

# Conflicting Framings of Women in Nollywood Videos

Agatha Ukata

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

[adaukata@yahoo.com](mailto:adaukata@yahoo.com)

As men have traditionally been in power in the film industry, Theorists believe that the camera shows us the world through the stereotype eyes of the 'male gaze' (Lovey 2004).

## Abstract

The representations of women in Nollywood videos fail to depict them in ways which evaluate the sordid reality of things in the real world. To achieve this false representation, the filmmakers have resorted to reversal in roles of women and men in the society. The implication of such misconstructions is that women are made to be seen and read in both the films and in real life as outlaws and evil to their families and society as a whole. This paper aims at outlining and critically analysing the role of women in Nigerian videos using two Nigerian videos *Omata Women* (2003) and *More than a Woman* (2004) to interrogate how Nollywood videos thrive on conflicting framings of women in ways which lead to understanding how the videos reproduce societal fears and anxieties that are borne out of patriarchy and the filmmakers' bias.

## Introduction

The representations of women in Nollywood videos fail to depict them in ways which evaluate the sordid reality of things in the real world. To achieve this false representation, the filmmakers have resorted to reversal in roles of women and men in the society. The implication of such misconstructions is that women are made to be seen and read in both the films and in real life as outlaws and evil to their families and society as a whole. This paper aims at outlining and critically analysing the role of women in Nigerian videos using two Nigerian videos *Omata Women* (2003) and *More than a Woman* (2004) to interrogate how Nollywood videos thrive on conflicting framings of women in ways which lead to understanding how the videos reproduce societal fears and anxieties that are borne out of patriarchy and the filmmakers' bias. Women are represented in outrageous roles which conflict with what society knows women for, like sophisticated thieves and murderers. Women in most Nigerian videos resort to the use of charms superstitiously believed to embody magical powers like *juju* to get what they want. Moreover, women are portrayed in criminal and other evil tendencies like prostitution, roguery traits among other character portrayals, with excessive or irrational devotion as the activities which eventually ruin them. This forms the basis of interrogating women portrayals as a social construction in Nollywood videos which has no significant relationship with how Nigerian women are.

Nigerian videos have since their inception been mostly produced and directed by men and this has an adverse effect on how women are represented in the videos. Their representation tends to have a bearing with the social constructions of the society especially as that which privileges

patriarchy. Patriarchy is a form of social organisation that recognises and privileges the male as the head of the family and title is traced through the male line. The man becomes the dominant within the patriarchal society thereby reducing women to the periphery and silencing them politically, socially, economically and otherwise. Bunmi Olujinmi (2008:119) attests to the fact that film producers/directors churn out films in line with male domineering status that emanate from the patriarchal school of thought. In consequence, the woman is tempestuous, devilish and perpetually the weeping and unsympathetic character. This forms the major argument that this paper raises as being responsible for the negative representation of women in Nollywood videos.

The second reason is that of the male filmmakers' bias which also relates and feeds into patriarchy and which furthermore, informs how the various character moulds of women in Nollywood videos is achieved. The paper poses two critical questions, first, why should women characters creation be in outrageous roles and of what significance is it to the overall image of women in Nigerian videos? The second question seeks to ask why it is not other patterns of representations, and why this in particular? Such questions look at the social stratifications in the society for answers and explain how it translates in the way Nigerian film industry, mostly male dominated, insists on portraying women in conflicting images. This is seen in the various ways that bring out the bias that informs women's roles in the kinds of storylines and character representation they are made to assume in Nollywood narratives. This, arguably, may not have been so if Nigerian women become more involved in film production. Mabel Ewrierhoma (2008:115) notes the late entry of women in film production and direction in Nigeria as being responsible for the way women are portrayed in Nollywood films. But, she cautions that the "social arrangements of masculinity that the home video entrenches" should be disabused, noting that "what the world sees about the Nigerian woman through the eye of the camera" should be that which will dignify womanhood and not the misrepresentations currently going on in Nollywood videos.

