
Contextualizing the Universality of Phenomenology in the Arts and *Ibibio Signified* in “Emergent Ibom Films”

Anietie Francis Udofia

Department of Performing Arts, Akwa Ibom State University

Professor Uwemedimo Atakpo

Department of Performing Arts, Akwa Ibom State University

David Ekanem Udoinwang (Ph.D)

Department of English, Akwa Ibom State University

Abstract: *Filmmaking has gradually gained prominence as a tool of creativity, promoting and preserving human values with modern technology. Nations that invest in the art from its philosophical perspective are attracting a global patronage to themselves but the ones who choose to make it bereft of the basic factors end up upsetting the aesthetic order of the art and downgrade the credibility of the discipline. In Nigeria, “Ibom films” is emerging as a brand, appreciated for its fluid deployment of Akwa Ibom signs system, but its demand concentrates around the local audience, and a single view writes off the longing to review it again whereas, Western films could be watched many times in distempered alacrity. Incidentally, there is the demand for Western films even with antisocial content over the indigenous ones, which indicates that some vital arts elements a film should embody may have been disregarded by the indigenous filmmakers. The paper is based on Descriptive Research Method, and it aims at establishing transcendental factors in the literary arts that form the foundation of universality in a film, and how the Signified is represented in “Ibom films” using Ayamma as paradigm. Findings show that film and drama share the same canons existing as universals in narratives transcending cultural boundaries in the viewers’ consciousness from the Western synergistic system. Representational ideas can be given a scientific sequitur for collective referents through semiotics. Pictorials, dialogues, and dramatic actions in “Ibom Films” form the signifiers that invoke irresolute ideas brought to specificity in the signified. The paper concludes that Ibom filmmakers can synchronize the universals and the specific by intersecting cultural signs system and phenomenology in their indigenous films to institute the uniqueness it requires to command the global appeal and patronage.*

Keywords: *Filmmaking, “Ibom-Films”, Phenomenology, Semiotics, Signified.*

I. Introduction

One of the instruments for determining progress presently in the society is the creative practices that characterize a specific time and the innovativeness emanating from the system that makes it to function. It points to the need to promote, develop and preserve the universal qualities and the newness that springs up from the interaction between the universals and the specifics of cultural upholding treasured by the various communities in the world. Such preservation of culture is acknowledged in the transcendence of classical theatre traditions to the contemporary filmmaking, which the specifics and the “universals are exemplified in

representation...” (Casebier 4). Virtually every nation attempts to establish a filmmaking industry to abridge the global knowledge and the specific culture that harnesses the parlance of a film.

It is quite disheartening to see nations and people attempting to cut a niche for themselves via filmmaking but end up regretting the outcome after much effort. Apart from the fact that filmmaking projects creativity, promotes values and preserves culture; it is also a viable tool for economic breakthroughs in the society constantly sort for; but it is not an all-comers art. In African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya etc., for example, the attempt to make film as an indigenous national craft has been one of the prerogatives of their governments. As Western nations and some oriental nations like China, Korea, and India, they hope to invest also from filmmaking. Regrettably, foreign films valued for quality and aesthetics than the indigenous films that even showcase their milieu. Many people have openly exclaimed that they can comfortably watch foreign films (Western and Oriental) many times and still have the longing to view the same film without satiation; whereas in watching indigenous film once, there will be no desire to watch it again. This shows that foreign films are prioritized over the indigenous ones. Consequently there is more demand for foreign film over indigenous films, which is an indication of aesthetic difference.

Considering aesthetics factor and human nature, Emmanuel Kant cited in Habib maintains that “they are still based on necessary and universal principles” (130). To consider the necessary in a film, there is usually the subject-consciousness and object-consciousness in which details encapsulating the genre, content and concern for humanity are teased out. Object-consciousness explains describable icons while subject-consciousness explains the innate artistic context reflected. In the same vein, the universal tilts to “the objects depicted, portrayed, and symbolized by an art object... Sensations, shared assumptions, expectations, codes, and so forth...” (Casebier12). These two ideas exist as predictable active consciousness in a film across the universe, and they are expected to be present in any film.

