

**Politics, social burden and didactic nuances of  
concealment in Emeka Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the  
Desert*: Focus on polemics of rational choice**

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the politics and didactic nuances of authorial projection of rational choice behavior in Emeka Nwabueze's<sup>1</sup> *Rainstorm in the Desert* in relation to social burden of concealment. Thus, this paper analyzes the playwright's portrayal of the multiple effects of devious concealment to individuals and the society. To this end, this paper attempts to discuss how aspects and forms of concealment have become subsisting tradition in families, communities, professional conducts, and state governance. Thus, this paper applies the ideas espoused in 'Rational Choice Theory' as a deliberate means of creating a thematic foci aimed at deepening discussion that will enhance the understanding of the propelling forces and variables that compel individual's to make their preferred choice of actions. Also we shall apply the theory of Interpretive Community as a means of discussing the rationale of locale specific perspectives on rational choices and irrational choices. As regards to the analysis of the portrayals, authorial inclinations of the playwright and our application of the selected theories, we adopt interpretive discuss approach. In the end, this study observes that behaviors are describable and measurable as rational or irrational in line with

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<sup>1</sup>Emeka Nwabueze rose to Professor of Theatre & Film Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka where he bagged a BA in Theatre & Drama Studies before earning a PhD from USA. He has published ten plays: *When the Arrow Rebounds* which is an adaptation of Chinua Achebe's novel *Arrow of God*, *The Dragon's Funeral*, (a historical drama, which won the CVL prize for drama), *A Dance of the Dead*, (which was nominated for the Normal Prize), *The Spokesman for the Oracle*, (which has a filmic version), *Echoes of Madness*, *A Parliament of Vultures*, *Guardian of the Cosmos*, *Heroes of Conscience*, *Fate of a Maiden* and *Lachrymose*.

a given Interpretive Community's inclinations even though rational choices are ultimately influenced by factors and variables such as awareness, knowledge, intent, ideology, philosophy and state of mind.

**Keywords:** Emeka Nwabueze, concealment, conflict, interpretive community, irrational choice, rational choice

## INTRODUCTION: THEMATIC PURVIEW AND TEXT'S SYNOPSIS

The play, *Rainstorm in the Desert* in many ways recreates typical realities that focus on the reasons behind individuals' choice of concealment of vital information from others and the shades of probable consequences and aftermaths. Thus, this study's attention is on the authorial contextualization of rational choices that propels characters' behaviors describable as concealments. Hence, central to our analyses are the following questions: how justified are some behaviors; which information must not be concealed, what are the possible consequences and lastly, what are the didactic inputs in tandem with social realities in Nigeria and beyond? To carry the reader along in our analysis of some projections made by the playwright in some of the play's dialogues, we shall first provide a synopsis of the focus play.

The play's story starts with action commencing at a police station, where the central character Odogwu Nwogbo, a man in his early forties, a successful businessman with postgraduate degree, held at the police station for allegedly killing his wife and mother is brought-out from the holding-cell by on-duty policemen, Sergeant Ofili and Lance Corporal Okechukwu to meet Sister Rose. Odogwu, who after spending a long time abroad in pursuit of the Golden Fleece returns to his village, eagerly seeks to add to his illustrious life accomplishments through the performance of Abia dance, which is his community's exulted mystical ritual dance. Previously Odogwu, who refuses to discuss what led to the death of his wife (Ugoada) and mother (Ezinne), however accepts to speak to Sister Rose, a clinical psychologist. Thus, in his session with Sister Rose, Odogwu relates what led to his current detention in the police holding-cell. He explains that his resolution to perform the Abia dance was predicated on his assumption that the strict compulsory stipulations of the dance were all met by him. These stipulations are that an intending performer must be a socially and economically accomplished married man who is widely acknowledged as a philanthropic free-born citizen of the village. Also

the man must have a living biological son at least, and his biological father must have died.

