

Communicating Gender Differences through the Paralinguistic Mode of Drama as Evidenced in Selected Igbo Plays

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Abstract

Drama is a literary genre whose nature lends itself to linguistic (literary) and paralinguistic (non-literary) modes of communication. Therefore, for an effective and affective communication of desired meaning to take place in drama, the two modes have to technically interact. The use of the two modes calls for an analysis of each of them. Often times, analysts or critics concern themselves only with the linguistic mode to the detriment of the paralinguistic mode. It is against the need for an effective and affective theatre communication that this paper attempts studying the paralinguistic elements or devices that account for communicating gender differences using these four Igbo plays, namely, Udo Ka Mma (UKM), Nwata Rie Awọ (NRA), Nke M Ji Ka (NMJK) and Obidiya (OB). The study adopts a communicative act analysis approach to analyzing movements and actions, dramatic props and dreams as dramatic devices for realizing effective meaning in dramatic performances. However, the study holds that, it is the roles of female characters in a play that determine movements and actions that would be couched in its title. Again, the dramatic intentional fabrics used around characters tend to mark the female characters, while unmarking the male ones, thereby limiting the female characters to the domestic domain while the male characters are not limited but rather operate in the public domain. In essence, just as the linguistic mode of communication renders women invisible, so also does the paralinguistic mode.

Key words: Gender identity and gender role, Gender communication, and Dramatic performance.

1.0 Introduction

Gender identity or role in relation to dramatic genre cannot be adequately analysed or comprehended unless subjected to the confines of paralinguistic communication. A linguistic or literary analysis alone of drama, offers us a limited window into the meaning of life and its living, hence the need for extra linguistic or non-literary information. Gender identity is one's deep-seated sense of maleness or femaleness. It is also a reflection of an individual's labelling by others as a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, a male or a female. Gender role on the other hand, refers to the extent people view themselves or by others as being masculine or feminine and playing the activities associated with either of them. Masculinity or femininity is socially defined, and varies from culture to culture. It is the gender in which a child is reared. It is this assigned gender that determines gender role as well as gender identity (Griffith and Scott, 1985). Gender identity or role is programmed by a complex series of biological and psychological processes: chromosomal, gonad, hormonal, morphological and assigned genders (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972). Moore (1994) advances a question-answer proposal of "who a woman is?" and by extension, "who a man is?" According to that proposal, it is one who has female or male biological characteristics, and whose behaviour is culturally determined by gendered expectations relating to the socially constructed distinctions.

1.1 Theoretical and Empirical Studies

Communication as the sharing of meanings of a discourse by participants is concerned with the sending and receiving of messages through a medium. It is essential to all social life and cultural systems, so much so that it is often taken in anthropological theory to be the paradigm of all cultures and all social organizations (Seymour-Smith, 1986). According to Seymour, it exists in two major modes: the symbolic (linguistic), which involves words either in a spoken or a written language, and the substantive mode (paralinguistic), which entails concreteness of materials. In this study, we are concerned with the substantive mode, which is the expression and moderating of gender thoughts, feelings, emotions through movements, actions and other paralinguistic features capable of communicating gender differences. The communication system and its modes of interaction are influenced by power. Leith (1983:147) notes that, "language has a vital part to play in the exercise of social power...the connotations that become criteria originate with the socially powerful" and which include the linguistic and the paralinguistic. It is this combination of verbal and nonverbal approach to powerful flow of communication that make Amase and Kaan (2013) in their study of oral satiric communication of Tiv oral poetry observe that verbal and nonverbal communication combine to give an effective and comprehensive communication, when they note Nwoga (1981) as saying that satire is the verbal equivalent of actions like tying a stolen object around the neck of the thief and parading him through the village. In other words, both aspects of communication as they relate to drama performance are Siamese twins, which cannot effectively move without each other.

Communicating gender differences is a complex issue. Various explanations have been advanced for its complex nature. Lakoff's (1975) dominance theory that men have upper hand in the use of language, and Maltz andorker's (1982) two culture theory that men and women make use of different languages offer some useful explanations. However, can their explanations, word choice, and the use of symbols or silences fully account for all the intricacies involved in communicating gender differences? Are male and female differences marked in only one way or in varying ways? In an attempt to answer the above questions, Tannen (1993) advances three proposals on how the process of socialization can lead to a difference in both inter-gender and intra-gender communications. According to the first, conversational style: men tend to see conversations as negotiations, which they have to achieve and maintain an upper hand, and protect themselves from others' attempt to bring them down or push them around. On the other hand, the women socialize by seeing the world as a community and focus on their connections as negotiations for closeness in which individuals try seeking and giving confirmation, support and to reach consensus (Tannen, 1993).

