecently. Childlessness and the family trauma which the women are often blamed is another negative image of the women in the film. There is a mother woman sneaking to hear the discussion of her son with his wife tonight and later in the morning pounce on her in-law daughter to produce a child for them. This family challenge makes Ann to buy a baby from outside. A woman disturbing the happiness of her son’s marital home just because of childlessness. Women in the film also become the victims of unwanted pregnancy and they resolve to abortion which subsequently leads them to lose their lives just as it happened to Chichi, one of the film’s protagonists. Moreover, childlessness as discussed in previous chapter in one of the major themes of Nigerian cinema.

Moreover, another negative image situated women in is that of evil acts. Ama throughout the film has been plotting against Kole because he will not marry her. On the other hand, the girl who he will marry, Ketch responds harshly as a result of Ama’s plots. Nevertheless, Kole is not shown trying to take revenge against Ama. He always tries to appease both Ama and the Ketch. The wickedness of the female is not only represented through actions or verbal talks, it is also inferred by viewers through facial expressions. An example is when Kole gets out of the rehearsal hall and Ama gives him a venomous look. Also the way Ama and Ketch gaze at each other sends a lot of their grudges.
In another film, In a woman’s world produced by Tissy Nnachi (2013), the young ladies in the film are highly depicted as sexual materials. They just fall in love with young men and entice them for sex. They run a very bad life even ruining others’ lives. The group of the ladies under Tasha becomes extra lecherous and subsequently armed robbers. Another girl in the film called Cleo who dates another guy who is taken away from her by the other group. She became so confused and felt deep in his love. At the end, Tasha and Cleo fight over Duran. Women are always depicted as a victim of any relationship while men scale free without being hurt. The ladies gang and kidnapped Cleo and harshly beat her. This film is also belonging to melodramatic category of film genre as it resembles those weepies of mid 19th century. Additionally, this film represents women as members of a cult groups. And taking revenge is what leads Cleo to join the cultists based on the influence of her friend. In the long run another girl in one of the cult groups is shot dead by a rival group.

Moreover, with regard to the assumption that the today’s cinema reproduces female image in a distorted manner and reinforces the patriarchal ideologies, women filmmakers are expected to counter this masochism and male centered cinema.

Mayne argues that

“there is temptation to establish a rigorous opposition. if women have been “falsely” represented in distorted images in the classical cinema, then women filmmakers will more likely to present “accurate”, “undistorted” not to mention “positive” images of women-which will then be eagerly consumed by the film viewer” (Mayne, 1984, p. 54). Despite this, Mayne doubts the possibility of this. Because “the works women filmmakers need to be seen against a background shaped and defined by the ways in which women have been associated with the cinema” (Mayne, 1984, p. 55).

Two Brides and a Baby, although is produced by a female filmmaker, the film still shows a distorted image of woman. Today, there should be a concerted effort towards changing the negative image of women in all the media particularly the film medium just a (Ukata 2010).

Friends in Love, is another popular Nollywood film produced by Azuka Odunukwe (2009). The film’s plot revolves around love and betrayal. A girl’s (Chike) curiosity to know all the movements about a guy (Debby) she loves and intends to marry puts her into more psychological pains. Chike finds another girl Bella to monitor the movements on Debby. The traitor, Bella base on the good values she finds in Debby, plots using another girl to be with him so that Chike will stop loving him. Bella succeeded and snatched Debby as she purport an enmity for Debby in the eyes of Chike. When Chike calls Bella to ask about the monitoring project she says “terrible is on the statement….unfaithful as a rabbit”. This has put Chike into more confusion and starts believing what her mind whispers to her. This feature of betrayal of Bella is an insult for womanhood. As it has been the main themes of the Nigerian cinema, this film also depicts how deep women fall in love with men. Just as in the film at discussion, ‘Two Brides and a Baby’ where both Ama and Ketcha fall in love with Kole. Additionally, this film has melodramatic tones belonging to the weepies of 1940s, 50s and 60s.

However, to show another weakness of women in the film, Ketcha gets more worried, bewildered and confused than Kole throughout the film. Similarly, Ugo gets more worried than Maye concerning their relationship.
Early Marriage film produced by Emeka Onwuamaeze (2003) is another Nigerian Nollywood film which is typical melodrama or a weepie. The film depicts a mother called Nwanneka disturbing the happiness of her son Christopher over the city girl Itheoma he proposes to marry. The mother wants him to marry a village and home trained girl Nnena. The teenage girl Nnena has later disappointed the Christopher and his mother. She joins armed gangs through a neighboring friend called Helen. The Helen is also a victim of early marriage and under duress. Her husband died and she later starts prostitution and have the armed robbers as her mating friends. Moreover, women throughout this have been portrayed negatively.

