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## Analysis of Texts and Dialogues of Women Leadership Roles in Two Nollywood Films

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### **Abstract**

*Often than not, feminist film discourses on woman's representation in cinema tends towards her role and physical appearance as an object of male visual pleasure, sex object, prostitute, and many more. Much attention has not been given to what motivates her actions in a certain way. This work thus looks into the texts and dialogues as key factors that necessitate her actions and visual appearance in the way she does. To this end, the role of women leaders in two Nollywood films: *Women in Power*, and *August Meeting*, will be examined in respect to what is written of them by screen writers which necessitate what they say to others, what is said of them, and what other characters say to them in these films. Thus, the role of screen writers is pivotal to the dialogues in these films. Works of some feminist film critics will also be examined.*

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**Keywords:** *Patriarchy, Feminine, Women Leadership, Cinema, Nollywood, Language*

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### **Introduction**

In recent times, women's involvement in leadership has gradually risen and many women are taking leadership roles in sectors hitherto termed the exclusive preserves of males. From Africa to the Diaspora, women of all races and culture have suddenly realized the importance of their presence in the corridors of power, and perhaps have understood the power they can wield and the changes they can impact when in leadership. Many a critic have argued that women can be in power without having authority which simply points to the stooge-like and cosmetic nature of putting someone in a position without mandate, portfolio or terms of reference. Heifetz (2007) decries this hapless dilemma of women when he states that those in authorities may not lead, and also those in leadership may not have authority, meaning that there could be leadership without authority; this he sums up thus "Women have practised leadership without authority forever" (320 ).

This outright discrimination and subjugation of women is an indication of marginalization and deprivation. It is even worse when some offices do not have room for the female gender since society never deemed it fit for women to occupy such positions. This results to feminists advocating gendered language to identify the offices of women. For example, the position of a chairman is masculine and when women are fortunate to assume such positions they carve out terms like chairperson, chair lady or lady chairman. In the Greek period, acting started with Thespis , the first actor, who is a male, and women were not allowed to act in the Greek era thus the term 'actor' originated without any consideration for the female. Later, in the course of time, the term 'actress' was used to refer to female actors. With the dominance of males in most fields and professions, women were hardly given a place, but with the advent of feminist thought and discourses, women are beginning to realize their rights to

assert their presence in these areas that culture and patriarchy have denied them a position of recognition. Little wonder that “some feminists (e.g. Penelope 1990; Spender 1985) argue that English is, in some quite general sense, male.” Thus, “English can be said to be male in a manner similar to that in which particular terms can be said to be male—by encoding a male worldview, by helping to subordinate women or to render them invisible, or by taking males as the norm” (“Feminist Philosophy,” 6). The stereotype of women and the absence of appropriate English word to refer to women or the perpetual language that pervades the film texts may be deduced from the notion that “Languages may also lack words for things that matter a great deal to women. This sort of gap is another way that a language can be seen as encoding a male worldview (“Feminist Philosophy,” 5). With this background information, this work is set to examine the language and text in cinema in relation to the role of leadership created for women with two Nollywood films as case study. These films are: *Women in Power* (Adim .C. Williams, 2005); *August Meeting* (Lancelot Oduwa Imasuen, 2001).

### **Feminists Discourses on Gendered Language**

It is pertinent to note that in most discourses of feminist critics, they have queried the *masculinization* of language which leaves little or no feminine words for the females to express themselves in literature which also reflects in the texts in films. This situation is observed by Dale Spender (1985) as “There *is* sexism in language, it *does* enhance the position of males, and males have had control over the production of cultural forms (“Feminist Philosophy,”7). Thus this ascertains Spender’s claim that ‘males have encoded sexism into language to consolidate their claims of male supremacy’ (“Feminist Philosophy,” 7).

Julie Okoh states that “in societies all over the world, sexism is a constant phenomenon. It creates for women condition of exploitation and subordination. Women’s freedom, dignity and equality are persistently compromised globally by law and by customs in spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (13).

