Repositioning gender relations: Exploring the auteur and nego-feminism theories in contemporary Nigerian Nollywood films

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Abstract
Gender stereotypes have been transmitted from cultures to cultures through agents of socialization.The reinforcement of these stereotypes has been internalized by both genders. However, these stereotypes has continuously portrayed a negative aspect of the female gender subjecting them to the dominance of men and reinforcing traditional views of the place and value of women in Nigerian society. The traditional Nigerian society enjoys such portrayals and provides the largest bulk of the content that fuels the stereotypes of women in Nollywood films.These films are becoming the template for Nollywood directors and producers.Therefore, this paper examines the repositioning of the narratives about gender stereotypes in Nollywood films especially as it relates to the negative portrayal of the female gender. Rather than focusing on the existent problem, this paper is an attempt to investigate how the Auteurs and Nego-feminism theory could be explored to assist female Auteurs/Producers at rewriting the narrative andperception of the film audience about of the negative portrayal of women in Nollywood films.

Key Words: Gender Relation**,** Auteurs Theory, Nego-Feminism Theory, Nollywood Films

Introduction

Gender stereotypes have been transmitted for centuries through agents of socialization. Although they differ from culture to culture, there are unifying gender stereotypes that limit the roles of genders. One of these prevailing stereotypes span across Africa, men and women are separated with a clear distinction on how they are raised, society's expectation of them and their status in society. The reinforcement of these stereotypes start from the moment a child is born. In the home, girls are made to play with dolls, focus on their beauty, learn to cook and do basic house chores closely following their mother's footsteps. Boys on the other hand are taken outdoors, taught to defend themselves and aspire to greatness. Nursery rhymes are sung to help children internalize these cultural stereotypes. An example is the popular Nigerian rhyme of the 90s. "Mummy in the kitchen cooking rice, Daddy in the parlour watching film, Children in the garden playing ball." Outside the home other agents of socialization like school and religious groups consistently reinforce these gender stereotypes. The roles of these agents are strong, but none influences societal norms as much as the mass media. This made Genner & Süss, (2017:82) opine that "in the digital era, media permeate all spheres of life at different ages: they are present in children's rooms, in schools, in families, and in senior citizens' homes."This view is also emphasized by Aromona (2016) where she noted that the media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerfulinfluences on how people view men and women. She further noted that media is so interlaced with our daily lives that it continually reinforces stereotypes and messages. This is pointed out by Kellner (2003, p.9) where he posits that: "Radio, television, film, and the other products of media culture provide materials out of which we forge our very identities; our sense of selfhood; our notion of what it means to be male or female". Kellner's view resonates that of several media researcher including (Ibbi, 2017) who brings the discussion to Nigerian film industry. He notes that as diverse as Nigerian cultures are, they share a common notion that women are second-class citizens who must be controlled by men.

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Ibbi (2017, p.57) stated that there are twelve ways a woman is represented in Nollywood and none is in a positive light. These are:

> the housewife: woman whose only ambition is to support her husband and children. Her education typically ends in the kitchen; the object of barter: forced to marry because of parent's financial problems; the femme fatale: highly sexual woman who uses her body as a weapon to destroy men; gold diggers and trophy wives: women whose only source of life is a rich man: they don't mind abandoning love and stability for money; the object of ritual: women are the best items for money rituals and appeasing the gods; objects of sexploitations: women are easily harassed, raped and are seen as sex objects; the witch: every old woman or mother-in-law is inherently a witch; the girl next door: sweet and trusting young women who are ideal for marriage; prostitutes: young women who sell their bodies for money; the career woman: successful, ruthless woman who never has a happy home; second choice: a stereotype suggesting women are always inferior to men; husband killer: women who eliminate their husbands physically or spiritually to inherit their properties and always seen as the extremely rich widow.

These negative stereotypes are then projected into the Nigerian mass media. From Television shows like Super Story '*Oh Father, Oh Daughter*' where lead actress, Shola Shobowale is depicted as a gold digger who breaks home and ruins men,to Music Videos like Olamide's Story for the gods that downplayed rape and presented women as fickle creatures that exist specifically for the pleasure of men, these stereotypes are everywhere.When looking at film, several scholars argue that it is a reflection of the society. Onah, (2013) states that drama is a reflection of a given society. The social, political and economic structure of such society influences the kind of drama a playwright creates. In other words, a given society gets the kind of drama it deserves.

