

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Semiotics as a science or theory of sign is considered by students and scholars of semiotics to be a new area of study. This view by semioticians is relative because since the written languages emerged, we have evidence that human beings dealt with the question of semiotics. Semiotics as separate area of study is actually much older than the philosophy of aesthetics. Because the proponents of aesthetics and semiotics were the same group of scholars before they eventually bisurcated into separate areas of study. The emphasis on semiotics as a science of sign research lies in philosophy and linguistics. Generally, semiotics is subdivided into syntactics; the relation of the signs, semantics; the relation between the signification and the sign and pragmatics; the relation between the signification, the sign and the user. The understanding of these, is the understanding of semiotic principles. Hence, a sign thus represents in cognition something else than itself, but cognition is more than representation which again is more than signification. The science of signs understood itself not only as a science of communication but also a science of sign that represents in cognition of something else than itself, but cognition is more than representation which again is more than signification. The science of signs understood itself not only as a science of communication but also a science of cognition.

“Semiotics has always been the premier ‘science’ of the artificial after all, the sign is only ever meant to stand in for something else (*aliquid stat pro aliquo*), even if it is another sign. The sign is not the designated itself (the real, the referent or the idea)” (Holt 332). Roland Barthes argues that myth: “is constituted when the artificial nature of the sign, its ever-tenuous link to the object,

is forgotten and taken as ‘natural’” (231). Any theory of the sign is therefore a theory of constructed meaning. Holt affirms that:

...semiotics identifies three levels, or metafunctions, of meaning in any complex text: representational, interactional, and organisational. Representational meaning is what something is about, interactional meaning is the range of social, affective connotations, and the organisational is the manner in which meaning is derived by the configuration of phenomena. (337)

Aesthetics on the other hand, is a general way of looking at the arts, whether beautiful, ugly or otherwise. Perhaps it should be called a theory, though any general proposition about all works of art, of whatever sort, that is not an analytic significance of a definition is likely to be false. However, some basic category of works of art generally or at their best, belong to what is to be observed in any work of art and can probably be found, at least in some grade. Such a principle is the semiotic view of art too, by which the categorization of works of art as, in the broadest sense, signs that are carriers of meaning and reference. There has been a recurrent and serious effort to establish this semiotic view, and thus to subsume aesthetics under the general theory of signs. A work of art is an iconic sign, that is, a sign that refers by virtue of its similarity to something, thereby, pointing at the meeting point between semiotic and aesthetic experience. Holt also explains that aesthetics:

...explores relations between things, how they are organised, how they “fit”, how they materially converse. The aesthetic is also the domain in which concepts are experimented with, worked out, turned inside out and exposed to the counterfactual. Aesthetic activity is the process of counterfactual ‘communication.’ (Holt 340)

Baumgarten was neither the first nor the only one who tried to set up a science of sensual perception. Plato and Aristotle had dealt with perception long before in relation with philosophical research about semiotics; the interconnectedness between semiotics and aesthetics. Thus, the word aesthetic became part of the common language use along with a semantic transformation. It changed from the subject to the object. That is instead of saying, “I aesthetic” one says: “something

is aesthetic”. The meaning of the word became more and more imprecise. This means that aesthetics describes the total of designed or created objects, neutralising the word beauty. The design or objects contain the meaning as to whether is beautiful or ugly. The beauty or ugly, the manifestation of art, has to be defined as the sensual appearance of an idea. It is the sensual perception of the design or objects that brings semiotics and aesthetics together, the design or the objects communicate to the sense to create meaning. Aesthetics:

...has had a limited role in semiotics and indeed in social semiotics. Rather than being associated with concrete meaning, it describes the domain of taste, sensibility, or personal predilection. Thus the aesthetic appears as either utterly *parole-like*—part of the moment and indeed arbitrariness of the individual choice from a broader language (say individual items of clothing selected from the language or grammar of costume. (Holt 339)

There is also the problem of our aesthetic commerce with nature: how does that fit into the semiotic scheme? The problem would disappear if we could show that our interest in the beauty and expressiveness of natural objects is of a fundamentally different character from our interest in the beauty and expressiveness of artworks. Aesthetic experience, according to Goodman, involves making: “delicate discriminations and discerning subtle relationships, identifying symbol systems and what these characters denote and exemplify, interpreting works and reorganizing the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world” (241). Semiotics also involves identifying sign and symbol and what the images denote, interpreting signs and recognizing the world in terms of signs and signs in terms of the world. The beauty and expressiveness of natural objects or artworks, may be beautiful and communicate differently to our sensual perception. Thus, “Semio-aesthetics”, as coined by this researcher, which by extension, is; “Afr-osemio-aesthetics. Is a conceptual amalgamation of both semiotics and aesthetics designed to bring some strands of semiotics that are relevant in the interrogation of aesthetics in the selected plays of study from the African perception.

Thus, the meeting point between semiotics and aesthetics is the development of the signs and character in Nigeria playtexts and the meaning or the motifs they represent in the Nigerian drama. What the characters and their language represent to other characters in the playtexts and the reader who reads the playtexts or the interpreter. The language and character in playtexts are embodiments of both semiotic and aesthetic elements. Both the language and the character as signs; symbolic or linguistics carry beauty and communicate meaning to the interpreter. A character was constructed to bring the meaning of playtexts to limelight, like the masquerade in Nwosu's play. The development of the masquerade in Canice Nwosu's *Hopes of the Living*, and the meaning the masquerade and what the action of the masquerade represents to the people in the play brings both semiotics and aesthetics together to function as one. Similarly, the crown in Nwadiigwe's *The Installation* and what it represents or motifs it portends culminates aesthetic and semiotic experience.

The drive for theatre and drama (play writing) in quest for a productive communication over the centuries has been commended by various theatre scholars and critics. Gowon Doki asserts that: "Central to theatre and drama is the desire to communicate an intended message to a designated audience" (1). Communicating effectively has been the concern of theatre both in the western and African worlds respectively. That is why the playwright encodes his play with language, symbols and metaphors for communicative purposes. If the reader/interpreter does not understand the communicative tendencies of a playwright in play the meaning/message would be lost. Kunene affirms that: "...language is the vehicle whereby the reader or critic attempts to fathom the depth of feeling he or she conveys." (315).

Various theatre scholars have tried to identify the synergy between theatre and communication, but, at the end they discover there is no gulf between theatre and communication as theatre is one

of the activities of human nature. Accordingly: "...the thrust of a theatre performance is communication" (Doki 1). Just as the thrust of playwriting is also communication. Following this trend, Brillhart defines communication as: "a process whereby symbols generated by people are received and responded to by people" (3). In this case, the playwright generates symbols and these symbols are received and responded to and interpreted by the reader. This implies that sign and signification as they relate to the topic of this study are tailored and geared towards communication. That people within the same cultural milieu and domain have generated certain set of symbols and signs, these signs and symbols are received by the people within the same cultural setting and responded to accordingly. Therefore, the dramatist's aim is to communicate with his playtext, relating with the people with certain signs in the community, these signs and symbols as Ohiri notes that: "... a symbol is a token of meaning: that is, it is one thing that stands for something else" (382). Thus ranges from language, totem, gestures, metaphor and other non-verbal communication tools in the said community, and communicate with these signs and symbols proficiently within the members of that community. Johnson submits that: "language is one of the most effective indices of showcasing beauty in drama" (85). Therefore: "...communication is an art in itself. When a message from an encoder is deciphered and acted upon by a decoder, there is innate and even 'outer' satisfaction" (85). Pointing at the beauty and expressiveness to the interpreter. Kunene corroborates that:

Since language is the *sine qua non* of literary activity...Language is the means by which the writer reveals his soul, and, by the same token, the writer's language is the vehicle whereby the reader or critic attempts to fathom the depth of feeling he or she conveys. (315)

In the playwright's bid to relate the issues bedevilling the society through his plays, he uses some non-verbal codes and symbols, or non-verbal languages to enable him communicate effectively that is communicating meanings effectually with some non-verbal signs within his play.

Doki, citing Argyle suggests three distinct classifications of non-verbal communication. They include, “those ones that are used to communicate attitudes and emotions and to manage the immediate social situation. The second types are those that are used to support and complement verbal communication and those that are developed to replace language as in gesture language” (42-43). In the same vein, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o posit that: “language as communication has three aspects or elements... the first aspect is the language of real life,... the second aspect of language as communication is speech and it imitates the language of real life,...the third aspect is the written sign. The written word imitates the spoken” (292). This third aspect is used to complement verbal communication. It suffices that the receiver of these different codes must be well grounded in the art of interpretation of non-verbal communication symbols to do a meaningful interpretation of text both in reading and performance.

Intertextualization is converted to signs and significations; the signifier, the signified and the object, thus the relationship that exists, between the signifier and the signified. Intertextuality in the opinion of Peter Barry is an offspring of modernity or post-modernism canons convention, and critics right from time never refute the existence of intertextual theory as a tradition in the playwriting process, and intertextual commitments in the analyses of literary works or genres. As a relationship between texts be it drama, prose or poetry, there may perhaps be a mighty level of reference between one text and another. Peter Barry asserts that: “...foreground what might be called intertextual elements in literature, such as parody, pastiche and allusion, in all of which there is a major degree of reference between one text and another, rather than between the text and a safely external reality” (91). Eagleton in the same vein posits that:

All literary works... are ‘re-written’ if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a work which is not also a ‘re-writing’. No work and no current evaluation of it, can simply be extended to new groups of

people without being changed, perhaps almost unrecognisably, in the process; and this is one reason why what counts as literature is a notable affair. (12)

Eagleton shows that adaptation or intertextualization or interrelatedness between texts have been in existence and there is no reading or interpreting of work of arts that is as the same as the source. This correlates Adeoti's submission that: "adaptation has been the major source material for literature since the classical eras of both Greek and Rome. Most of the works of great dramatists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were transposed from Greek mythical narratives into dramatic form" (12). In that vein, "Since adaptation connotes no meaning save an act of deliberate transposition from one popular genre of literature to the other, Nigerian playwrights adapt stories of the past which had been rendered in one artistic form into their own version of art" (Adeoti 8). This takes us to different conception in adaptation in the literary palace, such as Transliteration and others for clarity. "Transliteration is a type of conversion of a text from one script to another" (Kharusi and Salman 2). Transliteration is not primarily concerned with representing the sounds of the original but rather with representing the characters, ideally accurately and unambiguously. "Systematic transliteration is a mapping from one system of writing into another, typically grapheme to grapheme. Most transliteration systems are one-to-one, so a reader who knows the system can reconstruct the original spelling" (Kharusi and Salman 4). They argue further that:

Transliteration is opposed to transcription, which maps the *sounds* of one language into a writing system. Still, most systems of transliteration map the letters of the source script to letters pronounced similarly in the target script, for some specific pair of source and target language. If the relations between letters and sounds are similar in both languages, a transliteration may be very close to a transcription. In practice, there are some mixed transliteration/transcription systems that transliterate a part of the original script and transcribe the rest. (Kharusi and Salman 7)

While transmutation refers to the change of one substance into another. When this is linked to playtext, is the change of one playtext into another. This may be from the same genre or different genre to another genre of literature.

On the other hand, Bassnett conceives that translation: “ ... is, and always has been, a question of power relationships, and the translator has all too often been placed in a position of economic, aesthetic and intellectual inferiority” (Bassnett 35). Pavis corroborates this as he asserts that:

Translation in general and theatre translation in particular has changed paradigms: it can no longer be assimilated to a mechanism of production of semantic equivalence copied mechanically from the source text. It is rather to be conceived of as an appropriation of one text by another. Translation theory thus follows the general trend of theatre semiotics, reorienting its objectives in the light of a theory of reception. (56)

These are normal adventures in the literary world, as literary works from time being are re-written, re-shaped, reworked and remoulded by the society that produces, reads and studies them thereby projecting the position and argument of deconstruction. Nabil Alawi, in trying to compare the art of intertextuality to Darwin’s biological theory of evolution states that: “there is a growing trend among exponents of intertextuality to link the evolution of texts to the biological evolution whereby texts are seen as members in chain similar to the scala nature (the great chain of beings) of Darwin” (Alawi 3). Obviously, often texts come into existence from the existing ones with the exploration of the intertextual time and space. Similarly, as the reader/interpreter makes effort to deduce meaning from existing text he equally creates another text.