A second communication difference proposal lies in the use of rapport talk. The women use it to discuss similarities and match experiences while men use it to discuss knowledge and display skills (Tannen, 1993). In rapport talk, women seem to prefer discussing about their personal lives and feelings, while men prefer to discuss activities and events. The third is a mixed-sex conversation where men lecture and women listen and give support. Tannen notes that a mixed-sex conversation places the woman in a double-bind situation, because if she speaks in a way expected of a woman, then she is seen as an inadequate leader, but if she speaks in a way expected of a leader, she is seen as an inadequate woman. Tannen (1994) and, Heaton and Blake (1999) agree that men use the 'instrumental style' while the women use the 'expressive style'. The instrumental style focuses on identifying goals and finding solutions while the expressive style refers to the expression of emotion and it has a perspective that is sensitive to how others feel.

Goldschmidt and Weller's (2000) analysis reveals that emotional content of speech is significantly higher for women than for men, and this corroborates those of Tannen (1994), and Heaton and Blake (1999). Nnaemeka's (1996) study exposes how Achebe objectifies women as going and coming with mounds of foo-foo, pots of water, market baskets, fetching of kola nuts, being scolded and beaten before they disappear behind the huts of the compounds while his male characters, from Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* to Ikem in *Anthills of the Savannah* are endowed with big egos. Qusseyonu (1996) notes the use of oral art forms like myths, proverbs, folktales, which writers borrow into written art forms to bring to fore unmarkedness in depicting male characters and markedness for the female ones in African mode of communicating gender differences. For example, 'The Quarrel between Earth and Sky', 'Why the Snake-Lizard Killed His Mother' and 'The Mosquito and Ear' are oral art forms used by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* to communicate differences between the male and the female characters.

McManus (1999: 110-113) outlines four basic locations from which nonverbal communication patterns originate and they include voice, face, body and environment. In voice, the cultural perceptions or expectations are that women will have higher pitch, less resonance, more varied intonations, and a generally softer voice; in mixed group they will talk less and let themselves be interrupted, while the opposites are for men. Women employ more facial signals of submission. They smile, cry, look hurt, and maintain eye contact for a longer time more frequently than men. Their bodily expressions yield space more easily than men for they maintain an enclosed appearance, with arms folded or legs crossed or both close to the body, hands closed, and head tilted. Women also will put on more brightly coloured and decorative dresses including accessories such as jewellery more than men, and they will use touch to indicate closeness and affection, such as hugs. Last is environment, where women claim limited personal space and use colour and objects to convey mood, while men use colour and objects to show power. All what McManus (1999) notes in the study under reference relate to our present study of paralinguistic communication using the dramatic genre, and it is re-echoed by Nwabueze (2005) as seen in 1.2.

Finally here, the study of Kur and Edegoh (2010) notes that Nigerian home movies influence the young people's attitude in terms of cultural values according to their gender markings. Chijioko's (2006) observes in *Okwu Igbo Nke Atọ* (1985), *Olu Igbo Nke Atọ* (1985) and *Ogugu Igbo 3* the sexist communication strategies employed by Igbo primer writers marking gender. Chijioko's study reveals that language activities revolve around girls playing passive and servile roles (sweeping the compound, washing plates, assisting their mothers in cooking etc), while boys engage in active and more tasking roles (cutting grasses for the goats or taking them out for grazing, accompanying their fathers to tap palm wine or harvest palm fruits, hunt games etc). All these revolve around gender groupings in terms of identity and role. In the same manner roles are assigned to different genders in real life situations, so also are roles assigned to them in dramatic performance hence the relevance of the next subsection.

1.2 Drama as a Performance

Drama as a performance is an integrative discipline that challenges the hierarchy of psycho-motor,

affective and cognitive skills, because in the enactment of a scene, all three are in use (Hilton, 1987). It is the only literary genre endowed with imitation, impersonation, and a deliberate interest in costume, modulation of voice, gesticulation and movement in rhythm with the idiosyncrasies of the characters being imitated (Nwabueze, 2005). The approach adopted here, attempts answering the question: what paralinguistic elements are used to communicate gender differences in terms of identity or role in the plays of study? To this extent, the study looks at theatricality as movement and action, as well as a stagecraft with a view to identifying how these communicate gender differences, using some selected Igbo plays. Numerous Igbo plays exist, from which we would have drawn illustrations but for space and time constraint, we limit ourselves to only four plays, namely; *Udo Ka Mma* “Peace is sine qua non”, *Nwata Rie Awo (O Ju Anu)* “When a child eats the toad (He detests the meat)”, *Nke M Ji Ka* “A bird at hand worth more than millions in the bush” and *Obidiya* “Her husband’s heart”.

1.3 Synopses of Study Plays

Udo Ka Mma (UKM) is a play, which can be classified as a ‘tragicomedy’ or as ‘vaulting ambition’ using the traditionalist and thematic classificatory modes respectively. Tragedy because of class struggle, which leads to the loss of lives and property as Eze Obiekwe (king) and Maduka (peasant) draw their respective communities, Umuobija and Ndiikpa into sudden war characterized by high economic blockade. Vaulting ambition because of Obiekwe’s insistence on dispossessing Maduka his ancestral land of inheritance noted for its strategic location and fertility. In spite of the fact that the king’s brother and other confidants of his reiterate the fact that the king’s grandfather mortgaged the land in question twice to Maduka’s grandfather, the king stuck to his gun. In Igbo tradition, mortgaging a piece of land twice amounts to outright sale. All advice and plea that sue for peace fell on deaf ears. Consequently, a bloody war breaks out and Maduka’s community defeats that of King Obiekwe. Thus, the king’s selfishness overrides his sense of custodianship of the people’s tradition as well as his socio-political role model. However, the conflict is resolved when Dike, Obiekwe’s son marries Egondū, the daughter of Maduka, his father’s arch enemy.

