BABY SWAP AS DRAMATIC IRONY: A PLOT TECHNIQUE IN ONYEKAONWU'S *ERIRI MAARA NGWUGWU.*

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Abstract

This study explores how dramatic irony is used by the playwright to reveal to the readers or audience the ignorance of a character who acts in a way recognized as a grave mistake in Eriri Mara Ngwugwu. The study researches baby swap as dramatic irony used in the development of plot in Onyekaonwu's Eriri Mara Ngwugwu. It showcases how it was used as dramatic irony in moving the story forward. Hence, this study presents a detailed analysis of baby swapping, importance and usefulness of dramatic irony in literary work. In employing this technique, Onyekaonwu created characters with varying dispositions who cannot see or understand the contrast of their thoughts and actions. Dramatic irony can be used as an amusing exposure of a character's stupidity. Sometimes it could be used to cause anger and hatred or to show tragedy and sadness. This research, therefore, aims at exploring dramatic irony, illustrating the creativity and effectiveness of baby swap as plot technique in a classic Igbo play. It further reveals how the writer creatively used this technique to create conflict, suspense, thus enhancing the reader's understanding of the Igbo concept of tragedy as evident in the play.

Keywords: Baby Swap, Dramatic Irony, Plot Technique and Play

Introduction

Baby swapping usually termed baby switching has continued to be a well known issue in the medical field and Literature. Baby swapping can be described as a process whereby babies are swapped or switched after birth, either by mistake or out of malice or vengeance. As a result of such actions, parents who are not the

kids' biological parents unintentionally raise the children. This misidentification or baby swapping has continued to be a regrettable action and it is popular in medical field. According to Ginsberg (2010:255) it has been estimated that 20,000 accidental switches occur every year due to various errors in identification. The occurrence is more regularly detected due to genealogical Deoxyribonucleic acid DNA tests, which reveal the true genetic parentage.

Henry (2006:40) insists that misidentification happens despite efforts of some hospitals,

> When the wrong mother is identified today, it is almost always despite diligent efforts to make a correct identification. The hospital takes a footprint of the baby, places a wristband on the mother and the baby, provides a twenty-four hour video coverage of the nursery, and utilizes other steps to assure that each woman is uniquely identified to only her own child (40).

Apart from what Henry says baby switching in some cases are not mistakes, but deliberate exchange or swapping of babies for intentions best known to the person who swapped the babies. In most cases, it is always a nurse on duty, a midwife, the doctor or a ward genitor. Such intentions could be for revenge or profit.

In literary works, with baby switching as motif, dramatic irony is tool used to create empathy and sympathy with the characters as they live their fate to their tragic end. When a literay work uses dramatic irony to reveal to the audience that babies are switched, the writer uses it as a style to involve the reader greatly in the work by generating curiosity, raising expectations and creating a suspense. A protagonist may realize the irony of his action while the rest of the characters may not. He or she may be ignorant while the other characters have the knowledge with the audience. A mother may be the first to realise that her baby must

have been switched, while other characters will later know towards the end part of the play.

When babies are switched and a play continues to unfold, it means that the reader knows something a character has said, thought or done which other characters in the play are not aware of. Dramatic irony should not be used as a mere tool of disclosing to the audience or reader what another character knows or does, but should be used as a stylistic tool which if well managed creates tension and suspense.

Drama is a genre of Literature that is written and presented in a dialogue form to be acted on the stage. Drama is called *Ejije* in Igbo language which falls in line with Mbah et-al (2013:186) which state that a drama is a play written for actors to perform (on stage). The term "drama" is derived from a Greek word "dran" As an imaginative work of art, drama is written as a script in acts and scenes to be acted on stage for it to be a complete production. Boulton (1960) describes drama as literature that walks. This description of drama as something that partakes in movement indicates that drama becomes a reality in live performance. Drama is usually centred on conflict which attempts to resolve often heightens the action of the play. Drama is tension. Tension often means that the audience is expecting something to happen between the characters on a stage, which in most cases starts as a dialogue or conflict. Crow (1983:2) says that drama is:

> a type of theatrical performance in which the active participants impersonate (that is pretends to be people, beings or things other than they really are) and through a usually predetermined sequence of physical actions enact a story for the entertainment of an audience (2).

