

Review Article

Some Perspectives on Overcoming Communication Challenges in the Selected Novels Fatou Diome, Gloria Naylor, Leonora Miano, Pamela Jooste and Walter Mosley

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Abstract: This article entitled “Some Perspectives on Overcoming Communication Challenges in the Selected Novels of Fatou Diome, Gloria Naylor, Leonora Miano, Pamela Jooste and Walter Mosley”, analyses both genetic and biological disparities from childhood that characterize the lives of boys and girls till adulthood in society. Thus, *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* (Diome), *The Women of Brewster Place* (Naylor), *Tels des astres éteints* (Miano), *Dance with a poor man’s Daughter* (Jooste), and *RL’s Dream* (Mosley), motivated their use to raise an awareness campaigns on female conscientization against a male conspiracy built on the law of silence against the female gender, resulting in male marginalization, of women in gender relationships through diverse cultural and religious practices represented by the corpus. In order to achieve this goal, the following analytical tools were used: feminist criticism, post-colonialism and Africana Womanism. The hypothesis is based on the fact that the corpus underscores gender conflicts that rock power is exercised against women through the channel of communication by men. The analysis concluded that female consciousness raising is a tool that women use to counteract any form of subjugation in patriarchal societies that struggle to their emancipation and freedom. Consequently, the analysis highlights the philosophical and ideological vision that all five authors have of their respective African and African-American societies, concerning gender equality.

Keywords: Nairobi Manifesto, Metalanguage, Power dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Many factors mediate the location of gender and power dynamics in gender discourse. These factors are both personal and communal in nature. In trying to generalize about gender relations, difficulties come up both in the African/African American continents because of their vastness and diversity. An instance of this diversity in Africa is colonialism’s different affiliations from North-South and East -West. One of the main objectives of these texts is to highlight the inextricable challenges that promote the law of silence in some societies (African). From a feminist, a post colonialist and a womanist perspective, this article articulates a discourse rooted in the powerful versus the powerless binary that continues to distort smooth communication and entente between men and women around the world.

I- Cultural Contexts and Female Consciousness

Many cultural, traditional, ethnic and regional idiosyncrasies of men and women intersect the writers’ perceptions and consciousness. In the African America context, gender, class, race, sexism and other slavery and post-slavery crises continue to affect the lives of Blacks especially women. Nonetheless, these writers (Miano, Diome, Naylor, Jooste and Mosley) from the above continents are not only speaking back but are fighting back, sewing new seeds of enablement that will span gender and power relations towards development. Their objectives are stated in the “Nairobi Manifesto”

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Women, as the group adversely affected by the existing development strategies, will have to be in the forefront of the definition of a new self-reliant people-centred development. This strategy will have to reorganise and build on their creative potential and render women equal and active participants. (Nairobi...1985:5)

It is a vibrant call by the *Nairobi Manifesto* for women to occupy center-stage of development thanks to their inextricable potentials. The above writers therefore correct the distorted images /misrepresentations of women in society. Their voices are not monolithic but multiple, and the importance of their viewpoints summarize their ideas about what/how gender and power relations should be. Fiction then becomes a tool of self-consciousness to African/African American male and female writers. In recreating reality, these writers do not adopt disinterested standpoints. Consequently, writing is no longer a synonym for elusive fiction but a source of self-retrieval and development. In this case, one observes a direct correlation between reality and development at both the personal and communal levels. Literature then becomes a vital metalanguage, useful in declaring writers' ideological positions. The writers have an urgent message and this precludes self-effacement. Given the pressing need for gender redemption and development, Miano and others stand out among writers and men from these two continents that use literature for overt ideological ends. Furthermore, the main objective of this article is to demonstrate how these writers exploit gender and power dynamics to overcome communication gaps between men and women. The writers raise significant issues that affect gender and power relations in general and women in particular that stem from disparities in speech between both genders (male and female). This article focuses mainly on the different strategies to overcome communication challenges in gender relations.