Nwata Rie Awo (O Ju Anu) – NRA is a tragic play involving Aworo, Obioma and Qdinchefu as main characters. Aworo, the only son of Obidike and Nwamgbogo is stubborn and plays truancy, runs around with women, especially widows, hence his parents lament every now and then. Aworo’s wrestling skills can only be compared to those of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*. As Aworo defeats Akatoosi (a renowned wrestler), Obioma out of infatuation, falls in love with him. She jilts many suitors, including the one that was to pay her dowry the very day she elopes with Aworo. Latter, the marriage is haphazardly consummated as Aworo’s parents force him to seek the consent of Obioma’s parents. In order to remove Obioma from his life, Aworo feigns food poisoning by his wife and as Abangwu tradition demands; Obioma including their only daughter, Qdinchefu is sent packing to her natal home. Latter, she and her daughter are abducted by Aworo and sold into slavery to the highest bidder. Fifteen years after, Aworo marries Qdinchefu not knowing that she is his daughter. Because incest has been committed, the gods of the land inflict sickness and trauma from grotesque appearances to his new found love. As Aworo inquires from the dibija, he finds out the cause of his new wife’s incessant ill-health and its only remedy was to bring his first wife back. It is this first wife that will locate the whereabouts of their daughter, and then the problem will be solved. This is done and on arrival his first wife (Obioma) discovers that her co-wife is their daughter. Immediately, Aworo runs into the room and commits suicide.

Nke M Ji Ka (NMJK) is a story set in the colonial era to mark the white man’s erosion of the religion, psyche and government of the Igbo man. Ugochi the heroine of the narrative, in self rediscovery protests against obnoxious traditions of Umuemelele kingdom, which held her and her likes back. The traditions range from marginalization of women as a result of lack of male child to the deposition of twins in the evil forest. At the inception of the play, Loolo Ugochi is seen lamenting because she begets only girls for her king who desires by all means, not only a crown prince to the throne but also lineage continuity at all cost. After consulting the herbalists, diviners and dibijas, and sacrifices of atonement and cleansing made, her situation gets worst. All she and their four daughters get now is shouting, beating and all sorts of harassment, not only from the king but also from the king’s elder sister and second wife. Eze Onyekwere takes a second wife whose purpose of marriage is to beget a male child and nothing short of that for the king. One day Eze Onyekwere’s sister, Ogooma dreams where his brother took two chicks that ran into his compound outside, saying they were not his. Latter, a man came with two bulls saying that they belong to Eze Onyekwere and while he was telling the man that they were not his, the man insisted, and suddenly the two bulls turned into two young men. In trying her fate elsewhere, Loolo Ugochi joins the white man’s church, baptizes and changes her name to Lydia, which was misinterpreted as *o lu di ye* “The ‘marrier’ of her husband” and all these violate the tradition of Umuemelele kingdom. Onyekwere bans her from his compound and she runs to Pastor Daniel who sent her back to her husband arguing that the church cannot house a pregnant woman. But the pastor does that with security aid from the District Commissioner who cautions that he would deal ruthlessly with Eze Onyekwere, should he harass his wife any further. Meanwhile, Ugochi gives birth to twins (Pita and Pol), another abomination in the kingdom; the twins are deposited in the evil forest. The church rescues them and the king orders the youth to burn down the church

building and kill any member found there. King Onyekwere is jailed for five years with hard labour and while in prison, he is converted to Christianity. On gaining freedom, he baptizes and changes his name to Brother Samuel. In the church, he reunites not only with his family but also with his sons, Pita and Poł. The people of Ụmụeeme demand he comes back immediately to occupy his throne or all the rights and privileges therein would be forfeited. Onyekwere in peace and contentment replies, “What I have at hand is greater than that you have to offer me” and this where the title of the play draws from.