In Joseph Charles, Active consciousness defines what Edmund Husserl discusses as Phenomenology (190). Jenny Chamarette calls it the “description of the encounter...(with) the actual, physical, and virtual, experiential or affective contours of the object... dependent upon the embodied presence of a body through which that encounter can play out, and how attentive, or inattentive, that body is to the moving image work in question. (49). “With the active consciousness not just common-sense, it is possible for human beings to discern, analyze and interpret social action as it is presented situationally or contextually.... Human active consciousness makes it possible for new situation or every situation to be assessed independent of experience”(Bressler 190). To Maurice Merleau-Ponty, it is “an attempt to make us see the bond between subject and world, between subject and others...to make manifest the union of mind and body, mind and world, and the connection of one in the other”(3). Therefore, active consciousness in film is “an attempt to describe invariant structures of the film viewer’s lived experience when watching moving images in a cinema or elsewhere. Here the emphasis can either lie on the film-as-intentional-object or the viewer-as-experiencing-subject” (Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich13). Based on this, a film intended for wider audience may need to ground these basics first to get viewers attention. The basics as appearing in the mind form the film phenomenology.

Another symbolic constituent of a film is semiotics. It is a science of signs embodying the cultural ideas and the codes they are represented to makes communication flow in a film. It is the same as the innate traditional sign system Dan Brown views as ancient portals in ‘engraved Symbolon’ (181), and every society has a distinct set of codes that shared meanings are generated (Counsel and Wolf 10); such as in dialogue, gestures, costume/makeup, artifacts, natural phenomena, colours, and patterns. In giving cultural concepts a scientific approach, an idea can be raised and given decipherable referents called the *signified*.

If there is a brand of film that commands appeal within and outside its domain and epoch in which another made the same way commands, there is an indication of a transcendental factor lacking but is necessary which other filmmakers whose films are short-lived in appeal may overlook. Without the unity of the universal and the specific in a film, the product may not attract the required appeal let alone adequate patronage.

However, a brand of film called “Ibom Films” has emerged from Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria. Story telling tradition along with spectacle is prioritized, and the productions have begun to signal much attention. This paper seeks to establish the factors that constitute phenomenology in a film, evaluating Ibom culture and meanings encoded as *Signified* in *Ayamma*, one of the “Ibom Films”.

II. Theoretical Framework

The lost of direction in film production especially by the third world countries has reflected that either the ecstasy for filmmaking is practiced as a mere interlinks of the logic of tales bereft of form via the camera eye or that the rules for crafting a drama is subsumed for unexplainable fantasy that does not fit into the construct’s system which filmmaking belongs. For one thing, a film is a drama consumed via the screen. The basic elements that fine-tune the moral basis in a drama also set its narrative compass as a defined structure. Based on this, the theoretical framework of this paper is drawn from George Lukacs “Reflection Theory”.

Lukacs is a Marxist from Hungary, who expounded on Hegels’s concept to presents film viewers “with an image of the richness and complexities of life from which emerges a sense of the order within the complexity and subtlety of lived experience” (Widdowson and Raman77). Although both Hegel and Lukacs tilt their views to class struggle; class struggle does not come to play in the subtlety of reflection. According to Charles Bressler, reflection theory “declares that texts (referring to films) directly reflect a society’s consciousness...” (166). In this order, Lukacs periscopes Aristotelian position that a film “is defined by its shape, composition, manner of construction, and purpose...; (that) character, thought, dialogue, song and spectacle (are) considered important...; (and that) plot is the most important part of the narrative” (O’Donnell 74). Reflection theory emphasizes awareness regenerated in the order of a system.

Reflection theory centralizes the “presence” as the reality evolving from the aliveness in which the human history borne as active consciousness in mind brings to bear. The theory reflects that people do not strain to grasp an invention that has already existed in their consciousness as a system. Relating to film, those who have been watching films possess some inalienable data of the outlook of a film. As Ellen Winner puts, “when listening to an unclear radio station, we understand the words better if the program is familiar, because expectation usually guides our guesses correctly” (90). For the screen production, which film is the focus in this paper, two things are dominant in reflection theory – object as conditioned by natural laws and subject as randomness from the psyche brought under a structure for order. According Widdowson,

to ‘reflect’ is to frame a mental structure’ transposed into words. People ordinarily possess a reflection of reality, consciousness not merely of objects but of human nature and social relationships... which transcends a mere common-sense apprehension of a thing.... Reflection, to Lukacs, involves more than the mere rendering of external appearances.... (It is) a randomly presented sequence of images (that) may be interpreted either as an *objective* impartial reflection of reality or as purely *subjective* impression of reality. The randomness can be seen as a property either of reality or of perception. Either ways, Lukacs rejects such merely ‘photographic’ representation. Instead he describes the truly realistic work which gives a sense of the artistic necessity of the images presented; they possess an intensive totality which corresponds to the extensive totality of the world itself (76).