Bearing the above in mind about what drama tries to represent, dramatic irony goes on to be a type of irony, tool or device in a literary work. Irony occurs when words used to suggest the opposite. Anderson et al (1243) view Irony as a contrast or

discrepancy between expectation and reality-between what is said and what is really meant, between what is expected and what really happens, or between what appears to be true and what really is true.

Cuddon (2002) opines that in theory, irony eludes definition and this elusiveness is one of the main reasons why it is a source of much fascinated inquiry and speculation. According to Fowler (1933), irony is a form of utterance that postulates a double audience, consisting of one party that shall hear and shall not understand and another party that, shall hear and understand as well.

Hutcheon (1995:37) talks about the effect of irony by saying that irony:

> Unlike metaphor or metonym, has an edge; unlike paradox, irony is decidedly edgy…irony is a 'weighted' mode of discourse in the sense that it is assymetrical, unbalanced in favour of the silent and unsaid…irony involves the attribution of an evaluative, even judgmental attitude, and this is where the emotive or affective dimension also enters (37).

When dramatic irony takes place, the audience or reader becomes more engaged with the work. In most cases dramatic irony creates the feeling of suspense over what happens next.

Sedgewick (1948:49) says that dramatic irony is the sense of contradiction felt by spectators/readers of a drama/play who see a character acting in ignorance of his condition. Abrams and Dasylva (2005) opine that dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or narrative in which the reader shares with the author, the knowledge of the present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant.

Orjiako and Ezenwammadu (2018) opine that dramatic irony has three stages which are; installation, exploitation and resolution also called preparation, suspension and resolution.

The installation or preparation stage is the early stage of actions which the audience is informed of actions or thought the character(s) do not know about. The exploitation stage creates suspense in the reader or audience. The resolutions stage, as the final state, discloses the characters' ignorance to them. Here everyone is now fully aware of his or actions and mistakes.

In *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, Oedipus is the murderer he searches for, but the writer, Sophocles characterizes him in a way that allows the audience to believe that this may not be the truth, he tells us, but also, he do not tell us the truth we think or want to know, which is a sample of judicious use of irony.

Dramatic irony can be described as a stylistic device used by playwrights in plays, and in theatre and script writers in movies. Dramatic irony is also a plot device that is used in creating situations where the reader/audience knows more about the episodes and resolutions unknown to the character(s). Here, a character or some characters are at a disadvantaged end. It is usally used to highten suspense and humour in a play thereby making the audience part of the play. In carrying out dramatic irony as a literary or plot device, the character cannot see or understand the contrast of his actions and thoughts, but the audience or reader can see through their ignorance and mistakes.

Orjiako and Ezenwammadu (2018:189) disclose that

> Dramatic irony is not, of course, a secret kept from the protagonist of a play and other character in the play but that it is simply a kind of irony used by writers in providing a very interesting method of storytelling, in order to make the readers or audience interested and fully engaged in the play (189).

Dramatic irony was a significant tool for ancient and modern writers of drama and could be seen in many of their tragedies because their plays are based on well-known myths, legends, and modern happenings. The audience knew what has happened and

how or what would be the outcome of those prominent incidents in the play. They understand the ignorance of the characters over a dramatic situation and the actuality behind their speech and actions. Dramatic irony occurs in a situation where a character is ignorant of his actions while the audience or readers are aware and understand the situation more than he does. Mcarthur, and Mcarthur (1992) say dramatic irony is a double vision of what is happening in a play or real-life situation. In Greek tragedy, the characters were blind to fateful circumstances of which the audience was all too well aware, producing a privileged and often poignant appreciation of the plot.

Dramatic irony is a prominent tool used in a play. Drama which is a literary composition tells a story, usually of human conflict by means of dialogue and action. Theatre scholars believe that a play is not complete until it has been performed on the stage by actors. Bernard (1974) says drama it is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance, though it has also come to refer to a specific genre of fiction (either comedy or tragedy) having a serious mood and conflict. It can also be described as a plot mechanism or device used by writers to only disclose to the audience a crucial information that a character does not know.