His story conveys that it is because of the devious concealments by his mother, wife and biological father; he blindly relied on his personally assumed facts as his basis for making a supposed rational choice that resulted in tragedy. Furthermore, he relays that his mother, wife and uncle vehemently objected to his decision to perform the Abia dance whereas his friend Obi relentlessly egged him on. He adds that he eventually discountenanced all the objections and oppositions to his intention and went ahead to perform the Abia dance. Thus, because he danced the Abia dance, his legal father's brother Okosisi whom is his biological father passed-on in his sleep the night after the performance. Consequently, the council of elders sent a demand to him through an elder to inform him that he must bury Okosisi and fulfil all the obligatory rites as his first biological son accordingly. In his shock and surprise, Odogwu seeks for clarification from the village seer who affirms the elders' position. His consultation with the village seer validates this disturbing information, thus Odogwu confronts his mother demanding for her candid response to his questions. Initially, his mother responds by attempting to play dumb and ignorant to the nuances of his questions. Ezinne suggests that though she was lured by Okosisi to sleep with him, that his legal father's decision to keep her and her two daughters with Okosisi in their village while he attempts to settle properly in Kano after his transfer from Makurdi was responsible for her loneliness. Odogwu gets furious as Ezinne tacitly blames loneliness for her inability to resist Okosisi. Consequently, he grabs her arm tightly and she protests stridently as pain overwhelms her. In response, Odogwu releases his grip. Instantly she dashes for the exit, only to trip, hit her head against the wall, and collapses awkwardly. Rapidly Odogwu rushes to her, tries to revive her but she is gone. Not long after, Ugoada enters, gets agitated as she beholds Ezinne's lifeless body, and impulsively she rants at Odogwu. He gets very infuriated, grabs her throat and demands that she earnestly validate the paternity of their son. After initial attempts at evasion with feeble lies, Ugoada points accusing finger towards Obi, who parades sanctimoniously as Odogwu's bosom friend. Meanwhile in his rage as he compels Ugoada to confess, his tight grip around her neck suffocates her and he ends up in police holding-cell.

## APPLICATION OF IDEAS OF RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY IN THIS ANALYSIS

The title of Johannes Hewig et al. article ‘Why Humans Deviate from Rational Choice’, which obviously repeats as well as subsumes a reverberating question very many scholars have asked and researched severally over the generations, in many ways acted as a propelling stimulus that instigated this paper. Thus, our focus text *Rainstorm in the Desert* presents a tale centered on a man Odogwu who believes that he had made a rational choice when he insisted on performing Abia dance despite fervent disapprovals from his uncle, wife, and mother. To attempt a discussion of why humans supposedly deviate from rational choice we have selected a number of relevant postulations and extrapolations on rational choice theory made by relevant scholars as the basis of examining the contexts of choice of actions made by Odogwu, Ugoada, Ezinne and Okosisi in relation to the aftermath of his performance of Abia dance.

First, what is rational choice theory? Our observation is that the volume of work on rational choice theory is huge and the scholarly trajectories many. Meanwhile, the conceptual foundations of the rational choice approach is traceable to Cesare Beccaria’s 1764 essay ‘On Crimes and Punishments’ and Jeremy Bentham’s 1789 study, ‘An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation’. In his study Bentham applies rational choice theory as a concept that contextualizes actions describable as ‘deep play’.<sup>2</sup> From this early conceptualization on rational choice, more and more scholars have attempted to apply it in analyzing behaviors from diverse perspectives. For instance, Tom R. Burns and Ewa Roszkowska in their study ‘Rational Choice Theory: Toward a Psychological, Social, and Material Contextualization of Human Choice Behavior: Theoretical Economics Letters’ observe that rational choice theory “has been until recently the dominant approach for conceptualizing human action in the social sciences” thus “this theory is focused on a few determinants of individual choices; and methods of aggregating social behavior are based on the decisions of individual actors” (1968, 196). We also notice that the trajectories of

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<sup>2</sup>The term ‘deep play’ was initially applied by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748 – 1832) in ‘The Theory of Legislation’ to represent a social situation or contest in which the stakes were so high that it was irrational for people to engage in it. Thus the potential losses logically outweighed the potential benefits. Thereafter, anthropologist Clifford Geertz borrowed Bentham’s concept of ‘deep play’ and applied it in his analysis of Balinese cock-fighting.

studies and researches on dimensions and contexts of rational choice behavior remain cardinal in psychoanalysis, where scholars and psychologists rummage and deduct on palpable shades and phenomenal complexities of human behaviors. Also social scientists particularly sociologists, political scientists and economists remain on continual debates and permutations on why individuals choose to behave in one way or the other. In his contribution Brent Simpson observes that rational choice theory “received its first formal treatment in economics, where it has long been the dominant paradigm” (2007, 3802). Thus, Simpson notes that “more recently, rational choice theory has become one of the dominant approaches in political science and has made a number of inroads into psychology and sociology” (2007, 3802). He observes that “the introduction of rational choice into sociology has generated a fair amount of controversy, and debates about the place of rational choice approaches in sociology are ongoing” (Simpson 2007, 3802). Thus, he explains that:

The position sociologists take in these debates is determined in part by whether they subscribe to methodological individualism or methodological holism. For methodological holists and the majority of methodological individualists, the objective of sociology is to explain macro level social systems. (Simpson 2007, 3802)

Going forward Simpson explains:

All rational choice sociologists subscribe to some form of methodological individualism. The methodological individualist position holds that a theory must begin by stating how a social system (e.g., law or religion) affects the options available to individuals and how this (limited) range of options, in turn, affects individuals’ decisions. The theory must then build back up to the macro level by describing how individuals’ choices ‘aggregate’ to impact a second system level variable (e.g., economic development). (2007, 3802)

Furthermore, aside the application of rational choice theory in political and economic science, Hewig and his co-researchers propelled by their inclination towards biological and clinical psychology suggest that “rational choice theory predicts that humans always optimize the expected utility of options when making decisions”, though they observe that “in decision making games, humans often punish their opponents even when doing so reduces their own reward” (2011, 507). Essentially, what we learn from Hewig et al in relation to our thematic purview is that the reasons why individuals decide to do what they do

are propelled by factors and variables, which do not remain the same perpetually because they are also under constant re-aggregation.

Buttressing on above notions, Bill McCarthy and Ali Chaudhary observe that “rational choice theory refers to a set of ideas about the relationship between people’s preferences and the choices they make” (2014, 4307). Espousing, they observe that “there are several variants of rational choice theory” however in their paper they refer to these variants collectively as the rational choice approach (RCA) (McCarthy and Chaudhary 2014, 4307). More so they note that in line with rational choice approach:

People have preferences for outcomes (goods, services, states of being, etc.), preferences do not typically refer to actions or behaviors; people’s preferences are influenced by the expected benefits of an outcome, relative to its costs. There are several types of potential benefits (e.g., monetary, emotional, and social) and costs (e.g., opportunity, external, sunk as well as monetary, emotional, and social). The anticipated cost-benefit ratio associated with an action is an indicator of its expected utility; people can order their preferences for outcomes from most to least valued. Preferences are relatively stable: they do not change during a decision, but can be modified as a result of new information. (McCarthy and Chaudhary 2014, 4307)

In the above contribution, McCarthy and Chaudhary allude to the factors and variables that propel choice of actions and inactions, and how choice-making is influenced by an individual’s projection of what he considers the most expedient means of satiating intentions. Illuminating further, McCarthy and Chaudhary explain that:

People’s assessments of the benefits and costs of outcomes are influenced by the information they collect. Gathering information is however, itself a cost. Thus, although people prefer to have all available information when making decisions, choices are made frequently with incomplete information. People may believe they have adequate information when they do not, they have imperfect memories, and they often miscalculate. In other words, people have subjective expectations about the utility they will receive from their choices. (2014, 4307)

In the above explanation, McCarthy and Chaudhary point to the centrality of the individual’s knowledge of the things he/she will be making decision on. Hence, for the individual making a choice of action, he may view his decision as rational because the quantity and quality of knowledge on the subject suggest so. Similarly, in an attempt to espouse on what rational choice theory aims to explain, Brent Simpson notes that:

Rational choice theories explain social behavior via the aggregated actions of rational or purposive actors. The actors are rational in the sense that, given a set of values and beliefs, they calculate the relative costs and benefits of alternative actions and, from these calculations, make a choice that maximizes their expected utility. (2007, 3802)

Here, what Simpson's position suggests, which is in accord with the postulation of McCarthy and Chaudhary is that when an individual is making a choice on what to do, it is the individual's available knowledge, and the realities of the circumstance that usually combine to propel the individual to decide on choice of action(s).

