

## **‘Marriageism’: The self-identity of the Nigerian woman in selected Nollywood films**

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### **Abstract**

Marriage is an essential element of the family that is necessary for societal existence. In times past, the institution of marriage was totally constituted on cultural and parental dictates without recourse to the woman’s consent. Consequently, her identity was defined by culture, the environment she lived in, and her family. In recent times, there has been a redefinition of self-identity towards the institution called marriage. The 21<sup>st</sup>-century woman champions a re-structural phenomenon called ‘marriageism’ as a means of self-identity. This paper examines the identity placed on the woman by her environment, especially in the area of marriage. This study evaluates if truly the 21<sup>st</sup> century woman is free from the clutches of cultural and societal norms and how she can navigate within the patriarchal confines of the Nigerian society. Attention is given to three Nollywood films, namely *Flower Girl* (2013), *When Love Happens* (2014) and *Isoken* (2017). The films are appraised to show the concept of ‘marriageism’ identity as an ongoing phenomenon that still defines Nigerian woman. The study utilises the ecofeminism theory to show the relationship between the woman and her environment and how this plays out in her daily life.

**Keywords:** Culture, marriageism, Nigerian women, Nollywood films, patriarchy, self identity

### **Introduction**

The marriage institution is an integral part of African society; it is the focus of existence. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator. Therefore, marriage is a duty, a requirement from corporate society and a rhythm of life in which everyone must participate. Otherwise, he who does not participate in it is a curse to the community; he is a rebel and a lawbreaker. He is not only abnormal but also “under human”. Failure to marry under normal circumstances means that the person has rejected society, and society rejects him in return (Mbiti, 133). Society sees it as a means of lineage continuation; so, it is a mandatory indirect code for every man or woman to be married. Of the essence is marriage to the woman; her respect is borne out of her marital status, and she cannot afford to lose this respect by remaining single. However, as society moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people began to see marriage as a repressive societal tool to

keep the woman subservient. The feminist theory became the anchor on which their arguments were built. Phrases such as “I am enough,” “marriage is not my destiny,” etc., were slogans used to drive home their points on marriage not being necessary. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a rise in the number of educated, independent and self-made women who have climbed the ladder of success based on their wit and intellectual capability. These women are either feared in society or labelled Feminists who hate and disrespect their heads (men) in society. To create a level playing ground between the genders, marriage became a control tool for men and acceptability. Women opt for marriage so as not to be termed feminists who have no respect for cultural norms.

### **Nigerian society and marriage**

In modern society, Nigeria inclusive, with technology such as mechanisation and birth control, the male advantage has mainly become, if not entirely, redundant. However,

the patriarchal modes upheld by hoary ideology and vested interests are still part of our existence even in the globalised society. This ideology is manifest, among others, in the socialisation of children, which emphasises men as the breadwinners and decision-makers and women as mothers and homemakers. Boys are encouraged to be brave and strong, while girls are expected to be passive and pretty. This is done through, among others, fairy tales, dolls and activities such as dressing up or baking, and above all, the examples and attitudes of role models and historical figures.

From childhood, girls, in particular, are indoctrinated into the virtues of marriage, which contributes to maintaining the traditional gender roles. Beyond a certain age, an unmarried man is thought of as independent or hustling to make a living. In contrast, a woman who remains unmarried is assumed to have a problem and at once becomes a figure of pity and scorn. An unmarried man is called a bachelor; one might even find him on the list of eligible bachelors. However, apart from the old-fashioned title 'maiden' or 'spinster' bestowed on a woman, there is no polite term for an unmarried woman despite the renowned richness of the English language. As Ezeigbo rightly writes in *Gender Issues in Nigeria*, "A woman who goes through life without experiencing both wife-hood and motherhood is regarded as unnatural or unfortunate" (xv). A woman is successful or worthy of being a woman if she is married and has children.

