

The Alpha Phallus and the Moderated Space for the Igbo Woman: A Sociolinguistic Approach

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Abstract

The phallus symbolizes the power of the male reproductive organ. The societal perception of the phallus reflects in language which is one of the crucial factors in the societal construction of the world. It is observed that elevated expressions are used for the phallus while lower ones are used for the female reproductive organ in the Igbo society. The study sets out to examine the alpha phallus and the moderated space for the Igbo woman, with a view to finding out the elevated expressions and their lower counterparts, classifying them according to their meanings, the reason(s) behind them and the societal attitude towards them. A qualitative approach was adopted and primary data was sourced through interviews. Fifty adult male and female respondents from different Igbo communities were purposively sampled and interviewed. The research adopted the muted group theory for analysis of this work. Findings illustrate that the Igbo society is a patriarchal one and women have traditionally been subordinate to men. The imbalance reflects in language, hence, the more names and the exalted position for the phallus and a moderated one for the vagina. While thirty-five percent of the women interviewees see nothing wrong with the moderated space for the vagina, sixty-five percent acknowledge and admit the adverse effect of the slant both in the naming and the meanings for the two reproductive organs has on women. For the men, they see nothing wrong with the names and meanings. The positions given the two organs affect both sexes, men positively and women negatively. The study advocates that equal expressions should be used for the two reproductive organs as they complement each other. More so, Igbo maxims which express the power of the vagina should not only be documented, but should be used in mixed company; this will go a long way in helping the women to see themselves from a positive position and encourage them to contribute maximally to the running of the society.

Keywords: alpha phallus, power, women, societal attitude and qualitative approach.

Introduction

The Igbo are one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Igbo serves a dual purpose for the ethnic group, being the name of the group as well as their language. Omenukor (2013, p. 74) states that “the Igbo world is mostly patriarchal as it is anchored on strong social rules that put men in firm control of the women.” The above assertion makes it clear that men in Igbo society are not just placed above women but that there are powerful dictates that solidifies their positions. The implication of the above assertion is that the two sexes are not equal. They do not operate at the same level. While men are the empowered group, the women are in subordination to men. The ‘strong’ social rules that holds patriarchy firmly in place is transmitted through language.

On the issue of power between men and women in the Igbo society, Mba (2000) asserts that:

... women constitute a social minority in Igboland. ... the term ‘minority’ ... is used not in the sense of population size but as it relates to the control of power and its indices (p. 371).

The above explanation gives more insight on the positions of Igbo men and women. Ogwude (2014, p. 126) argues that ‘in a patriarchal system, one is socialized into maleness or femaleness’. Socialization ensures continuity especially when one is under a strict supervision of the society. A line is drawn on the societal expectations from a female child that is totally different from those of a male child. In their own observation, Omoru & Lemoha (2014, p. 90) aver that “Patriarchal ideals and their forms of manifestations function in society as natural phenomena”. Most natural things are accepted the way they appear without questions. Packaging patriarchal ideas and their form to appear natural is a way of making them look harmless. It is also a subtle way of making the governed accept their positions as ordained by nature.

Patriarchal ideals manifest in different forms in the Igbo society such as folktales, songs, proverbs, names and maxims. The focus of this paper is the reflection of patriarchy in reference to the phallus, which in this context represents the power of the male reproductive organ. The work shall also delve into the reflection of the female reproductive organ in a patriarchal society. The choice of the phallus and the vagina is based

on the fact that they are the major physical difference between the two sexes.

Theoretical Framework

The Muted group theory was propounded by Edwin Ardener and Shirley Ardener. Edwin Ardener, according to Littlejohn & Foss (2008, p.117) observed that the actual language of culture has an inherent male bias, that men created the meanings for a group, and that the feminine voice is suppressed, or “muted”. Ardener further notes that the silencing of women leads to their inability to express themselves eloquently in the male parlance. For Shirley Ardener, the silence of women has several manifestations and is especially evident in public discuss.

The two linchpins of muted group theory according to Funderburke (2012, p.23) are the ideas that 1) society is made of various groups or cultures who view life through a unique perspective, and 2) not all groups within a society are equal. The fact that the language of culture has an inherent male bias shows that men are of the dominant group while women are the muted. Buzzanell in Funderburke (2012,) notes that:

As is the case with muted group theory, researchers’ studies of dominant and subordinate groups are often focused on social justice, or advocacy for the underrepresented and under resourced groups in a society (p.24).

The above explanation identifies the focus of the researcher among the dominant group and the dominated. It is not just about identifying the challenge(s) of the subordinate group but suggesting a solution.

The muted group theory was expanded by Kramarae who integrated the theory with the results of research on women and communication. According to Littlejohn & Foss (2008, p.117), Kramarae is especially concerned with the ways women must translate their own perceptions and meanings into the terms of male worldview in order to participate in public life. The muted group theory is useful to this study which is on men and women. It will aid in identifying the problems with the representations of women as the dominated group and also in proffering a solution on the way forward for women.