On concealment, Akin Odebunmi observes that politics and "the practice of concealing news is very frequent among many Nigerian doctors, but it is not exclusive to them" because "in almost all countries, one form of concealment or another is practiced" (2011, 620). Thus, his contribution suggests that in some countries, professions, and circumstances concealment is, however, "more pronounced in some than others and practiced more with respect to some conditions than others" (Odebunmi 2011, 629). Odebunmi in his study which examines concealment items in the interaction between doctors and clients in South-western Nigerian hospitals and their pragmatic implications for medical communication in Nigeria recorded the following illuminating findings:

Concealment was found to take place between doctors and clients in a two-phase mode: Referential and pragmatic. Utterances which have descriptive forms at the referential level assume subjective and divergent shades in the context of concealment at the pragmatic level. Nine concealment strategies (jargonisation, veiling, forecasting, mitigation, stalling, normalization, dysphemisation, euphemisation and doublespeak) were found to be employed to achieve four broad goals: Preventive, palliative, culture-compliant and confidential with respect to 25 diseases /medical procedures. (2011, 619)

According to Pavel Tsvetkov and Nadezhda Amudzhieva:

Although using language to conceal the meaning was considered a socially disruptive practice as early as 500 BC, its utilization seems to have intensified in the era of mass media and globalism – and especially so in the spheres of politics, war and medicine. Its ill effects have been recognized at the highest levels, but nevertheless doublespeak remains the tool of choice when difficult news have to be announced or public opinion has to be manipulated to serve the interests of the few and powerful. The use of doublespeak in medicine can serve as a good example of its destructive effects – curtailing the development of new technologies and directly endangering human life. Public interest in said

phenomena has intensified in recent years with awareness of its negative influence possibly bringing about positive change. (2013, 336)

Meanwhile, some prominent scholars such as Frankel (2001); Heath (1992); Heritage and Stivers (1999); Leppanen (1998); Maynard (1989, 1991, 1996, 2003, 2005,); Perakyla (1998); Stivers (1998); Heritage and Maynard (2006); Odebunmi (2008), have contributed their findings on realities of bad, good, ugly news delivery strategies. To relate the suppositions and contributions of Odebunmi, Tsvetkov and Amudzhieva, Hewg et al, Simpson, and McCarthy and Chaudhary in interpreting specific choice of actions in *Rainstorm in the Desert*, we start with the following dialogue between Odogwu and his wife Ugoada, who walks in while Odogwu is reading a newspaper in their living room:

Odogwu: Sure you haven't come to talk about the Abia dance again?

Ugoada: I will continue to talk about it until you listen to the voice of reason and call off your participation in the dreadful Abia dance.

Odogwu: Dreadful indeed. Oh! You think that the rhythm is dreadful and complicated and that I may not succeed in my ambition of being the current Abia dance laureate of this community.

Ugoada: On the contrary. I think you should quit participating in the dance. It is not an activity for people of your class. (2019, 25)

In response, Odogwu suggests that he is a man of integrity; hence he will not want to be seen differently by reengaging on his earlier acceptance to be the year's performer. This position correlates with Simpson's supposition about the individual choice-maker being the one ultimately in position to "calculate the relative costs and benefits of alternative action before making a choice" (2007, 3802). However, when Ugoada persists with her objection to his participation, Odogwu earnestly asks her: "Why? Tell me" (2019, 26). For Ugoada, her rational choice is to continue with her devious concealment of the actual reasons behind her fervent objection to Odogwu's proposition to perform the Abia dance, hence she goes on to lie: "I've heard so much about this biennial activity" and "I've heard so much about its indeterminate destination" (2019, 26). For Odogwu, his rational choice is to go on with his proposition regardless; because his wife's professed reasons for her concerns are not dissuading enough. His expression of this inclination is apparent in the following dialogue:



Odogwu: But sweet, you have always complained that I don't participate in the traditional affairs of the community, that I am almost standoffish. Now that I have given a nod to your ideas, you turn to the opposite direction.

Ugoada: I didn't mean you should participate in traditional activities to the level of absurdity. There are traditional dances, masquerade performances, and other aspects of traditional culture. They are the ones I was referring to not this one. (2019, 27)

After listening and assessing his wife's logic Odogwu is not moved to change his mind because his wife did not clearly explain to him what makes his intention to perform the Abia dance a behavior that is describable as pro-absurdity. In another conversation between Odogwu and Ugoada, it is clear that Ugoada is persisting in her attempt to dissuade her husband Odogwu from continuing with the performance.

Ugoada: I am really afraid of the outcome of that dance. I'm not comfortable with the stipulations of the requirements.

Odogwu: Are you afraid I will not live up to expectation? You should trust your husband's resourcefulness as well as his ability to evaluate every situation very carefully before embarking on it.