Film making in Nigeria began as a propaganda tool by the colonial government then, it later became a nationalist instrument of indigenous film makers. It has metamorphosed into a pure entertainment medium for the cultural development of the Nigerian society. Today, the major focus of Nollywood films is entertainment. Nevertheless, with the changing gender roles in the contemporary society and the expectation of the media to reflect reality in any society, the issue of gender representation has been of great concern in the Nollywood industry.

With the wave of modern feminism spreading around the world, beginning in the United States with Betty Friendan in the 60s, the meaning and roles of gender being constructed by different societies are changing. Gender Links (2017) documented these changes, noting that the feminist organisations, journalist associations and local communities across the continent have sought to influence how gender equality or women's rights issues are told in the media through establishing their own media across the region. Initiatives such as Gender Links News Service and Mama FM by Uganda Media Women Association have sought to tell everyday news from a gender perspective and influence government policy on issues affecting women. Recently, Women FM was co-founded in 2015 by veteran broadcast journalist Toun Okewale Sonaiya. Stereotyping is a way of representing and judging other people in fixed, unyielding terms. These revolve around an alleged characteristic of the category to which they are assigned. They are reduced to the stereotype that results from this, rather than being viewed as individuals with their own personal features and qualities (Pickering, 2015). They are shorthand techniques for conveying a complex idea that, according to sociologists, are meant to naturalize and perpetuate certain beliefs about a particular group of people in order to put them in a disadvantaged position in the social structure.

Gender stereotypes are rooted in the idea of idealism- the Western thought common during the enlightenment period, which organizes ideas around pairs of unequal association of values based on hierarchy. Dualism, which is regarded as a logical contradiction because it tends to becloud a view of middle ground between two extreme descriptions of men and women, offers a conceptual schema in which viewpoints associated with men are considered not only as the standard or norm, but also as superior in hierarchy and in opposition to the views about women. Thus, categories such as reason, mind, the public and the universal are not only equated with male and opposed to the female categories of passion, body, the private and particular, but also seen as central, privileged and superior while those of the female are inferior. The result is that if the male is strong, then the female will be weak; if the male is

rational, the female will be irrational and if the male is reliable, the female will be unreliable. Such are the oppositions of women to men which reinforce Aristotle's age-long statement that men are stronger, women are weaker; men are courageous, women are cautious; men the outdoor type, women domestic; men educate the children, women nurture these children.

As earlier mentioned, these perceptions about male and female are rooted in societal discourses and stereotypes, which are transmitted from one generation to another through agents of socialization, particularly the media. The media has been content to argue that to the extent society is male dominated that is the reality it will convey. Where women are represented in the media, they tend to be portrayed in ways that are both unfair and inaccurate. Sexualised images of women are rife, and women tend to be defined in terms of their physical appearance, not abilities. Women are most often shown as victims of violence and homemakers (Gender Links, 2017). With the male domination of the Nigerian film industry, women have consistently been forced into these negative stereotypes. To counter this trend, a number of theorists have insisted that the only way women can be portrayed more positively is for women to start telling their own stories. This trend has resulted into more women taking up the roles of producers and directors in the Nigerian Film Industry. Hence, this paper is designed to explore the relevance of the auteurs and nego-feminism theories towards repositioning negative gender stereotype against women in Nigerian Films.

The Critical Issue
Studies of Nollywood films, beginning from the ground breaking work of Stella Okunna in the mid-1990s (Okunna, 1996), have attempted a critical interrogation of Nollywood productions to determine how they represent sociocultural variables like gender and to establish the connection between Nollywood's representation of gender and the perceptions of Nigerians on gender and gender-based issues. The results of these studies are conclusive, showing a remarkable prevalence of traditional gender stereotypes in Nollywood films (Adewoye, Odesanya, Abubakar, and Olatunji, 2014; Shaka and Uchendu, 2012).

These stereotypes as it portrayed the female gender have proven to be negative, subjecting them to the dominance of men and reinforcing traditional views of the place and value of women in Nigerian society (Aromona, 2016; Ibbi, 2017; Okafor, (2017).