The realization to feminist that language is gendered towards the male (perhaps women were not involved in literary and screen texts before this realization), makes them to propose language that tends to the feminine gender as a way of inventing a feminine language to create a forum or a ground for female writers hence the introduction of the term “gynotext” as opposed to “androtext” which is masculine in expression. Spender (1985) opines that “the sexualisation of words for women is considered especially significant by the many feminists who take sexual objectification to be a crucial element, if not the root, of inequalities between women and men” (“Feminist Philosophy,” 7). The realization by feminist writers of the socially constructed roles for women which is replicated in literature texts, and by extension in cinema, makes them resort to proposing gynotext which some feminists writers kicked against and resorted to lay emphasis on women’s writing - writing more about women since engaging in this sex war in their discourses is tantamount to popularizing the male writers.

The French theorists are concerned with or write about language, representation, and psychology; therefore, the major concern of these French feminists critics is never primarily a “representation of reality, or a reproduction of a personal voice expressing the minutiae of personal experience.” Rather, they are concerned with the psychological impact (repression) on women. Notable exponents of French feminist criticism are Julia Kristeva, Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray (Barry, 125). According to Zulu Sofola, 1998, English language has equally showed the role of the woman as an appendage, through the words ‘female’ and

‘woman’ which are derived from masculine nouns female and woman and that the terms man and human are used to refer to both genders without specifying the woman in any way (qtd. in Okerri, 45). Thus, feminists concern over male’s gendered language is evident in Spender’s observation:

This widespread encoding of male bias in language is, according to theorists like Spender, just what we should expect. Males (though not, as she notes, all of them) have had far more power in society, and this, she claims has included the power to enforce, through language, their view of the world. Moreover, she argues, this has served to enhance their power (“Feminist Philosophy,” 7).

The films under study will be examined to see how the text and language of women reflect their subjectivity and marginalization since most of the screen writers in Nollywood and the writers of these video films are males. This same situation is replicated in the films produced by Nollywood filmmakers who often downplay a woman’s potentials and create for her dialogues that deny her the expression of her intellectual capacity which could give her room for a healthy competition with her male counterparts. In this light, the role of women leaders will be examined in the films selected for this study to ascertain the language of communication whether it supports the claim that women are not just seen as objects of male visual pleasure in their physical appearances, but their dialogues and texts in cinema propel them towards an eternal and unchanging identity just as Claire Johnston observes that:

but the fact that there is a far greater differentiation of men’s roles than of women’s roles in the history of the cinema relates to sexist ideology itself, and the basic opposition which places man inside history, and woman as ahistoric and eternal (Johnston, 209-210).

### **The Role of the Director and Producer in Guiding and Influencing the Cinematic Process**

According to Kate Millet, “film is a very powerful way to express oneself” (qtd. in Johnston, 214). The implication is that, the film medium is used by filmmakers, especially males to establish patriarchy whereby helpless women are being continuously marginalized. To this end, Johnston pointed out the reason why the editors of *Women and Film*, attacked the notion of auteur theory, in their editorial, when they described it as “an oppressive theory making the director a superstar as if film-making were a one-man show” (212). The submission is that, since it is the obligation of filmmakers to invent the narrative codes suitable for proper representation, **auteur criticism** should be reformative and constructive. Johnston however acknowledges the fact that the auteur theory has a way of deifying the personality of the male director, yet it has “marked an important intervention in film criticism.” She further explains that

its polemics challenged the entrenched view of Hollywood as monolithic, and stripped of its normative aspects the classification of films by directors has proved an extremely productive way of ordering our experience of the cinema (Johnston, 212).

Andrew Tudor’s article “Genre and Critical Methodology,” made mention of **auteur criticism** which entails the works of film directors or filmmakers. The attention of feminist

film critics should therefore be focused on filmmakers so as to exterminate any form of representation that negates the true status and qualities of women (God'spresence, 27). This representation of women in a negative light both as an object to be looked at and admired, and as a symbol of suffering for the male's pleasure, is demeaning and disparaging to her image. This portrayal of women has been commented on by Judith Mayne when she asserts in her 1990 publication that "many early films, appear to confirm the widely held claim that the cinematic apparatus, emergent or otherwise, is made to the measure of male desire" (qtd. in Okerri,16).

### **The Woman's Cinematic Language and Image as Products of a Sexist Ideology Reinforced by Male Filmmakers**

"within a sexist ideology and a male-dominated cinema, woman is presented as what she represents for man" (Johnston, 211).