Obidiya (OB) is one of the greatest tragedies as well as revenge ever recorded in modern Igbo dramatic culture because of the inherent danger in land feud. In this play, triad or ‘O’ characters, Obidiya, Onuma and Oriaku are identifiable. Obidiya is Onuma’s wife and the bread winner of the family. While Obidiya goes out, in order to fend for the family, Onuma stays at home to receive gift items her wife buys from her business trips. The couple seems to be so intimate that; they hardly can do without each other. In spite of their childlessness, the couple lives in peace and harmony until Oriaku becomes so passionate about dispossessing Onuma his land of inheritance. The land in dispute is fertile and located at a strategic position and this makes Oriaku, who is also a money ritualist, swear to dispossess Onuma his land. The land case is tried by their community, Ụmụegbu and Onuma wins. Oriaku dissatisfied with the ruling of the community’s judiciary, appeals to the orthodox court and loses again. As Onuma and his wife contemplate on how to show gratitude to all that rallied around them during the trial moment, especially the magistrate, death came knocking. Series of portend came foregrounding Oriaku’s resort to jungle justice, which leads to the death of Onuma. These include the appearances of a python, a black and big millipede as well as a viper crawling into Onuma’s house in the day time. Other portends include the perching of vultures on the roof of people’s houses as well as soldier ants ravaging their pots of soup, causing innocent children to starve to death. All these bad omen show that the land has been desecrated and the gods’ wrath also imminent. In order to satisfy his vaulting ambition, Oriaku hires assassins who killed Onuma while his wife was away on one of her usual distant market business trips. Obidiya seeks for revenge and completely wipes Oriaku and his family. However, Obidiya’s effort is complemented by that of the gods in wiping away Oriaku and his family both home and abroad. The play ends when the heroine commits suicide in order to join her late husband, which according to her, is where their love will continue uninterrupted.

2.0 Movement and Action

The actors in a play are rarely mundane. They impersonate, imitate and embody the qualities of real persons they are representing. In acting, characters make movements in space and time, which involve changing positions or locations on stage. It could also be a gradual or dramatic change in attitude, opinion, policy or anything one does or plans to do. Related to movement is action. An action is doing something for a purpose; hence impersonation and imitation are embodiment of action. It is also a movement or act that one can perform on a particular occasion for a particular purpose in a given space and time. We can also refer to the important, exciting or significant things happening in space and time as action. It could be overt or covert. Action is preparatory, sincere and essential to the movement of plot, which brings it about particularly, in the realization of dramatic objectives; and for this reason, movement and action become difficult to be separated into two different entities (Tennyson, 1967). Gesticulation is a type of movement that one makes with the hands or arms, even facial expressions often while talking because one is describing something that is difficult to express in words. Movement and action are in rhythm with the idiosyncrasies of the characters being imitated or impersonated. In dramatic actions, actors use their bodies and minds in rhythmic patterns to produce actions or movements, which aggregate real physical and psychological lives of different men and women. The objective of this work is to demonstrate how different movements of actors, which are paralinguistic in nature, communicate gender differences.

2.1 Physical

Chukuezi’s *Udo Ka Mma* (Peace is Supreme) exposes a major incident where King Obiekwe and Maduka are engrossed in a land feud. The conflict draws attention to the early intervention role of women in a land feud in order to avert war and its attendant consequences, hence Obidiya inquires:

Obiekwe nna anyị nke a ihu dị gị otu a? (*O wee welite olu ya n’iwe*) O bụ maka ala Uhu Ụmụezeukwu. Maduka na ndị otu ya! (*O gwuzoro ọtọ duọ isi sị:*) Eziokwu, aga m eme ha otu n’obodo a(8)

(Obiekwe, our master, why do you look so downcast? (*He raises the tone of his voice in anger*) It is about that land at Uhu Ụmụezeukwu. Maduka and his people! (*He stands and swears*) Truly, I will ruthlessly deal with them in this town)

In a family setting, when the head of the household is upset, every other family member is affected, particularly his wife, and this prompts Obidiya’s inquiry. In Igbo tradition, wives are expected to assist minimize stress on their husbands. The inherent danger in a land feud as exposed in the play is between King Obiekwe (the heart cannot rest until it gets what it wants) and Maduka (he who has people is greater than he who has wealth) as the former develops a strong desire for the latter’s ancestral land of inheritance. Insensitivity, no matter at

what level accounts for poor state of a group or nation's citizenry in having leaders who remain adamant in the wake of declining security and performance... indices (Ezekwesili 2013). However, land has been a major source of conflict in Igbo land and elsewhere, especially where its demand is greater than its availability. The movement highlights not only the extent families and properties in these communities were destroyed, but also what land feud did to the socio-economic development and political relationships built over the years between the two communities, in a twinkling of an eye. It becomes catastrophic as King Obiekwe refuses to heed any advice that sues for peace, on the excuse that he cannot bring himself low for his kinsmen to show him the boundary of his ancestral land. The queen, Obidiya like the present day "first ladies" tries to influence her king's stance in the matter but all to no avail (8). She advises the king to consult with the elders of the land for proper adjudication. Like Calpurnia in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Obidiya is silenced, thus:

(*N'iwe*) Taa nwaanyi mechie onu gi...Obidiya, i leliala m (*O wee gwuzo otọ bawara Obidiya mba*). I kwuo udi okwu a ozọ gi alaa be nna gi... (9).

(*In a rage*) Shut up your mouth woman, you have disrespected me (*Stands up and scolds Obidiya*). If you try this again, I will send you packing to your father's household...