Nnena’s mother countered her husband to send the girl to school just because Christopher has money. Women have become the family destructors instead of becoming good family members. Helen, Nnena and Christopher’s mother in the film play the role of hindering the happiness of his (Christopher) life. Additionally, another theme of this film is the clash between tradition and modernity which is one of the characteristics of post colonial African cinema.

In her studies of three Nigerian Nollywood films, (Hostages, Dust to Dust, and True Confession) Garritano examines how women are represented and their status in the films. She maintains that women are portrayed as helpless objects acted on by others, dependent and they are portrayed as morally decayed, without any valuable qualities. Garritano concludes that these representations explicitly brings into point the gendered and biased perspective in which the female protagonists are reconstructed and depicted (Garritano, 2000).

Every woman, another Nigerian Nollywood film produced by Chiweuba Nneji (2012) Indecent dress is one of the characteristics of the film. However, this film gives a high status for women as to officials of organization. Childlessness is another theme of the film. Sexual intercourse scenes are explicit in the film. Women in the film are featured as traitors and dependents on men. Additionally, adultery and infidelity are other features situated women in this film. This happens as a result of female’s seduction to men. The cultural practice of families to propose marriage partners for their children and relatives is also part of the film’s plot. As a result of the infidelity, Beca gets pregnant from a man she sleeps with. A woman in the film wanted to buy baby from outside just show her husband that she is virile. She earlier told series of lies to people that she is pregnant, up to ten month she didn’t deliver. A clear picture of women’s evil depicted. She goes to a female medical doctor to get them a baby. At the end the new baby of her niece is given to her by the cruel and criminal doctor. The criminality of women is very explicit in this film. Beca and her husband are put in psychological pain. At the end of the film, Beca’s husband happens to be her father, he raped Beca’s mother long time ago. All the females in the film ended in mess. And Mrs Babra who stole the baby gets arrested. Ukata holds the view that:

“Women have also been labeled as prostitutes, husband snatchers and adulteresses. As prostitutes, they are seen as parasites that drain money from men and leave them with incurable diseases. Men’s role in prostitution, whether as pimps or patrons, is never considered nor turned into stereotypes. Likewise, adulterous women as stereotypes, have male accomplices whose liaisons with the adulterous women receive no publicity at all. When women are either labeled as prostitutes or adulterous it points to how unreliable they are, but the male figure has no queries to answer for having illicit affairs with the same women tagged as prostitutes or adulteresses” (Ukata, 2010, p. 46).
In Swagger Mamas produced by Anaele Ugochuku Dominick (2013), apart from the love theme of the film with young ladies suffering, the film also situates matured women as greedy as they participate in a Miss Africa beauty contest. Additionally, about twenty women participated in the contest and none of them is awarded with the five million naira promised, SUV Jeep and round trip to Germany, as it is just two ladies and one young man plan to dupe the women. The worst part of it is that the women participate in the contest against the wish of their family. The way the women are featured as mothers is a total insult to motherhood. Childlessness is another thematic aspect of the film, as of the families in the film adopts a child because they don’t have one. Similarly, indecent dress signifying the female’s body exploitation is another order of the film. At the rehearsal for selecting the right candidates, all the women gather and answer questions on current affairs, dance and at the end most of them are disqualified. Another negative image of women in the film is the sexual harassment they face in the film; talk less of domestication serving the family house under the leadership of the husband, while they face humiliation from husbands. Another negative image of women in the film is how they value wealth over human as one of the women Mrs. Evlen Obama who adopts a baby, leaves her at home and busy dancing for the beauty contests.

Chinyere Okunna’s research results on Nollywood videos affirm that the videos are full of negative and stereotypical images of women. According to Okunna, women are portrayed in Nollywood videos as wayward, morally bankrupt and easily enticed to material things which, in return, appeal them to act against the social moral norms and values by committing taboos like lesbianism, murder, infidelity and child abandonment (Okunna, 2000).

Nigerian films in both Nollywood and Kanywood film industries have more or less the same theme and narrative structure. The films are characterized by novice filming, use of cheap technology, unprofessionalism and above all the producers are just after profit maximization. Additionally, the most common feature of the two different industries is that of melodramatic tone of the films. “The films are full of indulgent and interminable soap opera close ups, all the better to see the tears of streaming down people’s faces, forcing the viewer to confront the emotions generated by invariably melodramatic tone” (Saro-wiwa, 2008, p. 2).