Importance of Dramatic Irony

With the above discussions, we can submit that dramatic irony plays vital role in the development of plot through situations like:

i. Using it as a plot technique by a playwright to create suspense and surprise in such a way that situations and events which could be understood to lead to a favourable conclusion produce unfavourable one. Here it is used to intensify and move the plot forward.
ii. Creating curiosity when a character reveals inability to understand a situation which the reader and other characters understand. This creates a contrast between a character's current condition and other subsequent scenes.

iii. Engaging the reader with the story by intimating the reader with information that a character does not have, thereby creating a tension between what the reader knows and how a character acts. This places the reader superior above other characters as he anticipates the end of a character's ignorance.
iv. Laying emphasis on the fate of a character. Here a character expects the opposite (mostly tragic) of what the reader knows fate has in store. It stresses the inevitability of comprehension on a character.

Using dramatic irony in a drama is not an option but rather a plot technique that can be used for conflict and suspense creation. In other words, a plot mechanism can be said to be something, a character, a situation in a drama that moves the story (plot) forward. Since plot itself is a structure of events in a story arranged in a sequential order, it can also be called the storyline. A good plot must have a beginning, middle and an end which outlines series of events in the in play. It could also be something or an action introduced in the story with the aim of solving a situation in the future.

Literature Review

Baby swap takes place in maternity wards where babies taken out of their cradles to be bathed or given one or two medical attentions are not returned to their biological mothers. This is usually a rare occurrence, but when it takes place, it usually has everlasting consequences for both families. When a mother (or father) discovers that her baby has been swapped she may likely suffer depression and anxiety. She would be greatly bothered about the condition and safety of her child. This is a regrettable situation that is much known to the medical literature.

According to Dalton et al (2018) despite technological advancement, human error as the leading cause of baby swap abounds due to:

- Misleading infant or mother bracelet information
- . Bracelets falling off the infant's ankles or wrists, which is particularly common in newborns, whose arms and legs may shrink after birth due to water loss
- Bed mix-ups of babies with similar or identical names
- Misreading of sequential names or Identity numbers
- Inadequate physical security mechanisms
- Parents who are not fluent in the staff's native language

According to Dobbs (2000), 'Tort' claims may arise from baby swapping in a hospital. The likely claim is one for infliction of emotional distress brought by the mother of the switched baby against the hospital. Baby swapping is a horror hospital error, intentions and actions which could be prevented with adequate ward security in the maternity ward. Mothers should always keep their babies by their side at all times, or could ask their partners to tag along to any necessary tests that require their baby to leave the room. Dress your baby in a distinct outfit so that the baby can be easily recognizable to you. Place a band on the baby immediately. The band includes the child's date of birth, names and the parent's (mother's) names.

Baby switching as a phenomenon has become a theme or motif that has frequently become a dramatic technique like In *the Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1893) by Mark Twain, two infants, one black and one white were switched at birth, causing them to pass for their respective races that they are not. In Pudd'nhead Wilson, Rosy who had wanted to kill her son and herself to avoid the tortures of slavery intentionally decides to switch his son with another in order to give his son a life of freedom and privilege.

Also the Philippine television series Mara and Clara (2010) portrays the dramatic irony of baby switching. The characters Mara Davis/David and Clara del Valle were switched at birth by Gary for revenge after his former lover whom he had wanted to marry married another man. In the case of Mara and Clara, it was a pure

case of malice and revenge. Just like Mara and Clara, In Wandering Sun/Nozomi in the Sun, Miki and Nozomi are two girls who were switched at birth by the nurse Michiko, who holds a personal grudge against the parents of one of the families involved.

In Kay Janice Johnson's *Whose Baby* (2020), an error occurred at the hospital. It was discovered that Lynn Chanak's child is not hers. And she must wed Adam Landry, a man she doesn't even know, in order to keep the child she loves and have the baby she gave birth to. Also in Eeiln Gouge's *Garden of Lies* (1989) Rose and Rachel had quite different childhoods. Rachel, an ice princess with aspirations of becoming a famous doctor, lives in the lap of luxury in Manhattan. In the New York slums, Rose succumbed to love too young and fled heartache to become a famous lawyer. They discover the truth about one another and themselves when they fall in love with the same fascinating man.