Alawi goes further to argue that: “within the context of intertextuality, allusions participate in the creation of a network of tissues between texts. Some allusions are very popular and occur in several texts; they travel between texts every time they are borrowed they gain new meanings within the intertextual space” (8). Hence, interpretation is at work. Alawi also adds that: “intentionally or unintentionally intertextuality can happen within the same culture as much it can happen cross-

culturally; it can happen on the level words, the sentence or the whole text...” (10). It goes to mean that this study may not be out place, as it intends to look at the textual and intertextual relationships among selected Nigerian playtexts; looking at their inter-relatedness from all ramifications; mythology, language, proverbs and other numerous cultural and artistic elements enshrined in the plays and capping it up with meta-textualization of these texts for related and relevant understanding.

Technically, textuality and intertextuality are strong tools where the art of playwriting or play-creating is discussed in theatre and drama. These words and their attendant meanings have posed technical challenges before playwrights over the years in their quest to adapt, transpose and transliterate and are motivated interrelatedness of texts by plays from other societies to their immediate society or within the same society. The art of transposition, adaptation and transliteration of plays from other cultures to suit their immediate culture, and its purpose in their own society is a herculean task. Furthermore, whether the plays are adapted, transposed or transliterated, for playwriting or for stage craft, it requires some technical demands to be met by the dramatists to enable him or her get the purpose of the transposition, adaptation, transliteration and intertextualization. This also includes the plays that are adapted from existing history, legend, myth, language and etcetera of the community or cultural background where the dramatists hail from.

In literary theory, textuality comprises all of the attributes that distinguish the communicative content under analysis as an object of study. It is allied with structuralism and post-structuralism. Textuality is not just about the written word, it is the placement of the words and the reader’s interpretation of its signs and signification. There is no set formula to elucidate a text’s textuality; it is not a simple procedure. Even though Hawthorn sees interpretation: “as less important or less

problematic” (20). Interpretation is required in order to make sense out of the text’s theme and sub-themes. The interpretation that a reader develops from that text may decide the identity and the definitive meanings of that text. This is where the role of deconstruction semio-aesthetic discourse can never be undermined in character and language deconstruction. Textuality, as a literary theory, is that which constitutes a text as a text in a particular way.

Etymologically, textual, intertextual and meta-textual interpretation goes with signs and significations, that is taking into cognisance the symbolic meanings of the language, signs and significations embedded in these plays that are being transposed, adapted and transliterated or better still, that are being motivated intertextually to suit their own purpose and at the same time have relevance in the Nigerian society meta-textually. Again, some of these plays are a re-work or to re-tell the history of the people, like that of Soyinka’s *Death and the Kings Horseman*, Emmy Idegu’s *Omodoko* and *The Legendary Inikpi* are also direct reworked of the history of the great Old Oyo and that of princesses of Igala kingdom respectively.

A text therefore, is an assemblage of signs such as, symbols, language, words, images, sounds and/or gestures shaped and interpreted with reference to the harmonies associated with a genre and in a particular ‘medium’ of communication. The term ‘medium’ is used in a variety of ways by different theorists, and may include such broad categories as speech and writing or print and broadcasting or relate to specific technical forms within the mass media (radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, photographs, films, play text, and records) or the media of interpersonal communication (telephone, letter, fax, e-mail, video-conferencing, computer-based chat systems). “Some theorists classify media according to the ‘channels’ involved (visual, auditory, tactile and so on)” (Noth, 175). The act of writing, for instance, may be shaped not only by the writer’s conscious purposes but also by features of the media involved - such as the kind of

language and writing tools used - as well as by the social and psychological processes of mediation involved. In this regard, Chandler notes that:

...not every writer acts or feels like a bricoleur. Individuals differ strikingly in their responses to the notion of media transformation. They range from those who insist that they are in total control of the media which they 'use' to those who experience a profound sense of being shaped by the media which 'use' them. (40)

The potentials of language could be explored through semiology, as semiology according to different language scholars, critics and semioticians, is however the resting place for language - signs and signification. As Saussure cited in Chandler contends that: "The idea is to think of language as a system of signs" (51). Whether from the structuralists' point of view or from the linguistics' perception in literary theory, language is the bedrock of sign systems and signification. It is the quest for the different semiotic structures and languages led the Russian cultural semiotician Yuri Lotman to coin the term 'semiosphere' to refer to: "the whole semiotic space of the culture in question" (Lotman 124-125). By semiosphere Lotman means, governing the functioning of languages within cultures. Also, Hartley asserts that:

there is more than one level at which one might identify a semiosphere - at the level of a single national or linguistic culture, for instance, or of a larger unity such as 'the West', right up to 'the species'; we might similarly characterize the semiosphere of a particular historical period. (106)

Language is seldom treated as a static, closed and stable system which is inherited from preceding generations but as constantly changing. The sign, as Voloshinov put it is: "an arena of the class struggle" (23). Seeking to establish a 'social semiotics', Hodge and Kress declare that "the social dimensions of semiotic systems are so intrinsic to their nature and function that the systems cannot be studied in isolation" (1).

Structuralism is an analytical instrument which has been employed by many semioticians and literary scholars, based on Saussure's linguistic model. "Structuralists seek to describe the overall organization of sign systems as 'languages' - as with Lévi-Strauss and myth, kinship rules and totemism, Lacan and the unconscious and Barthes and Greimas and the 'grammar' of narrative" (Chandler 20). They engage in a search for deep structures underlying the surface features of phenomena. However, contemporary social semiotics has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations. Modern semiotic theory is also sometimes associated with a Marxist slant which stresses the role of ideology.

The term semiotics is also known as semiology, that is, concept wise, they can be used interchangeably as will be witnessed as the work progresses. Semiology is the science of signs. Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and of the meaning and use. It also concerns itself with the relationship between form and meaning, with particular emphasis on language. Semioticians have based their theories on the understanding that a sign is composed of two parts, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is a sound or image, for example, the aural or written word tree. The signified, following the same example, is the concept or idea of tree. Together, the signifier and the signified constitute the sign. The same thing with 'open' written on the doorway of a shopping mall or mini mart, is a signifier, signifying that the mall or mart is open for business. Peirce believes that semiology was the foundation of logic itself. He describes logic as: "the science of the general necessary laws of signs" (Peirce 30). Much of his work involves an attempt to classify signs according to the nature of the relationships between and among signifiers, signified, and object. Peirce made two important contributions to semiotics. First, he showed that

a sign can never contain a definite meaning. Second, he identified various types of signs, including the symbolic sign, which is randomly related to its referent.

Saussure's work is primarily concerned with the linguistic sign, and his attempts at a classificatory system involves distinguishing between different aspects of language. He is generally considered to be the founder of structural linguistics. Saussure's semiotic analyses tend to be conducted in terms of opposite pairs. "First, linguistic studies may be diachronic (historical) or synchronic (at one particular time). Second, language may be considered as *langue* or *parole*," (50). That is, either as the general set of semantic and syntactic rules of a particular language or in its individual utterances. Hence: "...the sign comprises a signifier and a signified, the relationship between which is arbitrary, and which both depend on a vast network of differences" (50-51). Thus, in literary criticism, semiotics considers the complete system of a text and what is required to understand it, including genre and other conventions. These theories concerning the relationship between form and meaning have influenced not only linguistics and literary theories, but also anthropology and psychoanalysis.

Aesthetics on the other hand is a philosophical thought that connotes beauty, perception or feeling that has its essence in all climes and all fields of human endeavours. So, we can have African aesthetics, Roman aesthetics, Arabian aesthetics, Chinese aesthetics, Christian aesthetics, Islamic aesthetics, artistic aesthetics, scientific aesthetics, feminist aesthetics, revolutionary aesthetics and of course architectural aesthetics, among others. Guyer submits that the term or name, "'aesthetics' as a branch of philosophy came into being in 1735" (15). Guyer also maintains that: "aesthetics was introduced by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735". In fact, Baumgarten sees aesthetics as "a science of how things are to be known by means of the senses" (114 - 115). Guyer ascertains the position of Baumgarten as the modern founder of aesthetics when he says: "In the Aesthetics,

Baumgarten also stresses that there are three dimensions of complexity in a beautiful sensory representation - the three dimensions that were to found the division of the whole work into a 'heuristic', a 'methodology', and a 'semiotic'" (38).

Interestingly, there are scholars and philosophers that have worked on aesthetics before Kant (1724 - 1804) and Baumgarten (1714 - 62). These are Anthony Ashley Cooper (1677 - 1713), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Jean-Baptiste Du Bos (1670 - 1742) and Joseph Addison (1672-1719) who have made various pronouncements on aesthetics. These philosophers did ground work for modern aesthetics that flourished in the eighteenth century. They did not pronounce the name "aesthetics" as it were. But it was later pronounced by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. It was all these ground works of Baumgarten and other philosophers that Immanuel Kant built upon that helped aesthetics to flourish in the eighteenth century. Guyer affirms that:

In the beginning of the eighteenth century, there began a torrent of writing about the character and value of beauty and other properties, notably the sublime, both in art and in nature itself, a flood to which professional philosophers as well as other men of letters ... contributed and which has since hardly abated. In particular, the second and third decades of the eighteenth century have a real claim to be the moment of the origin of modern aesthetics. (15)

Kofoworola also sees aesthetics as perception that has a relationship with feeling. He maintains that aesthetics, going by its literal meaning, which is perception (*aesthetikos*) (here, there is a link with semiotic interpretation of language) or feeling (*aisthesis*) (which can equally be seen as an aspect of semiotic experience) cannot be neglected if one is in search of what aesthetics really means or connotes. Therefore, perception is:

...concerned with the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object or a subject. That ability is not dependent mainly on the physical manifestation of the eyes-sight, the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes, the sense of sight. Perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or the mind, and are capable of generating some feelings. (Kofoworola 130)

Aesthetics is a philosophical idea that was discovered in the arts which is used to evaluate, judge and interpret artistic consumptions. It is not alien to Africa as well as other climes of Europe, America and Asia. Aesthetics was also explored in the Greek and Roman arts as found in their art forms, be they, sculpture, artefacts, literature and performing arts, among others. African aesthetics has been dominated and influenced by the West which misjudge African aesthetics. Barry also argues in favour of African aesthetics in the arts, maintaining that: “African cultural aesthetics has been dominated and characterised by Euro-western tradition and culture because of the influx of colonialism” (61). Hallen corroborates this that:

The study and analysis of African art and aesthetics have been dominated by Western culture. Initially the aesthetic sensitivities of African cultures were characterised as ‘primitive’ and of low intellectual calibre. Africans reacted to such negative stereotyping by articulating their own, deliberately by non-western aesthetic theories. (61)

African critics and writers have did a sort of re-writing or re-examination to the practice of Euro-American misconception of African cultural aesthetics in many instances, such as, in drama, poetry, music, novel, and film, among others, as it is evident in the plays of Femi Osafisan, Sam Ukala, Julie Okoh, Sunnie Ododo, Emmy Idegu and John Iwuh as Hallen further expresses that:

At the turn of twentieth century, African philosophers, anthropologists and literary historians began with frantic efforts to examine and revamp African art and aesthetics from the moribund state it was forced to be by the western critics. Their argument was that the aesthetic quality of any art cannot be appreciated without due consideration for the culture that produces it. Before full aesthetics of African art can be appreciated, there should be close consideration of African culture. (10)

Aesthetics, thus, provides these feelings, going beyond beauty which our knowledge and understanding of semiotics will make us comprehend.