Obiekwe always stands up in a rage to swear, to threaten or to scold. His idiosyncrasies here are intended not only to dwarf the person and idea of Obidiya, but also to demonstrate his superiority over her as he threatens to show her the way to her kinsmen. In Igbo society divorce is easier said than done, its processes are stringent and complex, especially where the woman begets a male child because her son has all the rights and privileges to bring her back if and when he owns his own *obi* (compound); hence Obidiya is vehement in baring her mind to her husband. The female silences identifiable in *Udo Ka Mma* and other plays are insightful to the uncertainties surrounding the certainties in inter-gender communication especially, when classified information as demonstrated in the true ownership of the disputed land, is involved. Obiekwe ignores all the advice and goes to war in which he is defeated. His only son falls in love with Maduka's only daughter (44) and they marry. This brings peace and harmony back to the warring communities of Umuebia and Ndiikpa (88), hence the title of the play, *Udo Ka Mma* "Peace is a sine qua non to living". In essence, marriage especially inter-ethnic one can be explored or exploited by individuals or ethnic groupings for the purpose of peace and conflict resolution.

Obidiya exposes movements and actions that amount to extra-gender role. Extra-gender role here refers to role that is not originally, either socio-biologically or socio-culturally assigned to the particular gender (Ikeokwu, 2008). Obidiya, the wife of Onuma becomes the bread-winner of her family while her husband is alive and without any physical or mental incapacitation. She advises and provides security for her husband as well as buys *Ihe ahia* "Gifts" for him. It is absolute laziness or fear of the unknown on the part of Onuma to exchange his familial roles with his wife. The Igbo see the situation of Onuma as a deviation from the norm and would prefer him dead than to live, no wonder Oriaku kills him when he is combing his hair (looking for beauty). In revenge, Obidiya employs the services of the same assassins Oriaku used in killing her husband to wipe out completely Oriaku and his family.

The four plays of study are structured in a cause-effect movement manner with their prologues or introductions establishing the settings, the characters, and the audiences' expectations of the plots in a linear manner. For example, at the end of *Okwu Mbuuzo* (Prologue) in *Udo Ka Mma*, and *Okwu Mmalite* (Introductory speech) in *Nke M Ji Ka*, we observe a kind of symbolic call or appeal to the audience to watch out for details of incidents in the plays thus:

(i) Ihe ka nte esokwutela nte n'onu ya. Tufia, Chukwu ekwela! (*Udo Ka Mma*: 6). (ii) Ndi be anyi, ihe ka nte abakwute nte n'onu, ka anyi mara ihe ya na nte ga-eme (*Nke M Ji Ka*: iii),

((i) What is greater than the ant has met it in its hole. No, God will not allow it to happen! (ii) Our people, what is greater than the ant has entered its hole. Let us watch and see what it and the ant are going to do)

The above sentences draw attention in a gestural manner to the major incidents expected in the plays. They are dramatic intentional because they keep the audience in suspense and attracted their comments in positive and negative manners. Their comments lie in the intentionality of the incidences that generated the conflict between the male and female principles, and the concomitant reformations the women bring to bear on their respective spouses as well as their communities in the plays. Obidiya (*Udo Ka Mma*) bears on Obiekwe to allow their son, Dike to marry Egondū, the daughter of his father's arch enemy and which resolves the conflict. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, the queen transforms her king and the kingdom of Umueleme from their traditional religious practices and superstitious beliefs to Christianity. The major movements in the play intermingle with the minor ones to give us the rhythm of marriage and its fulfilment in the African context, that is, marriage must be procreative in such a manner that lineage continuity is ensured. Lineage continuity can only be ensured in the African sense through the presence of male children and not just female children because they are seen as *Ama ndi ozọ* (*Nke M Ji Ka*: 2), meaning "Members of other people's household".

In *Nwata Rie Awọ* (*O Ju Anu*) 'When a child eats the toad (he/she detests the meat)' communicates how

different genders sometimes leave the substance in life to pursue the shadow and this trigger off gender miscommunication. Aworọ and Obioma have in their various contexts abandoned the normal for the abnormal. For instance Aworọ, a famous wrestler like Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* abandons his wife, Obioma in preference to sleeping around with his numerous widow concubines every other day, a kind of eating the toad and detesting the meat (50). Aworọ abducts and sells his wife and daughter into slavery. At the end, he commits incest with his daughter, Ọdınchefu, and as he discovers it, he commits suicide – also a kind of eating the toad and detesting the meat. On the other hand, Obioma rejects many suitors, which is a dramatic plot to let Aworọ into her life. Obioma’s girl friend, Ekemma and her father Okwukọgu highlights the movement thus:

Ọgba nọ di aghaghị ịluta eke ọgba... ị jula Obi, chọọ Chike gbanahụ Oti, hapụ Eke. Ugbu a Anene eluwala gị ilu (33). Kama na ihe a ga-amata bụ mkpi mbugowe adighi agba. Agbagorọ agbagorọ wee rigochaa elu, o rukwe na nrịda ya, gbagogbago aghaghị ịdị ya (38).