Ellen Conford' s *Royal pain* (19881) was about Abby Adams of Kansas who was unintentionally switched with another baby when she was born in a small European nation. She is returning to Saxony Coburn to start over as the actual Princess Florinda XIV now that the error has been made. Being a princess is strange but enjoyable—until Abby learns she must wed the ominous Prince Casimir on her sixteenth birthday. Also in *Someone Else's Life* by Katie Dale (2012) The awareness that she had a 50% chance of inheriting the crippling family health condition added to the agony experienced by seventeen year-old Rosie when her mother Trudy passed away from Huntington's disease. When she informs 'Aunt Sarah', her mother's closest friend that she is undergoing testing for the illness, her mother’s midwife Sarah confesses that Trudy was not Rosie's mother after all. Her sick baby, who was destined to die, was substituted for Rosie at birth. Being devastated and heartbroken, Rosie makes the decision to travel to the United States with her ex-boyfriend during his gap year in order to locate her biological mother there. However, not everything goes as expected. Rosie must make a difficult choice that will have

devastating and far-reaching repercussions when she learns more about her family's hidden secrets and falsehoods.

Baby switching as a dramatic irony, is a plot technique that can be used to create a suspense which moves the story forward. When two characters are revealed or foreshadowed to have been switched at the birth, the story gives clue of what could happen next which is only left for the audience to decipher. Thus, dramatic irony has taken place to create intense suspense, humour, and convey emotions.

In Onyekaonwu's Nwata *Rie Awo (1980),* Aworo the great warrior puts a substance (charm) in his food and accuses his wife of being responsible. In the play,the audience sees him putting something into the food he was served by his wife, Obiọma. This lead to Obiọma and her daughter being banished from their village and sold into slavery. As dramatic irony plays on, the reader and audience understands Obiọma's sorrow and ignorance. There are other instances of dramatic irony in *Nwata rie awọ*, which was resolved at the end of the play when Awọrọ finds out that he has married his daughter as second wife. An abominable act that made him commit suicide.

Inno Uzoma Nwadike in *Okwe Agbala* (1991) employed dramatic irony in the development of the story's plot. When Chinyere hurriedly finished her degree examination ahead of other classmates in the hall, it created suspicion among other students, but ironically, the reader knows that she had met Dr. Emezina in private and collected the exam questions. Also while other characters are still shocked that she finished ahead of them, there was another character who was not ignorant of her recent prowess but declared that he saw Chinyere with an extra peice of paper in examination hall. When the result came out, Chinyere made First Class, but the reader is not ignorant of the fact that she has cheated in the examination hall and also participated in flirtious act with her lecturer which earned her such high grade in her degree result.

Nikolai Google's satirical play *The Government Inspector* (1836) also made use of dramatic irony extensively. At the inn, where the Mayor and Khlestakov first meet, a rather ironic situation takes place. The audience is aware that the Mayor is an untrustworthy and inexperienced government official that he is scared of the imaginary government inspector, and that Khlestakov is certainly not that inspector they are expecting. The two men are having this conversation, and as they both try to navigate it, the audience finds their attempts humorous. Khlestakov tries to act haughty to mask his sense of wrongdoing, and the Mayor wants to be powerful.

In Sophocle's *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus seeks to find the murderer which is but himself. Ironically, his curse falls upon himself, and his search ends tragically in his discovery of his failure to overcome fate. Ironically, he aggressively ran into the very fate which he has been running passionately to avoid throughout his life.

In Macbeth *(1623)*, William Shakespeare, Duncan visits Macbeth, on his arrival, he praises the Macbeth's Castle not knowing that he will be murdered in that same castle he has praised its beauty.Also, Duncan trusts Macbeth not knowing about the witches' prophecy of Macbeth becoming a king and that he would kill him. With dramatic irony as a plot technique in portraying Duncan's ignorance, the audience already is aware of the witches' prophecy.