Based on the argument of feminists about representation in the cinema today, the following table contains the list of the dominant negative images of women which are found on the screen being depicted by both Nollywood and Kanywood film industries of Nigeria. Such images are what the feminists criticize and call for the replacement with good and favorable ones.
### Table 1: Images of women in Nollywood and Kanywood films

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kanywood</th>
<th>Nollywood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family/Home breakers</td>
<td>Sexual materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greed</td>
<td>Complements of man’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialists</td>
<td>Disrespect for spouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of sorrow</td>
<td>Evils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate to men</td>
<td>Vengeance and unforgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not free</td>
<td>Domesticated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak and feeble-minded</td>
<td>Espionage agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evil story mongers</td>
<td>Manipulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home keepers and children</td>
<td>Loose in morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breeders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>Diabolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared with money</td>
<td>Inferior to men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valueless in relation to men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traitors and Unfaithful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Going by the above listed features of women in Nigerian cinema, northern Nigerian Kanywood film industry oppresses and misrepresents women more than the southern Nollywood industry. Kanywood also promotes patriarchy and relegates women than...
Nollywood. Moreover, the images on the Nollywood table are also damaging, negative and oppressive to women. These are what feminists question about cinema and ask for the shifting from misrepresenting women on screen to depicting them as heroines, business tycoon, high public officers, leaders, executives, and any other positive image.

Moreover, in defining semiotically the structures of the films, the syntagmatic categories given by Hodge and Tripp are used, while general paradigmatic approach is also applied on the paradigm part. As paradigm with regard to film analysis involves the selection of different items which work together and make meaning, the under tabled different choices are the paradigms in the two Nigerian films analyzed in this research work.

**Conclusion**

Initially, when studying the third world cinema examination of western colonialism and its left footprints in the countries colonized should be the first step for such a study. African countries are labeled as part of the third world countries, as most of them were colonized by the western super powers between 17th-mid 20th centuries. Nevertheless, a cinema is not automatically qualified for the name third cinema just because it is produced in the Third world (Simpson, Utterson, Shepherdson, 2004). Although those colonized countries have liberated and got their political independence, colonialism has succeeded in influencing and shaping the cultural practices of African communities, most times leaving behind negative effects which might not suit Africa and its people. These effects have of course affected the African cinema, which is a public cultural sphere and one of the agents of socialization.

Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene stated that before they started to make these films, Europeans had already shot films about the African continent showing Africans as antagonists of one another. Most of the Africans we see in those films are unable to set one foot in front of another by themselves (Pfaff, 2004).

The above statement by one of earliest indigenous African film producers is a clear instance of a distorted picture of Africa. Media are very powerful tools in image making and identity description. Whatever picture media feed people, they assume it as true. They tend to stereotypically and naively believe that. Through the power of the mass media the Europeans got the opportunity to use the cinema and represented the Africa and Africans the way they liked. Despite this mono-centrism of the early African filmmaking, the colonial film makers established cinema schools to educate Africans. The first school was Bantu cinema school, sponsored by the colonial office of the British film institute (Daiwara, 1992, p.2).

In Nigeria today, there are two biggest cinema industries known as Nollywood and Kanywood. The latter is northern Nigerian film industry which produces film in Hausa language while the former is of southern part industry which produces its films in English language. The content of these industries tend to resemble and copy the style in one way or the other of some foreign film industries. For example, Kanywood films imitate reproduce the way Indian Bollywood narrates their story, particularly the dance and singing in their films. Additionally, some filmmakers copy exactly the content and ideas of another film and translate it to produce their films. On the other hand, Nollywood film industry too tries to copy and imitate the American Hollywood styles and plots; by the way they couldn’t have succeeded due to lack of sophisticated production materials and adequate to funding.
Having that the aim of this research work is about the representation of women in Nigerian cinema, feminist film criticism is the approach used to examine how the films can be criticized from the feminist perspective. The way women are positioned, situated, empowered or relegated, liberated or suppressed, sexually exploited or not in relation to their male counterparts in the films. And the study found that women are given many negative images in Nigerian cinema, relegated and oppressed. They are featured as wicked, subordinate, and subaltern.