It is against this backdrop that this dissertation sets to investigate the ways the playwrights fuse their plays with signs and symbols to aid communication, as this will enable the reader/interpreter

to communicate effectively, efficiently and intensively and make abundant meaning. Through the perception of the interpreter, the study interrogates the fusion of these avalanche of signs and symbols which would be deconstructed for communicative and interpretative purposes. To this effect, the study concerns itself with the copious of language and character construction in the selected case studies which will be deconstructed through semio-aesthetic analysis as it will serve as a means towards the deduction and interpretation of meaning from playtexts by the reader/interpreter.

Examples of the West's misinterpretation of Nigerian culture abounds in various communities in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Some of these colonial tendencies are captured by Nigerian/African playwrights in plays like Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* and *Kunrunmi*. Gbemisola Adeoti notes thus:

Pilkings attitude to the people and their culture, like those he represents, is condescending. Unfortunately, with his unsolicited but supercilious intervention, he ends up bringing upon the people and their cosmology, incalculable damage. To him, Elesin is about to commit suicide or "ritual death" and he has to be saved from himself at all cost. (18)

Pilkings does this out of lack of understanding of the people's culture and tradition. Even when his house boy Joseph tries to explain, he does not listen because, he already has a preconceived notion against the people and their culture. Joseph explains it from the logic of the culture that Elesin: "will not kill anybody and no one will kill him. He will simply die" (167). "But Pilkings ignores this. Instead, he orders the arrest and detention of Elesin. He takes this steps without consultation with Elesin and the people for whom he thinks he is acting" (Adeoti 18).

African/Nigerian interpreters are found in the characters of Joseph and Amusu as a result of their contact with the west (the diasporic Nigerians), never represent their people. Instead, their judgments are tailored to the Whiteman's interpretation:

But for like Amusu and Joseph who have converted to Islam and Christainity cannot be said to be the true representatives of the people for whom the cultural practice still holds some significance. As converts, their judgments are already coloured by their new religious beliefs. (Adeoti 18)

Adeoti also notes the same example from Ghana through Awoonor's *The Cathedral* thus:

The sense of loss and alienation orchestrated by colonialism is depicted by Kofi Awoonor in "The Cathedral". He represents colonial officials and missionaries ironically as "surveyors and builders". They are destructive, since they cut the tree which is a metaphor for the people's cosmology. The tree is presented in positive images and in pleasant tone as it is "shedding incense on the infant corn/its boughs stretched across a heaven/brightened by the last fires of a tribe". The cathedral a symbol of Westernisation is contrasted with the tree and it embodies doom. (19)

This explains that the West does not understand the culture of the people they say they want to protect, which at the end they plunge them into catastrophe. They cut down the tree because they do not know the importance of the tree to the people. A symbolic tree that means a lot to the people and their culture. These and many other examples are the reasons why the west must endeavour to read ethnographies and anthropology of the people to understand their culture and what the culture signifies. That is why the current study strives to see how this challenge can be dealt with through language and character deconstruction and semio-aesthetic analyses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Gbemisola Adeoti lays bare the problem of this study. According to Adeoti there is always: "the tendency of European colonisers to hastily dismiss as barbaric and 'uncivilised', cultural practices of Africans about which they lack deep understanding" (Adeoti 17). The impact of this

Eurocentric semio-aesthetic view of the colonist cannot be overemphasized as they mislead young African readers and Nigerian critics in particular in their evaluation and interpretations of language and character construct in Nigerian plays. Consequently, this Eurocentric semio-aesthetic approach to the study of African art especially Nigerian plays enables the subjugation of African culture by the Western culture. Soyinka complains that: “We black Africans have been blandly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonialism – this time by a universal-humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of *their* world and *their* history, *their* social neuroses and *their* value systems” (41). Hence, West from Euro-American perception sees the aesthetic sensibilities of African cultures as ‘primitive’ and of low intellectual quality. This, Miller asserts that the Western critics have: “... pored over numerous African texts, texts that deal with culturally encoded and culture specific issues, without bothering to look at the anthropologic works that form an implicit dialogue with their literary counterparts” (446). It is this negative stereotyping that has bedevilled Africans who follow the sensual judgement of Eurocentric semio-aesthetics. Thus, semiotics and aesthetics of African art have been in the waning state it was forced to be by the western critics. Their perception was that the semio-aesthetic quality of any art cannot be appreciated without due consideration for the culture that produces it. The way they perceive the African culture, is the angle they see semiotics and aesthetics of African art. Hence, before full Afro-semio-aesthetics of African art can be appreciated, there should be close consideration of African culture.

This perception sometimes makes the West to misinterpret, misjudge and misconstrue language and other modes of cultural communication in playwriting. They gave Africa’s methods and medium of communication names. Hence this discernment has greatly affected the semiotic and aesthetic (semio-aesthetic) judgement of the reader/interpreter. This view and sense of judgement

grown to a height that the readers/interpreters see Nigeria's playtexts as lacking in communication process and impetus through language, semiotic and aesthetic signs, symbols and motifs. Elsewhere, Soyinka refers to *them* as vultures hovering over dead animal: "Westerners hovering over African literature like vultures" (41). The indigenous interpreters help in the propagation of this obnoxious misconception of African Arts.

This misconception of language and characters by diasporic African/Nigerian interpreters/readers and West however, helps in the proliferation of more plays with intertextualization. Thus in the bid to interpret a play the interpreters; the West and Africans discover that they are creating or building another play. This dissertation thus, is an investigation into the above stated problem to find out the numerous effective communication ingredients in Nigerian drama through the study of language and character deconstruction as viable semiotic and aesthetic elements. The synergy between Afro-semio-aesthetics, language and character deconstruction in the reading of text are examined, which is often neglected in the reading and staging of play texts like the ones selected for this study. This perhaps is the gap which this study intends to bridge for communication purposes.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study aims at evolving African semio-aesthetic concept that evaluates, judges and interprets artistic components and compositions of African drama from the point of view of the African and his cultural heritage. It also looks at examining how language and character deconstruction can aid generation of meaning from playtexts using the model of afro-semio-aesthetics. Also, it assesses the challenges of deducing from a play what is encoded by the playwrights in the bid to create meanings during reading or interpretation outside that of the playwright. Though it must be

noted according to array of literary scholars that the author of a playtext is “dead” and the reader or the interpreter makes meaning different from that of the playwright’s, which may create proliferation of meanings and increase in playtexts. The study is also fused with the following objectives:

- a. to expose the interpreters (West and diasporic Africans/Nigerians) to the elements needed for meaning to be generated from playtexts. Thus the interpreter must deconstruct the language and character of the play through afro-semio-aesthetic elements. Hence exposing the reason why plays albeit will keep increasing in volumes, as the reader/interpreter tries to make meanings apart from the meaning imbued by the playwrights.
- b. to consider aesthetics which is a philosophical thought that connotes evaluation and judgment, perception or feeling that has its essence in all climes and all fields of human endeavours. And semiotics, which is concerned with signs and symbols, and what they portend – signification.
- c. to expose the interpreter to be conversant with the reading and producing such interpretation of plays with creative mind of interpretation and to textually, intertextually and metatextually grab some signs, symbols, images, metaphors as extension of language and character as afro-semio-aesthetic elements for easy and swift understanding of playtexts. Thus espousing that they (interpreters) have the license to give meaning to a play outside the fused meaning by the playwright.
- d. to examine some of these elements as regards deconstructing and communicating adequately through signs and signification of language and character in the playtexts; Osofisan’s *Twingle Twangle...*, Ukala’s *Akpakaland*, Okoh’s *Edewede*, Idegú’s *Tough Man*, Ododo’s *Hard*

Choice and Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*. The dissertation explores greatly their intertextuality and meta-textual relationships, and examines the afro-semio-aesthetics element of language and character - signs and signification embedded in the playtexts and their importance to the interpreters of playtexts.

e. to examine the place of language and character in play interpretation. Thereby expousing semio-aesthetics – Afro-semio-aesthetics as a model for interpretation and example for Africans/Nigerians. Hence it is important because it presents a model of Afro-semio-aesthetics for character and language deconstruction in playtexts for meaning making.

f. to provoke and generate further works and studies by researchers in this area of study. And also to instigate more interest in the areas of semio-aesthetic analyses of Nigerian drama through deconstruction.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Since the advent of literary drama in Nigeria, many playwrights and critics have come up with different positions and ideologies on playwriting. This trend has continued to the extent that semiology or semiotics as a theory has been another dimension imbibed and embraced by these critics and playwrights to bring their arts and culture to the fore.

Viewed against this background, this study becomes significant, as it focuses on finding the way forward for the interpretation of playtexts through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of language and character using symbols, signs, and codes to assist in meaning making from Nigerian/African playtexts.

This study contributes immensely to the literary and critical development of the interpreter because it will help to re-educate them of the functions and place of Derrida's deconstruction, Saussure's semiology and Peirce's semiotics in meaning generation as applied to Nigerian plays through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses.

The work serves as a tool for re-awakening and conscientizing the reader/interpreter that as meaning is generated from the plays they read through African semio-aesthetics. It can also help in the creation of other plays different from the ones they have read.

It equally espouses that intertextualization is a viable tool and technique enshrined in the analyses of African semiotics and aesthetics, in the process of adaptation, transposition and transliteration of plays or orature and performance, especially the plays that have their roots in the peoples' arts, culture and tradition, like the case studies. Most importantly, transposing within our own 'intertext-intellectual' ingenuities such as Femi Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed* as a critical and radical intertextual interpretation of Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* and Osofisan's *Another Raft*, as creative intertextual interpretation of J.P. Clark's *The Raft*.

This work is also of immense help to future researchers on this critical discourse by providing material for them. Thereby serving as a guide for further research on this field of knowledge. In essence, the study is equally important because it adds to the avalanche of already existing literatures in the area of study and enhances the reference and reading list for further researches.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on meaning and textual interpretation of playtexts through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of character and language deconstruction in Nigerian drama. Specifically, the study examines how character and language can be deconstructed by the reader/interpreter for effective

interpretation and meaning making, bearing in mind that the original meaning of the language of the playwright (applying Derrida's deconstruction) can never remain the same. So intertextuality, textual and meta-textuality of sign and signification and the possible ways to come by them in Nigerian drama would be investigated. The attempt by different playwrights to communicate through language and character, signs and significations will be assessed using selected case studies for illustration. Issues relating to the subject matter is captured within the scope of Nigerian literary dramatic composition and interpretation.

However, the searchlight for this research is on Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of language and character - signs and signification and character deconstruction as regards the selected playtexts – textually, intertextually and meta-textually.

Consequently, the study is only concerned with the cultural signs and symbols displayed in the plays selected to be studied and analysed as African cultural symbols and signs of semiotics and aesthetics which eventually produce meaning for the interpreter. The research also concerns itself about the different meanings they (cultural symbols) project through a conjoined concept – semio-aesthetics. Therefore, we are looking at language and character and the meanings they generate through cultural signs and symbols and their communicative effects through Afro-semio-aesthetic discourse and deconstruction of language and character in Femi Osafisan's *Twingle Twangle A Twyning Tayle*, Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland*, Julie Okoh's *Edewede*, Sunnie Ododo's *Hard Choice*, Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man* and John Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* as African cultural semio-aesthetic values.

1.6 Research Methodology

Research Design: The study adopts Content Analysis approach of the qualitative research method. The researcher carefully selected the case studies through sampling technique. The samples were selected on the ground of the year each play was published; the geographical location of the playwrights and the age variations of the playwrights; the depth of language of the plays; character building by the playwrights; the structures of the plays; and the interconnected enterprise of the plays. But attention was given more to age variations of the selected dramatists. Osofisan, Ukala and Okoh are older and have all recently retired from the active services of their various universities. While Ododo, Idegu and Iwuh are younger and are still in the active services of their various universities. The plays were carefully selected because the playwrights construct their plays with language which this dissertation will be deconstructing through Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis. Equally, their plays were cautiously chosen out of the numerous plays by each of the selected playwrights because they deal or have connotative meanings, symbolic in structure, embellished aesthetic elements and foregrounded in semiotic enterprise.