Hence, while reality can be utterly different from the typical representation of women in Nollywood films, the traditional Nigerian society enjoys such portrayals and provides the largest bulk of the content that fuels the stereotypes of women in Nollywood films. Azeez, (2010:205) quoting a female respondent, opined that "I do not see anything out of order in the representations of women in our films [the indigenous Yoruba films]. They only remind us of our culture and the position in which we are placed. And any true African woman will see herself in the reflection of the images in the films and will try to correct and adapt herself according to the prescription laid down in the films. I do really enjoy it when an erring woman who wants to become a man is punished or when a woman who contravenes our culture is punished in the end…".This shows that while Nollywood is an accomplice in the continuing subjugation of women but the true culprit is the expectation of the existing patriarchy. Nollywood has been fingered as an institution actively and passively promoting a patriarchal worldview that ensures the subjection of women in Nigeria (Adewoye, Odesanya, Abubakar, and Olatunji, 2014). Hence, several studies (Ukata, 2010; Okwuowulu, 2012; Ibbi, 2017; Doghudje, 2019) have shown that the portrayal of women in films particularly in Nigeria is negative. Shaka & Uchendu (2012) posit that there is no middle ground when it comes to Nollywood's negative portrayal of women. "If a woman strives to achieve economic independence, or challenges obnoxious traditional policies of patriarchy, she is quickly moved into the frame of the extreme left"(p.4). This is also strongly supported by Nsereka & Enyindah (2018, p. 537), according to them "Nigerian cinema practices are influenced by the patriarchal ideologies and fantasies of the male filmmaker where women are placed in lower social status, often domesticated as housewives, secretaries, nurses and child breeders". Nevertheless, studies into aspects of Nollywood films that uphold gender stereotypes are being examined across Nigeria and the results provide a framework for gender analysis in Nollywood films. These studies provide a roadmap to gender stereotypes in Nollywood films while recommending how these issues can be addressed.The impetus from these studies has propelled a new group of female directors spearheading the movement to establish a level of gender balance and creating cinematic content that reflects a truer reality of women and men in Nollywood films.Hence, some of the films directed by these females' directors, challenge the

status quo, empower women, and question the factuality of many of the long-held views about the ability of women. Recent and notable examples of these gender-inspired Nollywood films include *Lion Heart*(2018) (directed by Genevieve Nnaji) and *King of Boys (2018)* (directed by Kemi Adetiba). These films with strong female protagonists are reconstructing the narratives and standing against the usual films produced by male auteurs/producers. These films are becoming the template for a new generation of Nollywood directors and producers.

Therefore, this paper examines the repositioning of the narratives about gender stereotypes in Nollywood films especially as it relates to the negative portrayal of the female gender. Rather than focusing on the existent problem, this paper is an attempt to investigate how the autuers and nego-feminism theory could be explored to assist female Auteurs/Producers at rewriting the narrative of negative portrayal of women in Nollywood films.

Auteur Theory
The concept of authorship which sees film as a creative artistic piece created and stamped by an author underline the process of film making. From this perspective filmmaking has been seen as a complex process involving many opinions and alternative possibilities (Bogdanovich, 2002), a film nevertheless embodies the vision of its author, through his or her directorial control over textual operation and meaning. Auteur theory is the theory of film that sees the director as the author of the film. The artistic input of the scriptwriter and the director has been contentious regarding creative dominance in the final picture. It was arguably resolved that while the scriptwriter authors the script, the director authors the screen. This assertion works on the assumption of director's control of production mechanisms through his technical, conceptual and ideological style in forms, themes, genes and mise en scene (Okwuowulu, 2012, p.216).

This perspective is aptly embedded in the proposition of the auteur theory which essentially poses the main question on cinematic authorship in relation to the directorial control over visual style and narrative themes of a film (Gallagher, 2001). The theory, which, according to Nelmes (2007), has been defined and redefined in different historical periods, describes the authoring practices embedded in filmmaking with assumptions on the socio-economic contexts which always frame such practices. In other words, auteur theory proposes that filmmaking involves a process that is controlled by the director of a film which carries the direct expression of the director's agency that determines the textual operations and meaning of the film, even though the whole process is a collaborative effort involving many people (Nelmes, 2007). Indeed, part of the criticism of this theory is that the proposition of auteur theory is paradoxical in its emphasis on a particular individual's control and determination of a film's technical and textual outlook when filmmaking is fundamentally a collaborative working dynamics, with many individuals having important roles and influence on the meaning and outlook of a film. Perhaps it is for this reason that Gaut (1997) has suggested the notion of multiple authors, which, according to him, is more theoretically sound and critically fruitful than the dominant view of single authorship.