Abrams (1999:28) describes dramatic irony as,

> a situation where the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation, the character unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstance, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or say something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends (28).

The success of *Oedipus Rex* is attributed to the brilliant interplay of dramatic irony in the play. From the beginning of the play, Oedipus is ignorant of the murder of his father and marrying his mother, but the audience watching the play is well aware of these atrocities. Therefore, Oedipus words and actions over the murder lend itself to dramatic irony. Oedipus speech demanding the people to reveal the murderer is also an instance of dramatic irony. Little does he realize that in cursing Laius' murderer to live in wretchedness, he is indirectly cursing himself. This curse comes to pass when in the end of the play Oedipus and his family are doomed to a life of pain and suffering.

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* is another major work imbued with dramatic irony. It involves the mistake of identity and the misinterpretation. Young Marlow's mistake of Mr. Hardcastle for an innkeeper and his misinterpretation of Mr. Hardcastle's action are caused by Tony's trick, which made him to see Kate Hardcastle as a common barmaid is caused by Kate's disguise. While all these actions progress, the readers and Tony are aware of the whole situations while other characters are ignorant. Just like Sophocle, Oliver Goldsmith, showed mastery of Dramatic Irony and manipulated it into use in his comedy. Usually, dramatic irony is mostly used in tragedies to show the fate of main characters or give other characters and audience some information and knowledge.

In Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame*, it is only the soothsayer, Baba Fakunle, who knows the sequence and turn of events. All the characters in the play know nothing, so their speeches contain the dramatic irony which lends to their ignorance employed by the playwright to advance the plot and keep the reader and audience spellbound. Ola Rotimi's dramatic Irony are more evident in the characters' words which is a product of their thought than their actions. The irony lies in our deep undersanding that though Baba Fakunle is physically a blind man, he knows the truth and Odewale in spite of having eyes can not see the reality unfolding before him.

Queen Ojuola's outright rejection of Baba Fakunle's judgement, the servant of the gods supports the dramatic irony in the play. She also went on and disclosed to him how Baba Fakunle made her kill her first son by her first husband because he said the son was to kill his father and marry his mother. Her narration is filled with innocence and ignorance being interpreted as dramatic irony because she did not know that she was talking to the son she thought has been killed.

Synopsis of Eriri Mara Ngwugwu by Onyekaonwu (1985)

The play opens with a soliloquy by Mrs. Okwundụ (Orieji Ogbunanjọ) who is in a puzzle and deep thought about her life. She lives in Iduma with her two children-Okoto and Uduakụ. She does not like her husband's means of livelihood in their home vllage, Iduma. The husband, Okwuike Ogbunanjọ is a murderer. She reports her husband to the police because of his evil dealings. He is imprisoned for twenty years. While in prison, Mr. Okwuike vows to kill his wife whenever he comes out from the custody. Because of that, Mrs Okwundụ escapes to Iguedo with her two children, Okoto and Ụdakụ and they live there for about twenty years.

When her children confronts her to know what could be her worries early in the morning, she uses flashback to narrate the story of their true origin to her children and informs them that their father has vowed to kill her as soon as he comes out of the prison custody.

This moves them to check if it is already twenty years, and realise that their father must have been released from the prison. As they make plans on how to handle the situation and the way forward, a close friend to Mrs Okwundụ sends a family friend to Iguedo to inform her that her husband has been released and that he is in search of her. The man who was sent resembles. Okwuike.While Okoto runs out in search of their father to kill him before he kills them, Okwuike finally finds his way into Mrs okwundu's house and strangles her to death.

After Mrs Okwundu's death, her daughter who was on the verge of marrying Ndubuisi elopes with another man known as Ọchọnganooko, who is a wealthy young and handsome man. They leave immediately for overseas where they wedded and have two female children, Ikoeze and Ogechi. After fifteen years, they return to their home town, Ikpangu, where Ọchọnganooko's desire for a male child pushes him to threaten his wife Ụdụakụ with divorce if she conceives a baby girl instead of a baby boy.