To achieve this false representation, the filmmakers have employed various tactics which also form the structural pattern of the arguments that this paper will be engaged with: creating women in role reversals and using all filmic narrative techniques including songs to achieve their aims. It is the insistence to represent women in roles that mostly portray vices that continues to beg the question: why is it that women cannot be given good representations like most men characters in Nigerian videos? The paper, on this premise, challenges the representations of women in Nollywood videos as representing the concept of women as evil.

### **Engaging the Videos *Omata Women and More than a Woman***

#### ***Omata Women***

This film is produced by Okigwe Ekweh (2003) and directed by Ndubisi Okoh. The image of women in this film is the type of images that should be removed from the Nigeria video screen. This is the same way that Black responses with artistic creations sought to redeem the negative way in which the Black people have been presented, even though achieving it is such an enormous task (Ukadike: 1996, 195). The women characters in the film are represented as evil but can easily recruit other women who choose to identify with these characters either as a result of their beauty or the flamboyant social status which the camera tries to give them.

The film portrays the *femme fatale* or dangerous image of women. Here, four married women, Chinasa, Ijiele, Ifeoma and Nkechi, engage themselves in a dangerous plot to dominate their own husbands, even if this means killing them. They seek to acquire riches at all cost. Their consortium results in the formation of Onitsha Market Women Association. They tag themselves as “the life wire of the town.” They recruit other women, promising them better recognition. However, the zeal with which they pursue their goals gets the better of them as these four central characters have their families destroyed in the end. For instance, Chinasa kills her husband through the assistance of hired assassins. The primary motivation for this is the need to avoid the shame that would trail her husband’s knowledge of her extra-marital affair with Dozie. Her other motivation for doing this is the need to inherit all the worldly goods that her husband has acquired. Later, she also goes after Dozie killing him and taking his money too. Her last victim is a minor, Ejike, whom she lures into a relationship and then she dupes him of 1.5 million naira which is actually the money Ejike was given as settlement by his boss for serving him satisfactorily. She makes him hand over the money to her. However, being determined to own the money makes her swear to an oath that she had not received the money from Ejike which becomes her undoing. For, she ends up being struck dead by the deity, Ogugwu. Ijiele on her part reduces her husband, Nduka, to a mere house boy by casting a spell on him. By so doing, she destroys her own home.

Meanwhile, she also destroys her friend Ifeoma’s home. She achieves this by divulging to Ifeoma’s husband the secret affairs the latter has been engaging in with her landlord. Her motivation for divulging this information is a misunderstanding she earlier had with Ifeoma. Consequently, Ifeoma is driven by her husband to the village and asked to report herself to her parents. She is also asked to face the same village deity for a confession. She however refuses to do this and instead seeks to embark on a revenge mission which sees her pouring chemicals on Ijiele’s face and mutilating her beauty forever. It is at this point that Ijiele’s husband is released from the spell earlier cast on him. The last of the women, Nkechi, is a trained lawyer who initially seeks to practise the profession. However, her husband insists on a different idea and she is eventually set up by the husband to run a super boutique in the Onitsha Market. This compromise marks the beginning of the disintegration of their familial harmony as she comes in contact with a group of friends purporting to be running a business association. She is thoroughly proselytised into prostitution by the trio, having been made to believe that it is the fastest means of making wealth. Her husband’s knowledge of her extra marital affairs results in a fight one day and he dies in that fight. Being widowed makes her miserable and she becomes a drug addict. In one of her inebriated moments one day, she is stabbed to death by her little daughter. Her death ends the tale of four women whose behaviour leaves much to be desired. However, of interest to me in this paper is the need for a more careful examination of the portrayal of women with such low moral standards as a recurring theme in Nigerian films.