Methodology

The participant observation method was used in this study. The researcher is an Igbo and grew up in an Igbo community where she had the opportunity to participate in Igbo communal life and heard different references made on the male and female reproductive organs.

The second method that was used for data collection is interview. The researcher added this method to source more information. A purposive sample of twenty-five males and twenty-five females were interviewed. The interviewees cut across different age levels. The older ones, sixty years and above were interviewed to ascertain what they call the reproductive organs. Twenty-five to fifty-nine years old were equally interviewed to find out if there is anything different they call the penis/vagina in their age bracket. The researcher tried to elicit from the interviewees, names for the male and female reproductive organs in Igbo, their meanings, the reason(s) behind the different names, the societal attitude towards the names and the effect(s) of the names on both sexes. The responses were carefully recorded, transcribed and translated into the English language. The data was organized under three headings.

Men and the Use of Language

Language is a social activity for it is man's major means of communication. Spender (1985, p.3) argues that language "... is our means of ordering, classifying and manipulating the world." Spender's argument is most revealing. Language is not limited to passing information across to another but one can order, classify and do some manipulations with language. Citing Mey 1984, Mey (2001) argues that:

... the social formations in which most of our species has lived have been dominated by males. In this oppressive societal condition ...the powerful dominate the powerless, not only in material respects, but also regarding other less tangible matters, such as the use of language (p. 313).

The above explanation points out clearly that men have dominion over women. Men are the powerful while women are powerless. The domination of the powerful over the powerless reflects in language.

It was men who made up the language and recorded it, and they persistently defined themselves as occupying the positive semantic space (Nilsen, 1977). The argument here is that the powerful are in charge. They made language the way it fits them, documented it for preservation and socialize the younger ones into the language that they have made, for continuity purposes. Aside that, they, men, reserved the positive meanings for themselves. Invariably, the negative meanings are reserved for those under them, that is, the women. Pauwels in Ekanjume (2010) affirms that:

For centuries men have played the role of norm-makers, language regulators, and language planners and have signalled their authority in language through their roles in the dictionary-making process, in the writing of normative grammars, in the establishment of language academies and other normative language institutions, and through their involvement in language planning activities (p. 129).

Considering that men put in place, the norms in the society, plan and regulate the use of language through the writing of the dictionary which is hardly questionable, one cannot but agree that men are completely in charge of language. Lakoff in Aremu (2014, p.71) gives more insight by noting that “power provides its possessor with language authority; and language authority in turn provides its possessor with power.” It can be deduced from the above observation that men have the authority to make language, bringing to the fore their own experiences, downplaying the ‘Other’s’ experiences. They (men) pattern the world the way it best suits them. The idea of documenting their own view of the way the world should be empowers them more.

Contrarily, women are at the receiving end. Lakoff (2004) observes that:

... women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treat them.(p.39)

It can be inferred from the discussion so far that man made language to suit his needs and perpetuate his ideologies. Women are socialized into

the man made language which is not favourable to them. It will be recalled that men packaged patriarchal language to look very natural for easier acceptance. One of men's ideologies which have been engrained into language is his belief on his phallus.

The Phallus and the Woman's Place

The phallus, which originally presents in its erect and fertile form, a symbol of male reproductive power, has over time been made to connote, through extended social practice and theory, the notion of male dominance (Kazeem 2000). The power and symbolic domination of the phallus is achieved and validated through language. For Tsaaior (2006)

The phallus is a symbolic metaphor and an ideological marker that generates meanings, meanings that are essentially gendered. It also represents a fundamental lack for a particular sex, female. The phallic lack presents another lack: that of the pen. And with the pen comes a viable voice, expression, identity, agency and subjectivity ... men wield exclusive preserve over language and the pen(is) and consign women to the category of the muted (p.177)

The above explanation by Tsaaior reveals that the phallus does not only generate gendered meanings but it brings to the fore the 'vacuum' on the part of women. This is not to say that women really have a 'lack' of the penis; things are exactly the way nature made them to be, with each performing its own function, and meeting, if need be for procreation. Undeniable is the fact that there is a bias in meaning that generate from the phallus. The second 'lack' according to Tsaaior, which is the lack of the 'pen', has done a lot of damage to the image of women. Without the pen, one's voice is entirely lost in the society. This falls in line with the muted group theory that not all groups in the society are equal. Those with the pen (men) create discourse and its boundaries and expect those without the pen, women, to comply. Kramarae in Littlejohn & Foss (2008, p.116) corroborates same idea as above by stating that "those who are part of the dominant linguistic system tend to have their perceptions, experiences, and mode of expression incorporated into

language.” It is very clear that, as a result of men being in charge of the pen, they document their thoughts and how they want the opposite sex to be treated for constancy.

The line of story is the same among the Igbo. Attention will be paid to the representations of the phallus among the Igbo.