Sampling: This study adopts stratified sampling technique to enable it bring its population to a manageable size. According to Nwabueze, “Stratification is a method of dividing a population into sub-groups with each sub-group representing a significant paradigm. It is a process of dividing a sample into constituent parts. Its aim is to make the sample truly representative of the population” (64). In simplifying stratify random sampling, Tuckman opines that: “... stratified random sampling will permit you to include parameters of special interest and to control for internal validity in term of selection factors through the use of moderator or control variables...stratification represents a good operational strategy for screening members of the population into and out of the study and for reducing the variability of the sample” (228). In

explaining further, Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias argue that: “Researchers use stratified sampling primarily to ensure that different groups of a population are adequately represented in the sample so as to increase their level of accuracy when estimating parameters” (188). Accordingly, Kothari opines that: “If a population from which a sample is to be drawn does not constitute a homogeneous group, stratified sampling technique is generally applied in order to obtain a representative sample” (62). Kothari goes further to say, “Under stratified sampling the population is divided into several sub-populations that are individually more homogeneous than the total population (the different sub-populations are called ‘strata’) and then we select items from each stratum to constitute a sample” (62).

Apparently, this is exactly what the current study did. Homogeneity of Nigerian drama is indisputable, every play you read is embedded with language construct and character building. It therefore becomes obvious that all the plays cannot be studied. In order to do a study of this magnitude genuinely, the plays were sub-divided into different stratum to ease this study. The researcher uses some characteristics to do this division: “the researcher divides his population in strata on the basis of some characteristics and from each of these smaller homogeneous groups (strata) draws at random a predetermined number of units” (Singh 87).

Nigerian playwrights are spread out throughout the country; from the south-west to south-south to south-east to north-central to north-west and north-east. It is obvious from this that the study cannot cover all the playwrights, therefore, the need for stratified random sampling to divide the population of the plays and the playwrights to smaller constituents that are manageable to guarantee verifiable and impeccable results. The researcher thus, classified the generations of Nigerian playwrights into two main groups; older and new generations. It was based on this parameter that Femi Osofisan, Julie Okoh and Sam Ukala were considered to represent the older

generation of playwrights while Sunnie Ododo, Emmy Idegu and John Iwuh represents the new generation of playwrights. This was carefully done through a mindful selection which bears in cognizance some characteristics such as use of language, character construct, cultural coverage, structured plotting and universality of the storyline among, others. More so, all the plays selected fall within the period of 1990-2015 to permit easy coverage as the larger sample has been brought to a smaller sample through disproportionate sampling. As for the geographical location of the older playwrights selected for this study; Osofisan is from South-West by birth and by location; Sam Ukala is from South-South by birth and by location and Julie Okoh is from South-South by birth and by location. On the other hand, the geographical location of the younger playwrights are; Sunnie Ododo is from the North-Central and he is in the North-East by location. Emmy Idegu is from North-Central by birth and he was in the North-West before moving to South-South by location and Jonh Iwuh is from South-East by birth and He is in the South-West by location. These playwrights were prudently selected because of their creative and artistic use of simple language and prowess in character construct.

Data Collection: According to Duruaku, Ugwuegbulam and Adaramaja, instruments of data collection are: “data collecting techniques which are used as instruments to gather qualitative and quantitative information for research” (64-65). The instrument adopted by the researcher for collection of data are the selected play texts. These plays were carefully selected for the study, hence the character construct will be deconstructed and the language as used in these plays will be discussed to enable the researcher finds a solution to the research problem. This will be prudently done through semio-aesthetics and deconstruction. Language and character deconstruction will be done in the plays selected and analysed with Afro-semio-aesthetic tools for analyses.

Data Analysis: Analysis according to Eukoha, Emeh and Umoinyan means: “categorizing, ordering, manipulating and summarizing of data to obtain answers to research questions and results of hypotheses testing” (45). The analysis of the data was done based on the records collected from the plays selected for the study and the research questions that guided the study. The data collected are analysed dwelling on Afro-semio-aesthetic elements. Results of the research and other content analyses of the data are presented in chapter four.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Deconstruction: deconstruction denotes the pursuing of the meaning of a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is founded, supposedly showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. “It is an approach that may be deployed in philosophy, in literary analysis, and even in the analysis of scientific writings” (Royle 56). Deconstruction mostly tries to demonstrate that any text is not a distinct whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings. Deconstruction opines that any text therefore has more than one interpretation and the text itself links these interpretations inseparably. Deconstruction maintains that the incompatibility of these interpretations is irreducible and thus that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point.

The oppositions challenged by deconstruction, which have been inherent in Western philosophy since the time of the ancient Greeks, are characteristically “binary” and “hierarchical,” involving a pair of terms in which one member of the pair is assumed to be primary or fundamental, the other secondary or derivative. To “deconstruct” an opposition is to explore the tensions and contradictions between the hierarchical ordering assumed in the text and other aspects of the texts’ meanings, especially those that are indirect or implicit or that rely on figurative or performative uses of language. Through this analysis, the opposition is shown to be a product, or “construction,” of the text rather than something given independently of it. The point of the deconstructive analysis is to restructure, or “displace,” the opposition, not simply to reverse it. This implies that in the

process of language and character deconstruction, is to construct a different meaning out of the already constructed meaning or communication by the playwrights.

As with the opposition between nature and culture, however, the point of the deconstructive analysis is not to show that the terms of the speech/writing opposition should be inverted; that writing is really prior to speech; nor is it to show that there are no differences between speech and writing. Rather, it is to displace the opposition so as to show that neither term is primary. For Derrida, speech and writing are both forms of a more generalized “arche-writing” (*archi-écriture*), which encompasses not only all of natural language but any system of representation whatsoever. What Mark Fortier refers to as: “Writing here means not only actual writing in all its forms but ‘arch writing’, a process which underlies not only written but spoken language as well as thought, self and any activity taken to be text” (38).

The privileging of speech over writing is based on what Derrida considers a distorted picture of meaning in natural language, one that identifies the meanings of words with certain ideas or intentions in the mind of the speaker or author. Derrida’s argument against this picture is an extension of an insight by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. For Saussure:

the concepts we associate with linguistic signs (their “meanings”) are only arbitrarily related to reality, in the sense that the ways in which they divide and group the world are not natural or necessary, reflecting objectively existing categories, but variable (in principle) from language to language. (40)

Hence, meanings can be adequately understood only with reference to the specific contrasts and differences they display with other related meanings. For Derrida, similarly, linguistic meaning is determined by the open of differences between words; a play that is limitless, infinite and indefinite and not by an original idea or intention existing prior to and outside language. Derrida coined the

term ‘différance’, meaning both a difference and an act of deferring, to characterize the way in which meaning is created through the play of differences between words. Because the meaning of a word is always a function of contrasts with the meanings of other words, and because the meanings of those words are in turn dependent on contrasts with the meanings of still other words. It implies that: “... meaning is made possible by the relations of a word to other words within the network of structures that language is” (Hobson 67). It follows that the meaning of a word is not something that is fully present to us; it is endlessly deferred in an infinitely long chain of meanings, each of which contains the traces of the meanings on which it depends. Every reader can deconstruct the language in a text and still makes meaning to; because he has reconstructed meanings from existing language.

Semiotics: this is concerned with the study of signs and symbols of all kinds, what they represent or mean and how they relate to the things or the ideas they refer to; sign, signifier and signified. Semiotics, also known as semiology, the science of signs. According to Charles S. Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure, Semiotics is concerned with the relationship between form and meaning, with particular emphasis on language. Both Peirce and Saussure based their theories on the understanding that a sign is composed of two parts, the signifier and the signified. Together, the signifier and the signified constitute the sign. Semiotics is the science of signs and sees signs and symbols from different perspectives. That is the linguistic signs and symbolic signs.

The study of signs and sign-using behaviour. As the study of: “the life of signs within society” (Saussure 56). Although the word was used in this sense in the 17th century by the English philosopher John Locke, the idea of semiotics as an interdisciplinary mode for examining phenomena in different fields emerged only in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the

independent work of Saussure and of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Peirce further defines sign as: “something which stands to somebody for something” (Peirce, 67). One of his major contributions to semiotics was the categorization of signs into three main types: (1) an icon, which resembles its referent (such as a road sign for falling rocks); (2) an index, which is associated with its referent (as smoke is a sign of fire); and (3) a symbol, which is related to its referent only by convention (as with words or traffic signals). Peirce also demonstrated that a sign can never have a definite meaning, for the meaning must be continuously qualified.

Accordingly, Mark Fortier defines Semiotics or semiology as: “the study of signs: words, images, behaviour, human and animal arrangements of many kinds, in which a meaning is relayed by corresponding outward manifestation. The falling leaves in autumn, for instance, are sign of the coming of winter” (Fortier 18). That is, they can be used interchangeably as we will witness in this work. We can thus, define semiology or semiotics as the study of signs. Semiology is the science of signs. Semiotics is concerned with the relationship between form and meaning, with particular emphasis on language. Semioticians have based their theories on the understanding that a sign is composed of two parts, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is a sound or image, for example, the aural or written word tree. The signified, following the same example, is the concept or idea of tree.

Peirce believes that semiology was the foundation of logic itself. He describes logic as “the science of the general necessary laws of signs” (30). Much of his work involves an attempt to classify signs according to the nature of the relationships between and among signifiers, signified, and object. Peirce made two important contributions to semiotics. First, he showed that a sign can never contain a definite meaning (between the encoder and the decoder). Second, he identified various types of signs, including the symbolic sign, which is randomly related to its referent. While

on the other hand, Saussure's work is primarily concerned with the linguistic sign, and his attempts at a classificatory system involve distinguishing between different aspects of language. Chandler's position becomes pertinent to us as he conceptualises semiotics as:

...could be anywhere. The shortest definition is that it is *the study of signs*. But that doesn't leave enquirers much wiser. 'What do you mean by a sign?' people usually ask next. The kinds of signs that are likely to spring immediately to mind are those which we routinely refer to as 'signs' in everyday life, such as road signs, pub signs and star signs. If you were to agree with them that semiotics can include the study of all these and more, people will probably assume that semiotics is about 'visual signs'. You would confirm their hunch if you said that signs can also be drawings, paintings and photographs, and by now they'd be keen to direct you to the art and photography sections. But if you are thick-skinned and tell them that it also includes words, sounds and 'body language' they may reasonably wonder what all these things have in common and how anyone could possibly study such disparate phenomena. (3-4)

It implies that semiotics or semiology transcends the signs on the road to even language that we speak. Semiotics is frequently seen as having important anthropological and sociological dimensions; for example, Umberto Eco proposes that: "every cultural phenomenon can be studied as communication" (45). Schleifer gives his own conception of semiotics as:

...the great convenience of language, the power it affords us to represent or 'signify' absent entities. The science of such signification-which studies language more carefully, I think, than the scholars of Lagado-is semiotics. The term semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion*, which means 'sign', and semiotics is the study-or the science-of the functioning of signs. Signs function all around us every time we use one entity to signify or represent another. (895-896)

On this premise Doki argues that: "It is, therefore, concerned with the process of signification and communication, that is, the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged" (31).

Doki further suggests that: "semiotics is umbrella concept that aims essentially at analyzing and interpreting the sign system. It is a scientific method of inquiry into the workings of the process of signification" (Doki 30). John Fiske adding to the concept of semiotics puts it like this: "At the centre of this concern is the sign. The study of sign and the way they work is called semiotics or

semiology...” (43). He reiterates that: “Semiotics, then, focuses its attention primarily on the text” (43). This is perhaps one of the motivating factors that have galvanized the study of semiotics and aesthetics as they relate to the study of the selected texts, or contemporary drama.