The marriage institution remains a contentious issue in the reconstruction of an African woman's identity. There are polarisations in the literary constructions of motherhood and present marriage and traditional family institution as a women-enslaving institution beyond redemption and hence good enough for demolition. Liberal

feminists, like most African womanists and ecofeminists, believe strongly in the sanctity of marriage and family life. African feminists writing from within the continent see marriage and family life as a source of support for women liberation in Africa. Still, they insist that the social institutions of marriage and family must be reformed to allow for gender complementarity. This struggle to unite collective/communitarian values with human rights/women (Ezenwanebe, 262-76). It is this reformation of the social institution of marriage that this work pays attention to. Marriage in this work is encompassing as it looks from the meeting stage to the actual wedding stage.

The desperation attached to women, especially in their 30s, who are not yet married, leads most of them into certain acts or practices that reduce their value and turn them into sexual objects or be repressed by their families, friends, and society. It is, therefore, not shocking that Nollywood has integrated the desperation of single ladies who, though solid and self-made, are still grappling to get married, as that is the ultimate status for every woman in society. The inclusion of the theme of 'marriageism' is not only disturbing but also appalling. "Women are still socialised to believe that marriage is the most important life transition they will make" (Simpson, L06). It is imperative to recognise that women are trading some forms of independence for a status that they value, perhaps above all else, namely the identity and marriage experience. It would be inaccurate to suggest that Nigerian women are somehow forced to marry against their will, reluctantly giving up the freedom and autonomy of being single. The overwhelming majority of women seek marriage and parenthood as the ultimate expression and fulfilment of their ambitions for themselves as persons (Smith, 2010). The involvement of the

society/environment in prodding these women into this oblivion of marriage as the ultimate goal cannot be overestimated. This work utilises the ecofeminist theory to show the involvement of Nigerian society in giving these women a false goal.

### **Nollywood films and 'marriageism'**

In many cultures around Africa, a clear line is often drawn to separate men from women. This has been defined and enshrined in the unwritten laws of the land, and despite the advancement in civilisation, this difference is still very much visible. This is still being practised in Nigeria. According to Andrew, since the women liberation movement in the 1960s, women's social, cultural, political and economic life has drastically changed and progressed for the better, seemingly giving them an equal footing with men in most aspects of life. However, the male dominance of the film industry, like many other industries around the world, is still evident in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (3). Amobi brings this scenario to Nigeria by stating that, even after four world conferences on women, the Nigerian woman continues to experience marginalisation in every sphere of human endeavour. This marginalisation is often cultural because the woman is still tied to the "umbilical cord" of the society she lives in.

Still reacting to the marginalisation of women in the film industry, Andrew thinks that "today's on-screen women need to have it all, and then some; 'the gorgeous Amazonian butt kicker' with great ass snug in superheroic spandex" (59). Pevere qualifies this class of women as the "empowered" woman of corporate consumer society (13). To Byerly and Ross, women must be strong, aggressive, but still beautiful and sexy. Regrettably, this so-called tough woman is a 'testament to a still male-dominant society's contradictory responses

to women demands for equal treatment'. Andrew points out that duality is exhibited in most female characterisations in Hollywood (respect and rebellion, beauty and brains, power and submission, sexuality and timidity, and so on) (50). Many scholars worldwide have shared this position on the same subject matter, and the Nigerian film industry is not an exception, being further encouraged by the availability of different cable and satellite network services in Africa that have dedicated channels for Nollywood films.

Adjudged as the third largest film industry globally (Opeyemi, 286), Nollywood has transformed over the years from crude to professional filmmaking. A good number of its actors, directors, producers, and screenwriters are now partnering with international movie producers. Over the years, media scholars have lamented the negative representation of women in Nollywood. Okome laments that, since the release of *Living in Bondage*, the thematic preferences of Nollywood movies are based on the notions of inherited stereotyping of women perpetuated by patriarchy; stereotyped representations such as the woman being a femme fatale, gold digger, the girl-next-door, the career woman, etc. The image of the career woman is vital to the theme of 'marriageism' because this woman is successful, beautiful but still acting out the cultural precepts that make her a victim of patriarchy. Though this stereotypical representation of the career woman started in the 1980s, the new filmmakers, compared to those in the 1980s and 1990s, "are often self-conscious about their cultural situation, inheriting the sense of mission and responsibility..." (Haynes 290). This devotion allows them to reconstruct a new model for the career woman, a construction that is individualistic and communal at the same time.