The Phallus in the Igbo Society

The phallus is highly esteemed especially among men in the Igbo society. By extension, the entire society is expected to hold the phallus in honour. For the Igbo:

1. *Etu nwoke abana, ikenga ya kwu ofo.*

‘No matter the size of a man his penis stands erect’

In the above expression, ‘*Ikenga*’, which among the Igbo refers to a personal god which one invokes when faced with a great task is used as a symbol to represent the phallus. *Ikenga*, according to Anyanwu (2017) is:

one of the symbols of power and authority in Igbo culture; it is believed to serve as a link between the dead and the living, a cult of the right hand which is linked to ones *Chi*, (guardian spirit). This force is reputed to have mediated in the affairs of men and assists its owners to achieve success in their chosen endeavours (p.24).

The above explanation reveals the position of *Ikenga* among the Igbo. It does not only serve as a link between the living and the dead but it has a reputation for bringing success to its own, hence the saying, *aka ikenga muo* ‘the hand of my *Ikenga*’ when something extraordinarily good happens to an Igbo man. The phallus is the focus in expression one, and not the size of the man. By implication, men who made the language fix it so that women should respect men, their physique notwithstanding. There is no need to probe if a particular man possesses the ‘*Ikenga*’ or not, think less of its functionality. The possession of the phallus which the woman ‘lacks’ automatically places every man on an advantaged position. The symbolic meaning of the phallus is also extended by the sayings:

2. *Nwoke na-anyu amiri kpa ofo n’aka.*

‘A man who is urinating is holding a symbol of authority in his hand’.

'*Ọfọ*', which stands for a staff of office, is highly esteemed by the Igbo, thus the saying: *O ji ọfọ ga-ala* 'there will always be freedom for one who has the symbol of authority.' Whoever holds an '*Ọfọ*' among the Igbo is highly respected; when a king is crowned among the Igbo, such goes to the *Eze ọfọ* 'custodian of ọfọ' to receive a staff of office. Ukatu (2011) explains that:

Ọfọ is a sacred traditional wooden instrument highly revered in Igboland and used as a means of communicating with the gods. It is therefore not something commonly used by all and sundry...It is an instrument portraying wisdom, authority, strength and commitment to the truth (p.170).

The reverence given to *Ọfọ* cannot be overemphasized among the Igbo. Most importantly is its usage in communicating with the gods. By extension, men use '*ọfọ*' to represent the phallus. In other words, men, who are represented by the phallus, should be highly respected.

Contrarily, the woman's reproductive organ is despised by the expression:

3. zA ga-eme aghaa ka e ji eri ihe nwuru anwu.

'One eats a dead thing because there is no alternative.'

Here, language is used to depict the woman's vagina as a 'dead thing'. For the men, the women are defiled beings. They (men) manage to have coitus with the women because there is no alternative for procreation among them. The nature of the woman's reproductive organ is also depicted in the saying:

4. Nwaanyi na-etukwu etukwu anyu amiri

'A woman stoops to urinate'

Traditionally, a woman stoops to urinate by the nature of her vagina. It is believed that if she stands to do so, the lower part of her body will be messy. On this, men take pride in their own nature. Men do not only stand to urinate but believe that by the nature of their penis, they can even quench a flame of fire from whichever angle they choose, by directing it appropriately.

The positive and exalted image of the phallus is equally seen in the names by which it is referred. The names are classified under two

categories: Names that reflect the power of the phallus and the nature of the phallus.

Names that reflect the Power of the Phallus

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 5. Odogwu | hero/warrior |
| 6. Mgbadike | fearsome masquerade |
| 7. Utudike | mighty penis |
| 8. Mbazu/óbi | digger |
| 9. Akwaraike | strong vein |
| 10. Okotaraokwuatunyeghionu | stirrer of dispute but makes no comment |
| 11. Odotaraogweikpe | stirrer of war who is never arraigned. |

‘*Odogwu*’ among the Igbo is a name exclusively preserved for someone who has performed and achieved a great feat. It might be in war or wrestling. Here, this reserved name is used to signify the phallus. In other words, women who lack the phallus should revere the men who possess it as heroes.

The second name above *Mgbadike* which stands for ancestral force represented by a dreaded masquerade is found in some Igbo communities such as Alor, Arondizuogu and some other communities. Among all the various kinds of masquerades in Igbo land, *Mgbadike* is most fearsome both in physical outlook and in performance. It is especially in its performance that it is related to the phallus; it is a restless, warlike spirit and is often held back and controlled with a strong rope by one or two followers, which is related to the natural tendency of the penis to over-express itself, if it is not controlled. In essence, the penis is metaphorically adored as a warrior just like the *Mgbadike*. Women have no choice than to accord the phallus the respect that is due to a warrior.

Utudike is a compound word comprising *utu* that is ‘penis’ and *dike* ‘the mighty’. *Dike* is used to qualify the *utu*. The phallus here does not represent that of a particular mighty man; rather, ‘might’ is used in a generic sense to qualify the phallus. The society needs to know and understand that the phallus is mighty.