Johnston explains that the "force of the author's preoccupations," as revealed by Peter Wollen include the obsessions about woman which is generated by the psychoanalytic history of the author, and is probably outside the scope of the author's choice. The implication is that the social construct of the woman's role is simply replicated in films unconsciously. This is probably the reason why in most men's filmic writings (screen authorship), women are represented as "bearers of meaning, not makers of meaning" (qtd in God'spresence, 27). It is obvious that most of the screenplays are written by males due to the dearth of female filmmakers thus giving them the power to determine, manipulate, monopolize and control the texts that are created or allocated to female characters. They are either presented as voiceless, overly assertive and independent sex objects or self-sacrificers. In the analysis of Dale Spender's 'Man Made Language,' as published in Bellebyrd, the writer opines that

Spender articulates a theory of the male control over the English language and the way that women have been systematically silenced through the forms of language, the conventions of male and female speech, the exclusion of women from print culture and the patriarchal structures at the heart of the gatekeeping process (Bellebyrd, 1).

### **The Place of Scriptwriting/Screen Writing in Cinema**

It is obvious that the indispensable role of a script/screen writer is undeniably vital to the process of film production. Without the script there is no dialogue. Even if it is an improvised performance, there is a guide as to what to say. This is not to say that the text cannot be screened or edited by the director, but suffice it to say that most film texts are as much the products of the screen/script writer. The script is the lifeline of every film since it determines the speeches of the characters in each scene or sequence. Thus, the role of a screen/script writer is pivotal to the overall theme and direction or focus of the film thereby guiding the audience's beliefs and reaction to the characters on screen. This is why the image and role of women in cinema is dependent upon the creative skills, beliefs, attitude and mindset of the screenwriter. For example, a male chauvinist may never abrogate speeches of assertiveness and independence to women, he would rather create characters that are subservient, marginalized and male-oriented in the order of patriarchy. In her work, 'Man Made Language,' Dale Spender argues that patriarchy is in every sector of society, which invariably means, in the cinema world as we shall soon discover in the selected films for this study. She observes that:

With Mary Daly, I agree that 'patriarchy appears to be everywhere'.

Veronica Beechey: The concept of patriarchy has been used within the women's movement to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression ... it has been used ... in the search for an explanation of feelings of oppression and subordination, and in the desire to transform feelings of rebellion into a political practice and theory ... Thus the theory of patriarchy attempts to penetrate beneath the particular experiences and manifestations of women's oppression and to formulate some coherent theory of the basis of subordination which underlies them. (5)

It is obvious from Spender's observation that patriarchy is an oppression of women's rights which could also appear in the form of language or texts in cinema whereby the females are characterized by demeaning roles that deny them true representation of their skills, abilities and achievements. This aligns with a commentary on her work as published in *Feminist Philosophy of Language* where the analyst observed that "Spender and others also suggest that the maleness of language constrains *thought*, imposing a male worldview on all of us, and making alternative visions of reality impossible, or at least very difficult to articulate" (8).

### **Examining Texts and Dialogues in the Conversations of Women Leaders in *Women in Power and August Meeting***

Language is our means of classifying and ordering the world:  
our means of manipulating reality (Spender, 3)

Texts and dialogues are the raw materials for producing a meaningful communication, thus the importance of language cannot be overemphasized in every communication medium of which cinema/film is one. Language gives the message or an idea or a meaning to a word or a person, thus the totality of the identity of such a person lies on the interpretation deduced from the speech or word spoken. Conversely, woman's image in cinema is deduced from the dialogue or speech said about her or what she says of herself or with other characters in the scene. In reading a film text, the scenario written about a character tells of her image, identity, class and personality, thus women's roles in films are determined by what is written of them. The power of her identity now lies in the creative prowess of the screen writer, which could be manipulated beyond reality thereby giving a false identity of who she truly is. Thus, 'some suggest that male power over language allows men to shape not just thought, but also reality. For example, Spender (1985: 143) claims that men "created language, thought, and reality." ' (qtd. in "Feminist Philosophy," 8).