Phenomenology invokes the subject that a film focuses. Semiotics focuses on the objective (activities brought to situate the indefiniteness of the mind through pictorials and action). They make the quality of a film and erect the superstructures for linking the film world as a system to the human world as an orderly universe that orders the system itself.

Phenomenology in Filmmaking

Phenomenology is viewed to begin from the idea of Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, who lived between 1859 and 1937 expatiated in his *Logical Investigations* which was published in 1900. Husserl focused on transcendentalism, but Martin Heidegger, his student, bent the transcendentalism to existentialism which stirs the divide between adherents of transcendental and existential phenomenology to this day. Juxtaposing both dimensions of phenomenology, the intent is to describe the instant occurrence the way it appears away from the rigidity of enquiry into its antecedents or its effect which fraught metaphysics without bias (Ozumba 114-116). According to Casebier, "Husserl held also that there exist universals that the spectators apprehend and utilize in recognizing what a work of art represents... our knowledge of representation is bound up with his contention that universals are exemplified in representations" (9). Film phenomenology is the inherent universal factors in a film from drama that transcend time and space.

Phenomenology suggests things appearing (Widdowson and Raman 51). It denotes "the ways in which... objects appear to the human subject, and the subjective contribution to this process of appearing... (it is) bracketing of the external world" (Habib 220). This means, "objects exist if, and only if, we gather them into our consciousness" (Bressler 65). It is a speculation that suggests that meaning, awareness, and significance of a creative work resides in the knowledge of its system. It is a way of thinking what the creator of a work thinks and knowing it the way he knows. According to Widdowson and Raman, "the text (film) allows the reader (audience) access to the author's (filmmaker's) consciousness..." (51); which implies that one decodes a film by the access another film or the film-system itself allows one based on the imprint of "filmness" existing in the mind. Linking this to film phenomenology, Casebier informs that the originator of the theory, "Husserl, is asking about the essential features of what appears to us in those acts in which we recognize... as depicted objects" (Casebier 25). This, in a way, is the presupposition of a centre within which knowledge- all knowledge evolves. To Widdowson and Raman, "Derrida would consider this kind of thinking 'logocentric' for supposing that a meaning is centred on a 'transcendental subject' and can be recentred on another such subject" (51). This establishes the focus of film phenomenology.

In Udo Etuk, phenomenology focuses on the fundamental nature rather than details (166-167), while Alberto Baracco acknowledges that knowledge is got through perception such as found in film and filmmaking, and one must suspend one's way of looking at life and concentrate on the way life presents itself (link.springer.com). That means, the knowledge depends on one's understanding and understanding comes from sense data of the factor (Kneller 72). It is the same thing as what Casebier calls "essence of the perceived" (25), and Francis Etim reflect that essence is "the *whatness*... which makes it possible for a thing to be as it is" (30). This suggests phenomenology to be "a world view that seeks to describe the appearance of things and events as they present themselves directly to our private consciousness" (Kneller 77). That is to say, it is "the content of our consciousness" (Widdowson and Raman 51), considered as the "systematized body of knowledge with public, impersonal ... characteristics aimed at unraveling the true nature of physical reality through the process of observation" (Uduigwomen and Akpan 301). Adekunle Ibrahim along with Francis Etim's acknowledges that the active consciousness of film icons and representation culture from artistic point can prefigure the audience's conception of the artwork in a film (217, 28). Therefore, film phenomenology "turns our attention to the realities presented in the picture" (Casebier 11). The way people see things depends on the way things appear to them; the way things appear show what has taken effect as a structure of reality in their mind.