II- Overcoming Communication Challenges in Boy and Girls

Most male and female fictional writers consciously or unconsciously do not lay much emphasis on the vital role communication plays in human relations. It becomes even more important when it concerns gender and power relations, which are pressurized by certain cultural patterns and religions that attribute quite different communication roles and styles to women and men depending on their class, age and status in society. Therefore, it is necessary to discover how communication styles between both genders and their understanding in interpersonal spoken relationships are felt. The selected authors' views on gender differences in communication are fascinating and valuable in understanding communication issues in gender and power relations. In the scientific domain, brain lateralization studies are captivating-specifically hormone research. It identifies differences in male/female brain development and the impact upon their behaviors and communication patterns.

According to the novels under study, gender differences are evident before birth and throughout childhood. Girls are said to spend more time talking to other children or to themselves while boys, most of their words are not understandable. They are either one syllable sounds like "uh". As one observes, such fundamental differences continue through growth and development, presenting real challenges in female/male dialogues. The main purpose of this section is to determine how men and women differ, and thus, how they communicate, discuss issues, overcome gender and power biases in order to relate successfully within male dominated environments. How can their different communication styles be synthesized to facilitate mutual understanding between them? Before attempting to analyze these preoccupations, we must underscore some basic differences between men/women, which are both biological and genetic.

Biological and genetic differences are subjects of controversy in many circles. They serve as foundations for further assertions concerning communication differences. The objective at this point is not to make comparisons with respect to status, for example, one is good and the other is better. It is not the intention, but rather, one will identify differences, which may predispose individual abilities (in women) or strengths that are important contributions to the development of both genders in the community. In this section, focus is specifically genderized communication styles in society.

III- Biological and Genetic Differences between Girls and Boys

Both biological and genetic differences significantly impart gender orientation. Researchers focus on the nature/nurture question because certain differences in biological sex are well-defined and accepted as factual. The main difficulty is how such differences influence perception, interaction, and ultimately communication styles in men/women, to become an interesting research domain. A review of such dissimilarities serves as a starting point in the study of gender differences in behavior and communication and why women may offer unique strengths essential to the healthy growth and functioning of society.

David Gelman *et al*, studying the hormones and biological differences, hold that men and women experience the world differently based on hormones. There is of course the influence of culture but they resolutely state: "*Men and women seem to experience the world differently [...] because [...] they feel it with a different sensitivity of touch, hear it with different aural responses, puzzle out its problems with different cells in their brains*" (Gelman *et al*,1981:72). These critics believe there are distinctive characteristics as far as the use of the five senses is concerned for men and women

thanks to differences in brain patterns. Scientists believe hormones are the bases of such differences because they play a role far greater than simply contributing to external sexual characteristics. To corroborate this idea, Jo Durden Smith writes: “*that the brain not only produces hormones but is also acted upon by those same hormones. [...] Sexual hormones have been found in the brain. And it’s become clear that in important respects the brain itself is [...] a thinking gland, even a sex gland*” (Smith, 1980:90). To Smith, the brain not only serves to think but it is a sexualized gland that imparts gender differences in boys and girls. It is evident that true genetic differences influence brain functioning, implying a genetic sexual stamping. It is obvious that sexual stamping starts from the fetus. This is reinforced and magnified by our cultural environments, though it is genetically based. This constitutes part of our biological inheritance and is mediated upon by hormones. Consequently, are there any major differences between the female/male brains?

The female brain is said to be organized to function more symmetrically (in connections or close relations) allowing integration of left and right brain functions more readily than the male brain. Nicholas Wade says: “*there’s no evidence, not yet confirmed, that male and female brains may be somewhat differently structured with the two cerebral hemispheres being more specialized and less well interconnected in men than in women*” (Wade, 1994:34). Another similar recent study in *Times Magazine* concerning word processing holds that: “*men tended to use only the left half of the brain during the task while the women drew on both hemispheres*” (*Times...*, 1995:16). Females are said to function more readily, using both hemispheres of the brain to process information and respond, since hormone development is a function of genetics, evidence seems to point to a genetic difference which may, in fact, affect the way a person interacts with his/her surroundings. Females tend to rapidly transit from left to right brain functions. What are the implications in women/men’s behaviors and communication styles? Studies have found differences in communication patterns and skills, related perhaps to the anatomical and functional brain differences described above.