Aesthetics: Aesthetics is generally believed to mean ‘perception’ and is concerned with ‘feelings’. Sensual perception as we know is connected to the/with the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object, symbol, sign, language, character, spectacle, costume etcetera. However, that ability is not dependent mainly on the physical manifestation of the eye-sight, the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes and the sense of sight. This implies to this research that perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or the mind, and are capable of generating some feelings and meanings.

It is closely related to the philosophy of art, which is concerned with the nature of art and the concepts in terms of which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated. Providing more than a general definition of the subject matter of aesthetics is immensely difficult. Indeed, it could be said that self-definition has been the major task of modern aesthetics. We are acquainted with an interesting and puzzling realm of experience: the realm of the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, and the elegant; of taste, criticism, and fine art; and of contemplation, sensuous enjoyment, and charm. In all these phenomena we believe that similar principles are operative and that similar interests are engaged. If we are mistaken in this impression, we will have to dismiss such ideas as beauty and taste as having only peripheral philosophical interest. This study seeks to conceptualize the nature of modern aesthetics and to delineate its underlying principles, concerns and ultimately, how it will be used in this work.

Aesthetics can be said to be the study of whether a work of arts or a non-work of arts from the perspective of either its beauty or uncomely. That is, beautiful or ugly. This definition emphasizes that the beautiful is according to the person studying that work and the ugly too. Accordingly, Holman and Harmon define aesthetics as: “The study or philosophy of the beautiful in nature, art, and literature. It has both a philosophical dimension. What is art? What is beauty? What is the relationship of the beautiful to other values?” (5). Beyond art, aesthetics goes to other areas like nature and literature. Thus follow by some rhetorical questions which are obviously things that will bring the meaning of aesthetics to lime light. They equally go further to state the psychological dimension which is: “what is the source of aesthetic enjoyment? How is beauty perceived and recognized? From what impulse do art and beauty arise?” (5). Hence, these are some of the questions this study seeks to address through the selected contemporary Nigerian drama for this dissertation. Holman and Harmon did not stop at that; they equally went on to look at the main purpose of aesthetics in the study of literature. According to Holman and Harmon, “The aesthetic study of literature concentrates its attention on the sense of the beautiful rather than on moral, social, or practical considerations” (5).

Again, Zima explains from his deduction of what aesthetics means from the point of view of Kant as: “the beautiful in nature and art as a phenomenon which ‘pleases without a concept’ and which ought to be perceived by the observer with ‘disinterested pleasure’” (3). There is no gainsaying that theatre or drama is a work of art as rightly opined by Johnson that: “theatre is an art form” (20). This implies that aesthetic experiences would be incomplete if the experiences of the doer of an action relay the pleasure (beauty) he derives from such an action, and not even a reflex on the unpleasantness (ugly) he derives from an action. Therefore, aesthetic value deals with both pleasant and unpleasantness of a particular work, whether art or non-art.

Semio-Aesthetics: From the conceptual clarification of semiotics and aesthetics above, it is apparent that semio-aesthetics is the effort by the researcher to merge the two concepts together to make it a compound concept which implores the elements of both concepts as explained above. Semiotics involves identifying sign and symbol and what the images denote, interpreting signs and recognizing the world in terms of signs and signs in terms of the world. Aesthetics deals with the beauty and expressiveness of natural objects or artworks, as they communicate differently to our sensual perception. Thus, the meeting point between semiotics and aesthetics is the development of the signs and character in Nigerian drama and the meaning or the motifs they represent.

Semiotics deals with the production of signs and the meanings they portend. For one to deduce meaning from signs it has to do with his sensual perception. This means that the same sign could make different meaning to the interpreter of the sign in line with the perception of the interpreters. It is the same way aesthetics deals with the sensual perception of art and culture of the people.

In the bid to clearly define aesthetics in African concept, we therefore need to look at aesthetics from its origin. Aesthetics is generally believe to mean ‘perception’ and is concerned with ‘feelings’. Sensual perception as we know is connected to the/with the ability to acquire an insight in something, an object, symbol, sign, language, character, spectacle, costume etcetera. However, that ability is not dependent mainly on the physical manifestation of the eye-sight, the reflection that is transmitted into the eyes and the sense of sight. This implies to this research that perceptions are reflected into the inner eyes; they belong to the sense or the mind, and are capable of generating some feelings and meanings. This set ground for the search of the meaning of African aesthetics.

African aesthetics may be seen/define as a process in the judgement, evaluation, assessment and the interpretation of the art and culture in the African World-views. The African World-views are

different from the World-views of other climes. The African World-views are the ways Africans view their art and culture and the perceptions or feelings they hold towards the art and culture. This may isolate the African concepts of aesthetics from the universal recognition and services of aesthetics. Thus African concepts of aesthetics are really different from the concepts of aesthetics in other climes. That is the functions and practice of aesthetics in African differs from the functions and practice of other climes; races and descents. That is the African aesthetics that this study drives at. The perception beholder 'A' may be different from the perception of beholder 'B'. That is why is widely accepted that aesthetic judgement is in the eyes of the beholder. Examples can be deduced from the how Africans see their culture and how the West sees the same culture.

African Semio-Aesthetics: *Afro-Semio-aesthetics*, as coined by this researcher, is a conceptual amalgamation of both semiotics and aesthetics designed to bring some strands of semiotics that are relevant in the interrogation of aesthetics in the selected plays of study from the African/Nigerian perception. It implies that if both concepts deals with sensual perception as posited by the researcher, it therefore means that "African semio-aesthetics" in Afro-postmodernist era, simply means the ways Africans perceive their signs and signification which is African semiotics and the sensual perception of their work of art and culture which is African aesthetics.

Though it must be noted that different aesthetics scholars of African extraction have questioned whether there can be meaning of African aesthetics different from the universal meaning of aesthetics imposed by the West with their Euro-American hegemony. This researcher dare answer the question that there can be different meaning of aesthetics that is different from the universally accepted meaning of aesthetics which is sensuous perception of art and culture. The argument is

that perception of the White man about African culture and art may not be the same sensual perception of Africans about their art and culture.

For instance, it is the sensual and biased hegemony of the White as portrayed by Soyinka in *Death and the King's Horseman* that made Simon Pilkings to intervene in the ritual suicide of Elesin. While Pilkings on one hand through his sensual perception kicks against the ritual adventure of Elesin and sees that adventure as crime, the people of old Oyo see it as smooth and a ritual death that Elesin must embark to put the kingdom at peace, which expresses the perception of Africans about their culture. Again, in one of the plays selected such example abounds. Janet in Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* for instance, from the Euro-centric perception never see the mark on Amadi as a sign of a lamb, hence she argues with Amadi and does not believe that anything can happen. While Amadi from Afro-centric perception makes her to see why the marks are true of Africans and they portend meaning which even Amadi him himself could not interpret as a diasporic character.

African critics see African aesthetics directly or indirectly in their quest to propagate Afro-postmodernist drive. The term African aesthetics refers to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations. The essence of the African semiotic and aesthetic is its representation as a construct of African people on the continent and people of African descent in the diaspora that articulates African culture. African semio-aesthetic perception may be seen as how Africans consciously define their own concept of beauty that is, the African-derived standards of perceiving, appreciating, appraising, or applying semio-aesthetic values or knowledge of things in Africa. The African semio-aesthetics is African centered, and it reveals the cultural bond between Africans in the continent and abroad. African semio-aesthetics embraces a rich variety of creative forms and styles peculiar to people of African

origin that incorporate a combination of practical, physical, material, temporal, and spiritual aspects.

Afro-semio-aesthetics includes African artistic expressions: visual and performative images, signs, symbols, verbal arts (poetry, oratory performance), rhythm, music (song and dance), dress, hairstyles, cosmetics, designs (African architecture and decorative patterns), and crafts in and from Africa. From the above, African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values.

African semio-aesthetics constitutes the factors both tangible and intangible in form and ideas to represent African world-view. In recent times, Afro-semio-aesthetics is at the core of Nigerian plays directly or indirectly. For more than two decades now, Nigerian playwrights have explored Afrosemio-aesthetic approaches to present and explore African sensual perceptions of semiotics and aesthetics in the writing of their plays. This has helped them in great measures to achieve presentation of Afro-semio-aesthetics through the medium of playwriting.

The concept of Afro-semio-aesthetic dwells on the premise that every clime has its culture, so does Africa. African semio-aesthetics lean on idea and correctional impetus against the euro-centric domination of the African semiotics and aesthetics. This correctional impetus is that Africa has semiotics and aesthetics. African semiotics and aesthetics deals with the philosophical sensual perception of the African man and his cultural heritage. The African perception of his culture lies with how he perceives his culture and tradition, his arts and artifacts, mythologies, legends, symbols and signs which are relatively African. Thus African has that aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities that are different from the Euro-American aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities. In other

words, African semio-aesthetics is the manner Africans evaluates, assesses and judges his arts and culture.

African semio-aesthetics therefore, is geared towards evolving a concept or theory that can be used in the reading and interpretation of African playtexts with a view of revealing those afro-semio-aesthetic ingredients fused in those playtexts by the playwrights that can assist in the generation of meanings and communicating effectively. Concretely, African semio-aesthetics emphasizes that Africans have aesthetics and semiotics, that Africa has semiotics and aesthetics why deal with the way Africans perceive their culture and arts, these perception influence the reading and interpretation of African playtexts. This is the position of the current study. It does this through Afro-semio-aesthetics.

Furthermore, Afro-semio-aesthetics deals with the ethnographies of the African people as most of the African plays are re-written of African culture, tradition and arts. Thus, they are reflected in the plays conspicuously in the process of the construct of their plays. Hence, the ethnographies of the African people should be well understood for the reading and interpretations of African plays to enable free flow of deconstruction for meaning generation and effective communication. The ethnographies include – the language, food, clothes, ceremonies, medicines, burials and so many others. Therefore, in an African play, before a reader condemns the character and language of any character in the play, he must understand why such character does what he did? This is simple, because he should understand what does the culture of the people permits and what it does not permit. Thus the reader/interpreter will be well guided through all the aforementioned element of African semio-aesthetics.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The reason for theoretical framework for this research is to guide the research, to determine what things to measure, and what statistical relationships to look for. The researcher also develops thoughts and theories on what the possible answers to the research questions could be. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. Theoretical framework therefore:

...provides solidity to Literature Review because the review of related literature is not a listing of studies carried out in the area of investigation, but an analysis of previous studies. A careful documentation of these studies will guide the reader in the right direction. (Duruaku, Ugwuegbulam and Sheu 55-56)

Hence, the need for theoretical framework for this work as it helps solidify the literature review, when the analysis of the study kicks off.

2.2.1 Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation

The theory of interpretation was propounded by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), a French philosopher who postulated the theory via what he calls the 'hermeneutic arc'. In order to understand the basis of hermeneutic- arc, it is appropriate to set the historical context of hermeneutics. Originally, the word "Hermeneutics" came from the Greek Mythological figure Hermes. As a messenger, Hermes was responsible for interpreting Zeus messages for the other gods and goddesses. In the words of Adogbo and Ojo:

Hermeneutics itself means science of interpretation, which seeks to bring to light the primordial nature of a phenomenon or the very "essence" of the object under study. Its goal is to discover the essential structures of acts, and objects or entities that correspond to them. (10)

The hermeneutic arc is encapsulated in three stages; explanation, understanding and appropriation.

Explanation: “In this first stage, the interpreter explores about this question ‘What is this book about?’ And examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play” (Ricoeur 1624).

Understanding: “In this second stage, the interpreter explores about this question ‘What does this text talk about?’ In this level, the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). Here the reader of a play takes steps further to know what the playwright tries to communicate to the interpreter/reader.

Appropriation: In the third stage, “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). The reader/interpreter here in the quest to discover the ‘dead’ author appropriates meaning to the codes embedded by the playwright. Whether he interprets the playwright’s intent or not, it is not a problem as he has the poetic license to appropriate his deducted meaning and adduced it in his own way.