However some feminist film critics have criticized the way directors distort reality by manipulating the image of the woman to make her conform to the false identity created for her in cinema. Through their discourses, they have condemned the auteur theory that gives the director (which may also include the screen writer) the power to manipulate and play "god." Johnston however challenges the notion that the commercial cinema is more manipulative of the image of woman than the art cinema. From Johnston's submission, the auteur theory "permits authors to play god," and this status of the filmmaker as a domineering and manipulative entity negates the image of women in cinematic narratives (qtd. in *God's presence*, 28). This observation is supported by theorists like Spender who noted that "men's ability to control language gives them great power indeed ("Feminist Philosophy," 7).

Language is often indicative of the status and mindset of the characters in a film thus their speeches in the film clearly reveal to the audience their intentions. For example, Loyce (Patience Ozorkwor), in *Women in Power*, who aspires for the leadership of the Career

Women's Forum (CWF), and The Minister of State, Internal Affairs, tells her collaborators, Agatha (Evelyn Osugo) and Sandra (Thelma Nwosu) of her intention to take up the leadership of CWF and a political appointment in order to stand up to men. The subjection and marginalization of women is evident in Loyce's speech when she complained about the meager quota of leadership positions given to women by the presidency. Furthermore, Chief Udensi (Dejimolu Louis), Maureen's (Liz Benson) husband, denies her the privilege of looking into the calabash of kolanut simply because she is a woman in spite of her titles as a chief, leader of the Career Women's Forum, as well as Minister of State, Internal Affairs. The conversation goes thus:

*Loyce: Chairman, I demand to also look into that calabash before the kolanut is broken.*

*Chairman: It is never done madam, never. Women are not allowed to see the kolanut before it is opened. Well, don't worry, you will eat from it, like every other woman.*

*Loyce: I accept I'm a woman but I'm also a chief and that qualifies me to see the kolanut before it is broken.*

*Chairman: We respect your title madam, but this is tradition and a woman is a woman, including women chiefs.*

*Loyce: If I am not allowed to see that kolanut, I will leave this gathering.*

*Chairman: Well, eeh... I have no opinion to that.*

It is sad to see women humiliated in films this way by males who seem to be devoid of human emotions simply because they see women who dare to step up to the plate working on the same platform with them as despicable and intolerable rival. It is important to note that African culture is very patriarchal; therefore the few women who dare to come up to leadership are often seen as breaching the *status quo*. A woman is expected to remain in her domestic space rather than step out to contend with men for leadership. God's presence observes that

In the African culture, women are expected to respect men as heads of families. This notion of women's subservience unconsciously controls men's behavior, thus they tend to resist female leadership as if they (men) were losing grip in terms of control over women (74).

God's presence further observes that "culture tends to shape roles women play from their domestic space to their public appointments" (74). This succinctly agrees with Kate Millet's outcry over the disparaging representation of women stereotype when she notes that

We are assailed by the bogey of the overbearing woman - woman as some terrible and primitive natural evil - our twentieth-century remnant of the primitive fear of the unknown, unknown at least to the male, and remember, it is the male in our culture who defines reality (Millet, 3).

Millet gives vent to her disapproval of women's inhuman treatment by male writers just the way Simone de Beauvoir advocates for women to be treated as those who have human rights like their male counterparts thus: "my idea is that all of us, men as well as women, should be regarded as human beings" (qtd. in Blunden, 2).

Maureen, being the president of the Career Women Forum, seems comfortable with the *status quo* and thus sees no reason to challenge male authority hence she sees Loyce's as overly ambitious and lobbying to take over the leadership from her.

Loyce detests wallowing in the socially constructed patriarchal ties that have structured a stereotyped language for women which is symbolic of helplessness and surrender. Loyce tends to break with traditionally constructed language of subjugation by stepping out of her domestic domain to take the public space of power and recognition. This is reflected in verbal conflict that ensued between Loyce and her collaborators, Sandra and Agatha:

*Loyce: "I didn't know I was dining with green snakes. You little brute had the guts to betray me." As their argument continues she quips: "I was embarrassed by a man. I chief honourable Mrs Obiageli Collins refused [to be shown] kolanut by a man, Maureen's husband for that matter. And you didn't see that as enough insult to walk out with me."*

*Sandra: "Iron lady, it's tradition and you know I don't like to meddle with traditional matters."*

*Agatha: "Why must you make us do things just because you do them? You are not our president. Only the president can make us do things."*

Loyce's assertiveness to break with tradition in comparison to Sandra's defeatist posture aligns with Barbara Annis' submission that women have to come to terms with their situation through recognition and awareness so as to make a change, and that there are women who:

recognize that there is a fundamental difference in how women and men perceive things, but don't yet want to change the status quo. They are prepared to continue working in the traditional hierarchical male structure without questioning or challenging it (36).