The drama traditions that suffix as active consciousness transcend into filmmaking. The prominent factors are "Subjective Consciousness" which defines the narrative system and constituents, and "Objective Consciousnesses" which centres on the elements that are brought in as aspects of aesthetics for senses appeal. These are presented in the study as the universals that filmmaking is conceived to reflect.

Subject Consciousness as Phenomenology

This is a set of dramatic elements shaped as a culture in their concrete forms existing in the minds of viewers as inevitable bits that is set to occur in any film. These elements are discussed under subheadings below.

Narrative-Consciousness: From the idea of plot, the dramatist lays a grid of situation occurring as a tale. The filmmaker also makes a story of his shots. This creates an active consciousness in the psyche of the consumers that they are listening/watching a story. A film must have a flow of events reflecting a beginning of a story (however it is placed), middle and the end.

Point of Attack/ Disagreement Consciousness: What initiates the crux of dramatic action in a film is the point of attack. Gustav Freytag sees it as the action that stirs the will to do the next will (804), while Milly Barranger sees it as “the moment early in the play when the story is taken up” (163). It suggests the very substance that engenders a quest to roll. This factor shapes the viewer’s mind to what the film is all about. What the story is all about becomes the subject matter in which the concerns for humanity or themes spurt. These two factors exist as phenomenology in film viewers mind.

Polar Attitude/Conflict Consciousness: A significant presence is the issue of conflict orchestrated from the point of attack. The conflict is intensified to generate tension and intrigues by setting a polar world, in which two persons seek to exert their will. Lee Jacobus see it as “act in dialogue...creating the *agon*, or dramatic confrontation” (36). Serious film’s consumers know there will be a discord from interest that will lead to the height of the clash from active consciousness, and they expect it in a good film.

Will-Power/ Possibility/ Encumbrance Consciousness: Based on the side a character chooses to side, a more pungent dramatic device for tension is the will-power of a character to enforce. It creates the crisis that sustains viewers’ interest. In John Lawson view, what really sets drama active is will and aim. (881). In the exertion of will, another factor called complication usually erupts to heighten suspicion. There is usually the possibility or impossibility of the will to be fully implemented. This spills into intrigues that intensify fear or humour. It lingers as active consciousness from drama to film.

Hamartia /Hubris Consciousness: Another phenomenon is the human nature that leads to transgression, and a thing of self the character struggles to protect. The one that emboldens the character’s failure to meet up with the situation makes his thrust fallible, while the thing of self he struggles to protect makes his thrust appalling. These two factors create fear and pity in tragedy; but are subsumed to foibles and humour in comedy. The tension from these factors pushes the action to its *climax*. Hamartia and hubris are phenomenological.

The Last Fight Consciousness: Early films which film viewers watched for years always have a moment the polar characters clash. It is the battlement for superiority or subjugation of the other. The idea evolves from the plot ingredient of drama Freytag calls the “climax” which is “the crowning point of a great amplified scene, enclosed by the smaller scenes of the rising, and the falling action... (that is), the outburst of deed from the soul of the hero, or the influx of portentous impression into the soul; the first great result of a sublime struggle, or the beginning of a mortal inward conflict...” (814-815). This ultimate clash of forces is active in the consciousness of film viewers.

Anagnorisis/ Peripeteia Consciousness: A tradition from classical conception of tragedy which a web of vagueness about oneself is unveiled to the protagonist is the “anagnorisis”. Lee Jacobus sees it as a moment the tragic hero perceives the truth, the recognition, while “peripeteia” is the moment the hero’s fortune is reversed (36). There is always a time in the sequence of narration where a glow of light about the truths surrounding a quest radiates. The hunter may be hunted or a stance reconsidered. This intrigue is an aspect of phenomenology.

Denouement Consciousness: It lies in the consciousness of a film viewer that problems must be solved and that either sorrow will pervade or joy will surface. This factor is a phenomenological element that exists in the consciousness of people who have been watching films. Generally, these elements transit from classical epoch through modern down to the contemporary era where filmmaking has become a tool for displaying

indigenous cosmic position in relation to cultural globalization. These are essential ideological stake... at any cost the synthetic unity of the locus where meaning originates (the subjects) the continuity transcendental function to which narrative continuity points back as its natural secretion” (Baudry 538).

Object Consciousness as Phenomenology

There are certain obvious sights that have transcended years of film viewership and exist as a factor to behold in any film. These factors include environment, Archetypes, Fantasmatic Body, Computer Generated Images (CGI) and Animation.