### ***More than a Woman***

This second film produced by Ossy Okeke (2005) and directed by Tarilla Thompson, responds to the *femme fatale* image which Eko and Emenyi (2002:172) identify as one popular image that has been transferred from the print media into Nigerian films, a disposition which has been greatly critiqued for continuing women’s derogatory representation in films. The film eulogizes roguery, a trend which does not in any way fit into the Nigerian movie space. Such a character will help to corrupt women as they identify with Trechia who disguises as a man when she goes

for operations but appears as a perfect beauty outside the cover-up. Her beauty can attract the audience who will judge her actions to be a welcome development because they have already identified with her beauty. At the same time, they may also feel that a person of Trechia's beauty cannot embody negativity. Besides, the camera and other film effects are employed to enhance her roguery portrayal thus, making her an enviable model rather than what she really is. A film of this construct serves no good purpose to the Nigeria film society, in the wake of increasing crime wave in the country. Such dangerous image is the type which this study on the image of women in films finds very misleading and potentially corrupting.

The female villain, Trechia, is a complete incarnation of a dangerous woman. Her embodiment seems alien to a typical Nigerian film space. She therefore can be described as an adaptation from other spaces like America as her roles are realized for the most part through special effects such as overblown actions, slow motions, among others, to match with her foreign image of "super woman." Her prowess and ingenuity, which are unfortunately used for criminality and roguery, exceed those of an ordinary woman. She is a thief who successfully shoplifts some of the most expensive and heavily guarded jewellery no matter how superb the security is at those shops. She is very resourceful and clever at organising and mapping out strategies for prospective operations. For instance, she carefully maps out her routes to avoid being arrested. Based on the way her character is portrayed in the film, we know that she is a tree without roots, since, she has no family pedigree, which in a way adds a mythical dimension to her personality. Nevertheless, she is eventually apprehended by a special squad of the state police and made to face the wrath of the law. However, the admirable portrayal of Trechia in roguery in this film could impact negatively on the image of women. Indeed, young ladies could be easily carried away by Trechia's misdemeanours. It can be argued that by trying to inter-textualise the film *Super Woman*, whose theme is foreign and does not fit into the Nigerian film space, the film makers are creating a glorified super woman thief worthy of emulation rather than condemnation.

### **Role Reversal: The Rewriting of Women in Nigerian Video Films**

The idea of role reversal as is used in this paper is to look at how roles and responsibilities which are Biblically and culturally prescribed as acceptable roles for men and women in the society have been reversed from pre-existing order or situations in Nigerian videos. The opposite role that the men and women are made to assume then makes for a reading of women as non conformist to social order in the society. The politics that surround the representation of women in non conformist roles and responsibilities in video narratives relates to the way women are erroneously viewed as outlaws and trying to bring confusion to a once ordered society.

The two videos of our analysis in this paper *Omata Women* and *More than a Woman* have depicted the theme of role reversals in Nigerian video narratives. The way women are portrayed to fit imaginary negative roles is exemplified in how Trechia is represented to assume men's role as sophisticated thief which sees her shoplifting in heavily guarded jewellery shops. Trechia's character is re-written in a way which depicts her to be more calculating in stealing than women should be. Her use of computer to map out her larceny strategies combines with the cardboard drawings where she maps out the routes to her target shops in a systematic way to give her a good mental picture of the modus operandi for each shoplifting adventure. She also uses video camera which enables her to record the organisational structures of the shops she attacks, in

order to improve upon her strategies next time. The totality of her preparation validates her professional ingenuity while at the same time portraying her as a highly sophisticated thief.

This confirms the way both Detective Banjo Daniels and the entire police force, in particular the information unit which unsuccessfully tries to capture the photograph of the thief from the shop close circuit television are humbled by Trechia's technological advancements. This highlights Detective Daniels' explanation to Trechia of this thief being a highly sophisticated thief and not just the local hoodlums, who operate because of the guns which they have at their disposal. Telling Trechia all these becomes his undoing as this piece of information makes her to know how to re-strategise and further build her confidence for more shoplifting adventures.