### **Ecofeminism and 'marriageism'**

As a conceptual framework, ecofeminism is a socially constructed set of fundamental values and beliefs that influences how we see ourselves and the world around us (Warren, 1997). Though ecofeminism is a universal concept, it is interpreted differently according to context, just as the conceptual framework also considers contexts such as race, gender and class. Third-world countries, which Nigeria is a part of, have developed their ecofeminism concepts that reflect how women and nature are perceived in their particular contexts. Ecofeminism links natural domination and gender domination and points out that the origin of domination is patriarchy. Patriarchy is linked with institutionalised control rather than individual sexism. Institutions such as family (marriage), church, school, etc., play a significant role in the domination of women and nature. The female is regarded as a private individual and the male as a public purview to reiterate the subordination of women in a patriarchal society.

Ecofeminism can be described as a challenging, multifaceted structure. It confronts systems of patriarchy, race and class. From a feminist perspective, the notion that women are identified with nature has historically been asserted in dominant global philosophical and intellectual traditions. According to Warren, these assertions are further regarded as matters of historical fact accepted as truth. These truths are also kept alive by metaphors that describe women as chickens, cows and snakes, while nature is described as barren, virgin, fertile, beautiful, etc. This historical assertion of women as connected to nature has been problematised by some of the ecofeminist scholars who argue that the notion could re-invent the dualistic wheel of

oppression where women are abused, just as the earth is abused by humanity.

One form of domination is the marriage institution which seems to be the bane of the modern woman. With the advent of civilisation and globalisation, the modern woman still finds her identity as an individual within the emblems of the marriage institution. For African ecofeminists, the family nucleus is a means of building a balanced society where all forms of oppression and hierarchy are dissolved. They believe that a reconstruction of the marriage institution where no dualisms, metaphors, class and race exist is the solution to the domination of women and nature. African ecofeminists have realised that conflict between nature (women) and patriarchal concepts (male) is inevitable. Therefore, to limit this conflict, the African ecofeminists developed the cooperation and negotiation model between the sexes. Just like their African feminist counterparts, they believe that both sexes must work together to give strength to gender issues. Men's involvement is to reduce the stereotypical role assigned to women by society and cause a balance within the ecological sphere as dictated by the pantheistic belief system of the Nigerian society where both sexes are involved in mutual societal constructions.

This paper aligns itself with African ecofeminists who do not radically reject the notion of marriage but the repressive mental ideology of what marriage should be, which has been imprinted on the minds of Nigerian women. Like Nollywood, African ecofeminists call for a deconstruction of 'marriageism' to reflect a woman's identity.

The films of study – *Flower Girl* (2013), *When Love Happens* (2014), and *Isoken* (2017) address many of the Western assumptions challenged by ecofeminists: the irrationality and unreliability of women as creatures of nature; the superiority of moral

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laws and social institutions put forth by humans; and the valuation of physical conflict over cooperation and negotiation.

### **Societal and 'marriageism'**

The modern women face societal pressure when they get close to their 30s or above 30 and are not married. There is a sense of panic visible in their lives. This is reflected in the lives of the three main female characters – Kemi, Mo, and Isoken – in the film *Isoken*. The panic is a show of how incomplete society terms them if they are not married. Isoken summarises the pressure a modern woman faces:

It does not matter what a woman accomplishes in her life; she could find the cure for AIDS, she could find the cure for world hunger, even cancer, and still, it won't matter unless she bags herself a husband and pops out some babies. (16:16 - 16:34).

The woman undergoes double oppression: for being female and for her unmarried status. Her accomplishments in life mean nothing if she does not have the prefix 'Mrs' as part of her name. Isoken, an MBA holder and a CMO in an advertising firm, is considered incomplete because of her single status. Kelvin, a white admirer of Isoken, comments on the issue as a Nigerian phenomenon:

I understand the pressure here (Nigeria) to get married is massive. How you are perceived is so important. (16:35 - 16:40)

With all of her exposure and achievements, the modern woman still robes herself in the moral laws and standards of society. The

laws in themselves are not bad, but they pressure the female who feels she has "failed in life examinations".