Ricoeur indicates that there are two ways of looking at a text. The first he describes it as considering only the internal nature of the text. From this perspective, it has context, no external world and there is no consideration of its having an author or an audience. At this point, the text has no outside but only an inside, it has no transcendent aim. What arises from it in this case, is the explanation which is possible because of the objectivity of the text. At this level, understanding is relatively immature. It takes into account for example, the meaning of the words as the reader understands it which of course, might not be the exact meaning intended by the writer. As Nwabueze succinctly captures it that: “To Derrida, a document is replete with a multiplicity of

meaning because there is no fixed system of knowledge and therefore, no definite, absolute meaning in a text” (56). According to Ricoeur, “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). Corroborating this, Derrida asserts that: “The text (of a document) should be perceived as an entity within itself and its interpretation should not be encumbered by unnecessary intrusive meanings. It is the text that speaks and no prior or external presence ought to be considered in its analysis” (8). Because: “...the author is no longer the source of meaning in a text” (Nwabueze 57).

The second way of looking at text proposed by Ricoeur is to restore it to a living communication. Through interpretation, the world of the text combines with the world of the interpreter to form something new. Yes, this interpretation although adding to the interpreter’s understanding is still fairly superficial. Thus Ricoeur opines that: “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). Relating this theory to the research topic, Emeka Nwabueze opines that: “Deconstruction is a poststructuralist theory of critical thought which considers the idea of a unified document illusory because meaning in a document is indeterminate. An extension of the concept of hermeneutics, this theory was given impetus by Jacques Derrida” (56). Thus, the researcher vehemently proposes that in the theatre, the role/duty of the reader/interpreter of a play is the role of an interpreter because the reader or decoder seeks to interpret the characters from the script for effective communication. Therefore, the reader or decoder can be likened to the interpreter. This theory in relating it to the research topic can be analysed thus:

The first stage (Explanation): The researcher has ascertained the fact that the interpreter's role to the text is unanimous to that of the reader's/interpreter's role towards effective and efficient communication. In fact, it is not an understatement to refer to the reader as an interpreter because the decoder chooses a play takes time to carefully read, study and critically analyses the play, hence making meaning from it. In this first stage according to Ricoeur's theory reader or decoder (Interpreter), chooses a suitable play and goes through it first, to explore the content of the play in its raw form without any biased or sentimental attachments.

The second stage (Understanding): In this second stage, the reader or decoder (interpreter) goes beyond merely reading the play into deeper critical analysis of the text. This stage according to Ricoeur explores the question, "What does this text talk about?" At this stage, the reader or decoder comes in contact with the abstract (Not physical) personality of the writer but inherent in his plays, though "dead" author.

This assertions were made possible because the reader or critic takes a step deeper towards uncovering "when" "where" and "why" of every playwrights plays as this would serve as a backbone to the reader/interpreter in interpreting the play as he/she takes cognizance of the plot, setting and the thematic focus of the play; the characters in the play; their relationship with one another, the conflicts, climax, tempo, mood, tone and resolution among others inherent in the play. It is at this stage that the reader/interpreter develops a germinal- idea of what/ how the play would look like in interpretation; the decoder starts exploring the possibility and applicability of the play interpretation and meaning appropriation.

The third stage (Appropriation): This is the third and last stage. From developing a germinal conception about the play, the critic/Interpreter goes beyond scrutinizing the text into interpretation

of the play. At this point, the reader/decoder now has a mature and concrete overview of the play, decodes the encoded messages hidden in the pages of the static script and can go as far as altering some parts of the play to suit his/ her style and concept of interpretation. The reader/decoder does this through the deconstruction of the language and character as embedded by the playwright to make his own meaning, as no work has static meaning. This is where all the reader's interpretative prowess, artistic genius and cognitive ability come to play.

Hitherto, the text is in an imaginary world (Static) but at this stage, the reader begins to apply all his knowledge of interpretation through semiotic elements, aesthetic enterprise and deconstructive mind to generate his own meaning. This is aimed at transiting the text from its static state, to a living communication. From the above, the researcher agrees with Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation as it is favourable to the reader who doubles as a play interpreter. However, it must be noted that from the researcher's view, the theory has the shortfall of not taken the environment that produces the play as necessary. This alone may lead to misconception, misinterpretation and misjudgement of such play. Though it must be observed that the end product of the interpreter's art is "communication" and the recipients of the live communication are the audience. It is instructive to note at this level that the principles of this primary theory are merged with Langer's theory of symbols for analyses.

2.2.2 Susanne Langer's Theory of Symbols

Langer studied with Alfred North Whitehead at Radcliffe College and, after graduate study at Harvard University and at the University of Vienna, received a Ph.D. (1926) from Harvard. She was a tutor in philosophy from 1927 to 1942, the year of her divorce from the historian William L. Langer, whom she had married in September 1921. She lectured in philosophy at Columbia

University from 1945 to 1950 and from 1954 to 1961 (after 1961, emerita) she was a professor of philosophy at Connecticut College.

In her best-known book, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* (1942), she attempts to give art the claim to meaning that science was given through Whitehead's analysis of symbolic modes. Distinguishing non-discursive symbols of art from discursive symbols of scientific language in *Feeling and Form* (1953), She submits that art, especially music, is a highly articulated form of expression symbolizing direct or intuitive knowledge of life patterns for example, feeling, motion, and emotion, which ordinary language is unable to convey. In the three-volume work *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling* (1967, 1972, and 1982), Langer attempts to trace the origin and development of the mind.

The theory of symbols by S. Langer is based on the principle that symbolism underlies all human knowing and understanding. She prefers the concept of symbol to sign. She further argues that: "Symbols are ... vehicles for the conception of objects" (Langer 70). A symbol is, "an instrument of thought" (70). Allowing a person to think about something apart from its immediate presence. The key elements of the theory are symbol, object, and person. Symbols become meaningful in discourse. Symbols can be discursive or non-discursive. Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal based emotion and meaning; art, drama, music, dance, etcetera. Meanings can be found in both non-discursive and discursive symbolism. The principle of the theory is that every sign has meaning and the potential for multiple meanings (both inherent and non-inherent meaning), which can be adduced and deduced by the reader and critic. Multiple meanings are socially and culturally influenced. Signs have both denotative and connotative meanings. For explicit understanding the texts (plays) and

the concern of this study, the researcher also considers the theory of intertextuality as good for the discourse, as the theory deals strongly with the relationships between texts (plays) and their correlated meanings.

As can be seen from the discussion above, two theories were discussed intensively. These theories are related to this research because the work deals with generation of meaning from playtexts by a reader/ an interpreter. Therefore, for the interpreter to make efficient meaning from the reading of Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle...*, Ukala's *Akakaland*, Okoh's *Edewede*, Idegu's *Tough Man*, Ododo's *Hard Choice* and Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*, he may be well schooled in Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation, Saussure and Pierce's Semiotics and Semiology respectively and Langer's Theory of Symbols.

For interpretation enterprises, an interpreter needs hermeneutic arc; explanation, understanding and appropriation of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation. On the other hand, the interpreter equally needs semiotics and semiology as the aforementioned plays are embedded with social and cultural signs, symbols and other non-verbal cues for communicative purposes. Equally, for proper understanding of symbols in the play, the researcher proposes Langer's Theory of Symbol which its primary aim is to make clarification on understanding through three elements of the theory which are; symbols, object and person meanings can be deduced. This study explores these theories through the reading of the case studies with Derrida's deconstruction to the meaning of play to light.

It must also be stated clearly that the study leans on Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation and Sussane Langer's Theory of Symbols for proper explanation, understanding and appropriation of the selected playtexts by the interpreter as opined by Ricoeur in his postulation. Langer's theory

of Symbols also lays bare for proper interpretation of playtexts through; symbols, objects and persons – discursive and non-discursive symbolism. Thus, the shortfalls of the theories of Ricoeur’s and Langer’s would be acknowledged. Nevertheless, the theories would be intensively used in the analysis of the case studies to exhume the results for the problem of the study.

But in the quest for this study to show the Western critics and African/Nigerian readers who misjudge Nigerian playtexts from Eurocentric perception, that for them to understand Nigerian playtexts, the culture of the people must be understood. This points to African semio-aesthetics as a model which emphasis is on the understanding the environment of the dramatists and their plays and what critics of the plays’ environment say about the plays for proper interpretation. In the same vein, Miller submits that:

No responsible Western reading of African literature can take place in the vacuum of a “direct” and unmediated relationship with the text. What the literary text says is necessary but not sufficient, other texts must be brought into dialogical exercise of a good reading...any non-African reader (or even an African reader from a different cultural area) seeking to cross the information gap between himself or herself and a African text will probably be obliged to look in books that are classified as anthropology. (446)

“A consideration of the Western reading of African literature should begin with what African critics have written on the subject” (Miller 444). Therefore, without the proper understanding of what has been said by the people themselves there may be problem of adequate interpretation.

Miller argues further that:

In order for anything to change, the Western reader must now contextualize African texts within an increasingly African framework. All of the disciplines of the humanities are in the process of decolonization, and as the process moves forward, it becomes both possible and imperative for readers to supplant Eurocentrism with Afrocentrism, while remaining attentive to *acentric* strategies that operate in new, overdetermined spaces. (445)

Here Hountondji cited in Miller, asserts that: “It is possible for readers to conceptualize Africa and its cultures using models that are proposed by Africans: these scholars are breaking down the wall between ‘theory’ as exclusively Westerners and ‘information’ as all that Africa can provide” (445).

Ricoeur’s Theory of Interpretation through its hermeneutic arc – explanation, understanding and appropriation deals strictly with playtext and how meaning can be deduced from a playtext. Ricoeur says that what a play is all about, what a play talks about and what is used to expand the meaning of a playtext. A critical mien into Susanne Langer’s Theory of Symbols, one sees same thing through its tenets: symbol, object and person. This means that symbols and object are non-discursive symbolism according to Langer, which can be used to deduce meaning from a playtext. And person in relation to character of a playtext is also used to deduce meaning from a playtext. Of utmost importance is Ricoeur’s “appropriation” which is, what is used to expand the playtext and symbols and object of Langer’s theory of symbol. The object and symbol in a playtext are equally used in expanding the meaning of a playtext. Therefore, it is arguable that theory of interpretation and theory of symbols are interlaced through the expansion of the meaning of a playtext, which is the aim of this study. It is on this premise that the researcher adopts these theories as the theoretical basement for this study.

The West and some African/Nigerian interpreters are not conversant with the backgrounds of the African/Nigerian playtexts, and efforts are not made/geared towards getting other critical works done by indigenous critics to help refill their interpretative vacuum. One may argue that this may be why Ricoeur’s Theory of Interpretation and Langer’s Theory of Symbols as sound as they seem, have shortfalls. They have shortfalls because they never mention understanding the background/environment, which is the culture that produces playtexts, after the three cardinal

points/elements of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation: explanation; understanding; and appropriation and Langer's theory of symbol: symbol, object and person. These elements can be used to study contemporary Nigerian drama. But, semio-aesthetics holds that for a reader/interpreter to understand a playtext, he must understand the background/culture of the playtexts linked to Ricoeur's theory, will call for multi-culturalism. Or in a broader term, African semio-aesthetics as part of afro-postmodernism in a globalised world. African semio-aesthetics may move further to create room for integration of Western theories with African theories and practice; integration of theories in a globalised or multi-cultural society. This involves the process of identifying a core set of connectors within a theory and showing how they fit together or are related in some ways to the theory or theories. It is the structure that can hold or support a theory or theories of interpretation of playtexts, and this involves bringing the interrelated theories in the interpretation into one, through a combination or synthesis which explains their interrelatedness.