Another aspect where the narrative constructs role reversals is in making Trechia to be the one to steal while Dan, a man, becomes the buyer of the stolen items. This position should have been the other way round where Dan should have stolen for Trechia to buy. This chronicles the irony of roles which is given cogency in the characters' phone conversation below:

Dan: ... my partners are leaving for Europe tomorrow, so I want the goods delivered.  
Trechia: (reassuring but with some caution) Sure I will deliver.... I will deliver the goods.

During this scene that the narrative depicts Trechia assuring Dan of her ability to deliver the desired goods Trechia is already pregnant. In an earlier scene, the visuals depict Trechia and Detective Daniels doing shopping for the baby they are expecting, following Trechia's announcement and confirmation of her pregnancy. The pregnancy serves to justify the view that women are capable of performing every task during pregnancy, and pregnancy should not be seen as an excuse to exonerate and absolve women of criminal engagements. The way her strength is built as not only capable of riding her bike, but also has to run and jump over a heap of sand in a rough and steep terrain as she tries to escape from the police, gives cogency to this view. This segment of the narrative happens in her last scene of shoplifting which ironically correlates with her promise of delivering the goods, and the visuals on the race culminates in her final arrest. While her arrest ends the film narrative, her pregnancy serves to draw our attention to the lack of objectivity that underscores the filmmakers' representation of women in reversed roles. The implication of such representations is that women use their biological function as mothers to cover for most evils that they commit as people exonerate them from crime when truly pregnancy does not inhibit them. It draws on the politics of typification, which stands to portray women in ways which do not reflect how real women are. For instance, a woman who is pregnant finds it really difficult to function and to do most of the things that were easy for her to conveniently do before. It further speaks to how such role reversal representations of women lead to a misrepresentation which is capable of sending only wrong signals about women.

The misrepresentation of women in role reversals and rewriting is also a thematic concern in *Omata Women*. For instance, Ijele's name as a metaphorical fearful masquerade as well as a lioness, serves to illustrate the enormous strength that she possesses. Her character provides a re-reading of women in the Nigerian society as having undeserving power over their husbands. Her name here serves to introduce her willingness to play out the role in the narrative. The narrative informs the video patrons that her real name is Agnes but because she is aware that the name does not resonate with her strength in terms of the kinds of evils that she is capable of indulging

in, she chooses and prefers to be called by her nick name “Ijele.” The only time that we are told that her proper name is Agnes, is when her husband is first introduced and is warning Ifeoma to desist from calling his wife Ijele “for the last time if you don’t know, her name her name is Agnes.” According to Rollin (1999:305), “even when names seem nondescript, there may be artfulness in the author’s choices....Even secondary characters speak for their creators.” This position supports the fact that it is only at the introduction of her husband Nduka during part of this scene that we see him acting out his traditional role as a man who has the authority to discipline a woman and bring her under his total control. The story enunciates his manly role, as he meets his wife Ijele in the company of her lesbian friends and he orders her companions out. Just as Ijele’s friends are making their exit, Ifeoma makes her entry and he is seen also warning Ifeoma, whose introduction to the viewers also coincides with this moment. This scene constructs the authority which a traditional African man is supposed to have over his wife and children. It explains how Ngugi in *Wizard of the Crow* expounds on the idea surrounding how men assert themselves over women “Listen. Tradition is on my side, it is the man who wears the pants in the house” (2007: 435).

However, shortly after the first part of their story, patrons of the video already know that Nduka’s traditional role would be short-lived. This is because of her association with Chinasa, as we have already been introduced to her character in the third scene of the narrative. For instance, in that scene, her role of enumerating what Chinasa stands to gain with her husband’s death leaves us with a hint of her character and foreshadows many other shocking revelations. Thus, within the second half of her husband’s introduction, her role is reversed by the filmmakers to suite that which they prefer. She is depicted through the visuals adding some substance to her husband Nduka’s food and verbalizing the effect she expects from it: “as from today whatever I say you must do! You must do!” As in most Nigerian video narratives that deal with fetish powers, sound becomes a way of telling that the unusual has taken place. Once her husband Nduka swallows the food under the vigilant and monitoring eyes of his wife Ijele the earlier popular sound that tells that something unnatural is taking place is introduced. The sound becomes a telling point through which we are called upon to know that something terrible and unusual has happened.