Another episode of societal pressure is found within the families the women reside. In the films of study, we see that the parents of the three lead female characters oscillate between being traditional and modern. They act out the two worlds depending on the context. For all the families, we see them matchmaking their daughters with any available suitor because they feel time is of the essence on the issue of marriage. Their daughters are expected to go to the various husbands' houses to reduce the parents' worry about them.

In the case of Mo in *When Love Happens*, her mother sets up a dinner date for her and Dare, who, unknown to the parents, is her ex. Dare fits the criterion of who an eligible suitor should be, and Mo has no choice but to agree to go ahead with the status quo. The same experience goes for Isoken, who has been advertised countless times to different single men until her last set-up with Osaze yielded a somewhat positive result. Only Kemi in *Flower Girl* is saved from matchmaking embarrassment, but even then, the parents see a potential husband in any man she brings home. This is obvious when they invite Tunde for dinner and bombard him with questions suitable for a husband-to-be.

To find a suitable partner, the societal pressure these young women undergo makes some of them go on the Internet blind dates, which turn sour. Mo is a candidate for such exploration when she randomly meets five men on her desperate search for a husband. The first man, Leo, is a stuck-up nerd; the second, a talk-to-death fellow who discusses his job all through; the third, a scrub who could not pay for his drink; the fourth who likes his voice than others; and finally, the fifth who is a sexual

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pervert. One would imagine that, after all the adventurous and humiliating attempts, she will stop, but, No! "Ladies ain't smiling", so she has to step up her game because "widening one's option is not a show of being desperate".

Social media has also added to the pressure and expectation to be married. The Internet presents an avenue to mount pressure on the females in the films. In the film *Isoken*, Isoken is seen going through an article on the Internet with the caption: "For Women Who Want Kids 'The Sooner the Better': 90 Percent of Eggs Gone By Age 30" (05:31). This caption is enough to put the woman in a state of turmoil and unnecessary agitation to get married. Apart from the Internet, we also see religion being used to put pressure on the woman. Isoken's aunt believes she is cursed and asks to take her for cleansing:

About a year ago, she said I have a spiritual husband that is chasing me, so she needed to take me to her pastor for deliverance. (19:35 - 19:40).

One is left to wonder how many women are in various deliverance meetings just for the sake of being able to get married. The anointing oil massage and speaking in tongues done in the search for a suitor are degrading.

The issue of societal pressure is also seen in females antagonising one another, especially when one is married and the other is not. In *When Love Happens*, Mo meets Mary, an old-time school friend, at a supermarket, and one can see Mary gloats over the fact that she is married and Mo is not. Throughout the conversation, Mary identifies her strengths and achievements through her marriage without viewers learning anything tangible about her; she

rants eloquently about her marital achievements:

He loves my shape...(12:47)

He is into importing and

exporting...(13:30)

He is loving, caring and generous...(13:31-33)

I've got the cutest baby in the world...(13:36)

All of these are Mary's accomplishments as a woman, which place Mo at a disadvantage. When Mo is asked about her marital status, she is seen rushing out of the supermarket in a bid to save her face.

Isoken also goes through such hostility during the wedding ceremony of her sister. The first family member to be seen prays for her: "God will do your own, you hear" (02:02-03), and her cousin's wife adds:

You are taking this very well.

If it is some people, they will be crying and hiding by now.

First, it was your sister,

Femeh, now Osato, your

younger sister! My dear, she

should be the one serving at

your wedding, not the other

way round. (02:04-36)

Isoken bemoans her predicament to her friends after all the marriage vituperation:

So I expect a few 'God will do your own oh' or 'Don't

worry; your own will soon

come', but my family is not

playing. Even that my

deadbeat cousin's wife, who

has three children under five

at twenty-five, that one has

something to say to me. I

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wanted to slap that her nonsense mouth.