Although feminists struggled at the three different waves of feminism namely: first-wave, second-wave and third-wave, all of them have a common goal of deconstructing the patriarchal ideologies, which relegate, subordinate and sometimes suppress women. According to Krolokke and Sørensen, first-wave feminism emerged in the wake of industrial society and liberal politics. It is connected to both the liberal female’s rights movements and early socialist feminism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and Europe. First-wave feminism is concerned with access and equal opportunities for women. Second-wave feminism arose in the 1960s to 1970s in postwar Western welfare societies, when other suppressed groups such as homosexuals and Blacks were being defined and the New Left was on the rise. Third wave feminism emerged from the mid-1990s onward, rising from the emergence of a new postcolonial and post socialist world order; it seeks to overcome the theoretical question of equity or difference and the political question of evolution or revolution. Krolokke and Sørensen (2006). The common goal of all these three different periods of feminism struggles is that they all fight for the course of femininity and the liberation of women from cultural oppression and undermining. At this juncture, several theories have been developed by feminist critics, theories such as psychoanalysis, deconstruction, equality, structuralism, Freud and Lacan theory, semiotics, mise-en-scene Marxism and many more are being used in examining film in relation to how women are depicted on the screen by male auteurs.

Ideologically, Nigerian cinema is devoid of clear ideological aims rather than profit maximization and promotion of the culturally oriented patriarchy. Moreover, Nigerian government is yet to wake up and start exploiting the film industries with a view to fast track national development and for propaganda purposes. Thus, it pays less attention to the activities of the filmmakers, unless the issue of censorship.

This research work extensively discussed and analyzed two chosen films for analysis, namely; Gabar cikin gida (Enemies in the House) and Two Brides and a Baby. On the first one, feminist point of view and semiotics approach have been combined and sutured together in ascertaining the representation of women in the film. It is found that women in this film have been positioned and portrayed with negative images. On the other hand, the second film selected for the analysis, Two Brides and a Baby is about two hours screen time, with two days and one night plot time. Also in the analysis of the film, the same approach applied to Gabar cikin gida is used in the examination of how women are represented. The most negative feature and image situated the women in this film is how the sexuality of female body is being exploited. Some of the female protagonists are half naked throughout the film, while none of the male protagonists is portrayed with such an image.

Finally, going by the findings of this research work and the situation of Nigerian cinema and filmmaking, it will be good to offer some useful recommendations and suggestion as follows:
Today, there is the need for capacity building for both the filmmakers and the protagonists. Lack of proper training and inadequate knowledge about the process of filmmaking is one of the major challenges to the Nigerian film industries. The filmmakers mostly engage in trial and error. Unless this habit is addressed, the industries will continue going unprofessional.

Government alone can’t handle the issue. Investors within and outside the country should put their hand so that good and qualitative films would be produced. Additionally, the films should take another pattern of bringing unity to among different Nigerian ethnic groups. The dress and the names from both north and south should be mixed and reflect the country not only one region.

And for the purpose of the education, more film schools should be established in Nigeria. In addition to the ones available and theatre arts departments in some Nigerian universities, additional special institutes meant for pure training of filmmaker are needed. Nevertheless, those institutions should be well equipped with both human and material resources for the smooth conduct of the capacity building trainings.

Nigerian film producers should strive to concentrate more on producing educational films, not entertainment always, because education is the first pillar for development. Their films should be beyond melodramatic. Melodrama is also good for its target, but generally, the films should be meant for national agenda.

Government should set up film and consultative committee made of well qualified producers and artist to work hand-in-hand with appropriate government agencies so as to tackle the problems of contaminating the cultural values, of Nigerian societies.

Government should also invest in film making throughout the country, because, filmmakers after profit making, as such they what the people want most. If the government would invest in film industries, more educational, societal reform inclined films would be produced as an alternative to the current trivial themes of the films. It can also be suggested that merit awards should be given to films that have messages which promote consciousness, cultural solidarity and patriotism. However, the awards should not be associated with affiliation of the filmmaker or a protagonist.

The films produced should have different themes and plots from the current images of women in Nigerian films. Positive, favorite, meaningful and important roles should be given to women in Nigerian films.

More women should be involved in the process of filmmaking in Nigeria. The involvement should be right from pre-production to post production stage. This will help make their opinions, ideas, imagination and more importantly change their image on the screen.

Cinemas of the third world should be fully supported so that their films can serve as an alternative from the dominating first world cinema especially American Hollywood. Pidel Castro once criticized the Hollywood cinema which he described as poisoning human mind and he calls for the adequate support for the third world cinema (Simpson, Utterson, Shepherdson, 2004).
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