There are very many sounds that most Nigerian video films employ especially within scenes which depict the occult world but one of them is most popularly used in most Nigerian videos that it is very easy to tell its function in terms of what follows it. However, no matter how new a particular sound which is meant to shock and cause fear is enunciated, it is always able to call our attention through its systematic shocking auditory power to shock our sensibility into believing that the atmosphere has been charged spiritually. This explains why in the narrative the danger sound is validated by Nduka’s immediate reaction of placing both hands on his chest. He does it in a manner which serves to confirm that a transformation has taken place within him which he seems unable to control. To establish the magnitude of the fetish powers on him, the sound is again repeated and this time, it is louder. The sound now follows a spontaneous reaction which sees him twisting his face and this action culminates in an unprecedented smile and hilarious shouts of Ijele and not Agnes. This contradicts his former position where he earlier warned Ifeoma not to call his wife Ijele but Agnes.

His wife's reaction at this time is brought to focus by the close camera pan that she is given which helps to depict her confirmation of the efficacy of the fetish powers on Nduka as she is seen nodding her head and smiling in approval of the transformation going on. Shortly after this confirmation, she walks out of the inner room where she was with Nduka and is depicted in a long shot as she walks to the beer parlour where she is hailed by customers and Ifeoma "Ijele! Ijele!" The hailing portrays her toughness as a strong and feared woman whose popularity is undoubted. She walks over to where Ifeoma is sitting and announces to her that she has taken care of her husband and now belongs to Ifeoma as her lesbian wife. The choice of lesbianism over heterosexual marriage is unprecedented in Nigeria since traditionally women are made to see themselves as incomplete and unimportant without husbands and such a re-conditioning of society provokes no anxiety about why lesbianism should become an issue of concern in Nollywood videos. The camera followed her back to their house where she meets Nduka still eating the food and, being impatient to have him start obeying her orders, she starts giving out orders immediately "Nduka, take this plates to the kitchen and wash them." Her husband Nduka who is now fully under the effect of the spell, willingly answers "with all pleasure I would wash them and wash them until they are sparkling clean as Ijele" (*Omata Women*). Under the influence of the spell, Nduka tells his wife that they can call her "Ijele from morning till night" and he also starts calling her Ijele too from that moment until the end of the film. This is one of the attitudinal changes in him that serves to indicate that the spell is working on him.

Another area that also portrays his unbalanced state is in the manner he responds to his wife's orders by taking the plates for washing. To ridicule his demented state as a signal to the emasculation going on in him, he is depicted in shots as he happily sings and dances all the way out of the sitting room to the back of the house where he has to wash the dishes. Besides, the camera also focuses on every bit of the washing details to validate the sudden transformation which has started in his life. From this time onward we know that Nduka has been emasculated by his wife Ijele. This scene also builds upon the idea that the wifely responsibilities have been transferred to Nduka and he graciously does them throughout the narrative until the final scene of his portrayal when the spell is eventually broken following Ifeoma's mutilation of Ijele's body with chemicals. Nevertheless, the destructive consequence of the reversal of roles which sees Ijele performing the male role in her family argues Aristotle's views which Catharine M Mackinnon (2005:50) echoes that "excellence of character...the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying. And this holds of other excellences..." Thus Mackinnon (2005:50) summarises Aristotle's position as she notes that "the sexes are different: men tell women what to do, women do it, and so on. Gender is defined as a difference, the sex difference. This has been as much social construct, imposed social fact, as philosophical argument. Human societies have tended to define women as such in terms of just such differences from men, whether real or imagined, generally enforced to women's detriment in resources, roles, respect, and rights." Contrary to Aristotle's view which is also echoed by Mackinnon which shows the order of things *Omata Women*, has represented reversal of roles in ways which contradict how men and women are read within African society as men being in charge as a demonstration that shows that what role and responsibilities one plays determines who is ruling over the other as in the dominant and the subordinate. This goes back to the concept of the family which tilts towards the Bible organisational structure which follows that husbands are heads.