Yes, I'm thirty-four, and two of my younger sisters are married. No, I don't have a boyfriend, and no, I am not going to kill myself; I am freaking fine!" (03:15-45)

### **Patriarchal status and 'marriageism'**

In the films under study, it is evident that society expects certain qualities and pedigree from the man a woman intends to marry. In the film *Isoken*, Isoken's mother and aunt give her the résumé of Osaze, the potential suitor:

He is from America, and his mother happens to be the president of our church society, and he is from a very good home. The boy na okpeba (handsome) oh! (05:31-34)

Also, in *When Love Happens*, Dare, Mo's suitor, is described as such:

I heard you graduated with Honours in your Master's programme, that's quite impressive. (48:47)

It seems to make a good husband; a man is expected to be of a particular breed, and once he is not up to that level, he is termed a hustler. Being a patriarchal man living in a patriarchal society, Umar, in *Flower Girl*, understands that money and status are essential in marriage. This is why he puts his marriage to Kemi, his fiancée, on hold until he becomes a partner in the law firm where he works. Even women are not left out of this patriarchal ideology of pedigree before compatibility. Agnes, Isoken's friend,

believes that marriage should be a union of two great families:

All these butterflies you are feeling for Kelvin (hisses), na butterfly we go chop?... Osaze is the real deal... your marriage should be a union of two Edo great families. The aso-ebi will be on flick. I can imagine Flavour and Olamide playing at the wedding. Wetin you come dey find again? (21:41-45).

As described by Agnes, marriage is a business merger that must continue to be practised to maintain the laid down patriarchal rule of society. Even Isoken gives us a patriarchal checklist of what Osaze stands for:

If there were a checklist of what a great guy would be, Osaze would tick every box. Ah, ah, one person, handsome-check, successful-check, ambitious-check, great kisser-check, check, check. (20:49-59)

The status of the men in the films also affects their attitude. They are arrogant, egoistic and self-centred men who vainly boast about their achievements. In *When Love Happens*, Dare cheats on Mo and, as a patriarchal man, blames it on his raging hormones:

Mo, see, I can explain what you saw... Look, that girl means nothing to me, and it was purely physical; nothing more. It was just physical, nothing else. It was nothing

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serious... You know it is you  
I love. (1:35:26 - 1:36:26)

No apology, nothing. Instead, he is more concerned about her understanding his motives than how his actions have hurt her. Cheating is shaped to normalcy in a patriarchal society; it is an outlet to release pent-up emotions on a physical level and to seek solace from a boring wife, as explained by Mo's boss. Also, Osaze displays his level of arrogance despite his level of exposure while at Isoken's home. Though he recognises how ambitious and successful she is, Isoken remains on the back burner in his life: "...so I believe I can build a great future with Isoken behind me." (25:36-52)

To a patriarchal man, no matter the height of a woman's success, a woman will always be a second-class citizen because her place is in the "other room" and not the public room. They are burdens that only money can placate. This is evident in *Flower Girl* when Umar proceeds to marry Kemi as a yardstick to become a partner in the law firm where he works.

Furthermore, dressing is a feature used by Nollywood producers of the films of study to show the patriarchal personality of men. Dare, Osaze, and Umar dress formally. This is symbolic because it shows how strong, stiff and stoic they are. When they try to dress less formal, they become uncomfortable and out of their league. They, therefore, expect to see their women conforming to such formal, restricted and uptight mould. The patriarchal man is so rigid in his ways that any other way is unacceptable. Even Tunde Kulani, who is not a patriarchal man, acts as such to conform to the norms of the society in which he lives. He pretends to be a playboy and, as such, is termed a 'stud' by people around him.