Environment-Consciousness: Every film manipulates the iris of the camera to situate the surrounding (locale). This act alone gives much information about the characters and the reason each behaves as he does. Clothing and circumstances that motivate all actions spring from the environment (Setting) (Jacobus 630-631). This lies as active consciousness in the film viewers mind.

Archetype Consciousness: In text scripted for stage which are adapted to film or direct film script, the question of archetypes is usually a psychic situation in its material form via the camera. In Wilfred Guerin, Earle Labor and Lee Morgan, Myths are both conjectural and philosophical insinuation about the generality of human experience across the universe in its sameness as conceived in both the conscious and subconscious level. They elicit cultural ideation grounded in collective symbols, which are represented in such images as *Water, Sun, Colour, Woman-Image* (drawn from Karl Jung’s *anima*), *Wind, Desert, Ship, Garden, Mountains, Hills* etc., other patterns such as Creation, Immortality, Hero Archetypes, Seasons and even generic consciousness of literary crafts are archetypal objects (115-122). Such sight like *Dream-World* with *Slopes, Plains, Valleys, Rivers*, one flying in dream to escape danger etc., are phenomenological; they are actively situated in the consciousness of film viewers.

Fantasmatic Body Consciousness: This is the embellishing of the persona projected in a movie to evince a beyond-normal-man-capability aura. For the favourable heroes (the actor/boss as Nigerian audience designates), there is usually the projection of these mortals to assume apotheoses of demi-gods, who, in a way, are indestructible. Film originated from the West. In America, for instance, individuality-capitalism is the underlying ideology. In film, this projects the bourgeoisie’s ideology. This is what Mary Doane describes as body, sound and visual anchor wholeness (162-164). That is “cinematic apparatus transforms what is before it but conceals that transformation by effacing traces of it. Bourgeoisie ideology in general functions in much the same way, masking its operations and presenting its object as natural when it is really a product of ideology” (Casebier 92). In this case,

what the classic cinema does is to make it seem as if the sound and visuals belong to a body; this body has the visual quality we see and emit the sound we hear... the fantasmatic body, serving to anchor the experience. This body authorizes and sustains certain relationships between sound and image, and has certain important characteristics...The attribute of the fantasmatic body is first and foremost unity and presence-to-itself (Doane cited in Casebier 91).

The existence of competent polar personas or more is active consciousness in film.

Computer Generated Images (CGI)/Animation/Wonder Consciousness: These are images that evoke intrigues, surprises and intensify delight as they simulate character’s abilities beyond their nature feats as found in characters flying, cars exploding, planes crashing, actors dodging bullets, and slow motion for emphasis and effects. Animated images can represent a natural force that may not be realized such a supernatural being in motion, or an ideal locale or enlarged or diminished beast blown out or rational proportion.

The Signified

The word, *signified* draws meaning from Ferdinand de Saussure’s discussion on Structuralism. According to Habib, “Saussure’s exposition to the ‘Nature of the Linguistic Sign’ provides a referent point for much subsequent literary and cultural theory.... He suggests a new terminology: *signified* designates the *concept*; *signifier* designates the *sound image*, and *sign* designates the combination of these or the entire

construct... The bond between signifier and signified is *arbitrary*” (226). In Haralambos, Holborn and Heald, “the Swiss linguistic theorist Ferdinand de Saussure first distinguished between the *signifier*, a word, and the *signified*, a thing to which it refers (116). In Bressler’s view, the *signified* is the thing that comes to our minds when a sound is raised (81), while Widdowson and Raman acknowledge it as the half of a sign expressed in speech or written down, and that a sign has two parts: one part is the mark or sound made while the other is what comes to mind as a response to the sound or mark made. The signified is the concept that comes to mind when a sound or mark is made (104). All these ideas suggest that the word, *signified* denotes referent, which is the object invoked in the sound, mark or gesture expressed.