In Nigeria and within the Onitsha film space in particular, it is not the duty of a man to do house chores like washing of dishes and cooking for the family or going to the market to buy soup condiments. But being under the spell, Nduka engages in these roles which the traditional society views as women's roles without realising that his role has deviated from that which the society approves for men. The narrative draws the attention of the viewers to how he has lost his sense of manhood, by using another male character, Orimili, Nkechi's husband to satirise how Nduka has allowed his wife to use him as a woman. It shows that the story consciously makes an effort to point out that his emasculated role acted out in his new responsibilities clearly identifies him as a man who has deviated from the accepted norm within the society. Thus, the story depicts Orimili taunting Nduka for asking Orimili to give him the money that he owes his wife Ijele. He not only refuses to give him the money on grounds that he did not transact any business with him, but makes the former to understand that the society frowns at men playing roles that are meant for women, like Nduka attending to his wife's errands. This culminates in his question: "Nduka, are you not ashamed of yourself going on an errand for a woman in main market?" (*Omata Women*).

The totality of Nduka's reduction by his wife Ijele into a woman, or worst still, houseboy status is dramatised through the visualising of Nduka as he carries a basket of goods on his head, while he walks behind his wife who shows him her customers in the market so that he will be able to know where to buy things. This segment adds to how the video song whose wordings at this point corresponds with the action that is taking place "*this woman go turn you to houseboy, this woman fit to kill you...*" (*Omata Women*) becomes an authorial voice which functions as the omniscient narrator in the narrative to portray women as evil. The song at strategic points is embellished with a voice-over produced by a male voice which enumerates the many ways that women have dealt wickedly with their husbands. This brings to focus how the song and voice-over builds on the change in husband and wife responsibilities' between Nduka and Ijele which sees him cooking in the kitchen and tasting for salt. At this point, the song is introduced to give value to what is happening in this family and the lyrics add value and explain that it is out of place to see a Nigerian man in kitchen cooking and suggests that such an action must have been masterminded by unusual circumstances "*if you want to marry a woman, never you marry a bad woman, because that woman fit to kill you, they will plan, plot and lie and kill, just to control their husbands for house! They will plot lie and kill just to have their way...*" (*Omata women*). The song, like Burt (1994:7) explains, has the ability to create several underlining meanings, which serves to give more explicit meaning to the story. He notes that the quality and language of music are vital aids in breaking down the objective explicitness of certain pictures where there is a need to redefine them in a way that is consistent with the intentions of the story.

To that effect, the lyric helps to depict through her that such position not only undermines the men but makes the women themselves to lose the value and essence of being women who should be loved and cared for by their husbands. Overall, Nduka and Ijele's duties as husband and wife in *Omata Women* hold in the same way that Garritano explains that "Mabel's manliness" and Joshua's "womanliness" are symptomatic of a world in disarray, and both characters suffer for their deviance. But such deviance interrogates the postcolonial nature of Nigeria that sees both men and women working in offices and industries. The implication of women also in gainful employments is that there are bound to be changes in terms of roles and responsibilities which will affect the standing traditional responsibilities and duties for men and women and