Annis' explanation also fits into Maureen's docility or complacency over the exhibition of male superiority and dominance that restricted the powers and authority that accrue to her leadership. This results in Loyce challenging this mundane structure that has held them voiceless and spellbound as she confronts Maureen for her weak leadership which "lacks the force to take us to the Promised Land." She is ready to "stand up to men," as she puts it. That is why she desires a more vibrant leadership instead of Maureen's "weak" leadership, so she desires a change as she speaks: "Look, our women should be taught to stand up to the men and take their rightful place. That is the only language our men understand. Action!" The desire to stand up to men makes her acquire a chieftaincy title, and gets appointed as Minister of State, Internal Affairs, as well as taking over the leadership of the Career Women Forum from Maureen. Her action falls in line with Helen Cixous' opinion in *The Laugh of The Medusa* when she writes:

The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative (875).

Despite the docility of the Career Women Forum (CWF), the executive members' discussion, on their way coming back from an international conference at Toronto, Canada, away from the airport in chauffeur-driven car, Stella tells her experience as she discusses with Sandra, thus, "at that conference, I saw that every woman really has something to offer, they have something to deliver. They have one story to tell. And you know, I learned a lot" On her own part, Loyce sees the Toronto Conference as a launching pad for her political ambitions;

therefore she challenges Maureen, the president of the Career Women Forum (CWF) over her kind of female empowerment that subjugates women under the control of their husbands. Maureen who perceives Loyce's zeal as unnecessary aggression in this context reacts: "education and skill acquisition are just the first steps to self-empowerment." It is incredible to see women still remain in their cocoon after such an empowering and impactful conference. Why should their language still portray a defeatist and compromising posture, except for Loyce who tells her husband, "I am thinking of the Toronto resolution of women empowerment, how to implement them."

Thus, from all intents and purposes, Loyce desires vibrant women leadership and followership, as she harps it loud at Career Women Forum (CWF): "There is no history of human emancipation that has ever succeeded without aggression. Look at the French revolution, the black liberation struggle in America, the Apartheid in South Africa. I could go on and on and on. The best and perfect approach is an aggressive approach to equal rights and opportunities with men. My ladies, the only language oppressors hear is action." Unfortunately, all her efforts towards a change of *status quo* is seen as being overly ambitious, as Maureen sees Loyce's quest as "lobbying desperately for that position for some time now."

It is evident that the male filmmakers deliberately create a forum for women to air their views, desires and aspirations, and subsequently create anarchy among them to frustrate their efforts and then make them to appear as enemies of their fellow women and spouses, as is evident in the speeches and dialogues of members of the Career Women Forum (CWF). Therefore, Loyce's husband sees her ambition and actions as "writing rubbish over my head." Thus, when the Inspector from State Security Service (SSS) and representation from Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arrested Loyce with charges of high level fraud and other state security issues, which the viewing audience has no idea of their occurrences, her husband gives her up, saying: "Well officers, here she is. My dear, you are a very independent woman. I'm sure you can take care of yourself." Nonetheless, it is sad that the male filmmakers create the dialogue in order to assassinate women's character in the person of Loyce, for standing up to men.

In a similar characteristics, the speeches of Amaka (Eucharia Anunobi Ekwu) and Angela (Ngozi Ezeonu), in *August Meeting* depict them as helpless, inadequate and devoid of the appropriate attributes for a leadership contest without the assistance (interference) of their corrupt husbands who are greedy for financial gains that would accrue to president of the Umoji Women Association. The two presidential aspirants are allocated dialogues that show their subservience and dependence on their husbands in a political race that is supposedly the exclusive preserve of woman.