Signified is tacitly expressed in Sanders Peirce’s Semiotics. The word semiotics itself is drawn from root of the word semiotics is in a Greek word, *sema* meaning ‘sign’ while semiotics as a parole is still derived from Greek, *semeiotikos*, which means ‘observant of signs’, suggesting the “study of signs, analogies, metaphors, symbolism – and the way they are used in language to aid communication” (vocabulary.com). Semiotics, then, appropriates scientific denotations to cultural signs and metaphorical representations of traditional ideas through film shots. Therefore, in a film, the signified “focuses on the communicative behaviour of all filmic elements... what characters say or how they communicate matters much to a film critic... the significance of symbols and their possible meanings... in visual codes, the use of colour or camera angle may act as a symbol on a primary level” (Kenechukwu 88).

The *Signified* can be represented as a sign in three (3) ways. According to Colin Counsel and Laurie Wolf, confirm the *signified* in a diagram, demonstration, and representation confirming the *icon*, *index* (pronouns), and the *symbolic* (10). To Eagleton, the *signified* can “indicate to us the way to go like pointing finger ... (to) creative interpretation” (20), meaning that “things and state of mind are linked by a motivated relation... one is the image of the other” (Todorov 16-17). In Mark Fortier’s view, the *signified* “is the concept involved by the signifier” (Fortier 18), while Saeed acknowledges it as a relationship that holds between a sign and the object it represents (5). In terms of film, Ofonime Inyang and Idara Inyang write, “interactivity thrives on images, signs, indexes and icons that send out appropriate meaning to the beholder” (120). Therefore, the *signified*, is identifiable in “gesture, posture, clothing, hairstyle, perfume, accent, social context etc... symmetrically communicate something meaningful to us (Hawkes 125). A typical example of its representation is in the “Emergent Ibom Films.”

Emergent Ibom Films

“Ibom films” is one of the budding film brands in the Nigeria’s Nollywood industry found in Akwa Ibom State of the Niger Delta axis of the country. It is actually a set of films made using *Ibibio*, *Annang*, *Oro*, *Eket* language and other sub-dialects such as *Ika*, *Ibena*, *Nkari*, *Ebughu*, *Etebi*, *Okobo*, etc (Jacob 6). The brand used to be called “Akwa-Cross Films” until various distinguishable features brought into the content marked “Akwa” as the ones produced in Akwa Ibom State or the ones portraying *Ibibio* (comprising all sub ethnic groups like Annang, Oro, Eket etc.) way of life distinct from the “Cross” as being the ones produced by Cross River State people as they are today. “Ibom Films” is the one synergized in Akwa Ibom culture. It is an addressed further as “emergent” since it is still evolving in practice and scope of creative thrusts.

The “Emergent Ibom Films”, like any other sub-Nollywood video film in Nigeria, is one of the clear processes of cultural projection and preservation in ethnic pigments through film as witnessed presently. Dimensions of cultural dramaturgy began to resurface through foreign technology in TV programmes. This traditional ritualized and de-ritualized practices orchestrated in the Western synergistic logic laid the foundation for filmmaking in Nigeria (Ogundele 48-50). According to Hyginus Ekwuazi, “film came into Nigeria in advance guard of colonialism. It came with that cast of mind that coined the slogan: ‘out of Africa come many curious things’” (22). Nigerian film then emerged as a genre of drama, and like a formal drama text, it is envisaged to draw from discursive philosophical positions that grounds the specifics on the universals.

Home videos such as “Igbo films”, “Hausa films” and “Yoruba films” are indigenous brands of Nigerian film, and “Ibom films” is a budding brand emerging. All are made to reflect the modern man in his primitive land. The concern is on how the *signified* is represented in the “Ibom Films,” using *Ayamma*.

Nonetheless, the signified can be more representational as a code since “codes produce messages or meanings which are far more stable within several communicative context and concert” (Akwang 83).