In the meantime, it is necessary to emphasize the underlining idea of the theory, which presents the author of a film as the source or a product of discourse, who represents an ideology or worldview that he or she carries throughout his or her works, thus, having a signature that identifies him, his orientations, his belief and notion about life (Gerstner 2008). So this theory, which first appeared in *Cashiers du cinema*, a French film journal, establishes that directors infuse their films with their distinctive personal vision through the salient manipulation of film technique and thus stamp their personality on the materials from one film to the next. In other words, auteur theory proposes that films are creative expressions of those who made them bearing on their individual worldviews. Thus, the theory suggests that the "work of individual filmmakers is best understood as a thread in a much more complex tapestry of technological, social, historical, institutional, cognitive and cultural practices" (Nelmes, 2007, p. 93).

Essentially, it is meant to offer a strategy for seeing a film as an art created by an artist (Dyer, 2008). The theory therefore entwines the notion of the value of film with the person who was deemed aesthetically responsible for it. So at the heart of the theory is the idea that films are valued when they are deemed to be the work of an artist, traditionally identified as the director, who creates meanings embedded in a particular film. As Bordwell (2008) notes, the theory establishes an idea predicated on a "repetition and enrichment of characteristics themes and stylistic choices, which bears traces of individual personality"(p.44).

Crafted by Sarris, an American critic, it proposes what Routt and Thompson (1990) called 'auteur print', which suggests that in

understanding the value of a film, it is necessary to first locate its author and creative centre not as its writers but as its director in so far as it is the director who orchestrates the meaning as well as the visual aspects or elements of the film. Though critics of auteur theory have argued that it is far from being coherent because of its paradoxes and because it is "quite a simple principle" (Martin, 2001), it is nevertheless a useful and critical tool for understanding films as both an art form and a cultural phenomenon. As Gallagher (2001) notes, it is a formidable approach for comprehending style, technique and expression.

Critique of the Theory

The theory suggests that the "work of individual filmmakers is best understood as a thread in a much more complex tapestry of technological, social, historical, institutional, cognitive and cultural practices" (Nelmes, 2007, p.93). The premise of the theory as discussed by Andrew Sarris allows Directors to have increased control of project, to take risk, scout for the best actors and allows for easy attribution when trying to analyse the world view of the films in discuss. The theory also allows auteurs to create signature movies that form a part of their identity just like we have the Russo Brothers for Hollywood and Tunde Kelani for Nollywood. The theory helps the directors in two ways. First, to exact their influence and philosophy into the theme and style of film they are to steer. Next, to create and sustain their identity until it becomes their signature. According to Concept Artist Syd Mead during the making of Blade, he said "The director is God in film" (Dangerous Days, 2007). This is because films are fully steered from scripting to completion by a director. But then, feature films don't emanate from one person. It is a joint effort of writers, producers, directors and other studio executives. A lot of ideas and series of hard work goes in movie production (Tseng, (2013). Grant (2008) highlights that on every movie set, except when the movie producer doubles as the movie director, the director's word is art, while that of the producer is a law.

Popular critics who have come out condemn Auteurs theory include Palie Kael, a critic and theorist who highlighted that Andrew Sarris' note on Auteur Theory is based on 'inappropriate premises', "wrong assumptions" "lack rigor", "undisciplined" (Gerstner, 2003) filled with a lot of logical problems, pays an extra, underserving homage to the director and unnaturally promotes a director within the confines of production while judging the films based on the director not the entire production team (Gerstner, 2003). Grant (2008) stated that the originators never intended it to be a theory until Andrew Sarris interpreted it and made it pronounced. He further stated that it is naïve and often arrogant to assume the director is the only author that matters in the filmmaking process.

Nego-feminism Theory

Nego-feminism theory according to Nnaemeka (2004) discusses feminism as a form of negotiation with 'no ego' which is structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever shifting local and global exigencies." Most African cultures have a culture of negotiation and compromise when it comes to reaching agreements. In Nego-feminism, negotiations play the role of giving and taking. For African feminism, in order to win challenges, feminists must negotiate and sometimes compromise enough in order to gain freedoms. Nnaemeka argues that African feminism works by knowing "when, where, and how to detonate and go around patriarchal land mines." This means that Nego-feminism knows how to utilize the culture of negotiation in order to deconstruct the patriarchy for the woman's benefit. Nego-feminism as a new feminist theory is used as a negotiating tool between patriarchy and matriarchy. The expected outcome of the theory is hope to create a better and balanced society that accommodates the sexes.