Mbazụ/óbi' which stands for digger represents strength. The choice of 'digger' as a name for the phallus might have been influenced by the agricultural profession of the Igbo. The digger is a powerful instrument which helps to dig the land effortlessly. The Igbo use it especially in harvesting yam which is the chief of all crops as evident in the new yam festival. It should be noted that yams are harvested as from the month of August when the land is already dry in some places. It is through the strength of a digger that the harvest is made possible. The relationship with the penis is seen in the ease with which the penis burrows into the inner recesses of the vagina; thus, the female organ is seen as the soil, while the penis is the instrument that digs and conquers it. Secondly, the name digger equally came as a result of the shape of the phallus. The long and curved shape of the *mbazụ* is like the curved and long shape of the penis. The phallus has to be respected by the virtue of its strength to perform difficult tasks.

The function of the vein in the body cannot be overemphasized. The vein supplies blood to the heart and without it, the body will be lifeless. Equating the phallus to not just a vein, but a strong or strategic one, *akwaraike*, projects its great importance to humanity hence the need to revere men that possess it.

The last two names on the list *Okotaraoknuatunyeghionu* and *Odotaraogujeikepe* are names that men use to salute their positions in the society. Both names are used to suggest that the penis is a trouble maker; the trouble in this instance is restricted to illicit sex, and unwanted pregnancy. The war or dispute the phallus stirs in the society is mostly impregnating a maiden. In such situations, men are both the offenders and the judges. Ordinarily, this attribute of the penis should be pejorative or indicting of the penis, but it is not used in that sense. It is rather used as a superlative, eulogizing the power of the phallus. Consequently, the matter or 'offence' is most often swept under the carpet. Nwadike (2003, p. 114) affirms about the Igbo that "... *Ohaobodo anyi bu nke nwoke na-ennveghị uta obula*". 'Our community is such that a man is blameless'. It is actually the phallus that brings in trouble but nobody questions it not to think of sending it to prison. Matters are settled traditionally with men presiding over it all.

Names that Depict the Nature of the Phallus

Some of the names that depict the nature of the penis are as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 12. Mgbamgba | the huge one |
| 13. Ifegbaraagba | the huge object |
| 14. Uṭalimmuo | ancestral cane |
| 15. Ometeredikenura | the one who wakes a hero up from sleep |
| 16. Mkpōrogwu | root |

The first two names on the list describe the size of the penis by referring to it both as a person and thing that is huge and therefore should be respected. The above reference is what men want the women to know generally about the penis. There is no need to think or imagine if men possess different sizes of penis. The size of the penis is generally associated with its performance; in other words, big size of the manhood is equated to good sexual performance. The naming is consistent with the muted group theory which argues that a dominant gender group creates discourse and discourse boundaries and expects other groups to fall in line with the boundaries. The third name *utalimmuo* refers to both the nature and the function of the phallus. By nature, the phallus looks like a big rope. The function here has to do with movement during coitus. The movement is referred to as whipping. It is only the superior that flogs the subordinate. By implication, the phallus is superior.

Mkpōrogwu ‘root’, refers not only to the physical nature of the phallus but to its function in maintaining the lineage. As root is associated with foundation, the phallus is seen as the basis of life without which nothing will really grow. *Ometeredikenura* refers to its natural functions. It is only the phallus that can wake a hero up to either urinate or have coitus. If the phallus performs all these functions, there is every need to hold it in high esteem. All the names used to represent the penis shows that it is superior, great and the alpha phallus indeed.

Man uses language to give names to the vagina. Consider the follows:

Names for the Vagina

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 17. Ahu nwaanyi | female/woman’s body |
| 18. Ihuukwu | frontal part of the leg |

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 19. <i>Ọnyaanaana</i> | a sore that never heals |
| 20. <i>Oluluememkpochi</i> | unfilled pit |
| 21. <i>Ikpummanụ</i> | redish mound of venus |
| 22. <i>Atụọka</i> | uncircumcised/uncut clitoris |
| 23. <i>Ọbomma</i> | sheath. |

The names here only describe the nature of the woman's vagina. *Abu nwaanyi* is a metonymic expression used to overshadow the female sex organ. The name really obscures the organ instead of exposing it and lauding it as the phallus. Spender (1985) notes that:

Having learnt that language of a patriarchal society we have also learnt to classify and manage the world in accordance with patriarchal order ... (p.3)

The above assertion depicts that women learnt the language that men invent even when the language did not define them satisfactorily.

Ibụkụ which is narrowly different from *abunwaanyi* tries to describe the location of the vagina. The fact is that the frontal part of the legs is not the true location of the vagina. No vagina is situated in front of the legs. Same thing applies. Women learnt the language they were taught and use it.

Names 19-23 describe the vagina from men's point of view. The name *Ọnyaanaana* refers to a sore which never heals. No one likes beholding a sore, not to think of a sore that would not heal. Referring to the vagina as a sore is a way of disparaging it and reducing its value. *Oluluememkpochi* negates even the function and usefulness of the vagina. One may argue that the vagina is never filled up despite the quantity of sperm that enters it. *Olulu*, stands for the pit which is either used to collect water for use during dry season, check erosion or collect waste as the case may be in families. Men use the term to suggest that women are ever receivers who are never satisfied, thus suggesting that women are insatiable beings. Physically, when the pit is no longer useful to the owner, it is filled up and sealed. There hardly exists a non-useful or unfilled pit in the Igbo society. The prefix '–e' before '–me' 'do', in the name *oluluememkpochi* negates the name, giving the impression that the pit is no longer useful and defies several attempts to fill it. From a woman's

perspective, the vagina is ever useful. It does not only satisfy the man's sexual needs but receives sperms and gives back a human being. The 'pit' is literally 'filled' when the woman becomes pregnant. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that it is derogatory to equate a woman's vagina to a pit, not to think of the one that refuses to be useful.