The Ibibio Signified(s) Ayamma

Ayamma is a film produced by Emem Isong, it was presented by Ibaka TV in 2016. It is set in Ibibio society (Akwa Ibom State). The subject matter is Love. There are many themes in the film, such as “The Illusion Arranged Marriage”, “Sexual Politics”, “Betrayal”, “Cosmic Duality”, “Cultural Taboos”, etc. The death of Obong Ikpaisiong persuades the Daraima, the crowned prince to pronounce that no one should sing until the mourning of his father is over. Ama, the wife brought to him, is jealous of Iko whom her husband takes delight in the grace of her dance. However, a semblance of Iko appears constantly in Daraima’s dream and sings him to ecstasy and joy. Ama lures Ekong, Daraima’s younger brother, to bed and begins to control the kingdom by sex and diabolic manipulations. Daraima is mentally deranged, and a maiden should sing to restore his mind. Iko is betrayed into singing, which leads to her death. In the jungle where Daraima wonders, Ifeoma who is wondering in search of her mother’s root in Ibibio finds him and ministers some herbs to restore his sanity. The kingdom is drifting for lack of a potentate, and the only option is a sane son of the old king. Ekong is designed to wear the crown. Aniefiok, Itoro and Ifeoma emerge with a superlative Daraima assumed to have died in the jungle. A new dawn is set. Daraima executes evil doers to claim the throne.

Based on Sanders Peirce’s conception that a sign comprises the *Iconic*, *Indexical* and *Symbolic*, this section focuses on the dimensions of meaning actions, gestures, colours, words and objects deployed in *Ayamma* suggest as *Signified(s)* in the film.

The Iconic in Ayamma

An icon is an aspect of sign signifier that has close representation in terms of sameness in appearance with the signified. The icon is equivalent to a metaphor/noun. In *Ayamma*, the same Iko in Ibibio is iconic to Ifeoma of Igbo which is the same Ayamma in Prince Daraima’s dream.



Iko



Ayamma

These images are portrayed to suggest two persons as one. The third person in the web of this icon is Ifeoma in the bush, which is searching for her mother’s root in Ibibio.

Prince Daraima, the prince and the man in the dream world with Ayamma



Prince Daraima- Real Life



Prince Daraima Dream World

Hairdressing as Signified

There are various hairdressings in the movie directing the viewer’s mind specific referents. The two outstanding ones are *Mkpuk-eda* and *Mmong-mmong*.

Mkpuk-Eba is a signifier suggesting that the person is a maiden; she has a pointed set of breasts; she is not married; and that she is seasoning. *Mkpuk* denotes tender, while *eba* denotes breast (tender breast). It denotes firm breast but freshness/ unmarried is the *signified*.



Mkpuk eba

Mmong-mmong is a signifier a woman who has suckled children and her breasts go sagging. *Mmong-mmong* means waterleaf, suggesting someone who has surrendered her sexual libido but the *signified* is married/sagged breast.



Mmong-mmong

The Indexical in *Ayamma*

In a film, “the indexical (is) where the sign is associated, possibly causally with its referent” (Widdowson and Raman105); whereas Colin and Wolf discuss index as the adjective or a descriptive element to the noun or idea in mind (10). In *Ayamma*, dialogue, objects and situations are themselves causally linked to their *signified*.

Dialogue as *Signified*

The following discussions are indexical in the film. They suggest responses. Those responses are *signifieds*.

Daraima: Will you love to scrub my back while I take my bath?

Maiden: I would want nothing more, my Lord. The pleasure is all mine...

(Scrubbing of Daraima’s back will result to maidens’ pleasure). Other instances include: “A maiden shall sing and the village shall rejoice” (Song causes the village to rejoice). “You betray me and send me to my early grave” (Betrayal causes death). “I shall be slaughtered; I shall join my ancestors” (the cause of joining my ancestors is my being slaughtered). “He is not a native doctor; he is a native he-goat. He slept with the princes”. (His becoming a native he-goat is caused by his sleeping with the princes). “She slept with the native doctor to control the throne” (Romance with the superhuman alters the cosmic order). “The man should still be there: I gave him herbs” (The reason the man lives is that he has taken herbs/herbs revives life). “Make me a charm to keep him under my control day and night” (Charm controls the human mind daily). “Afo akpuyak mmin eh, yak nnie independence eh?” (meaning), *Supposing you let go of me (the hand), let me have independence* (stalking brings about imprisonment). All these utterances stimulate actions. The actions are not the referents; they evoke the *signified(s)*.

Proverbs/Jokes/adages as Signifieds

Virtually all the dialogues among the elders in “Ibom Films” are in riddles, proverbs or adages. Each utterance evokes a *signified*.

Gessture as Signified

There are gestures that result to a different action. This resultants are *signifieds*.

Scowling of the eyes: This is obtainable in this dialogue by Aniefiok in *Ayamma*.