According to Nnaemeka (2004):

> In the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of "give and take/exchange" and "cope with successfully/go around." African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts (p. 377-378).

Nnaemeka explores this notion of feminism in direct contrast to her experiences of how feminism has been practiced in the West. She criticize the imposition of Western practices, on African

communities. She emphasized that in "feminist theory, certain locations have dominated the discourse, creating a one way conversation between the developed and underdeveloped and developing worlds. Through colonial and imperialist legacies, an active and passive relationship is maintained, where one location is established as an authority on the conversation, refusing to invite inter sectionalises and variations. Nnaemeka argues that feminism practiced in the West is not necessarily and wholly applicable in Africa. She argues thus:

> Western feminists have brought to the fore intense debates about the conception of good, social justice, and moral responsibility from which, unfortunately, the humanity of those to be rescued is relegated to the background"(p.371).African feminism is not reactive; it is proactive. It has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment. Its uniqueness emanates from the cultural and philosophical specificity of its provenance" (p.376)

This unidirectional approach to feminist intervention is at odds with notions of "global feminism" and crudely mimics imperialist behaviours. Nnaemeka probes at the glaring issues with the failure for theory to be localised, merely that it is forced into the realities of passive subjects with clear power imbalance in application particularly in its inefficacy of removing egos from the discourse, and its failure to negotiate.

Nnaemeka critiques Western feminism for the fact that it is often "judged more by its sophistication than by the contribution it might make toward social change" (p. 363), as well as the fact that "it is also caught up in its ambivalence: fighting for inclusion, it installs exclusions; advocating change, it resists change; laying claims to movement, it resists moving" (p. 363). In contrast to the lopsided contribution to theory from the West, which she finds flawed, Nnaemeka provides examples of successful application of nego-feminism. She argues that feminist engagement in Africa focuses on collaboration, negotiation, and comprise, at odds with Western feminism which seeks to challenge, disrupt, and deconstruct, which is evident for example in Amy Allen's book on feminist theory, "in which the author states that feminists are interested in "criticizing, challenging, subverting, and ultimately overturning the multiple axes of stratification affecting women" (p. 380).

In other words, theory making should not permanently be a unidirectional enterprise— always emanating from a specific location and applicable to every location—in effect allowing a localized constructs to impose a universal validity and application. I argue instead for the possibilities, desirability, and pertinence of a space clearing that allows a multiplicity of different but related frameworks from different locations to touch, intersect, and feed off of each other in a way that accommodates different realities and histories (p.362-363).

The weaknesses of the feminist theory led to Nego-feminism theory by Nnemeka (2004) to accommodate its application to African environment. In Africa, like much of the world, women face present assault on their personality and a fundamental misrepresentation of their abilities in films. Drawing inspirations from western feminists' critical approach to reviewing films and media materials, Black and African feminist evolved an approach that sits with the peculiar nature of the black society and how meanings are constructed and disseminated. As Akin-Aina (2011, p. 65) puts it, African feminisms "are shaped by a variety of contexts, movements and historical moments" and as a result, the African feminist movement is:

> "...characterized by an ongoing process of self-definition and re-definition; a broad-based membership; a resistance to the distortions and misrepresentations by Western global feminism; a 'feminism of negotiation'; as well as efforts to reconcile power dynamics on the continent, nationally and within the movement" (p.66).

The fundamental implication is that African feminism or *Nego-feminism* struggles to combat misrepresentation and prejudice on two fronts: at home and in foreign materials. This reality makes it a little tougher for African feminists to take charge of their agency and combat narratives that denigrate and subjugate them. The problem with adopting the approach and views of western or global feminists is that it does not accurately capture the unique issue African feminists contend with. Western feminists live in a less unequal and patriarchal society. As such, reflecting the views

and problems of African women essentially misrepresent and/or discount the challenges they face. As Emelogu (2019) opines, Nego-feminism offers an understanding of the non-universality of Western feminism by revealing the intricacies of gender relations in Nigerian culture and the extent to which progress has been made towards liberating women from subjugation within society and on screen.

Thus, *Nego-feminism* as conceived by Nnaemeka is a broad-based, all-encompassing thought that validates the unique problems all African women face within the structure of patriarchy and with the aim of addressing them through negotiation and what she calls "power-sharing and power ebb" (Owusu, 2019). Therefore, Nego-feminism presents a formidable framework to anchor a robust discussion on the stereotypical depictions of Nigerian women in Nollywood films, how peculiar the depictions are within the context of the society they exist while taking into account the range of the stereotypical depictions and their implications on the struggle of Nigerian women to combat patriarchy and attain equal rights and dignity in the society.