There are gender differences in communication depending on situations, times, cultures and customs. Therefore, gender styles attest and implicate communication. Linguists agree upon gender differences that result either from basic biological/genetic differences and others are as a result of cultural behavioral expectations and training. Gender differences in communication pose problems in gender relations in relating/interacting with one another. The aim here is to examine such differences in order to gain understanding of gender and power issues vis-à-vis communication. A step toward better communication will enhance the reinforcement of relationships between men and women in society. The question one may ask is: how do biological differences impart a woman’s style of talking, discussing, solving problems and even arguing with others/men? Is this manner of interacting significantly different from men’s communication styles to present opportunities for understanding? How can this orchestrate changes and development in gender and power relations?

Most scientific studies on communication differences between both genders agree females are more verbal from the time they are very young. Carol Jacklin reviewed more than 1.400 studies of sex differences and concluded that only four of them (sex differences) were well-established: verbal ability for girls and visual-spatial ability, mathematical excellence and aggression in boys. Anne Campbell supports Jacklin’s review saying

Female brain is better organised for communication between its two halves... if we look at the activities girls excel in; we see there also seems to involve communication. Verbal skills are used to communicate with others and women on the whole use words more expressively than men. A picture therefore emerges showing that women are better communicators than men, that is based at least partly on differences in the brains, and that these differences probably exist at birth. (Campbell, 1989:90)

Campbell indicates that thanks to differences in the brain, women more than men are projected as better communicators. This critic intimates that men’s inadequacies in verbal skills ultimately lead them to use physical violence against women. The former becomes violent when unable to satisfy/express their desires in many cultures. There are some major differences in communication between men and women which are manifested in the lives of some characters. Jo Durden Smith cites a study, which concludes also that: “*females, by contrast, are sensitive to context, good at picking up information that is incidental to a task that’s set them, and distractible. They have superior verbal skills*” (Smith, 1980:17). This applies also to men and that is why Christine Gorman asks this rhetorical question: “*are women innately better at reading words and understanding emotions or do they just get more practice? Hormones may be involved*” (Gorman, 1995:51). She believes hormones play a vital role in highlighting women’s ascendancy on men in understanding emotions. Nicholas Wade also acknowledges women’s innate skills may give them an edge in perpetual speed, verbal fluency, and communication skills. There appears to be a genetic connection to these skills and many seem to imply abilities akin to what has been termed “women’s intuition”.

Carl Jung considers intuition as an unconscious ability to perceive possibilities, to see the global picture, while addressing the local situation. Ron Schultz provides the reason for women’s development of intuition. He cites women’s intuitive abilities through the physical differences between the sexes. He says

[...] From the earliest age, girls find it necessary to pay attention to nuances and small signs of which the male rarely recognises the existence. Such small signs tell the girls what she wants to know, and she is usually ready with a plan of action, before the male has begun to react. (Schultz, 1994:38)

Schultz opines that girls use linguistic nuances that escape boys' attention to overcome the latter's physical strength against them. On the other hand, women speak more while men react, using physical power to back up their linguistic lapses. Concerning these same differences, Gelman *et al*, affirm

[...] From infancy on, males and females respond in ways that provide significant clues to later differences and behavior... McGuinness believes that girl infants are more alert to social clues. They respond more to people, read facial expressions better and seem better able to interpret the emotional content of speech even before they can understand words, a clue to the proverbial woman's intuition. (Gelman *et al*, 1981:73)

Culture and nature disorganize women's behavioral patterns while men exploit cultural lapses to victimize women. In social interactions between both genders, women have facts/ideas that guide their verbal expressions while men generally do not. After analyzing the genetic and biological differences between men/women in communication styles, it is also vital to consider what holds in this study. The objective here is to place side by side the theoretical and the practical aspects of their dialogues in order to foreground ways and means to enhance communication development between men and women, starting with Miano's *Tels des...*