Ikpummanu is a compound name given to the vagina. *Ikp* refers to the vagina. The name is generally accepted. *Mmanu* 'oil' is used to refer to a red colour among the Igbo. Here, the name is used to refer to both the colour of the vagina and the monthly menstruation in women. For men to be magnanimous enough to note the colour of the vagina and give it a name based on that needs to be revisited. One should note that a menstruating woman is not very useful to the man, hence the saying:

24.Kedu ihe mu na nwaanyi na-atuṣiṣi obala ga na-akpa n'obi? (What shall I be discussing in my out-house with a woman that drips blood?).

By the above expression, the man makes it clear that a menstruating woman is not useful to him. From a feminist perspective, it could be argued that the vagina performs better functions for which it could be named.

Atuoka, which is the last but one name, does not only depreciate the vagina but it is a general statement against women. Here, the vagina is described from the negative angle. Some vagina were circumcised and some not. Generally referring to all women as uncircumcised is wrong. Secondly, one wonders how men care about women. Women circumcision is being fought against based on its adverse effect on women. Adeleke, Nwamuo, & Ayanlowo (2017), who use the acronym FGM for 'female genital mutilation', posit that:

Psychological consequences of FGM include the feeling of incompleteness, fear, inferiority and suppression. Women, who experience FGM, complain of chronic irritability and nightmares. They have a high risk of psychiatric and psychosomatic disease (p.374).

Considering the after effect of female circumcision, one cannot but advocate its eradication. Men's use of the name *Atuoka*, which is

uncircumcised /uncut clitoris in reference to the vagina show that they think more of their gain than the well being of women. Traditionally, Adeleke, Nwamuo, & Ayanlowo (2017, p. 373) note that ‘FGM is considered a potent means of ensuring a lady’s virginity before marriage and devotion to the marriage afterwards.’ Men prefer virgin wives and wives who will remain faithful to them but the traditional belief is simply not true as FGM is no warranty for self-restraint in women. There is every need for a rethink on the part of men who gave the name. Apart from the fact that the name is a general one which does not capture the state of every woman’s vagina, women’s health should be a priority in naming them and not the supposed gain.

The last name on the list, *Obomma* belittles womanhood. It will be recalled that the phallus is referred to as a machete. Referring to the vagina as a sheath or a cover of the machete deprecates the woman. The machete is of greater importance than the sheath which could be kept anywhere, anyhow and replaced if need be.

During the interview section, it was gathered that one of the symbolic representations of the phallus is ‘cursor’. In this era of modern technology, the importance of the cursor to the computer cannot be overemphasized. Without the cursor, the computer will not function. Using the cursor to symbolize the phallus shows that men move with time. They do everything possible to situate their importance in the society. For the woman, ‘website’ is used in reference to her vagina. A website refers to a place on the internet with one or more pages of information. The description of the vagina as a website sounds positive but before that conclusion, further questions about the website reveals that someone can open different websites for a search. In other words, the cursor is free to open different websites at about the same time. Here again, men apply modern technology to have an edge over women.

Discussion

Societal Attitude towards Man-made Language

The more women have resisted the more it has been suggested that there is something wrong with us. In the view of the dominant group we are abnormal, neurotic, frigid or hysterical, or even bitter and twisted. We are man-haters, and there is a clinching argument that we even fail to have a

sense of humour (Spender, 1985). Spender's observation reveals that men see nothing wrong with the bias in language. They rather see the women who point out the slant in language as abnormal ones. In other words, men's ideas are perfect and final. There is no need for questioning what they have done not to think of making suggestions on how to adjust language to be all inclusive. Some men who admit the bias in language would rather have women accept it as a humour and make no noise about it.

Thirty-five percent of the women interviewed revealed that they accept language the way it is. The rest of the women who agree that there is a slant in language especially as it regards the sexual organs express their helplessness. They admit that such language use have adverse effect on women but since it is 'a man's world', they do not know how and where to begin to tackle the matter considering what men's reaction would be if they try making moves towards a change.

It is clear that women have for ages been socialized into patriarchal language that some of them see absolutely nothing wrong with the language. They internalized wholly what they learnt from childhood to their own subjugation. For the men, they are still committed to the business of making language.

Effects of Man Made Language on Women

The idea that social power arrangements are largely embedded in language also means that language and the world it creates often silences women in profound ways (LittleJohn & Foss 2008). The fact that women hardly have a say in the choice of their naming automatically places them in the muted group. For the purpose of this paper, wrong description of the vagina as the body or the fronted part of the woman's legs deplores the vagina. *Ọbomma* places the woman very far less than the man by belittling her vagina as something which could be replaced anytime. The expression forces her to see herself, not the way she is, but the way men would want her to be seen.