necessitates the very anxieties that see such a change as amounting to a world in disarray. This is since the husband is no longer the sole bread winner for the family and sometimes in some cases the woman has a more income generating job than the man which makes it difficult to insist on saying that men must not help out in roles which were hitherto regarded as those for women. If the woman does not stay at home but has a busy day at work then it stands to reason that by the end of the day she is also tired and the man (husband) if he gets back before her can assist with kitchen chores to make the work easier. By so doing postcolonial Nigerian family roles are becoming similar to those of the western world and Nigeria is gradually moving away from the predominantly agrarian society it used to be in pre-colonial times where specific roles were for men and others for women. This explains the anxiety of men having to share the constructed roles and responsibilities which hitherto were exclusively for women as a fallout of postcolonial reconstruction of the Nigerian society. It is such anxieties that Nigerian videos interrogate through Nduka and Ijele who exemplify how men and women should not act, and in so doing, they construct gendered norms similar to those described in "*Hostages* and *Dust to Dust*" (187). Similarly, Ijele's character exemplifies what the duo Haynes and Okome say about Mabel's character that it embodies "immense frightening power." The film condemns Mabel as a powerful woman. The perversion of her natural "roles" as mother and wife signifies her moral degeneracy" (cited in Garritano 2000:180). Such a position also stands to condemn the usurping of powers by Ijele and its connotation that is translated in the metaphorical frightening masquerade name which Ijele means even though customarily, it is only men and not women who wear masquerades and terrorize people with them. A name that invokes the concept of a masquerade helps to build Ijele's role in the story to assume a masculine trait of strength although it brings to bear the very fact that the name embodies her corrupt power of role reversal and vendetta character portrayal in *Omata Women*.

### **Song as Instrument for Judging Women as Evil in Nigerian Videos**

The song becomes the personified judge on women's characters in the film. The song is used to draw relationships that help to enunciate the various icons of wickedness that women in this video are associated with. It is through the song that the representation of the men (husband) characters are enshrined with outstanding qualities as good and stable home builders as against the women whose lust for money and quest to be at the head of affairs in the family has put the society in disarray. It further facilitates the way women are represented in order to portray how their behaviours affect the male characters. Sometimes the song is given more emphasis through a voice-over which has words loudly spoken out to represent the various conditions which men with such women as Ijele and her vicious circle of friends face as their wives. For instance, Nkechi's husband Orimili's psychological state is captured through a voice-over which accompanies the sound track of the narrative above: "*if you marry a bad woman, everyday na wahala you go dey so so find yourself for bar on top of beer bottles.*" [Its translation is that if you have a bad wife, you would be having problems to contend with which would make you to result to taking alcohol] (*Omata Women*). The song and its voice-over is used to explain the transformation which has taken place in Nkechi's life. The visuals reveal that Nkechi travelled with Onwa to Port Harcourt for two days, and abandoned her matrimonial duties for prostitution. Upon return from his trip to the village, Nkechi's husband Orimili, discovers that his wife has been away for two days. The story portrays how worried he is that she has changed from the once caring mother into a carefree mother who can abandon her children to the care of his niece (Obiageli) for two days. Her absence means that women have abandoned their roles as home

builders and that it is the men as depicted in the narrative that the responsibilities of building the home has now been shifted to. This becomes a postcolonial critique to analyse how families are negotiating their responsibilities as a result of the changing society that builds tensions based on the quest for resources which takes women out of their responsibility as care givers. The implication is that the very tensions which have given rise to women's new responsibilities are thrown back to the family to deal with especially when children are not well brought up and both the family and the society have to suffer embarrassing consequences as a result of it.

The song and voice-over are deployed strategically to bring out Nkechi's deviant behaviour and to portray how that feeling induces Orimili to take alcohol. This explains how music and the voice-over in *Omata Women* functions as an authorial commentary particularly, as they correspond with scenes where women are depicted as naturalized evils of the society. Besides, it helps to draw a similarity between the Eve's and Jezebels or Delilah's of the Bible and the women of *Omata Women*, in terms of portraying how women can take their husbands away from their destinies. Nkechi's role as it changes from good to bad like Mabel's in *True Confession*, contradicts her formal position which like that of Moses was to lead women towards actualizing an ideal society but which she compromises for money. Her latter role echoes that which according to Garritano, is "equated with the unchecked greed and insatiable desire that has infected Nigerian culture with a rampant immorality, the very immorality Moses hoped to eradicate" (187).