Critique of the Theory

The major strength of Nego-feminism theory lies in its origin, this theory is written by an African woman about African women. This is where the propounder, Nnaemeka (2004) states that "in the foundation of shared values in many African cultures are the principles of negotiation, give and take, compromise, and balance. Here, negotiation has the double meaning of "give and take/exchange" and "cope with successfully/go around." African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise."In this light, the theory builds on the existing criticism of the radical feminism theory. The new wave of radical feminism that tries to change the situation of women by promoting homosexuality, prostitution, nudity and misandry. According to liberal feminism, gender roles are harmful as they restrict women and condemn them to a life of servitude.

This extreme view has been rejected by African feminists, to black African women, any ideology that does not account for our unique identities, our deep cultural values, our belief that motherhood is a source of power and not exploitation should be rejected. This rejection inspired the solid framework of African feminism theory. This is evidenced in the many scholarly and activist contributions of the 1980s into the new millennium. Nego-feminism like other branches of

African Feminism theory is a feminism of cooperation, collaboration, and inclusion.

While the idea of collaboration and negotiation is the anthem of Nego-feminism, it has done little to create social change. Critics have argued that negotiation does not remove the deep-rooted nature of patriarchy or change the status quo for women. Bayu (2019) states that "African females are not ready to bring radical change in the deep-rooted patriarchal lifestyle... African feminists oppose different feminism theories not having ground reason, but just for the sake of opposing"(p.55). The American columnist Gwendolyn Mikell highlighted this disparity between Western and African feminisms when she wrote that "the slowly emerging African feminism is distinctively heterosexual, pro-natal, and concerned with many 'bread, butter, culture, and power' issues." (Kaboré,2017, p.415)

New direction of Auteurs and Nego-feminism theories in repositioning gender stereotype

The Auteurs theory is an important direction to spring a critical analysis of the roles of directors in creating or forcing particular meaning system or worldview that tends towards either the reinforcement or renegotiation of gender stereotypes in Nollywood films. In other words, the application of the theory in film making will afford an understanding of the pattern of gender stereotypes in accordance with the worldviews of their authors. The theory will help in investigating how auteurs portray gender stereotypes in the Nigerian film industry, particularly now that more women are in the Nigerian film industry as directors and producers.

To cater for the peculiarities of the Nigerian film industry and especially its production processes, the theory will also synonymously refer to the producers. The uniqueness of the Nigerian film industry is that, sometimes, producers act as the directors, performing the roles of producers and directors at the same time.To this end, the production process in the Nigerian film industry vests immense power on the executive producer as he or she might assign roles, produce, direct and even market his or her films. As the executive producer, the Nollywood culture allows him or her to determine and influence the content and can force certain worldview on a director who then works with his whims and caprices. The auteurs theory is domesticated in the Nigerian film industry; as executive producers act the role of the director whose signature on the film is final. The domesticated auteur's theory therefore puts into consideration the four vectors of film production

(Ethical/Philosophical and Morals, Creative, Technological and Entrepreneurial). The auteur theory was adopted and adapted to understand the extent to which the worldviews of the producers or directors influence how gender is reflected in the films they produce or direct. The inception of Nollywood film production was especially dominated by male producers which show a lopsided representation of women. Shaka and Uchendu, (2012) citing Austen (2009) describes Nigeria women as the sacrificial lambs of 'moviedom' and quoting Okome (1997, p.83) on the representation and objectification of women in Nollywood video films show that the "thematic preferences of Nollywood movies are based on the notions of inherited stereotyping of women perpetuated by patriarchy" (p. 83). They further show the gender stereotype portrayal of women in the earlier film like *Living in Bondage* (1992) "in which a faithful and submissive wife is used for money making ritual when her husband's attempt to offer a prostitute is foiled. Women are thus represented as dispensable property or goods. They are to be used in whatever form that appear most profitable, pleasurable or convenient. This stereotype is buttress with the notion that 'once you have money you can have as many women as you wish'. So it would do no harm to sacrifice one or two of them to acquire wealth"(Shaka and Uchendu, (2012,p.4). This trend continued in other films produced during that period. For example *Glamour Girls I & II* (1994)portrayed women as promiscuous and dishonest. *Jezebel I and II* (1994), *Evil Passion* (1994) and *Nneka: the Pretty Serpent* (1994) portrayed women as diabolical and demonic. The early Nollywood film productions show women representation "from the ritual genre which demonized strong independent women and victimized vulnerable docile women, the industry moved on to the epic genre which effaced women. The popular epic video films of the late 1990s and early 2000s include: *Battle of Musanga*, (Bolaji Dawodu, 1996), *Ikuku* (Emeka Ani, 1996), *Out of Cage* (Ndubuisi Okoh, 1999), *Sango* (Femi Lasoke, 2000), *Gazula* (Jude Okoye, 2000), *Ngene* (Ndubuisi Okoh, 2000), *Ekulu* (Ifeanyi Ikpoenyi, 2000), *Akum* (Andy Amanechi, 2000), *Vuga* (Simi Opeolu, 2000) among many others. In all these video films, whether the ritual genre or the epic genre, the images of women were predominantly negative"(Shaka and Uchendu, 2012, p.5).