The other expressions used for the vagina (*Ahunwaanyi*, *Ihuḱknu*, *Onyaanaana*, *Atuḱka Oluluememkpochi*, and *Ikpummanu*) undermine the integrity of women and their self esteem. It should be noted that the phallus enjoys a prestigious position when compared to the vagina. This observation corroborates the argument of Stanley in Spender (1985) that:

It is not just that the vocabulary is divided into two unequal portions with the less nouns to refer to females, but that this smaller number of words also encompasses that which is of lesser value (p. 20).

The data for this study shows forty-five expressions for the phallus as against twenty for the vagina (see appendix).

The esteemed position ascribed to the phallus and the supposed lack of it on women places the women on a beggarly position. The beggarly position is evident in most lyrics. Oyeka (2017) points out in her analysis of selected lyrics by Flavour that even with name calling of a lady, as *ashawo*, *corner corner baby* and *wuru wuru baby*, she still stooped low to have coitus with the name caller. Before the coitus, her partner belittled her by telling her that her breasts were flabby while his penis is robust. Such word amelioration for the men and word deprecation for the women affect the women's reasoning. Ezeigbo (1996, p.116) argues that 'If you want to hold down and subjugate someone, you must belittle him or her through loss of confidence'. It is the same men that cause women to lose confidence that turn to accuse them by the saying that:

25. Nwaanyị na-eme ka aturu
'A woman behaves like a sheep.'

The Phallus and the Vagina

It is clear from explanations so far that it is not only that men made language but they owe no apologies to the women hence the saying:

26. Utu amaghị ọtu iwe ji.
'The penis does not know a vagina that is angry.'

The above expression discloses that men do not really care about the feelings of the women especially as it regards the way they are seen through language. Ezurike (2005) convincingly explains that:

Men are the sole custodians, interpreters and implementers of culture and tradition in Nigeria and in many other cultures. They arrogated the responsibility to themselves (p. 39)

Men appointed themselves gate-keepers of knowledge which is transmitted through language. However, they are least moved by the adverse effect of the language on women who constitute more than half of the world's population. The cries of the women as a reaction to their negative perception fall on deaf ears. One may at this juncture raise questions on the power of queens and priestesses among the Igbo. The point remains that they have limited power. For the Igbo,

27. A naghị agụnye nwaanyị n'ọnụọgu.

Women should not be included in a head-count.

28. Di nwaanyị bụ ike ya.

A woman's strength is her husband.

The above aphorisms explain to an extent the woman's place. When she is single, she is under the care and supervision of her father and in marriage, under the husband's, hence her limited power.

According to muted group theory, it may be necessary to restructure language so that the minority group is more integral in language creation and evolution (Funderburke, 2012). For this study, the minority group refers to women. It is here argued that a person is what he or she is named. What a phallus is to a man, a vagina is to a woman and even more. There is every need to know and understand some maxims which are hardly used in mixed company that say much about the vagina. Ogbalu, (1978) talking about men and women explains that:

Everyone vies with the other in demonstrating his deep knowledge of sex but this is done through proverbs. Women on their part, in their own gathering enjoy sex proverbs as men do. In the presence of men, according to the norms of the society, they are not expected to show their expertness in the use of proverbs generally how much more those on sex (pp. 6 – 7).

It is here argued that it is what one hears that he or she knows. Although Ogbalu claims that women enjoy sex proverbs, it is the ones that women are meant to hear that they enjoy. If men and women have separate gatherings and men are permitted to show their knowledge of sex proverbs while women are not, it shows that there are things that are

hidden from the women. Some of the maxims which women need to know about their vagina are:

29. Otụ sị na ya tara ahụ n'efu ma ihe uto dị ya n'ime.
'The vagina says that despite its leanness, there is sweetness within'.
28. E were ikpu kwee abia, umuokorobia agbagbuo onwe ha n'egwu.
'If the vagina is used as a musical instrument, young men will dance themselves to death'.
29. Nwoke no n'elu nwaanyi anaghi aza oku.
'A man on top of a woman does not answer a call'.
30. Ikpu siri na ya mere nwoke jiri nuo ara ugbo abuo.
'The vagina says that it made the man to suck the breast for a second time'.
31. A si na utu kenie, o dika o ga-arachi ohu ma o raa nwantinti, o gusisiba onu mmiri.
'It is said that when the penis rises, it seems as if it will destroy the vagina but after a little coitus, it will start salivating'.
32. Nwoke obula tolite, o ga-achọ ebe o siri lo uwa.
'When a man becomes an adult, he will start searching for his source of life (vagina)'.
33. Nwoke nwuru n'elu nwaanyi, ihe wetara ya uwa ewerekwala ya.
'A man who dies on top of a woman (having coitus) has gone back to where he came from.'