Semio-aesthetics (Afrosemio-aesthetics) is being proposed as a model to fill the gap created by Ricoeur's theory of interpretation and Langer's theory of symbols. The lacuna created is that they both fail to address the place of environment/culture in understanding of playtext. This, semio-aesthetics (Afro-semio-aesthetics) seeks that for a playtext to be understood, the cultural background of the playtext should be understood first. If the culture of the play is understood, then, the West and some diasporic Africans/Nigerians would not have the essence to misinterpret African/Nigerian playtexts. The Afro-semio-aesthetics model therefore, would serve as a means towards the deconstruction and deduction of meaning from African/Nigerian playtexts. Afro-semio-aesthetics emphasizes that every facet of the culture of the play crafted by the playwright in any part of Africa is crafted in the ethnographies of the people which the West must read first before interpreting African playtexts. Hence, language, symbols, codes, signs, logo etcetera which

form the cultural elements; cultural background of African/Nigerian playtexts, African aesthetic and semiotic elements, may be well understood and comprehended through the reading of ethnographies of the culture of the playtexts before the White/African; Nigerian can interpret African/Nigerian playtexts.

2.3 Theoretical Studies

Semiotics is the theory of the production and interpretation of meaning. Its basic principle is that meaning is made by the deployment of acts and objects which function as “signs” in relation to other signs. Systems of signs are constituted by the complex meaning; relations that can exist between one sign and another, primarily relations of contrast and subordination. Signs are deployed in space and time to produce texts whose meanings are fused by the mutually contextualizing relations among their signs. This makes semiotics more complex as it does not connote a single theory. There are, in fact, several semiotic theories. Accordingly, to Scholes: “Semiotic theory focuses on the social and cultural meaning of signs and codes” (85). He goes further to posit that:

Signs consist of an image, a word, an object or even a certain type of practice. The meaning of signs depend on the relationships between the signifier (the image, word, object, or practice), the signified (the implied meaning), and the referent (what the image, word, object, or practice refers to). (Scholes 82)

It becomes pertinent to adopt this theory as one of the secondary theories for this study, and, other theory will follow suit. Semiotics is a language based theory which means the science of signs.

Chandler explanation is apt as he says:

Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday speech, but of anything which ‘stands for’ something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. (2)

Evidently, the study is based on culture and Claude Levi Strauss, one of the proponents of semiotics, has been reported to have built his work on semiotics on, “the mythologies of various cultures to be different versions of the same narrative” (Dobie 153). The study of sign is principally built on two models from the perspectives of its co-founders, Ferdinand De Saussure (1857-1913), a Swiss linguist and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), an American philosopher and physicist (Chandler 3).

Saussure’s model of sign study is dyadic (two-part model). The dyadic model insists that two parts are involved to generate meaning and they are signifier (significant/sign vehicle) and signified (signifie/meaning). Chandler maintains that: “Contemporary commentators tend to describe the signifier as the form that the sign takes and signified as the concept to which it refers” (14). So, the Signifier is an image or sound pattern that represents an idea or a concept while the concept that is being presented is the signified. To understand the relationship between the two, it requires psychological disposition of the perceiver. Chandler calls their relationship ‘*signification*’ (15).

The message or meaning generated from the signifier (sign vehicle) is purely arbitrary. This is the argument put forth by the Saussurean semioticians. Their claim is that no direct relationship subsists between the signifier and the signified. Saussure argues that: “the street and the train are real enough. Their physical existence is essential to our understanding of what they are” (Cited in Chandler 22). For instance, the hitting of one’s left toes against stone (which means the likelihood of bad occurrence) does not have any direct link to an occurrence of tragedy. But have meaning in the African world-view, which could mean anything to the reader or critic of play. It is just a cultural creation in the African world-view. This creation is arbitrary.

Peircean model of sign, on the hand, is triadic (three-part model) which are: representamen, interpretant and object. To study semiotics or sign from Peircean model, the three parts are essential. Chandler opines that: “The sign is a unity of what is represented (the *object*), how it is represented (the *representamen*) and how it is interpreted (the *interpretant*)” (29). The relationship between the *representamen*, the *object* and the *interpretant* is called *semeiosis* or *semiosis* according to Peirce (30). Chandler explains that:

The three elements that make up a sign function like a label on an opaque box that contains an object. At first the mere fact that there is a box with a label on it suggests that it contains something, and then when we read the label we discover what that something is ... The first thing that is noticed (the *representamen*) is the box and label; this prompts the realization that something is inside the box (the *object*). This realization, as well as the knowledge of what the box contains, is provided by the *interpretant*. ‘Reading the label’ is actually just a metaphor for the process of decoding the sign. The important point to be aware of here is that the object of a sign is always hidden ... We only know about the object from noticing the label and the box and then ‘reading the label’ and forming a mental picture of the object in our mind. Therefore the hidden object of a sign is only brought to realization through the interaction of the representamen, the object and the interpretant. (31)

It is obvious that mental picture of what a sign represents has to be done through the three essential elements of the representamen (sign vehicle), the *object* (what a sign represents) and the interpretant (the sense made of a sign).

Charles Sanders Peirce’s triadic model will be emphasised and adopted alongside philosophical thought of aesthetics for two reasons. First, Peirce’s model is wider in scope than De Saussure’s dyadic model. Second, it considers materiality and reality. Chandler corroborates this position in these words:

Saussure’s *signified* is not an external referent but an abstract mental representation. Although, Peirce’s *object* is not confined to physical things and (like Saussure’s *signified*) it can include abstract concepts and fictional entities, the Peircean model explicitly allocates a place for materiality and for reality outside the sign system which Saussure’s model did not directly feature. (33)

According to Saussure, semiology is the study of existing conventional communicative system; a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life. While Peirce on the other hand, sees semiotics as the science of the study of signs. Semiotics can be applied to anything which can be seen as signifying something. It can be applied to everything which has meaning within a culture. Semiotics can be applied to media texts (this includes television, radio programmes, internet, cartoons, magazines, films and others). Also, it can be applied to the practices involved in producing and interpreting such texts. The task before semiotician in the Saussure's tradition is to look beyond the specific texts or practices to the system of functional distinctions operating within them. Again, to establish the underlying conventions, identifying significant differences and oppositions in an attempt to model the system of categories, relations (syntagmatic and paradigmatic), connotations, distinctions and rules of combination employed.

Peircean and Saussurean model of semiology and semiotics and consequently establishing African cultural aesthetics inherent in them as they represent meanings in African sense. Therefore, semiotics and aesthetics (philosophical thought to judge, evaluate and interpret artistic consumptions) are explored to examine the identified cultural signs, symbols and language through deconstruction in the selected play texts.

2.3.1 Deconstruction and the Dialectics of Structuralism

Jacques Derrida's deconstruction is intended for the critique of the relationship between text and meaning that is how meaning different from the author's is generated from a play without any prejudice to the author. Its approach consists in conducting readings of texts with an ear to what runs counter to the structural unity or intended sense of a particular text. The purpose is to expose that the object of language, and by extension character and that which any text is founded upon.

“A drama text is a written presentation of series of structured words and actions that form the play” (Bakare 211). But is irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. The study hoped to show deconstruction at work that is, the way that this originary complexity, which by definition cannot ever be completely known and works its structuring and destructuring effects in the African plays, especially the selected Nigerian plays.

In Jacques Derrida's 1967 book *Of Grammatology*, he “introduced the majority of ideas influential within deconstruction” (Derrida 25). Derrida published a number of other works directly relevant to the concept of deconstruction. “Books showing deconstruction in action or defining it more completely include *Différance*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Writing and Difference*” (Derrida and Spivak 17). According to Derrida and taking inspiration from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure: “Language as a system of signs and words only has meaning because of the contrast between these signs” (14). In the same vein, Rorty submits that:

Words have meaning only because of contrast-effects with other words...no word can acquire meaning in the way in which philosophers from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell have hoped it might—by being the unmediated expression of something non-linguistic (e.g., an emotion, a sense-datum, a physical object, an idea, a Platonic Form)”. (Saussure 15)

Raymond Opega sees language as “... the most significant tool, a human institution, which distinguishes man from the lower classes of animals” (1). According Farinda and Ojo, “Language is a socio-cultural phenomenon with serious implication of group identity” (53). As a consequence, meaning is never present, but rather is deferred to other signs. Derrida refers to this view and belief that there is a self-sufficient, non-deferred meaning as metaphysics of presence. “A concept, then, must be understood in the context of its opposite, such as being/nothingness, normal/abnormal, speech/writing, etc.” (*Deconstruction Theory* 26)

Furthermore, Derrida contends that: “in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand” (Derrida 17). This implies signified over signifier; intelligible over sensible; speech over writing; activity over passivity. The first task of deconstruction would be to find and overturn these oppositions inside a text or a corpus of texts; but the final objective of deconstruction is not to surpass all oppositions, because it is assumed they are structurally necessary to produce sense. The oppositions simply cannot be suspended once and for all. The hierarchy of dual oppositions always re-establishes itself. “Deconstruction only points to the necessity of an unending analysis that can make explicit the decisions and arbitrary violence intrinsic to all texts” (Derrida and Bass 17).

Finally, Derrida argues that it is not enough to expose and deconstruct the way oppositions work and then stop there in a nihilistic or cynical position, “thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively” (Derrida and Bass 17). To be effective, deconstruction needs to create new terms, not to manufacture the concepts in opposition, but to mark their difference and eternal interplay. This explains why Derrida always proposes new terms in his deconstruction, not as a free play but as a pure necessity of analysis. As it was asserted that:

Derrida calls undecidables that is, unities of simulacrum “false” verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical oppositions, resisting and organizing it without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of Hegelian dialectics (e.g., *différance*, *archi-writing*, *pharmakon*, *supplement*, *hymen*, *gram*, *spacing*). (Nietzsche and Clark 119)

Derrida’s theories on deconstruction were themselves influenced by the work of linguists such as Ferdinand de Saussure and literary theorists such as Roland Barthes. Derrida’s views on deconstruction stood in opposition to the theories of structuralists such as psychoanalytic theorist

Jacques Lacan, and linguist Claude Lévi-Strauss. However, Derrida resisted attempts to label his work as post-structuralist.

Derrida approaches all texts as constructed around elemental oppositions which all discourse has to articulate if it intends to make any sense whatsoever. This is so because identity is viewed in non-essentialist terms as a construct, and because constructs only produce meaning through the interplay of difference inside a “system of distinct signs” (Zuckert 20). This approach to text “...is influenced by the semiology of Ferdinand de Saussure” (Nick Royle 21). Saussure is considered one of the fathers of structuralism when he explained that terms get their meaning in reciprocal determination with other terms inside language as created by the reader or critic. Hence:

Derrida’s original use of the word deconstruction was a translation of *Destruction*, a concept from the work of Martin Heidegger that Derrida sought to apply to textual reading. Heidegger’s term referred to a process of exploring the categories and concepts that tradition has imposed on a word, and the history behind them. (Derrida and Ferraris 40)

There have been problems defining deconstruction. “Derrida claimed that all of his essays were attempts to define what deconstruction is” ((Mantzavinos 41). That deconstruction is necessarily complicated and difficult to explain since it actively criticises the very language needed to explain it. Derrida has been more forthcoming with negative than with positive descriptions of deconstruction. When asked by Toshihiko Izutsu some preliminary considerations on how to translate “deconstruction” in Japanese, in order to at least prevent using a Japanese term contrary to deconstruction’s actual meaning, Derrida began his response by saying that such a question amounts to “what deconstruction is not, or rather ought not to be” (1).

In debunking this further, Derrida states that: “deconstruction is not an analysis, a critique, or a method” (3). In the traditional sense that philosophy understands these terms. In these negative

descriptions of deconstruction, Derrida is seeking to, “multiply the cautionary indicators and put aside all the traditional philosophical concepts” (3). This does not mean that deconstruction has absolutely nothing in common with an analysis, a critique, or a method, because while Derrida distances deconstruction from these terms, he reaffirms “the necessity of returning to term, at least under erasure” (3). Derrida’s necessity of returning to a term under erasure means that even though these terms are problematic we must use them until they can be effectively reformulated or replaced. The relevance of the tradition of negative theology to Derrida’s preference for negative descriptions of deconstruction is the notion that a positive description of deconstruction would over-determine the idea of deconstruction and would close off the openness that Derrida wishes to preserve for deconstruction. If Derrida were to positively define deconstruction as, for example, a critique, then this would make the concept of critique immune to itself being deconstructed. Some new philosophy beyond deconstruction would then be required in order to encompass the notion of critique.