There is a comparative paradigm made between the stoic patriarchal men and the reconstructed modern men in the films. In doing so, the films show the difference between slavery (patriarchy) and freedom. Dare, Umar and Osaze are compared to Tobe, Tunde and Kelvin. One thing that separates these men is that they are men who have remodelled the patriarchal checklist. They are men who allow their women to be independent. Isoken discusses Kelvin with her friends:

With Kelvin, I just feel like I can be myself. No need for forming, no need for packaging. (21:00-08)

Kokua replies her thus:

Maybe because there is no pressure to be perfect around him. (21:08-12)

This freedom credo is also shown when Mo describes Tobe:

You are my best friend. It is because you are a part of my life; that is what makes you special. I can tell you absolutely anything; it is not everyone I can do that with. (1:31:13)

One realises that these women are drawn to these reconstructed men because there is no form of pretence and lies. This brings one to question why these women still hold on to patriarchal men. Kelvin explains it as being afraid to be perceived otherwise by society which the woman still depends on for survival.

Also, within the patriarchal confines, women are expected to act in specific ways,

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and once a woman does not follow the rules, she becomes a "market woman and not a proper woman". The woman is also envisaged to look feminine, which means soft, predictable, fabulous and artificial. Agnes refers to the norm during her discussion with Isoken and Joke:

No one expects to see the real you on the first date. (09:30-53)

Therefore, the woman is left to trail the path of perfection birthed out of patriarchal standards influenced by society. This is to emphasise that, even though women live in modern times and claim to be modern women, they still find themselves stuck to the old ways due to fear of embracing the unknown.

### **Taming nature and 'marriageism'**

The exploitation and restraint placed on women are also placed on nature in the films of study. All the women – Mo, Kemi and Isoken – have careers that link to nature (environment). Mo is an event planner; Kemi is a florist; Isoken is into advertising to showcase art. On their jobs, they relate with people and tend to capture special moments within their environments. On the other hand, Dare and Osaze are into oil and gas, while Umar is a lawyer. The havoc wreaked by the oil and gas industry on Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. The Niger delta is an example of chaos capable of being caused by the mining of oil. Men and women become jobless, and children are left to starve to death due to these activities. This company exploits the land's natural resources for monetary gain without any consideration given to the welfare of the occupants of the land, just as Dare and Osaze exploit and dehumanise the women in their lives. Dare hurts Mo, whom he calls an

"errand girl" due to the nature of her job, and Osaze is satisfied with Isoken being behind him. Hierarchical dualism, which is frowned upon by ecofeminists, is placed on nature/woman versus reason/man.

In addition, the first scene in the film *Flower Girl* opens with a red rose (nature) being snatched from the younger Kemi. This refers to Kemi being disassociated from her true identity and freedom. Umar, who snatches the flower from her, treats her like a child and calls her love for marriage a mere fantasy:

We are not children anymore, Kemi. For a long time now, I have moved on, and you are stuck in la-la land(fun land). (17:08-17)

In calling her a child, he compares nature to a fun, playful, wild and irrational being, and this is how he relates with her: a woman that needs saving from herself. Furthermore, Umar is seen becoming uncomfortable around nature while at the African Chili Restaurant, which carries a yellow hibiscus emblem. He is stiff and unresponsive to Kemi, and he breaks up with her at Lagoon Restaurant facing the water. All these are just ways whereby Umar detaches from nature. The same red rose taken from Kemi is symbolically used by Tunde while proposing to her. In a sense, Tunde is giving her back her identity, which Umar took. Nature becomes a part of their love, not to be battered but adored.

In *Isoken*, hair is metaphorically used to highlight how nature is perceived. Isoken's friends believe that being on natural hair is not feminine and soft, nor glamorous. This view alludes to the wildness associated with nature. Furthermore, her choice of hair also reflects the man she is with; when she is on artificial

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hair, Isoken is seen with Osaze, who likes them soft and glam; when on natural hair, she is with Kelvin, who likes them authentic and untamed. This perspective of Kelvin can be associated with his job as a photographer, where the environment (nature) is his source of inspiration. Kelvin displays his love of nature when he takes Isoken around Lagos to appreciate her environment and an art gallery. Isoken's home is also alive with different nature-based paintings and prints showcasing her love for art and nature, while Osaze's home reminds her of a "man's cavey". Isoken's natural hair is derided by Osaze's mum, who complains:

And this hair just won't do.  
You look like eh, eh. How  
can I put it nicely? Like a  
rural girl (04:59-05:09)

Calling her a rural girl links her with nature because the rural environment enables nature to be appreciated, unlike the city where globalisation has left its negative impact.