Ugoada: My spirit is reluctant to accommodate the activity. I have the feeling that this is a time of catastrophe and disaster. One has to be careful with everything he embarks upon especially in the traditional society. (2019, 28)

Close reading of Ugoada's expression suggests that she is alluding to her knowledge of what will happen if Odogwu goes ahead to perform the Abia dance which will be disastrous. This is because Odogwu is not aware that he does not have a biological son which is one of the stipulations required before performing Abia dance. Yet feebly Ugoada goes on with her concealment hoping that the following words will save the situation: "I'm not asking for more than my right. I am your wife and have the right to object to whatever you're doing that I feel would do havoc to your integrity" (2019, 29 – 30). Indicatively, from the dialogue, Odogwu apparently questions the congruity and consistency of his wife's position, whereas his wife appears to be at pains in elucidating her reasons for opposing Odogwu's participation in the Abia dance. While Odogwu is seriously attempting to firmly decide his rational choice of action, his friend Obi comes in to voice his support through flattery. Furthermore, another shade of opposition to Odogwu's participation in the Abia dance which is propelled by devious concealment comes from Okosisi his uncle which is subsumed in the following dialogue:

Odogwu: Uncle, with due respect, I would like you to tell me why you do not want me to be the Abia laureate?

Okosisi: The consequences are enormous. It is an activity that involves the living, the dead and the unborn. There are many restrictions, hidden and transparent involved in that traditional activity and it is better for a wise man to avoid getting involved because of hidden consequences. (2019, 34)

In response Obi who behaves as if he earnestly has Odogwu's interest and support at heart, whereas he deceitfully conceals information which may contribute to Odogwu's calamity, sanctimoniously align with Odogwu as projected in the following conversation.

Obi: Sir, I do not think there are hidden consequences.

Okosisi: A wise man does not beat the war drum if he is not ready for war.

Odogwu: Uncle, there's no need of talking about war in this situation. I'm wise enough to know how to avoid anything that portends war.

Okosisi: Wisdom is like a vast desert and cannot be covered in simplicity. I hear you talk about integrity. You already have enormous integrity, and you have the respect of all members of the community. You do not need the Abia dance for additional integrity. One does not need to climb the palm tree in order to drink palm wine. (2019, 34)

Thus, Okosisi apparently driven by disenchantment angrily exhibits his frustration in the following dialogue:

Okosisi: You're only chewing the chord of foolishness. Abia dance is so intricate that you think you know but you do not know the meaning of what you think you know.

Odogwu: Uncle, I can assure you that before taking this decision, I carried out extensive research on that and other traditional activities involved in it. I'm couched that I am in a perfect position to be the Abia dancer.

Obi: What is there to be afraid of? The main stipulations are that the person's father must have joined the ancestors, else he will be compelled to join them soon after; that the person should be a married man, have a son, and must never have been involved in forced sex or violation of another's spouse. (2019, 35 – 36)

Clearly through Okosisi's devious concealment and Odogwu's presumption of sufficient wisdom Nwabueze intricately projects an intense conflict between poles of rationality. Okosisi's choice of deep and dense ambiguity in his expression of intent to Odogwu is not helping Odogwu to clearly appreciate what he is alluding to. Thus, we deduce that Okosisi is at pains on how to dissuade Odogwu from going on with his proposition; hence we can analyze his rational choice from more than one dimension. It is understandable that Okosisi prefers persuasive words to a full disclosure of his devious concealment

because he considers the enormity of shame that will come his way if he embraces full disclosure. Hence, Okosisi choice of concealment and projection of his views through veiled responses and comments cannot be said to be very shrewd since the likely aftermath will be tragic. On the other pole of rationality, Odogwu strongly rationalizes that he needs to engage in the Abia dance because he cannot yet see the reason why he should not despite oppositions from his wife, mother and Okosisi. The bone of contention between Okosisi and Odogwu is that while Odogwu feels that he is eminently qualified and mentally ready for the dance because he is convinced that he satisfies all the stipulations as he suggests in the comment: “My dear father died a long time ago, I’m married and I have a son, I have never polluted myself through involvement in the vices enumerated” and “I know myself more than you do” (2019, 36). In the above comment, it is apparent that a person’s rational choice of behavior is predicated on the conviction or presumption that all the information available to him/her at that specific time does not indicate that if he/she takes a particular line of action that he/she will lose. Again, through the dialogue above the playwright indicates that conflicts of interests are propelled by inclinations, ideology, and prospects. This supposition is elaborately espoused by Simpson who explains that:

Rational choice models assume that the range of alternatives open to actors is constrained by the environment or by institutions within which they make their decisions. In their purest form, these theories also assume that actors possess complete information about their values and the various courses of action through which they can pursue them. Actors collect, organize, and analyze this information prior to making a decision. Thus, rational choice theories are means-end theories. (2007, 3802)

In the contribution above, Simpson talks about the suppositions of the theory, which alludes to the point when an individual possess complete information about what he/she is deciding on. Here, it is vital we add that the notion that information can be complete is mostly hard to attain in all circumstances. Though, we think that rational choice theory can be applied in practically all studies that involve human actions propelled by choice before the action is taken. Naturally, individuals begin to validate the polemics of rational choice in any circumstance in relation to the aftermath because the same action can have differing effects at different times, locations and contexts.

It is indicative that the choice to conceal the incidence that led to birth of Odogwu by Ezinne and Okosisi is a risky choice. This is

because total disclosure will result in consequences and pains. Therefore Okosisi and Ezinne are making their choices between full disclosure and concealment. They settled for concealment as their rational choice because it saves them from public opprobrium and condemnation. Buttressing on why people take risks and view it as rational choice, McCarthy and Chaudhary observes that in line with theory of rational choice of action “people do not have a preference for risk taking in itself (i.e., risk taking is not an outcome); rather, people’s attitudes toward risk taking influence the utility they associated with an outcome” (2014, 4307). However, it is the eventual outcome of risk-taking that will be the matter for interpretation. These interpretations are deductions and permutations describing the influences of ideology, philosophy, inclinations, interpretive community and expectations when people are faced with choice making. This is because the interpretations of actions are made in line with inclinations of the interpretive community. Espousing on the above variables and other factors that propel people’s choice of action McCarthy and Chaudhary explain that:

Preferences are also influenced by people’s orientation to time. Individuals with a positive time preference will need greater future compensation in order to forgo a present benefit, whereas those willing to forgo a current benefit for a lower level return in the future have a negative time preference. Time preferences are not fixed across all decisions but are influenced by several factors, including a person’s current level of a valued outcome; preferences are further affected by attitudes toward risk and uncertainty. (2014, 4308)

Looking at the above circumstance and realities from another angle, we deduce that the contribution of McCarthy and Chaudhary on preferences of individuals towards their approach to taking decision can be that conditioned and shaped by the society’s norms and culture. For instance, if Okosisi and Ezinne are in a society which will be lenient in appraising their action (adultery), if the response of the society to Odogwu as a child begotten through adultery will not be too unsympathetic, and if the general price they will pay for full disclosure will allow them to pick up the pieces and move on, they may have had a different mindset. Hence their intention to conceal is driven by trepidation of the greater and immediate pain. Thus, what we take from this scenario is that choice-making is about deciding which action brings to the individual the better outcome and McCarthy and Chaudhary’s explanation throws more light on this:

A risk-averse person generally refuses to accept what is calculated to be a fair gamble; those who generally have a preference for taking fair gambles, rather than a sure thing are risk-seekers; and between these extremes are people who are risk-neutral: those who are generally indifferent to accepting or refusing a fair gamble. Some rational choice theorists assume that risk disposition is relatively fixed, whereas others assume it will vary across types of decisions and situations. (2014, 4308)

Furthering what McCarthy and Chaudhary's contribution indicates is that rational choice is ultimately about taking actions that enhances the maximization of utility. The notion here is that utility accruable from taking a given action is no doubt best explained by the individual who takes such decision, if all things being equal the individual significantly is sufficient enough for such decision taking. Hence, theoretically in line with rational choice approach "determining a behaviour's 'rationality' depends on knowing, or making assumptions about a person's information, preference ordering, and approach to risk-taking, and time discounting" (McCarthy and Chaudhary 2014, 4308). Also it is McCarthy and Chaudhary position that people's rational choices may, therefore, result in different behaviors, even when they are faced with the same situation and that "people may pursue a course of action inconsistent with their preferences for a variety of reasons" (2014, 4308). This may be the case in a situation whereby "their decisions may be negatively influenced by an intense emotion or a sudden change in context" (McCarthy and Chaudhary 2014, 4308). It is this change of context that supposedly propelled Odogwu's mother and wife to consider revealing what they have concealed for long under duress. As the rational choice approach aims to analytically simplify the complex causal origins of behavior, McCarthy and Chaudhary suggest that a person's choice of action may be influenced by factors and variables that are explained below:

They may have limited cognitive skills that reduce their ability to use effectively the information they gather or to reflect upon previous choices, or they may be unaware of the interests that motivate them (these may be equally obscure to observers). Explanations of behavior that emphasize false consciousness, habitus, national culture, inertia, determinism (biological, psychological, or social) or similar forces suggest that these may also prompt people to make choices that are inconsistent with their preferences. (2014, 4308)

Hence, in the instance in the focus text, where the Abia dance stipulations are that the person's father must have joined the ancestors,

else he will be compelled to join them soon after. That the person should be a married man, have a son, and must never have been involved in forced sex or violation of another person's spouse, it is likely that many people attempting an evaluation of Odogwu's choice of action will come up with interpretations subsuming their interpretive community inclinations. Thus, Odogwu's declaration of his intention and affirmation of his choice of action were based on his presumption that he satisfies all the stipulations for Abia dance. To him at that time, that was his rational choice.

#### WHEN IS CONCEALMENT GOOD, BAD OR UGLY?

To test some suppositions emanating from our analysis of *Rainstorm in the Desert* in relation to contexts of rational choice behavior as it concerns concealment we presented our study to second, third and final year students of Theatre and Film Studies department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. We asked them if it is a rational choice for them to make a full disclosure of every detail of their past relationship and sexual experiences to their would-be spouses. Overwhelmingly, they indicated that it is not a rational choice action to make such total disclosure; hence concealment is upheld as good choice in this instance. Again we asked them if such past relationship by a would-be spouse resulted in dysfunctional sexual state, impotency or barrenness, will they feel that they deserve full disclosure from the individual. In response most of them suggested that they deserve to know. We went further to ask them whether the practice of concealment of medical condition and genealogy records of orphans in orphanages to potential child adopters is good, bad or ugly. Most of them suggested that potential child adopters deserve to know but when we explained the reasons behind such concealments, they changed their responses and suggested that the concealment is good choice of action because the main aim makes it good. We also asked them to comment on concealments in government activities such as secret service, military, police investigations and national defense policies. Again overwhelmingly the students say that it is a rational choice action to conceal strategies of enhancing security for self and the society by the concerned. Through, the illumination we provided, the students overwhelmingly agreed that rational choice actions are propelled by several variables and factors, such as self-interest, self-preservation, possibilities of gains, profits, losses, pleasure and pains. Thus, at the end of the session, it became clear to the students that concealment can

be tagged good, bad, or ugly depending on the interpretive community's perspective. Therefore, the playwright Emeka Nwabueze in *Rainstorm in the Desert* attempts to highlight pertinent matters and logic of living life which remains perpetually relevant and universal.

## CONCLUSION

In the course of this study, which focuses primarily on learning more on what represents a rational choice action in relation to concealment, we observe that scholars have variously attempted to tackle this question from several trajectories? Again, our findings suggests that based on the various scholarly deductions, it is apparent that the ideas of rational choice theory remains contested. However, in these contestations the scholarly perspective convergence supports the premise that human actions hardly yield to accurate predictions in all attempts. We also observe that the playwright in presenting the absurdities of human pretentious dispositions and some reasons behind their sanctimonious behaviors, points at social construction of reality and the interpretive community as two overwhelming and conspicuous central factors. Hence, what may appear rational to an individual may not be so to another because the two individuals may have built their social reality perception and worldviews based on their inclinations to their communities' social construction of reality. We appreciate that through this play *Rainstorm in the Desert* the playwright presents a portrayal of a social context and social construction of reality praxis of human behavior within rational choice theory paradigm. The playwright presents the 'interpretive community' as basis for describing what is a 'rational choice' in given circumstances.

Lastly, the interpretation of Nwabueze's craftsmanship in *Rainstorm in the Desert* paints a picture of a society where people engage in devious concealments, parading as righteous quasi-angles, whereas their behaviors are smokescreen for sanctimonious outrageous activities covered by presumed impervious social masks, designed to delude. Consequently, this study highlights that choice of actions and inactions require that people continually seek dense and deep knowledge as means of enhancing attempts at seeing through people's social masks, in a bid to reduce the painful impacts of sanctimonious dispositions of people. Thus, this study calls for illumination that retools the mindset, ideology and perspectives towards culture of devious concealments with propensity for tragic aftermath.

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