Aesthetically, the song is embellished with Pidgin English, few Igbo language words and proverbs which give the film its local flavour. Its aesthetic relevance is that it helps to locate the setting of the story to be Onitsha, an Ibo town in eastern Nigeria. Within this town, there is always an admixture of Igbo, Pidgin English and Standard English in most people's conversations.

The imaginary roles of women in this study reflect those of *Dark Goddess* and *True Confession* which as Emenyi and Eko affirm "satisfies patriarchy and promotes expediency to the detriment of creating a sustaining vision of reality" (178). Thus, if real Nigerian women should be seen in their proper way, Nigerian video makers must take the challenge of representing society in films to suite reality. This avocation reiterates Olujinmi's that video filmmakers should "wake up and come out of the patriarchal dreams and fantasies" (125). For according to her, "there is no doubt that there may be some women who fit into the pictures painted in the films. However, these negligible cases should not be turned into a norm" (125). The constant representation of women in Nollywood videos in outrageous ways clearly denotes the anxieties and fears of male filmmakers for successful women in the society and that is where we make a clarion call to filmmakers to outgrow their biases and patriarchal ideologies to represent society just the way it is.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has shown that women are portrayed in criminal and other evil tendencies with excessive or irrational devotions. This forms the basis of interrogating women portrayals as a social construction in Nollywood videos which has no significant relationship with how Nigerian women are. Indeed, the conflicting way of framing women from how real women are demeans them and is uncalled for. The reversals of the roles of men and women in the society and

rewriting women in ways which will lead them to be seen as evil portray women as the major cause of societal ills and subvert conventional cultures.

## References

- Burt, G. (1994). *The Art of Film Music: Special Emphasis on Hugo Friedhofer, Alex North, David, Raksin. Leonard, Rosenman*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Eko, E. and Imoh. E. (2002). "Female Portrayal in Nigeria Films: An Analysis of *Dark Goddess* and *True Confession*." *Ndunonde: Calabar Journal of the Humanities* 3. 2, 170-181.
- Evwierhoma, M. (2008). Women through the Eye of the Camera: The Aesthetics Challenge of Nigerian Films. *Africa through the Eye of the Video Camera*. Ed. Foluke Ogunleye. Manzini: Academic Publishers.
- Garrittano, C. (2000). "Women, Melodrama, and Political Critique: A Feminist Reading of *Hostages*, *Dust to Dust* and *True Confession*." In *Nigerian Videofilms*. Ed. Jonathan Hayne. Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 165-191.
- Haynes, J. and Okome, O. (1998). "Evolving Popular Media: Nigeria Video Films." *Research in African Literatures*. 29. 3, 106-117.
- Lovey, C. (2004). "Women Representing Women." [www.MediaEd.org.uk](http://www.MediaEd.org.uk) the UK media and moving image education site; accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009.
- Mackinnon, C. (2005). *Women Live-Men's Laws*. London: The Belknap Press.
- Olujinmi, B. (2008). "The Image of Women in Yoruba Video Films: An Evaluation." *Africa through the Eye of the Video Camera*. Ed. Foluke Ogunleye. Manzini: Academic Publishers.
- Omata Women* (2003). Dir. Ndububisi Okoh. Lagos: Reemmy Jes Nig. Ltd.
- More than a Woman* (2005). Dir. Tarilla Thompson. Lagos: O. C. Afasson Productions.
- Rollin, L. (1999). "Names, Ambiguous." *The Oxford Companion to Crime and Mystery Writing*. Rosemary Herbert Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wa. Thiongo, N. (2007). *Wizard of the Crow*. London: Vintage.