IV- Analysis Of Miano's *Tels Des Astres Eteints*

Communication differences in gender relations in the above novel are exploited to promote development among men and women. As earlier said in the theoretical part of this work, male characters are asymmetrical in nature (aggressive, fight for the respect of their status, hierarchy and independence), while female characters are symmetrical (working in connections with close friends/relations). In the quotation that follows, Miano uses her hero, Amok to underscore the communication crisis in a couple. Amok states: "[...] *le voisin du dessous [...] il criait. Tout le temps. Des insultes à sa femme [...]*" (Miano, 1995: 21). (... The neighbour below [...] shouted insults every time against his wife [...]). As an asymmetrical figure, the man uses language not like the woman for establishing connections and negotiating relationships. He uses it to establish his status of the dominant figure in their relationship. Consequently, Deborah Tannen states that: "*for most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. This is done by exhibiting knowledge and skill, and by holding centre stage through verbal performance*" [...] (Tannen, 1995:282). Tannen claims that from childhood, men talk to underscore their social standing, by attracting power and respect to themselves. She asserts that men are egocentric and not self-centered as they project the "self" over "others", whereas women become selfless and depend on others to maintain social order. The knowledge about differences in communication styles of men and women in the example above stems from the ways both learned as children and reinforced as young adults and then adults, in their same gender relationships (Tannen). By unveiling such dissimilarities in communication styles, Miano underscores a salient area in gender relations that is capable of bridging gender gaps in many cultures around the world. An understanding of such innate differences in dialogue goes a long way to ameliorate gender bonding between men and women.

In another communication squabble, Miano depicts male physical aggression that depends on the role culture plays in the life of each gender. Men and women experience the world differently. This is why their reactions to the circumstances surrounding them are also dissimilar. This situation generates not only communication problems but also different behavioral patterns in men and women. Amok acknowledges his father's physical aggression on his mother in this statement: "... *la peur le pétrifiait quand son père sévissait sa mère. [...] La voix de stentor de son père le paralysait. Son cœur s'effritait en entendant les cris étouffés de sa mère*" (Miano, 2008:25). (...Fear shocked him when his father was beating his mother [...] His father's stentor voice paralyzed him. His heart ached as he listened to his mother's suffocated shouts). The quotation unveils the character of Amok's father as somebody who cherishes his independence, hierarchical social order and power over his wife. He exercises verbal and physical violence to reaffirm his control over his wife. Therefore, male and female characters do not interact with language in like manner. This is because for most women according to Tannen: "... *the language of conversation is primarily a language of rapport: a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships*" (Tannen, 1995:282). Women to Tannen are more versed in establishing connections and negotiating relations with others as depicted in the previous chapter. From this perspective, Miano believes men and women can learn by transforming their differences in conversation. Furthermore, an in-depth understanding of male/female behavioral patterns at specific times, customs and traditions are different strategies that can enable "smooth" communication and gender development in each cultural background. Therefore, Miano is suggesting that a review of cultural, communicational and behavioral patterns among the genders is a major step towards the closure of gender gaps in the society. In Senegal, how do communication styles help to overcome gender disunity?

V- Analysis of Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre De l'Atlantique*