However, the current Nollywood film productions see the influx of female producers and directors rewriting the roles of women in most films that has been released to the audience. The author being the unifying, creative source for the

meaning and value of a unified work of art, whether that work is a film, a novel, or work of art according to Bell (2010) show the need for female auteurs to negotiate the roles of women in Nollywood film productions for audience acceptability and recreating a new worldview for women, which is the main drive of the concept of repositioning. Thus, Nnaemeka (2004) highlighted that Nego-feminism is all about collaboration, so these female auteurs are collaborating with the male auteurs to rewrite the narratives. These two theories intersect and overlap in various ways. First, the auteur theory indicates that as more women become auteurs, the narratives and stereotypes will eventually change and Nego-feminism theory shows that the female auteurs in collaboration with the men around them are repositioning women as strong, reliable and capable leaders. In current Nollywood movies the women are not portrayed as subservient but homebuilders as seen in Ikechukwu Onyeka's *Mr And Mrs* (2017) and Genevieve Nnaji's *Lionheart*(2018). Rather, women in these movies are seen for being able to balance their career and family without one suffering for the other. This concept of showcasing women from another perspective is reflected in the *Lionheart* (2018) a movie produced by veteran Nollywood actress Genevieve Nnaji who was also the star actress in the movie that was once nominated for the Oscars awards. Adaeze Obiago (Genevieve Nnaji) a woman had to work hand in hand with her uncle to save her father's transportation company. Amidst her educational qualifications and years of experience at the company, she is faced with gender stereotypes as their competitor who had the money to buy the company over, alongside other top members of the company felt she wasnot fit to steer the wheel of the company during the hard times. Eventually, through hard work and consistency, she was able to sort out the company's financial issues with a bank, partner with a bigger transportation company from the north and ensured her father's transportation company did not fall into the hands of their competitors. Omoni Oboli production, *Wives on Strike (2017)* was produced to prove a point that women can get what they want, when they want it. The movie showcases how women came together to fight child marriage. All the market women agreed to go on a sex drive until a bill was passed to cancel child marriage. Eventually, some women went the extra mile to get other benefits for themselves asides the penalty for child marriage.Also *M rand Mrs* (2017) directed by Ikechukwu Onyeka show Susan the daughter of a

dry cleaner, who eventually became a lawyer called to bar. Since she had inferiority complex, she was always at the mercy of her husband, who is the son of wealthy oil merchant. With the help of her friend, whom she believed had a perfect marriage, she was able to rediscover herself and break free from the emotional trauma her husband was putting on her. After Susan gets her freedom, she soon realized that her friend only supposedly had a perfect marriage as things were not right. Her stay-at-home husband was perfect in his dealings. He always bought two pairs of everything including pants which he shared between his wife and his maid. Susan later helps her friend by paying the maid and sending her back to the village. In the movie *Dry (2014)* written and directed by Stephanie Okereke Linus was based on true-life story. Halima, a 13-year-old girl was forcefully wedded in a rural part of Africa. She eventually developed Vesico-vaginal Fistula, a disability that almost cost her life. Eventually she is thrown out of her matrimonial home, left for dead and her only daughter is given to the custody of her husband's sister. Halima was fortunate to find a benefactor who sends her to London, she ends up becoming doctor and on her first visit back to Nigeria, she realizes her only daughter too is already stigmatized because of Vesico-vaginal Fistula. She does all she can to save her daughter and uses all her connections to fight child marriage. These are all efforts by female auteurs to reposition gender stereotypes in Nollywood films by trying to re-write the narratives of women and their roles.