The above aphorisms highlight the strength or power of the vagina but because they are hardly used in the presence of women, they do not know that they possess such power. The first maxim makes it very clear that there is sweetness in the vagina despite the fact that it is lean in comparison to the phallus in its erected position. The goodies in the vagina are so enormous that if it were to be used as a musical instrument, young men will dance themselves to death. It is also the sweetness in the vagina that carries a man away that he hardly answers a call while having

coitus. The vagina is so powerful that it lures a man to behave like a baby, sucking a lady's breast as an adult as the aphorism 28 reveals. The 29th aphorism declares that though the phallus appears strong and powerful, the vagina is more powerful than it is, for the phallus becomes weak in a couple of minutes of coitus. The last two expressions (32 and 33) bring to the fore, the major function of the vagina which is child birth. No matter how strong or weak a man is, he will surely look for the vagina for nature made it that he came to the world through it. Any man who dies while having coitus is exonerated of any offence for he made an exit through the same door he came in. Such is the power of women which is hidden from them. Women are more often made to hear the maxims that belittle them. It is argued here that women should pay close attention, and use the above positive maxims about the vagina in their writings. By such documentation the younger ones will understand their usefulness.

There is every need for women to understand and internalize the following argument by Kazeem (2000) that:

The potency of the phallus needs to be proven continually on the bedside of the woman and it is upon this test and certification that the identity of the man resides. Without the woman as the provider of the avenue, manhood becomes slack and lacking (p.365).

The above argument is an eye opener for women. It is not just about giving great names to the phallus, the proof of the efficacy of the alpha phallus lies with women. Such knowledge on the usefulness of the vagina will go a long way in helping the women appreciate themselves more. Language has a way of affecting its users. Aremu (2014) avers that:

...language has power not only to influence but also to shape public opinions. Language equally has the potency of reshaping and restructuring the views and opinions of the audience (p.82).

Based on the power of language to influence, shape, reshape and restructure, it is posited that there is nothing wrong with women renaming themselves. The use of *Ihnukenyu* for the vagina and other such

names does not appropriately describe the vagina. Women should invent and use their own words to describe the vagina positively. They should also document such names for continuity. Consider the following suggestions:

Suggested Names for the Vagina

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 34. Ọkụnwaanyị | woman's earthen pot. |
| 35. Ugonwaanyị | the glory of the woman (likened to the eagle) |
| 36. Ugwunwaanyị | woman's prestige |
| 37. Ọgọnwaanyị | woman's benevolence |
| 38. Ụsọnwaanyị | woman's sweetness |
| 39. Ebubenwaanyị | woman's glory |
| 40. Odogwunwaanyị | woman's hero |

In the Igbo traditional setting, one eats from an earthen pot 'ọkụ'. The importance of food and 'ọkụ' cannot be overemphasized in the Igbo society. Based on the fact that every human came to life through a woman, her importance to humanity cannot be overemphasized too, hence, the suggestion *Ọkụnwaanyị*.

'Ugo' which stands for eagle, is the king of birds. Its beauty and the height it covers is second to none. No other human being carries and nurtures her child like the woman. She is completely different from other species just like the eagle, hence the suggestion *Ugonwaanyị*. Every normal man desires a woman for whatever reason(s). The vagina remains the woman's prestige due to the several functions it performs hence, the suggestions of *Ugwunwaanyị*, *Ọgọnwaanyị*, *Ụsọ*, *Ebube* and *Odogwunwaanyị*.

This paper is not a challenge to those who hold power; rather it is a wakeup call on both sexes. There is every need for men to have a rethink on the way they view and name women considering the adverse effects negative naming or description have on women. On the other side, women need to know, see, and understand what they carry so as to actualize themselves and fill their vacuum in the society. If women wait for men to rename them, they may wait for a life time. It is not that women are competing with men but there is a need for a proper naming

for people are what they are named. A better perception and reference of womanhood will have a more positive impact on them; it will result in more valued contributions in the family and society in general.

Conclusion

The study examined the exalted position accorded the male reproductive organ which is symbolized by the phallus, and the moderated space for the vagina, the female reproductive organ. The study reveals that men upgraded the phallus based on the fact that they are the custodians of culture and language, a position they arrogated to themselves. They project themselves in the positive while less valued expressions are used for the women. The expressions for the two reproductive organs affect the two sexes, the women negatively and the men positively. The study also reveals some maxims that project the real or masked image of the vagina but these are hidden based on the fact that they are hardly used in a mixed company. Based on the changes in the society which also affect language, it is advocated that the maxims that highlight the power of the vagina should not only be used but documented for continuity.

There is no one who can describe the woman more than herself. This study makes some suggestions on expressions that can be adopted to project the power of women's reproductive organ. This is not to say that women are challenging the men folk. It is for women to understand their usefulness and be encouraged to contribute maximally to the society. Just as the phallus needs the vagina to prove its potency, both sexes need to work together, encourage each other so that both will contribute maximally to the running of the society.