Diome's society demonstrates wide dissimilarities in communication styles between men and women. This novelist's objective is to abrogate cultural practices; exploited by men to maintain women in marginal positions in the private spheres of life. Communication power is used by a father against her daughter to connect her to the symmetrical functions that limit women's access to the public sphere. In such a brain washing exercise, the victim states: "*mon père dit qu'en faisant maman on peut gagner le paradis, et c'est beaucoup mieux que de l'argent ... je ferais seulement maman...*" (Diome, 2003:216). (My father says that by becoming a mother one can have access to paradise, and it is far better than money... I will only be a mother...). This sarcasm against excessive childbearing by women leads to death in some cases. It is ironic also because the purported paradise becomes hellfire to many women abandoned with male responsibilities. The communication imbalance is summarized by Tannen who says: "[...] *the seeds of women's and men's styles are sown in the ways they learn to use language while growing up. In [...] culture, most people, but especially women, look to their closest relationships as havens in a hostile world*" (Tannen, 1995:284). This is because linguistic power favors boys than girls in many cultures. This is a clear example of cultural influence and behavioral patterns between men/women. There is no true communication between the father and his daughter because he is all-powerful and self-centered. Another reason is that men and women often have very different ideas about what is vital for them. Moreover, there is the problem of timing, for instance, at what point should an important issue like marriage be raised in the above statement? Also, communication plays a vital role in women's "domestication" in this fictionalized Senegalese Muslim community. Instead of women sharing their thoughts, feelings and future plans with other women, men usurp their power of speech and impose their views on them. Diome is acknowledging the fact that the first step in handling this issue is by abrogating and subverting male-imposed cultural, behavioural and communication powers over women. This will pave the way for better communication and progress between both genders.

Women's fortification in communication style against men's liberates the younger generation women while the older suffers from male brutality. Sankèle, Le Vieux Pêcheur's daughter, ridicules Moslem precepts by indulging in fornication that ends up in a pregnancy. The father's fury is transferred to his wife because she did not transmit the symmetrical rapports embedded in their religion to her daughter. For this reason, Sankèle's mother suffers from physical violence as the narrator asserts: "*il [...] la [...] gifle [...] Cette trainée est [...] la fille de sa mère! Un mot de plus et je te répudie!*" (Diome, 2003:149). (He [...] slapped her [...] this prostitute is ... the mother's daughter! Just one more word and I repudiate you!). Le Vieux Pêcheur is a symbol of male hegemonic power and presence over women to maintain them in subservient positions. This rapport by Sankèle's mother and father shows that men sincerely communicate poorly with their wives. Male power abuse does not enable them to know what women want, and women honestly do not have the power of speech to express their worries. Women also do not seem to understand why men find what they want difficult to understand and deliver. This is why the narrator says: "[...] *sur chaque bouche de femme est posée une main d'homme ... elle perd définitivement l'usage de la parole*" (Diome, 2003: 50). (... on each woman's mouth is placed a man's hand ... she definitely lost her power of speech). The man exercises physical influence over the woman's desires to control him just as Diome underscores women's plight locked up in communication vacuums, through men's intolerance towards their access to speech. Fortunately enough, Diome propagates the strident voices of women like Sankèle and Salie who deter male caprices over their lives. Diome wants such examples to stir downtrodden women to emulate and free themselves from "serfdom" and speechlessness.

Therefore, Senegalese women's communication style is not static but protean and dynamic. This also varies in different parts, classes, and cultures to the other. African women's perspective on the need to speak out on behalf of their gender is therefore equally varied. Kolawole suggests that: "*it is important to identify and foreground hidden areas of African women's strength and audibility as a departure from over-emphasis on their voicelessness and helplessness as victims*" (Kolawole, 1997:39). Women need to unvoice their voicelessness and underscore their potentials in every domain. By highlighting their voices, Diome intends to present them as development partners in the socio-cultural, economic and political institutions of the nation. In North America, the perspective is dissimilar from that in Africa.

VI- Analysis of Gloria Naylor's *Women of Brewster Place*

Naylor acknowledges women's irrevocable power dynamics in communication exchanges with men. In this liberal society, women's status is not locked up in stereotyped male practices that hinder their emancipation and empowerment as compared to what some female characters undergo in the works of Miano and Diome. In Naylor's on the contrary, it is male characters who assert women's prowess in the communication domain. Their verbal skills are used to overcome male prejudices against them. The following dialogue between Mattie Michael and Butch Fuller unveils the dynamism in women's communication style in the American context. Mattie holds: "*that Butch Fuller is a no-count ditch hound and no decent woman could be seen talking to him [...]*" (Naylor, 1982:9). Butch retorts: "*Lord, you Michael women got the sharpest tongues in the country [...]*" (Naylor, 1982:9). "The sharpest tongues" is a hyperbole that authenticates the intensity of the African American woman's linguistic empowerment against male bully tactics of marginalization. Many centuries of subservience of black women have made them arrogant in their power of speech against men. Mattie's over Butch's confirms the resilience and transformation of these women during the Civil