(One who rejects suitors, ends up marrying a python. You reject Obi, drive away Chike, run away from Oti, abandon Eke, and now you detest Anene. But you must realise that you cannot force a he-goat to experience erection. If a crooked way is followed to climb up, the same is followed to climb down.)

In *Udo Ka Mma*, *Nwata Rie Awọ* and *Nke M Ji Ka*, there are incidences of war or mayhem as movement and action. The point here is that the absence of the man or the woman in a home creates a vacuum, which the widow or the widower remembers at certain critical points in her or his life. In extreme cases, widows are subjected to dehumanizing tortures or oath swearing by their spouse families either to indict or vindicate them from their husbands’ death. In essence, widowhood is a major gender communicative movement in the life of an individual, which more often than not, leads to remarrying or assuming extra gender roles.

2.2 Symbolic or Psychological

We have been discussing movement that involves moving from one spatial entity in time to another. There is another type referred to as symbolic or psychological movement or exile. It involves the liberation from deep negative emotional feelings or depression to a freed life characterized by self fulfilment. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, King Onyekwere in consonance with the tradition of Ụmụleme kingdom, deposits the male twins Ugochi, his queen delivers in the evil forest, after many years of looking for a male child (65). The church rescues the twins—Pita and Pọl and this rekindle the king’s anger to a boiling point. He orders the youths to burn down the church and kill anybody seen there. He is sentenced to five years imprisonment, during which he is converted into Christianity. Thus, the king and the queen escape from obnoxious tradition to a Christian and modern way of life, which assures them lineage continuity (94). King Onyekwere is liberated from his former life experiences to new ones. He no longer traumatizes his wife and daughters for lack of male children but hugs them; he no longer intimidates and scares them but loves and cherishes them. He expresses this new life experiences thus, *Chineke kere ụwa, e – etu a ka ihunanya na ebere gị si adi? Biko gbaghara ekweghi ekwe m* (95) “God, who created the world, is this how your love and kindness are? Please, forgive my unbelief.” In other words, King Onyekwere escapes from lack of a male child to abundance of male children, from lineage extinction to lineage continuity and from war in the family to peace.

2.3 Dramatic Objects/Symbols

Stage craft and its management in addition to making use of “language of action, language of sound”, makes use of “language of physical objects” referred to as props (Brook, 1990:55). That is, objects that communicate or suggest meaning. Brook categorizes these objects into the dramatic non-intentional and dramatic intentional. Dramatic non-intentional objects or symbols refer to those objects, which do not further the plot of the play in any way, or help in creating mood. Their absence does not hamper the free movement of the play. Dramatic intentional objects on their part have significant value that draws attention to meaning on stage. They usually have negative effect on the spine of the play if removed. In other words, they further the plot of plays. However, an object can only be classified as dramatic non-intentional or dramatic intentional within a given context, for what is intentional in one situation could be non-intentional in another situation. The following stage direction from *Obidiya* involving the character Obidiya, illustrates:

Ọnụma nọ n’ulọ ya abọ isi, chepu azụ n’ezi. Ndị ogbu isi abata kọọ ya okpiri n’olu, were akwa kechie ya ọnu, buru ya puo. A ga-emenyụ oku ugbu a, tie egwu iru uju, anya mmiri, egwu e ji ebu ozu, nke ga-eme ndị mmadu chee echiche. Obidiya ga-abata burukwa abọ n’isi na ihe niile o zutara n’ahia. O ga-edebe ha n’ala gagharịa, legharịa anya (23).

(Ọnụma backs outside, combing his hair. The assassins enter, knock and hit him with a club, stuffing his mouth with cloth, and carry his corpse away. Light fades out and dirge music plays arousing people’s thought. Obidiya enters, carrying a long basket of wares she buys from the market. She puts them down, moves and looks around.) O lee ebe nwoke a nọ? O ga-asị na ya amaghị na m alọtala? Ọnụma! Ọnụma! Ọnụma e e e! Ọnụma e e e! Ọnụma e e e! O gara ole ebe n’abalị a? Nwanne m Ọnụma e e e! (O munye ihe oku, lee ebe niile, hụ obara n’ala, na iperipe akwa ya togborọ n’ala tinyere okpi. Ujọ eju ya ahụ. O legharịa anya, tie mkpu) Ha egbuole ya. Ndị iro egbuole ya. E gbuola nwa mkpi, izuzu alala. Ihe a bụ obara mmadu, nke a bụ akwa jioji ya o gba oge m na-aga

ahĩa. Onye gburu Onuma di m? O riri ji onye? Onye ka o riri ede ya? Mụ na onye ga-ebi? Nwaanyi o na-ebichi okpu ulo? Enweghi m nne, agba m aka nna. Aga m ala ebee? O gburu Onuma egbuole m. Ya bĩa were m. Ihe a o bu ndu?... Onuma ekeele m obi! (24)

(Where is this man? Will he say he doesn't know I am back? Onuma! Onuma! Onuma e e e! Onuma e e e! Onuma e e e! Where has he gone to this night? My brother Onuma eee! (*She puts on the light, looks everywhere, and sees a pool of blood and the remains of his loincloth on the floor as well as a club. Fear runs through her body. She looks around and screams*). They have killed him! Enemies have killed him! When the he-goat is killed, all secret meetings will end. This is human blood; this is the George wrapper he was tying when I left for the market. Who killed Onuma my husband? Whose yam has he eaten? Who has he eaten his cocoyam? Who am I going to live with? Does a woman inherit a compound? I don't have a mother, I am fatherless. Where do I go from here? He that has killed Onuma has also killed me. Let him come and take me as well. Is this life? ... Grief has overwhelmed me!)