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Appendix I

Phallus	Gloss
1. Akwaraike	Strong vein
2. Odogwu	hero/warrior
3. Mmaagha	sword
4. Okanga	determiner
5. Akpu	stump/knot
6. Mma	knife/cutlass
7. Ọdọtaraogwejeikpe	Stirrer of war who is never arraigned
8. Okotaraokwuatunyeghiọnu	stirrer of dispute but makes no comment
9. Mbazu/obi	digger
10. Mkparaigwe	metal/iron rod/staff
11. Obejiri	sharp machete
12. Okenze	great noble one
13. Ọfo	symbol of authority
14. Ngedelegwu	heroic drum
15. Mgbadike	fearsome masquerade
16. Apiaeko	one who hits and puffs up
17. Utudike	mighty penis
18. Nwokeike	great man
19. Nwatanogorookweta	excellent performer
20. Idejiogwugwu	the strength behind/which sustains ọgwugwu deity
21. Nnabuenyi	father is great
22. Ikenga	strength personified
23. Mmansu	dagger
24. Otootoo	the monster
25. Ometeredikenura	one who wakes a hero up from sleep
26. Ọluchaaogbuoaso	one who spits after a fight
27. Oriaku	the one who enjoys wealth
28. Ezienyi	great/good/noble friend
29. Otuogbeokamkpuruubeabuodinaakuku	- a corn on the cob situated in between two pears

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 30. Ọnọnaalaakpanri | one who fetches food from underneath |
| 31. Mkpọrọgwụ | root |
| 32. Gbagagbaga | an epithet that reflects the way the penile rod dangles between the thighs of a man without parts. |
| 33. Ụtalimmụọ | ancestral cane |
| 34. Ọsụnri | pounder |
| 35. Ifegbaraagba | the huge object |
| 36. Ifemgbada | the thing that is located lower down |
| 37. Mgbamgba | the huge one |
| 38. Kusọ | cursor |
| 39. Ọkwuọtọekeneeze | the one who greets the King standing |
| 40. Ngwongwoogu | the war equipment |
| 41. Diono | the powerhouse |
| 42. Ụbọakwara | veined- guitar |
| 43. Akwaraigwe | iron-vein |
| 44. Ajọihenaọnuọtọ | dangerous/bad thing with a nacked neck |
| 45. Okolobiaimiogologo | a young man with a long nose. |

Appendix II

Names for Female Reproductive Organ

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Ọnyaanaana | a sore never heals |
| 2. Webusaiji | website |
| 3. Ogwugwu | a shrine |
| 4. Olulimmụọ | spirits' hole |
| 5. Ọtụtọedenọnu | a sweet substance never tasted |
| 6. Anụgbaraaji | a hairy meat |
| 7. Ifenwaanyi | a woman's thing |
| 8. Ikpu | mound of venus |
| 9. Ihuaru | front of the body |
| 10. Ahunwaanyi | female/woman's body |

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 11. Ọbomma | sheath |
| 12. Atuọka | Uncircumcised/uncut clitoris |
| 13. Oluluememkpochi | unfilled pit |
| 14. Ngada | tigh |
| 15. Ikpummanu | redish mound of venus |
| 16. Oriamu | penis eater |
| 17. Ihuukwu | the frontal part of the legs |
| 18. Igbachukwukwelu | a drum built by God |
| 19. Abuja | the Nigerian federal capital territory |
| 20. Bemuditrayangulu | a place where something goes into and never returns. |

La Nomination Comme Outil Stylistique Dans *Verre Casse Et Black Bazar* D'alain Mabanckou

E. E. Ogini, E. S. Otegbale &
E. V. Ubiri

Résumé

L'étude stylistique dans la littérature africaine d'expression française concernant la littérature avait témoigné les salutations des critiques au cours des décennies après sa parution dans l'ère des indépendances. Certains critiques croient qu'une appréciation véritable d'une œuvre littéraire n'est pas complète sans un recours à la méthode stylistique en tant que pot-pourri des théories littéraires. L'analyse stylistique repose généralement sur la déviation graphologique que sémantique. Le néologisme, le mélange de langue et le changement de la langue d'une langue à l'autre au cours d'une narration sont considérés comme des outils fondamentaux, employés par Mabanckou pour souligner son message dans les textes de cette étude. En adoptant la sémiotique, une théorie qui aide à l'interprétation des signes linguistiques, cette étude examine la manipulation nominale de Mabanckou en ce qui concerne la création et les jeux des mots pour souligner le message de l'écrivain et l'aspect esthétique. La nomination, usage des groupes nominaux, mise en jeu par la technique du néologisme sont abordés comme des outils stylistiques dans les textes. C'est une méthode visant la création d'un nouveau chemin de rédaction.

Mots clé : Stylistique, Sémiotique, Nomination, Allusion.

Abstract

Stylistic analysis in African literature written in French literary scholarship has been greatly graced by critics since its inception in the 1960s. Some critics are of the opinion that true appreciation of literary work is incomplete without the application of stylistic method, being a melting pot of literary theories. Stylistic studies of novels are a magnificent work of scholarship. Consequently, this paper is essential for knowledge, development and aesthetic values in literature. Stylistic analysis is largely carried out on