Out of desperation, Uduakụ meets with her nurse who is in charge of delivering her of baby and pays her to swap her baby at birth if it happens to be a baby girl, for another person's baby boy. On the day of delivery, Ụdụakụ delivers of a baby girl and the nurse does as she agrees with Ụdụakụ. The nurse switches Mrs Ọkpala Okwuolisa's baby boy after her delivery.

The two babies from their respective homes grow into adulthood. The male child, Taagbo becomes a student in Ọtamkpa University while the female child Nneka becomes a teacher in Iguedo. The two switched children later become friends and fall in love with a plan to marry each other. Ọchọnganooko, on the other side and in his flirtious lifestyle influences Nneka with his wealth and starts having sexual affair with her, not knowing that she is his own daughter. Ọchọnganooko refuses to approve of Taagbo's intention to get married to Nneka the day his son brought her home. He did this because of his secret relationship with Nneka.

The nurse who switched both babies has been dismissed from her work for slapping a commissioner's wife during child delivery. Feeling frustrated and rejected, the nurse visits a prophet. While praying with her prophet and other children of God, the prophet receives a revelation of all the atrocities she has committed while working in the hospital and advises her to go and confess her sins to the families whom she switched their babies.

Ọchọnganooko who feels betrayed by his wife's action remains unhappy with her wife who has apologized, he also becomes ashamed of his immoral act for committing incest with his own daughter, Nneka.In order to get rid of her as a pay back of

the humiliation she causes him, Ọchọnganooko sells his wife to ritual murderers to kill her and claims that she is drowned in a river. Fortunately for Ụdụakụ she is rescued by one of the human parts dealers who happens to be her real father Okwuike Ogbunanjọ who recognizes her as his daughter.

While the men of Ọchọnganooko's village make burial arrangement for Uduakụ, she is brought back by her father, Okwuike Ogbunanjọ. Ọchọnganooko becomes dumbounded and ashamed of himself since he has been caught red handed in his evil act. Uduaku's brother Okoto also present at the scene remembers that it is his father who killed his mother. He brings out a knife and stabs Okwuike to death. Ọchọnganooko enters into his room and commits suicide.

Use of Dramatic Irony in Onyekaonwu's *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*

Onyekaonwu's *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu* has many examples of dramatic irony, thereby making the actions of the characters seem wholly contradictory to the actual situation known to some other characters or to the audience. In analyzing and interpreting the findings, the study is concerned with meaning and a social process. The drama analysis is focused on the major characters' utterances and actions which show their ignorance, mistakes of identity and the misinterpretation of actions.

In the first scene, when everyone believed that Mr. Okwuike Ogbunanjọ has been killed, he appears and strangles his wife Mrs Okwundu. At this moment, the audence and readers are aware that there has been a mistake. Okoto kills a stranger but in his ignorance, he beleives he has killed his father. He goes back to ransack the contents of the bag of the man he claimed to have killed, only to discover that he has mistakenly killed the person sent ahead to warn them about their father's search for them in Iguedo.

The drama which started its first conflict in scene one unfolds to act two scene two where Uduakụ's nurse stops by her

house after her husband Ọchọnganooko had threatened to marry another wife since she can not conceive a male child. She confides in the nurse about her desperation to have a male child, no matter the cost of it.

Uduakụ: Biko, nọọsụ, nwaanyị ibe m,nyere m aka. Obi ga-atụwa m, ma alụkpo m nwaanyịọzọ n'ụlọ a. Biko, ị mara ihe ọ ga-eri, kwuo

Nọọsụ: Gịnị ka ị na-ekwu? Abụ m Chukwu na-enye nwa, ka a sị ka m nye gị nwoke? ... Na-ekpe ekpere...

Uduakụ: Ọ bụ taa ka m kpewere ekpere?...ihe m chọrọ bụ nwa nwoke, ụzọ abụla ụzọ. Gwa m ihe ọ ga-ewe m? M kwụchagodu ụgwọ, mụọ nwa, ọ bụrụ nwoke, enyeghachila m...