Rights Movements till date. Naylor's womanist inclination is confirmed by her creation of strong women confronting the destructive male stereotypes, structures and traditions by coming to terms with men in their communication style. Mattie's comments against Butch demonstrate women's incapacity to connect with such an absurd fellow. It means Butch cannot be part of the innate close relations women struggle to build because of male asymmetrical characteristics and independence. Butch's reaction shows women's unanimous drive and communication power that prevents male predators from subordinating their lives. Naylor believes such communication "balances" play major roles in fostering gender equality, and why not socio-cultural progress in America.

The African American setting is typical in projecting symmetrical relations between women from different cultural backgrounds as a step towards the integration of different racial groups in America. These women share similar prejudices suffered in the hands of fathers and their union blends their mishaps into a trust and connections relationships. They display points of convergence and share experiences as the narrator confirms: "*The young black woman and the old yellow woman sat in the kitchen for hours, blending their lives so that what lay behind one and ahead of the other became indistinguishable*" (Naylor, 1982:34). The white lady Mrs. Eva tells Mattie: "*Child. I know what you talkin' about. My daddy was just like that too*" (Naylor, 1982:34). This analogy between black and white patriarchs shows Naylor's abhorrence of male abuse of power against women because the similitude of male violence is color blind. Naylor demonstrates that men frequently operate in mediums bound by hierarchy, status, rules and orders. Women on the contrary normally function with connections and closeness as paramount. For women like Mrs. Eva and Mattie, status and hierarchy are not important and are not predisposed to giving orders, but rather express preferences and suggestions, which are likely accepted. A psycholinguist, Elgin states: "*male/female communication does not have to be either armed combat or endless mystifying tedium. It does not have to be the source of either rage or misery. It can and should be effective, efficient and a source of mutual satisfaction*" (Elgin, 1993: xvi). To Elgin, communication should not be a battle ground for both genders but a tool for mutual understanding. According to her, smooth communication among men and women can prevent anguish and misunderstandings.

This psycholinguist wrote with a similar objective to improve communication between men and women. Also, a psychologist and business communication consultant, Judith Tingley says: "*When men and women adapt each other's different communication styles in the same way they adapt to the language of another country, this will help alternative communication barriers between the two sexes*" (Tingley, 1994:22). The recognition and adoption of communication styles by men and women obliterates genderized barriers. Consequently, intimacy and connection are essentially symmetrical (people are the same, feeling close to each other) whereas independence (men) and status are asymmetrical (people are dissimilar, unlike and placed in hierarchical structures). According to Naylor, these perspectives significantly impact communication in any realm to include how men and women relate within leadership and development scenarios. It is also necessary to discover how this communication gaps affect the characters in Jooste's work.

VII- Analysis of Pamela Jooste's *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*

Women in South Africa adjust to a more masculine style that makes them more credible. This credibility however makes them less feminine and this is stated in a less than complementary manner. In a scornful dialogue between Gloria Daniels and Frank Adams concerning Blacks' expropriation from their residential areas, the former blames the latter: "*If no one speaks up about it, how's it ever going to change? ... "You've got a big mouth ... why don't you open it and ask for what's right for a change instead of what's in it just for you"* (Jooste, 1998:131). She is satirical about male self-centeredness, injustice and their independence, which sidelines women's. Gloria embraces a male speaking pattern, which most often puts women at a disadvantage in conversations with men. Her communication style focuses on connections with one another whereas Adam's seeks the recognition of his status. Jooste is acknowledging that women are judged differently even when they communicate with the same style. Her ideas are buttressed by those of Tannen, who asserts that