Chief Festus tells his wife, Angela: "we cannot allow Amaka and her husband to outgive us." Similarly, Chief Johnson tells his wife, Amaka, to donate to the association, on his behalf, the 1.5 million naira he has previously given her for her political race. He spurs her with his words: "*We cannot allow Chief Festus or his wife to donate more than us. And let me tell you, you must win that election by all means necessary. And if you need more money, let me know, tell me.*" Male power is still reflected in the following text as Chief Festus suggests a bizarre step to his wife thereby introducing a twist, a new dimension to the narrative. He cautions her: "*You have to be very very careful, Angela. I have a feeling Johnson and his wife will not sit and watch us win this election. And you know, a lot of money is involved. The last thing I will want, is to lose that money.*"



One begins to wonder, “Where is the woman’s independence. When will men allow women to take decisions on issues that are absolutely feminine within the sisterhood camp? The interference of their husbands in luring their wives into taking desperate measures to outdo the other (like men do) makes Angela to remind her husband that her contest for the presidency of the Umoji Women Association is in the spirit of sisterhood, and that it is not her intention to kill Amaka, her opponent.

In the spirit of sisterhood, Angela freaks out when her husband Festus suggests that she finds a way of eliminating her rival, Amaka, from the race. Festus persuades her to go beyond the level of fortifying herself with the help of a *Dibia* (witch doctor), but to ask for more measures to destabilize Amaka and that “*this is warfare. And in warfare, people die. No sentiment. An enemy is an enemy.*” This change of tone in the narrative creates an unfamiliar ground for the sisterhood race as Angela explains her candid intentions to her husband saying: “*I know I want to win this election Festus, but I don't think I want to kill anybody.*” Festus craftily poisons her mind by simplifying the crime that “*there are other means of destabilizing the person*” with the suggestion of “*temporary madness.*”

Angela and Amaka’s husbands influenced them into believing that their contest is not a sisterhood affair but a political battle which allows for a “temporary paralysis of one’s opponent,” as Festus puts it. In line with their husbands callous, selfish and greedy ambition, they romance with the diabolical powers of a herbalist (a male), who helps them to edge each other out of the presidential race as he utilizes his evil powers to cause Angela to be paralyzed on both legs while Amaka is “raving mad.” What a fate for women whose destinies seem to lie at the threshold of patriarchy. One would dare to ask, is it really a man’s world? Would women ever be liberated from the strings of patriarchy? Little wonder that Spender regrets that “At the most basic level of meaning the status of the female is derived from the status of the male and on this has been erected many strata of positive and negative classifications” (4).

From all indications, it is glaring that Angela and Amaka are handicapped and bereft of their goodwill and autonomy to contest for the presidency of the association, in a womanly manner. Their husbands’ speeches are evident of male dominance and control. Despite the introductory speech of the outgoing president, Florence, who introduces the two contenders as sisters, in line with spirit of Sisterhood that characterizes the unity in the Umoji Women Association, their husbands wins them over with the audacity and power that accompany their language. Thus, the excitement and sisterhood we see in the opening scene as Florence introduced the two presidential aspirants is lost: “*The first woman is very powerful, very very powerful. She is our sister, Lolo, Okwuloka, Nwayikibie, Odozi-Akudiya, Chief Mrs Amaka Chukwuka*” (meaning, she is a woman who is respectable by marriage, a strong and troublesome woman, a woman who is greater than others and harnesses her husband’s wealth well). She continues: “*The next candidate is our sister, Omalicha-Ugo, Odozi-Akudiya, Ntutu Ebube, Ugonnanya,* (meaning, beautiful eagle, harnessing her husband’s wealth well, awesome woman, her father’s beauty) *our sister, Chief Mrs Angela Odinaka.* These eulogies can be interpreted as “beautiful eagle, someone who dresses well and harnesses her husband’s wealth, an epitome of glory.” The domineering influence of her husband alters Angela’s genuine intentions to transform the community and help improve the plight of women as is evident in her brief and friendly speech (manifesto): “*Women of our land, I am very happy that we are thinking about our community like this. That is why I insisted that my husband should donate the kind of money he gave.*”

Their state of subjection to the male supremacy causes a twist in their intentions making their aspirations a pipe dream. This state of helplessness as indicated in their speeches align with Marie Wilson's observation that women often are:

“...isolated as stereotypes, often unable to speak their minds unless they agreed with the dominant conclusion. How in the world could anyone fit in under these circumstances? Often we didn't, and it was used as a proof that we shouldn't be in power” (xiii).