(ya agbabaa n'ime ụlọ, buru ngwugwu ego pụta bunye nọọsụ)

Nọọsụ: Ị matara na ọrụ a bụ ọrụ dị egwu; ma bụrụkwa ihe chọrọ izota mmiri... Ọ dị mma ka anyị nwaa....(EMN50)

Please, nurse you are my fellow woman, help me. I will be devastated if my husband marries another wife into this family. Please just say what it would cost.

Nurse: What are you saying? Am I God who gives child, maybe I would have given you a male child? ...keep praying...

Uduakụ: Did I start praying today? ...I just want a male child, by all means. Tell me what it would cost me? If after paying you and give birth to a male child, don't pay me back the money...

(she rushes inside her house, comes out with a wrap of money and gives to nurse)

Nurse: You know that this is a risky task; and deserves secrecy... it is alright, let us try...(Act two, scene two EMN50)

This was the begining of a journey that makes the play a tragedy. After the nurse finally carried out the act of switching babies for profit intentions, Uduakụ and the nurse became the only characters who were aware that two babies have been switched at birth, and that biologically, her son Taagbo does not belong to Uduakụ but to another person. Onyekaonwu employed this technique in advancement of the play.

In susequent years as portrayed in the play, the nurse was later dismissed from duty for being rude to a commissioner's wife during child delivery. In search of redemption, she visits a prophet who reveals her sins with solution on how to remedy the situation.

Prọfeetị: ka a na-ekpe ekpere,... m wee jụọ Ndị Igwe, ha wee na-akọwa na ihe dị ka afọ iri abụọ gara aga, na ọ dị onye mụrụ nwa nwoke n'ụlọ ọgwụ unu, i kuuru ya, kunye onye mụrụ nwa nwaanyị. E mere ka m mata na nwata nwoke ahụ na nwata nwaanyị ...na-akwado ịlụ onwe ha. O dị nnukwu ihe ọjọọ ọzọ agwa a ị kpara wetara nke a bụ na nna mụ nke nwaanyị agaala kpọrọ ya dilaa n'amaghị ama..!

Prophet: while we were praying,...so, I asked the heavenly people, they explained that about twenty years ago, you switched someone's male child with another person's female child in your hospital. It was revealed to me that both children are planning to get married to each other. There is a sacriledge your actions has caused which made the father of

> the female child to sleep (fornicate) with his daughter unknowingly..!

At this juncture, the dramatic irony became evident. It brings to the notice of the audience that the two children in quote are Nneka and Tagboo who are engaged to each other. The reader and the audience are now aware of the incest being committed by Ọchọnganooko who is also ignorant of such abomination. When his (supposed son) brings before him Nneka as the girl she wants to marry, Ọchọnganooko and Nneka become two characters who are aware of the adulterous and immoral act she had in the past with her soon to be father-in-law. Other characters do not know that she has had sex with his father-in-law. This was an action that thought very well before taking decisions, unlike Ọchọnganooko who knows about it on the day she was brought to him for his consent. This made Ọchọnganooko to disapprove of Tagboo's marriage to Nneka outrightly.

At this stage, Ọchọnganooko and Nneka are just having sexual affairs away from their spouses and still ignorant of the fact that they are father and daughter. So his outright rejection of the would be daughter-in-law was based on the reality on ground that he has committed immoral act with Nneka whom his son is moving mountains to make sure she is his wife. He can not stand the sight of Nneka as his son's wife. The dramatic irony here is that Udụakụ's ignorance over her husband's dislike for Nneka, their would be daughter-in-law makes her more confused and ignorant of the immediate situation and even future episodes.

When the nurse comes to Ọchọnganooko's house to confess her evil deed, Ụduakụ quickly understands the nurse's mission, but her husband was unaware that the nurse brings tragic news that will shatter him till the end of his life. In the play, he was seen sending his son Tagboo to go and call his kinsmen as was requested by the Nurse who says that her mission must be disclosed in the presence of Ọchọnganooko's kinsmen.

Onyekaonwu employed dramatic irony as a technique in the form of mistaken identity when Okoto kills the man sent to rescue him instead of his evil father, Mr. Okwuike Ogbunanjo. A similar instance is the wedding day chaos when Uduakụ abandoned his husband, Ndubuisi and elopes with Ọchọnganooko. The audience is aware of this action but ironically no other person understands the situation except her chief bridesmaid. So in perpetuation of dramatic irony here, the congregation ignorantly with heavy hearts search for the missing bride who was already on her way to the airport while they mourn her sudden disappearance on her wedding day.