Intimacy is vital in a world of connections where individuals negotiate complex network of friendships, minimize differences, try to reach consensus, and avoid the appearance of superiority (gender), which would highlight differences. In a world of status, independence is key because a primary means of establishing status is to tell others what to do, and taking order is a marker or low status. Though all humans need intimacy and independence, women tend to focus on the first and men on the second. (Tannen, 1990:243)

Tannen notices that the likelihood of women focusing on intimacy promotes their oppression because men inherently strive for independence especially vis-à-vis women. Women should adopt intimacy and independence and forge gender equality. Gloria differs from the category of women stipulated by Tannen. She relinquishes female communication style and adopts a masculine one to liberate Black people from the apartheid regime. Her verbal acts and prowess depict a transformed, dynamic and empowered character that implores a synergy between women's symmetrical and men's asymmetrical characteristics to liberate Black people from apartheid's carcans.

Jooste believes that improved communication between black men and women not only benefits personal relationships in the private sphere but also in the public one. This is why Tannen holds men and women have different, but equally valid styles of communication and she concludes: “*recognising these gender differences frees individuals from the burden of individual pathology...If we recognize and understand the differences between us, we can take into account, adjust to, and learn from each other’s styles*” (Tannen,1990:243). Tannen advocates the necessity of dismantling communication differences for a coalition building in gender and power relations. Jooste claims that this synergy will ultimately harness men and women’s communication styles for the mutual benefit of both genders. In the case of the single male writer, how do communication styles affect his characters?

VIII- Analysis of Walter Mosley’s *RL’s Dream*

Mosley demonstrates the woman’s acquisition of communication power over male brutes. The novelist observes that female characters frequently complain that comments made by them against men are ignored. At times such comments may be attributed to male participants/characters in a group. An illustration is Kiki Waters’ exasperation against violent male attackers. She qualifies them as: “[...] *mother fuckin’ bastards [...] they don’t give two shits ‘bout what happens to us. They don’t care*” (Mosley, 1995:41). Her diction is sarcastic, embittered, and full of agony because of male betrayal of her trust in them. Mosley shows that once there is a misunderstanding, men and women cannot interpret the same conversation in a similar perspective. This, according to Ron Schultz who quotes Judith Hall, a psychologist, says: “*women are more sensitive to non-verbal communication (right brain) which of course includes the emotions, and “that they tend to be more attentive to visual cues such as facial expressions, body gestures, tone of voice, and the way people look at each other*” (Schultz,1994: 3). Men continue to believe centre-stage positions are not meant for women, for this reason, women are termed the “weaker-sex”. Unfortunately, /fortunately for them, women possess and make use of communication skills and styles that generate new avenues for their rights and privileges to be considered. Women no longer care about the negative judgments men make about their speeches as they equally use downgrading expressions against them. Therefore, Tannen’s standpoint is that: “... *talking in ways that are associated with women cause’s women to be judged negatively, but talking the same way does not have this effect on men. So, it is not simply the ways of talking that affect so much as the people’s attitudes toward men and women*” (Tannen,1990:243). Cultural attitudes towards male expression cherish their power over women. As a matter of fact, men/women’s verbal expression and behavioral patterns should undergo social changes in order to enhance good communication between them. Mosley seems to say that by uprooting cultural stereotypes and negative assumptions against women, that could amend many communication incongruities between them.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article underscored some challenges that impede good communication between men and women. Some of these obstacles are enshrined in religions, cultures, traditions, customs and a people’s ethos especially with respect to women. One has discovered that men and women in the different novels communicate differently and misunderstandings easily occur between them. Ways of talking associated with leadership and authority generally tend to be masculine. This places some African women at a disadvantage. As analyzed, women now exploit masculine speech patterns to redynamize gender relations to implement developmental projects for the society’s benefit. From the analyses, each society has to adopt and adapt new communication skills and strategies among both genders to avoid antagonisms that jeopardize gender bonding around the world.

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