From Wilson's observation, we could identify with the dilemma of Amaka and Angela who find themselves in a culture that dictates their actions. August Meeting, which according to Ekwutosi is a time when “all Ibo women must go home to attend this meeting...we all raise money to do things for the community.” Ekwutosi further says, “and it's a way of showing what you have worked for, for the whole year.” August Meeting “creates a forum for the women to socialize and make contributions toward the development of their community as Florence, the incumbent President, says that the previous projects executed include “the community centre, the primary school, and others.” Meanwhile, Evans who refuses to give his wife money to be like other women paints a negative picture of the women when he discovers that his wife has to sleep with Chief Johnson for financial gains. Evans tells the Igwe of Umoji, “But Igwe, let me warn, what this generation of women will cause in this community as a result of the August Meeting, is yet to come.”

We then see a long shot of women booing at Evans as he passes through their midst leaving in hot anger.

The unfortunate case of Amaka and Angela witch-hunting themselves because of craze for executive office of the president of the women group, which has resulted in Amaka being inflicted with madness and Angela with paralysis made the Igwe-in-Council to cancel the August Meeting from taking place that year. But the women of Umoji cannot take that decision from Igwe and his members of council. Therefore, feeling a sense of patriarchal oppression and denial of their human rights, Umoji women go on a protest, a faction of the women go nude before the Igwe and his council of chiefs. Finally, the August Meeting is allowed to hold, but fresh election into leadership (which was the cause of great trouble between two presidential candidates, Amaka and Angela) was deferred till next year. The interference and control exercise by the male-folk over women's exclusive affairs makes Nnenna (Patience Ozokwor) to retort, “This is our affairs, the women affairs. They should let us handle it.”

Who says women have no power? According to God's presence, “women power exists if only women can realize their potentials and take up courage to take a step” (102). The realization of this fact and fear of women's power is evident in Chinweizu's submission that “Female power does exist and every man alive is under its sway”(108). The sad scenario where women are subjected to the dictates of patriarchy is also evident in other films where women play roles - in films produced by men - that are against their natural endowment as mothers. For instance, the texts and dialogues in the films *The Evil Queen* and *Busy but Guilty* paint the picture of woman as victim of her own ambitions.

Significant is the collaborative efforts of all Umoji women as they found strength in solidarity, when they streamed out in Igwe's palace chanting protest songs in resentment of the Igwe-in-council's earlier decision to cancel the August Meeting. Summing the women's

resentment is Florence's reaction to Igwe's verdict, "Elders of our land, it is on that note that we said we are different. The women of Umoji said, and are still saying that August Meeting must..."

All the women echoed in response, "hold." Next in line, Ezinne (financial secretary) rejects the claim that the conditions of the two victims (Amala and Angela) is good enough reason to ban or cancel their all-important August Meeting, in these words, "Igwe, it is not right to conclude that Amaka's madness and Angela's condition is as a result of Umoji's August Meeting." The film is a good example of what woman's film would look like if women filmmakers begin to seek measures to empower women and make them more vocal.

In relation to the two films examined, *Women in Power* and *August Meeting*, it is obvious that the dialogues and speeches of the women leaders, as scripted in the texts inform their actions and create a certain screen image for them. When this image is represented or repeated over a time, it becomes a stereotype, thus the female marginalization we often see in film is a product of the repetition of a wrong image of women as constructed with a patriarchal undertone or influence. This observation is put forth by Martin Joly in "Believing (in) the Image?" when he writes that "But the memory of an image will also be the more forcible the more the visual message has been repeated" (48). It is pertinent to state that the screenwriters and directors are mostly male, as in the case of *Women in Power* and *August Meeting*, thus the texts and dialogues are doctored to suit the patriarchal dictates where the female characters are compelled to stay within the discourse designed for their screen image and identity.

In line with this awful state of affair whereby patriarchy dictates the course of events in the business that is solely feminine, God's presence, states that

Perhaps this is due to the fact that most of the screenplay writers, directors and producers are male and they unconsciously re-establish patriarchal structures already existing in the society. If film, like other forms of art, mirrors the society, there are vital aspects of society that are often deliberately omitted or neglected in films. This means that the contributions of the few Nigerian females in leadership to societal development are still fraught with marginalization in cinematic representation (132).