Conclusion

The stereotype of women in Nollywood films is in tangent with the view of Shaka and Uchendu (2012) which show the "general overview of patriarchal representation of women in Nollywood film culture, and the recurrent and consistent negative portrayal of Nigerian women in Nollywood could be an attempt to justify and continue to perpetrate some gruesome traditions of trial by ordeal which women are subjected to…" (p.27). Ukata (2010) blames the perceived misrepresentation of women in Nollywood films on a male dominated film industry which, she argues, puts patriarchy and commercial interests first at the expense of women. She remarks: The portrayal of women in most Nigerian videos is reported to be generally at variance with how real Nigerian women are in Nigerian society. There are many types of women, good and bad in any society but the videos mostly feed off the negative stereotypes that reduce women to be the

personifications of evil (p. 207). Ukata (2010) further argues that the above depiction of women partly explains how, in order to maintain their audiences, the films portray their characters in ways that align with the so-called traditional gendered roles of men as subjects and women as objects of the stories which eventually translates into the one-dimensional description of women. However, women and children form the larger part of the film audience and their side of the story will always give the types of representation they want. Hence, Shaka and Uchendu, (2012) submits that "it will be a misnomer by appropriating certain filmic conventions and methods, subverting the customary usage and turning the lens of objectivity to represent women through unbiased looking glass …that have held women framed and stilled…" (p.27). Therefore, the application of the Auteur and Nego-feminism theories will be a new direction to reposition the way gender are portrayed and expand the societal perception and responses to gender-based roles in Nollywood films. Doghudje (2019) through an exposé of the *Lion heart* (2018) by Genevieve Nnajisee the film a balanced production from a female auteur which provides a solid background on which productive dialogue about gender stereotypes in Nollywood can be anchored and questions addressed. She argues further that the issues raised are topical and patently relevant to feminist discourse on women's representation in films, and in the media generally. More so, it provides a way forward for gender-based discourse and serves as a point of reference for other female directors willing to interpret the role of women in a manner that is more accurate and truthfully reflective of their strengths and capacities" **(**Doghudje, 2019, p.90).This reorientation according to scholars ought to begin from the Nollywood video film culture, so as to correct the (mis)conceptions of several millennia about gender roles and gender identity. Hence, it is suggested that film scholars and critics need to rise up against this trend to save the Nigerian woman from further character assassination and misrepresentation locally and internationally through repositioning the role of women in Nollywood films.

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Filmography

Dangerous Days, (2007)
Producer: Charles de Lauzirika
Starring: Daryl Hannah, Michael Deeley, Harrison Ford

Glamour Girls I and II (1994)
Director: Kenneth Nnebue.
Starring: Clarion Chukwura, EuchariaAnunobi, JenneferOkere, Zack Orji, Dolly Unachukwu, Liz Benson and NgoziEzeonu.

Living in Bondage I&II (1992)
Dir. Kenneth Nnebue and Chika Onu.
Starring: Kenneth Okonkwo, Kanayo O. Kanayo, JenniferOkere. NEK Video Links.

King of Boys(2018)
Producer: RemiAdetiba
Director: KemiAdetiba
Starring:Sola Sobowale, AdesuaEtomi ,JideKosoko, OsasIghodaro, Illbliss, Reminisce, Toni Tones, Akin Lewis

Lion Heart (2018)
Producer: Genevieve Nnaji
Director: ChinnyOnwugbenu
Starring: Genevieve Nnaji, Pete Edochie, NkemOwoh, Kanayo O. Kanayo.

Wives On Strike (2017)
Producer: OmoniOboli.
Director: OmoniOboli.
Starring: OmoniOboli, ChiomaChukwuka, KehindeBankole, UfuomaMcdermott.

Mr And Mrs(2017)
Producer:ChinweEgwuage
Director: IkechukwuOnyeka
Starring: NseIkpe-Etim, Barbara Soky, Joseph Benjamin, Beauty Benson.

Dry (2014)
Producer:Stephanie Okereke Linus
Director: Stephanie Okereke Linus.
Starring: Stephanie Okereke Linus, Olu Jacobs, William Mcnamara, Klint Da-Drunk.