Aniefiok: “Love is an idiot” (He begins to scowl his eyes to simulate the idiocy from love, which his encounter with Iko induces).



Love makes Aniefiok to scowl his eyes

Tripping/Receding Sun/ Broken Calabash: The beheading of Iko causes Ifeoma to trip in Igbo land. The death of Obong Ikpa Isong causes the sun to recede; causes a calabash to fall off from Iko’s hand; and causes the tripping of the messenger who returns from getting herbs to heal the king



es ec
e ca
king



tenc
up)
t act



Calabash makes Aniefiok drunk

Iko’s disrespectful comment churns Aniefiok stomach and causes him to spew the wine in his mouth.



Aniefiok Spews wine for disrespect

Iko's dance causes the royal staff to slip from Daraima's grip.



Iko's dance causes staff to fall

All these are indexical signs suggesting diverse *signifieds* in *Ayamma*.

Symbols as *Signifieds* in *Ayamma*

A symbol is a concept made to stand for an idea. In *Ayamma*, many concepts in deeds, object and interplays stand for something else as decipherable in the culture it is situated. They include:

Hairdo: The ones made on the maiden characters is *signified* for firmness of breast, the one bent to the side of the lady's chin is *signified* for sagged breast.



Mkpuk for maiden/mmong-mmong, married

Palm-Frond: The one on land (the shrine) is *signified* for sacredness. The ones on warriors' shoulders is *signified* for legality and both also reflect restrictiveness.



Sacredness and legality

Receding sun is *signified* for the return of life to the maker.

Broken Calabash is *signified* for end of wholeness/life.

Tripping of the herb bearing messenger is *signified* for futility of effort.

Hammock that conveys Princess Ama is *signified* for Royal bride. **The ten-comb** attached to the bride's hair is *signified* for the King's first daughter.



Hair-comb = King's first daughter

Nsibidi Signs is *signified* for a community that education is not alien/mystery.

Leopard Skin is *signified* for power.

Native Doctors Makeup: The white is *signified* for the divine, while the black that intercepts it is *signified* for darkness and frailty.



Power/purity/frailty

Ama's Green/Iko's Red Costume are *signifieds* for opposition.



Opposition

Ama's Red Skirt before Daraima is *signified* for desire for love.



Desire

The Staff Falling of Obong Ikpa Isong's Hand is *signified* for expiration of life.

The Dream World/its locale is *signified* for joy in a world of love/a universe bereft of suffering and disillusionment and man's quest for freedom.

Ekong's Charm is *signified* for the black man's repose in the supra-mundane for safety and for attack.



Human repose in supernatural

Executioners Covering Faces is *signified* for man's hatred to death



Hatred for killing of humans

Iko's Blood on Ama's Face is *signified* for the permanence of stigma of death. That is, anyone who kills another is owing a debt to be avenged with blood.



The human blood accompanies the killer

Iko's body covered with leaf is *signified* for life as putrescence.



Life is putrescence

Phenomena as Signifieds: The millipede is *signified* for despair while dragonfly is *signified* for regeneration.



Ill Omen



Regeneration of Life

The intersection of these parts of the sign system of the Akwa Ibom cosmos has reflected the extent the emergent Ibom filmmakers have intensified their creativity towards establishing referents to various cultural signs. The suitable portrayal of human cultures in their specificity elevates the development of the nation's semiotics and creative depth in filmmaking, making film itself a system.

III. Conclusion

Filmmaking may look like all-comers craft, which anyone that can afford a camera can arrange shots and become a filmmaker but to make a film to have a brand as a unique art and a discipline in the contemporary world, there are basic elements that are meant to be in place. One is ground-plan of the phenomenology. This is active consciousness of film technology from its Western backdrop set up from the inception of drama as a noble art; and the semiotics, which apportions meanings to activities synergized via the iris of the camera. The analysis of the film in tandem with what a typical film requires reflects that cultural signs may be rich and appealing; but making a film to have its innate system in whatever society can guarantee a brand.

When a creative work embodies the components for which it is known, it may inspire aesthetics to consumers and motivate desire to patronize. Filmmaking is not different. "Ibom Films" may enjoy a more popular patronage if these two aspects would be considered as fundamental ingredients that situate the commanding aesthetic appeal in film.

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