These insalubrious situations call for the adoption of an alternative means of filling in the omissions that pervade the films we see today. This alternative mode of representation is to break off from the lies and stereotypes that portray women as weak and unfit for leadership, thus it becomes paramount for women screen writers, directors and producers to adopt the *Woman's film* and begin to tell their own stories from a woman's perspective. Cixous, in her ground-breaking 1976 essay, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, encourages women to write and "put herself into the text---as into the world and into history---by her own movement" adding that "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing"(875). This implies that when women begin to write from a woman's point of view, they will by all means, put their perspective to their stories thereby telling their stories without any distortion, thus "the role of the female screenwriters, directors and producers is very important to the image of the Nigerian woman since they possess the power of creativity" (God's presence, 135).

## Conclusion

This work has discussed that text, as scripted in these films, inform the dialogue or speeches of the female leaders and leadership aspirants, and they could do nothing outside the cinematic process of the stereotyped role and character already created for them. Thus this portrayal of women as conformists or loyalists to patriarchal constituted structures does not give the women leaders' room for self-development or a mind of their own, to show forth their self-worth and true identities. Rather, they speak or act out their emotions, desires, needs and aspirations as expectations of men directed by patriarchal cinematic agents for male pleasure --- a creation alien to the realities and true identities of the entity called woman. This study has therefore stated the need for a female perspective to the scripts written to ensure women's true experiences and identities are adequately captured. This aligns with Wilson's advocacy for a change, a breakaway from stereotypes that undermine women's potentials to lead. Thus:

Change must be sweeping, and it won't be easy. When it comes to women's leadership, we live in a land of deep resistance, with structural and emotional impediments burned into the cultures of our organizations, into our society, and into the psyches and expectations of both sexes (xiii).

In agreement with Wilson's observation of the toughness of regimented structure that may resist the woman's attempt to break the status quo for a change to ensure women's access to power, and perhaps, as Dale Spender suggests a feminine language bereft of patriarchal regimentation, it will be appropriate to consider the submissions of Daly and Caputi 1987, Elgin 1985, MacKinnon 1989, Penelope 1990, Spender 1985 below:

In general, the solution suggested is not to attempt to create a neutral language that can accurately capture reality in itself, a goal they would take to be nonsense. Instead, we must aim to create a new reality more congenial to women. Some feminists have argued that the only way to achieve this is for women to create their own language, either by redefining terms already in use, or by inventing a new language, with new words and new rules. Only in this way, they suggest, will women be able to break free from the constraints of male language and male thought, to articulate a competing vision for the world, and to work toward it (qtd. in *Feminist Philosophy*, 8).

Therefore, women filmmakers are thus challenged to be manipulators of their image in cinema just as the males have done. This will help them correct the already distorted and stereotyped image of women. This goes to show that the intervention of feminist filmmakers is vitally important for the positive profiling of women's image in films since "new meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of the male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film" as Johnston earlier stated. Thus "there is no such thing as unmanipulated writing, filming or broadcasting," instead, Hans Magnus Enzensberger has succinctly opined that:

The question is therefore not whether the media are manipulated, but who manipulates them. The revolutionary plan should not require the manipulators to disappear; on the contrary, it must make everyone a manipulator (qtd. in Johnston, 213).

## Recommendations

Having discovered the defects that accompany male screenwriters' texts and dialogues in Nollywood, as they create lines for female characters, especially female leadership roles, the following recommendations are made that may be considered for a positive improvement on women's screen image.

- Women should be encouraged to write stories for Nollywood filmmakers.
- More women should be encouraged to join to add to the scanty numbers of female producers in Nollywood.
- The few women filmmakers in Nollywood should be given every kind of support (financially, equipment, etc) by women NGOs, feminist organizations and the ministry of women affairs.
- Actresses in Nollywood should be educated on the impact the negative roles they play has on the totality of the image of women in our society.
- Regular seminars and workshops should be held for women filmmakers and actresses on the roles of women in the film industry.
- Females in the academia (including students) should organize programmes that encourage them to take up leadership, and to also invite women leaders who would relate their achievements as indicative of the importance and their presence in leadership. This is more so since women are in the proper positioned to take decisions that address the issues that the male leaders may lose sight of or do not understand.

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