Also at the begining of Ọchọnganooko and Nneka's sexual excapade, Nneka knows that she is at the verge of going to bed with his would be father-in-law (Ọchọnganooko) , but with her friend's (Uju) pressure, she throws in the towel to partake in his largese. This creates tension and suspense while other characters are ignorant of their own actions and fate.

> ***Nneka***: O nwere otu ihe m na-enyo enyo. ọ sịrị na aha ya bụ Ọchọnganooko Obiakọ. Ọ bụ na ọ bụghị ya bụ nna Taagboo...
>
> ***Uju***: Ịgwa gị eziokwu, ọ bụ ya mụ Taagboo ma na o nweghị ihe nke ahụ mere. Tagboo, ọ ga-anọrọ n'Ọtamkpa, ebe ọ na-agụ akwụkwọ, nọrọkwa n'Ịkpangwu ebe a? Ị hụbeghị onye ya na nwoke na-adị mma, ya na nna ya a na-adịkwa. Nwoke m oge agbanwoola o. Ọ bụzịkwa ma ị chọrọ ịbọọdụ laastị.
>
> ***Nneka***: ọ bu eziokwu na ọ matebeghị na ọ bụ m ka nwa ya na-akwado ịlụ...
>
> ***Uju***: ...kọgheriri gị ihe ahụ gaa nara nwoke mmadụ ego dị adị rie...(EMN 59)

> *Nneka*: There is something I am suspecting. He said his name is Ọchọnganooko Obiakọ. Is he not Taagboo's father
>
> *Uju*: To be honest with you, he is Taagboo's father but it does not mean anything. Will Taagboo stay in Ọtamkpa where he is studying, and also stay in here Ịkpangwu? Have you not seen someone in a relationship, and still shares some happy moments with her boyfrind's father? My dear, time has changed oh. Or else you want to lag behind...
>
> *Nneka*: Well, he is yet to find out that I am his son's fiance...
>
> Uju: keep talking nonsense, I advise you agree to the man's demand and collect money from him...(Act three, scene one EMN 59)

Dramatic irony is a significant tool in the hands of playwrights and was employed in Onyekaonwu's *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*. The audience knew what has happened and how or what would be the outcome of those prominent incidents in the play. They could easily understand the ignorance of the characters over a dramatic situation and the actuality behind their speech and actions.

Conclusion

Dramatic irony is a plot technique commonly used in literary works, especially in drama to showcase something that is contrary to the truth in order to disclose some actions or thoughts to the reader or audience for the purpose of change. Bearing the above in mind dramatic irony goes on to be a tool or device used in creating tensions and suspense that are carried out on a stage. A plot technique could be a character or object that must be destroyed or protected by all means to continue the flow of the story. It could also be something or an action introduced in the

story with the aim of solving a situation in the future. It is obvious that *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu* is not only well crafted with dramatic irony, it is also resolved on the plot technique of baby swapping.

Baby swapping has been described as a process whereby babies are swapped at birth very soon after birth, either by mistake or with malice or vengeance. In most cases it is always the nurse on duty or the midwife that aids such act. Such intention could be for revenge or profit purpose as was shown in Onyekaonwu's *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*. In literary works with baby switching as motif, dramatic irony comes in hand as a plot technique. The reader and audience are pushed to sympathize with the characters as they live in their fate. This article, showed the textual analysis of *Eriri Mara Ngwugwu*, highlighting the plot technique of baby swap used by Onyekaonwu, to bring about dramatic irony in his play. It was also found that dramatic irony was veritable sources of information in the Igbo tragic play as it reflected the concept of tragedy within the political, historical, philosophical and cultural contexts. From the foregoing, we can safely conclude that baby swap as a dramatic irony constituted the main plot technique used in achieving tragic effects in the play, despite the fact that flashback was at time employed to enable the audience have a better understanding of the situation surrounding the characters which they are unaware of.

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