### **Changing the narrative of 'marriageism'**

In changing the narrative, the modern woman must reconstruct her ideology to be individualistic instead of communal, where pressure is allowed to penetrate. Isoken's father surmises:

Since you were a little child,  
you have always taken it  
upon yourself to ensure  
everyone else is happy, often  
to the detriment of your own  
happiness... It is not your  
duty to make everybody  
happy. You don't have to  
make a decision that will  
make you miserable just  
because you want to please

anybody, not me, not even  
your mother. Nobody should  
put you under such pressure.  
(13:59-14:10)

Isoken is advised by her father to live her life devoid of societal influence. She demonstrates her willingness to allow social influence in her life when she allows others to say Yes to the marriage proposal from Osaze: "I wanted to marry because everyone wanted me to." (17:21-26)

The strength of a woman emanates from individualism. A woman does not define herself based on patriarchal norms but on what makes her happy and genuinely fulfilled.

Love is also a feature that is noteworthy in the films. Mo, Isoken and Kemi choose love over pedigree concerning marriage. In defining what love means to a modern woman, Mo and Tobe, in *When Love Happens*, give an explicit exposé:

I am not that kind of a  
girl. I don't want a man  
to shower me with gifts.  
No! I want a man who  
will respect me, respect  
us. I want love. I want  
faithful love. I want true  
love. (1:38:04-27)

To the modern woman, gifts cannot be exchanged for love. Love is the sole reason why Kemi walks out on Umar on their wedding day. It is the only ingredient for the woman's survival; along with it comes freedom and happiness. Alarming is the rate at which Nigerian mothers encourage their daughters to get used to a loveless marriage just because they cope in such. A cycle of frustrated and embittered women is recycled year in and out. Kemi rejects this cyclical

phase when she is advised to cope with her union with Umar:

Don't worry. Whatever you are feeling, you will get used to it. (1:15:13-17)

It takes Kemi the will to be free from slavery and her love for Tunde to reject this "getting used to" repressive state. She responds thus: "Mummy, I don't want to get used to it. It is not right." (1:15:20-29)

In changing the narrative, these women, who have grown from being the timid and repressive females seen at the beginning of the films, stand up for their freedom and survival. Isoken stands up to her mother, who has been a thorn in her flesh in her pursuit of a suitor. Isoken stands her ground, saying:

Enough, mummy! Enough! I nearly married Osaze, who would have made me miserable just because I wanted to please you, so that maybe just for once in my life, I can say I finally did something to make mummy happy, to make you proud of me. Still, I know now that will never happen unless I do exactly what you want me to do, and that's not going to happen because, you know what, I'm not normal. I never have, and I never will be. So, the earlier you start to accept that, mummy, the better. (25:07 - 26:05)

With this outburst comes freedom and the release of a lost voice. The mother is shocked and realises she has lost her prey. An exciting occurrence is the show of

pleasure and happiness visible on the face of Isoken's father. He helps to convey her to meet Kelvin, the love of her life. Kemi's father likewise helps in telling Kemi Tunde's whereabouts and helping her in finding love. This shows that men and women must work hand in hand to achieve this change. None is susceptible to change than the other. Also visible is the fusion of old (marriage) and new (reconstructed ideology) in creating a balanced society for modern women to explore. All women under study end up with the men of their choice, not as society dictates but as their hearts and newness dictate.

### Conclusion

This paper has explored the impact of patriarchy on the modern woman and, by extension, nature and how this has affected the woman's sense of identity and worth, using different examples from three Nollywood films. This assertion has been examined from the perspective of societal pressure, male dominance and natural destruction. This paper recommends changing the ideology of marriage as a sense of accomplishment for the woman; there is a need to reconstruct the ideology governing marriage to create a balanced society where hierarchy/patriarchy is demolished.

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