The dramatic non-intentional objects here are the 'long basket', which Obidiya uses for carrying her wares to distant markets. While the 'blood' and the 'remains of Onuma's loincloth', and the 'club', 'comb' and the 'cloth' used in stuffing Onuma's mouth are all dramatic intentional objects. The difference between the two sets of objects is that while the former can be done away with, the latter cannot because they give Obidiya and the audience the clue of what has happened to her husband as well as the suspense created by the disappearance of his corpse. All of these help to further the movement of the play- the plot. The object of 'lighting the house' is also non-intentional because it only helps to make sure that her husband is not playing any pranks on her for returning late. After confirmation, she screamed, resulting into the interpolation of exclamations and interrogations, which culminates into elegy. However, the interplay of different significations of the intentional objects and their concomitant intense grief creates an avenue for expressing her love to her husband, even at death and this furthers the play to a height where Obidiya sues for a tragic revenge end.

Dramatic intentional objects combine images with ideas and they could refer to props, costumes, make ups or scenery descriptions. In some cases however, a dramatic intentional object is expressed through what is called the language of physical symbol and they tend to suggest meaning beyond themselves. Our concern here is the dramatic intentional objects, which are categorized into non-metaphoric and metaphoric symbols. The non-metaphoric symbols are those symbols that have only one identity, and which are consciously used by the playwright to further the plot, create mood and characterization. In the example of stage direction above, we observe that it creates a mood for weeping, agony and sympathy for Obidiya because she is reminded of her childlessness, loneliness and the sudden disappearance of her only consolation in life, her spouse.

In *Nke M Ji Ka* (34), Achalu gossips Ugochi in order to get the favour of their husband. The following stage direction and dialogue buttress this point, thus:

(N'obi eze, eze na nwunye ya nke abuo no na-akpa nkata. Oku ga-egosi ututu (34)

(In the sitting room, the king chats with his second wife. Morning time).

The above is language of physical symbol signifying antagonism and petty jealousy, which are common characteristics of co-wives in polygamous homes. Chukuezi (1979) buttresses this view when he informs us through the character, Akujuobi that Chimma, his sixth wife quarrels with her co-wives every other day (7).

In discussing dramatic objects, we note that they refer to props, costumes, make-ups, and even scenic descriptions. *Nke M Ji Ka* provides us with a context that holds all the aspects of dramatic objects at a glance. Thus, we have:

N'ime ajo ohia, a nu ube anuohia di ichie ichie. Umụ okorobia abuo kpu omu n'onu. Otu n'ime ha bu umu ejima no n'okporoq ite. Onye isi ala bu ite ogwu bu uzo. Nwa okorobia bu umu ejima ahụ esowe ya, Ugochi esonye. E tere ya unyi n' ihu, yiwe ya nkirika akwa. Nwa okorobia nke ozọ so Ugochi n'azu ji nwa uriom okuko a manyere n' omu. Ha niji abata. Oku ga-egosi etiti abali)

(In the evil forest, sounds of different animals are heard. Two young men hold tender palm fronds between their lips. The priest carrying a medicine pot leads the way, followed by the one carrying the broken earthen containing the twins. Ugochi follows; her face is smeared with charcoal solution, her body wrapped in tattered cloth. The young man following Ugochi holds a chick tied with a tender palm frond. All enter the stage. The lighting will show midnight time.)

The dramatic props here are the *tender palm fronds* and the *chick*, while the costume and make-up are respectively, the tattered cloth and charcoal solution smeared on Ugochi's face. The scenic description of the evil forest, sounds of different types of animal and lighting showing midnight time are also dramatic intentional. The tender palm frond symbolizes danger while the chick suggests the idea of a scapegoat, which carries one's sins away, hence the priest beats Ugochi with the chick and tender palm fronds and pronounces her cleansed.

The 'charcoal solution' is symbolic of guilt or sin; hence the priest washes Ugochi's face and pronounces her guiltless or sinless. In terms of costume, the 'tattered wrapper' or cloth signifies penitence, the sober mood of a sinner. In terms of scenic effect, 'the evil forest' and 'the sounds made by different animals' coupled with 'the

lighting', suggest the darkness of evil as well as that of midnight. All these create a weird situation that accompanies the cleansing activity. Such an activity is carried out in the dead of the night when it is believed that the gods come around to take sacrifices. Apart from the animal sound, which is dramatic non-intentional, others are dramatic intentional objects. If the sound is removed, it does not affect the plot of the play because it could be represented with plastic sound effect. On the other hand, the dramatic intentional objects, say 'the twins in the broken earthen pot', if removed, will disrupt the fabric of the play, in the sense that there will be no rescue mission, burning down of the church premises or the conversion of King Onyekwere.

2.4 Dreams

In *Nke M Ji Ka* (11), we see Ogooma, the only daughter to the family dreaming about the future of the family (11). She travels to her natal home one early morning to share her dreams with her, brother, King Onyekwere. The dramatic intention of the dream is to let King Onyekwere have a preview of what is about to happen in his household and take precaution. The characters, actions and objects of the dream are intentional stage craft that corroborate life realities. The dream's summary explains the following equation, thus,

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| i) | Two chicks run into the compound as rain beats them. | Male twins as taboo in Umueleme tradition are born into the king's family. |
| ii) | The chicks are put in a broken earthen pot and thrown away. | The axe of tradition falls on the twins and they are deposited in the evil forest. |
| iii) | An unknown man brings two bulls and insists they are the king's, the bulls turn into young men. | The church rescues Pita and Pöl who grow into young men that will continue the family's lineage. |

Interestingly enough, the dream of Ogooma in this context is a positive portent because it portends the provision of initial lack- male child. It also portends lineage continuity and its assurance to the family of Onyekwere. The two dreams in *Nwata Rie Awo* by Obioma (50) and Qdinchefu (60) illustrate negative portent because it gives an insight to the punishment for misdemeanour. However, the *Nwata Rie Awo* examples portray a situation where the dreamers happen to be the direct victims of portent. The first dreamer here is Obioma (50), while the second is Qdinchefu, and relating the dreams to latter events in the play, we find out that they correspond to what later happened to them. The dream suggests the following:

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| i) | Going to search for mushrooms on the top of a hill with other women. | Aworo is the mushroom; the other women are Abangwu widows he prefers to his wife. |
| ii) | The seven headed spirit and the one eye one touching Obioma as others escape. | Obioma is alleged of poisoning, and abducted with her daughter. |
| iii) | She eventually gets to the hill top and slips off into the valley where a cluster of spirits beat her to death. | She pays for being choosy as Aworo commits incest (with their daughter) and suicide. |

Qdinchefu's dream corroborates the cries of the symbolic *Ajo nmunu* "Evil bird" (42-44), which all together inform us about the female fractures Obioma and Qdinchefu experience in the hands of Aworo. The dream motive is a poetic justice, which has already taken its toll on Obioma (Qdinchefu's mother) as her dream suggests. Qdinchefu's dream is a follow-up to that of Obioma, for the death motif in her incessant dreams is the message of incest and suicide Aworo commits. The poetic justice is inescapable; hence Qdinchefu is tossed about from one spirit to another in her dream.

3.0 Findings and Conclusion

It is the roles of the female characters in plots that determine the movements and actions couched or expressed in the titles of plays. Okwerekediya (50) and Obidiya (76) in *Udo Ka Mma* are of the view that the marriage between Dike and Egodu will bring peace between the warring communities. In *Nwata Rie Awo*, Obioma (33), Amangwu women (50) and Qdinchefu (64) are behind the movement of 'eating toad and rejecting meat'. Ugochi in *Nke M Ji Ka* begets male twins that are deposited in evil forest and rescued by the church, and who eventually continued the lineage of Onyekwere, hence the title of the play. The male characters contended against female principle in the plays of study. Obiekwe in *Udo Ka Mma*, Ugochi in *Nke M Ji Ka*, Aworo in *Nwata Rie Awo* and others are indicted by one form of female principle or the other. In all the plays, the use of instrumental style of communication by male characters and the use of expressive style by female characters relate the way in which dramatic objects and movements express respective genders of actors or characters. A look at the analysis done above will lend credence to this claim. In *Nke M Ji Ka*, consider the cleansing materials used on Ugochi, because Onyekwere desires a son. Also consider how Aworo in *Nwata Rie Awo* feigns food

poisoning and abducts Obioma and their daughter, because of his infidelity. All the dreams recorded in the plays are by female characters only, no male character dreamt. See examples in the section of dreams above.

In conclusion, women tend to have more intercourse with nature in seeing realities of life more than men. Just as verbal mode of communication tends to render women invisible, so does the non-verbal mode. In fact, dramatic intentional props or fabrics used around female characters relate women only to the domestic sphere, and men to the public sphere. In all the illustrations above, dramatic intentional and non-intentional objects appear as necessary elements in African dramatic culture. Although movement and action or stagecraft is necessary for an effective theatre, they nevertheless can fulfil all that need to be studied in non-verbal communication in theatre. This study attempts only non-literary (paralinguistic) mode of communicating gender differences, but not the literary (linguistic) mode, which sees drama as literature.

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