Derrida asserts that: “Deconstruction is not a method, and cannot be transformed into one” (3). This is because deconstruction is not a mechanical operation. Derrida warns against considering deconstruction as a mechanical operation, when he affirms that: “It is true that in certain circles (university or cultural, especially in the United States) the technical and methodological ‘metaphor’ that seems necessarily attached to the very word ‘deconstruction’ has been able to seduce or lead astray” (Derrida 3). Commentator Richard Beardsworth explains that: “Derrida is careful to avoid this term ‘method’ because it carries connotations of a procedural form of judgement” (80). A thinker with a method has already decided how to proceed, is unable to give him or herself up to the matter of thought in hand is a functionary of the criteria which structure his or her conceptual gestures. For Derrida, this is irresponsibility itself. Thus: “to talk of a method

in relation to deconstruction, especially regarding its ethico-political implications would appear to go directly against the current of Derrida's philosophical adventure" (Wood 27).

Beardsworth here explains that it would be irresponsible to undertake a deconstruction with a complete set of rules that need only be applied as a method to the object of deconstruction, because this understanding would reduce deconstruction to an idea of the reader that the text is then made to fit. This would be an irresponsible act of reading, because it becomes a detrimental procedure that only finds what it sets out to find.

Again, Derrida submits that: "deconstruction is not a critique in the Kantian sense" (3). This is because Kant defines the term critique as the opposite of dogmatism. For Derrida, it is not possible to escape the dogmatic baggage of the language we use in order to perform a pure critique in the Kantian sense. Language is dogmatic because it is inevitably metaphysical. Egwuogu and Bello argues that: "language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a particular people interact. It can also be seen as the use of structured and conventional symbols for human communication. Language is common attribute of man" (89).

Derrida argues that language is inescapably metaphysical because it is made up of signifiers that only refer to that which transcends them the signified. In addition, Allison and Garyer ask rhetorically that language: "is not the idea of knowledge and of the acquisition of knowledge in itself metaphysical?" (5). By this, Allison and Garyer mean that all claims to know something necessarily involve an assertion of the metaphysical type that something is the case somewhere. Therefore deconstruction can challenge a particular dogmatic perception and hence desiderate dogmatism in general, but it cannot escape all dogmatic position all at once.

Furthermore, Derrida clarifies that: “deconstruction is not an analysis in the traditional sense” (3). This is because the possibility of analysis is predicated on the possibility of breaking up the text being analysed into elemental component parts. Derrida argues that: “there are no self-sufficient units of meaning in a text, because individual words or sentences in a text can only be properly understood in terms of how they fit into the larger structure of the text and language itself” (4). Here the position of the reader and the critic is clearly stated, if the words or sentences as used by the playwrights do not fit into a larger structure because there is no sufficient units of meaning that is why the reader and critic have the license to create meaning out of the meaning of the playwrights.

According to Nietzsche, “Derrida follows a long line of modern philosophers, who look backwards to Plato and his influence on the Western metaphysical tradition” (30). Like Nietzsche, Derrida suspects Plato of dissimulation in the service of a political project, namely the education, through critical reflections, of a class of citizens more strategically positioned to influence the idea. However, like Nietzsche, Derrida is not satisfied merely with such a political interpretation of Plato, because of the particular dilemma modern humans find themselves in. His Platonic reflections are inseparably part of his critique of modernity, hence the attempt to be something beyond the modern, because of this Nietzschean sense that the modern has lost its way and become mired in emptiness.

Derrida describes the task of deconstruction as the identification of metaphysics of presence, or logocentrism in western philosophy. Metaphysics of presence is the desire for immediate access to meaning, which the reader seeks, the privileging of presence over absence. This means that there

is an assumed bias in certain binary oppositions where one side is placed in a position over another, such as good over bad, speech over the written word, male over female. Derrida writes:

Without a doubt, Aristotle thinks of time on the basis of *ousia* as *parousia*, on the basis of the now, the point, etc. And yet an entire reading could be organized that would repeat in Aristotle's text both this limitation and its opposite. (Derrida 29)

To Derrida, the central bias of logocentrism was now being placed as more important than the future or past. This argument is largely based on the earlier work of Heidegger, who claims that the theoretical attitude of pure presence is parasitical upon a more originary involvement with the world in concepts. Derrida states that his use of the word deconstruction first took place in a context in which:

structuralism was dominant and deconstruction's meaning is within this context... deconstruction is an 'antistructuralist gesture' because '[s]tructures were to be undone, decomposed, desedimented'. At the same time, deconstruction is also a "structuralist gesture" because it is concerned with the structure of texts. So, deconstruction involves 'a certain attention to structures', and tries to 'understand how an 'ensemble' was constituted. (Derrida 2-3)

As both a structuralist and an antistructuralist gesture, deconstruction is tied up with what Derrida calls the, "structural problematic" (Derrida 2). The structural problematic for Derrida is the tension between genesis, that which is: 'in the essential mode of creation or movement', and structure: "systems, or complexes, or static configurations" (*Deconstruction Theory*, 194). An example of genesis would be the sensory ideas from which knowledge is then derived in the empirical epistemology. An example of structure would be a binary opposition such as good and evil where the meaning of each element is established, at least partly, through its relationship to the other element.

Structuralism is a movement of thought in the human sciences, wide spread in Europe in the 1960s, affected by number of fields of knowledge and inquiry: philosophy, anthropology, history and literary criticism. Structuralism analyses cultural phenomena according to principles derived from linguistics, emphasising the systematic interrelationships among the elements of any human activity, and thus the abstract codes and conventions governing the social production of meanings. The structuralists uphold that the elements composing any cultural phenomenon are similarly relational; they have meaning only by virtue of their contrasts with other elements of the system and meanings can be established not only by referring each element to any supposed equivalent in the natural reality, but only by analysing its function within a self-contained cultural code. Structuralism is also concerned with language; more than just utterances in speech and writing—sign and signification; all conventions and codes of communication. Structuralism explains the structures underlying literary texts either in terms of a grammar demonstrated on that of language or in terms of Ferdinand de Saussure's principle that the meaning of each word depends on its place in the total system of language. According to Levy-Strauss: "The view of structuralism is simply based on the application of structuralist principles to the human mind" (70).

Structuralism is studied in this research because it concerned itself in challenging the long-standing belief that a work of literature or any kind of literary text reflects a given reality. It rejects traditional notions that literature expresses an author's meaning or reflects reality. Furthermore, it sees text as objective structure activating various codes and conventions which are independent of author, reader and external reality. Structuralism analyses and explores the structures underlying the text or system, which make the content possible. One of the leading principles of structuralism is that the form defines the content. In the structuralists word, "form is content" (Hawken 30). That is, that the underlying structure of a text or system, which presents and organises the content,

determines the nature of that content as well as its message or communicated information. Hence structuralism analyses how meaning is possible and how it is transmitted; regardless of the cultural meaning- form and not content. This may be interpreted as the area of convergent between structuralism, deconstruction, semiotics and aesthetics.

It is for this reason that Derrida distances his use of the term deconstruction from post-structuralism, a term that would suggest that philosophy could simply go beyond structuralism. Derrida argues that: “the motif of deconstruction has been associated with ‘post-structuralism’, but that this term was a word unknown in France until its ‘return’ from the United States” (3). In his deconstruction of Husserl, Derrida actually argues for the contamination of pure origins by the structures of language and temporality. Manfred Frank has even referred to Derrida’s work as “Neostructuralism” (2).

Deconstruction’s reception was coloured by its intellectual predecessors, most notably structuralism and New Criticism. Beginning in France in the 1950s, the structuralist movement in anthropology analyzed various cultural phenomena as general systems of signs and attempted to develop metalanguages of terms and concepts in which the different sign systems could be defined. Structuralist methods were soon applied to other areas of the social sciences and humanities, including literary studies. Deconstruction offered a powerful critique of the possibility of creating separate, scientific metalanguages and was thus categorized as post-structuralist Anglo-American New Criticism sought to understand verbal works of art (poetry) as complex constructions made up of different and contrasting levels of literal and nonliteral meanings, and it emphasized the role of paradox and irony in these artifacts.

For Derrida, if the theatre were to dispose of the authority of the playwright it would cease to be theological and logocentric, thereby relieving it of the domination of a hidden authority. This has influenced postmodern performance; by breaking free of the traditional theatrical conventions it seizes its own authority over the performance and, logistically, removes the need for a playwright. Another argument posed by Derrida is that, “structuralism is caught up in many of the philosophical assumptions it sets itself against” (Fortier 37). For Derrida the act of unravelling these assumptions is more important. This unravelling, or deconstruction, offers accessibility to an open signification that underlines any meaning. Deconstruction shows that any collection of linguistic signs can always produce different sorts of meanings.

To understand the application of deconstruction within postmodern theatre we must first understand the role of semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles S. Peirce are two of the most important and widely cited semioticians of the 20th century. An insight into their work will allow us an understanding of semiotics. Once we understand sign systems we have the ability to deconstruct them in any literary work like this thesis tries to experiment, thereby defamiliarising or opposing conventional drama and theatre semio-aesthetics.

Deconstruction therefore, is an essential element in drama discourse and analysis just as it is in postmodern theatre. By unsettling the stability of textual/semiotic signifiers, it allows an open interpretation of its translation. There is no longer a fixed meaning, it opposes the semiotic and aesthetic enterprises. However, in deconstruction, it is important to note that to simply “replace an aesthetics of presence with one of absence ... would merely reverse the traditional structure, not reject it, ... Derrida constantly warns us against ... merely re-inscribing a binary system by reversing its terms”(Fortier 18). This includes semiotic and language deconstruction.

For instance, if we were to read the text or perform a production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and, for a feminist political statement, made the female parts be played by men and the male parts be played by women, then the traditional structure has not been rejected. All we have done is reversed the binary opposites and in doing so we have simply defined a political problem whereby equality has still not been manifested. Postmodern performance relies on opposing the aesthetics- what we believe, understand from reading and through convention to be beautiful or correct, and turning the common semio-aesthetics around – offering new angles of interpretation. The works of Brecht, Artaud, Derrida and the structuralists Saussure and Pierce have provided this style of performance with the means to oppose the aesthetic.

2.4 Language and Communication in Modern Nigerian Drama

Language, like any other concept has several definitions. This is of course, due to the fact that people seem to view things from different perspectives. According to Sapir, language: "... is a purely human and non-instructive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (8). Linguists see it as a system of spoken or written words that humans learn in order to be able to communicate effectively, or a system of arbitrary vocal sounds by means of which a social group cooperates. Otte opines that: "Language as a convention of the society is essentially a communication system as it associates meaning (message) with a set of signs (sounds or symbols) or signifier and signified, that is referent or object" (11). Ngugi Wa Thiong'O says, "The language, through images and symbols, gave us the view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own" (290). He goes on and succinctly capture it that, "any language, has a dual character: it is both a means of communication and carrier of culture." (Ngugi 291). Therefore:

Since language is the *sine qua non* of literary activity...Language is the means by which the writer reveals his soul, and, by the same token, the writer's language is the vehicle whereby the reader or critic attempts to fathom the depth of feeling he or she conveys. (Kunene 315)

Language is a system of signs for encoding and decoding information. Language refers to the cognitive faculty that enables humans to learn and use systems of complex communication. Okon asserts that: "language is a mankind's means of communication" (83). Okon Citing Smeets avers that: "not merely convey messages, they also express emotions, intention and values, confirm social relations and transmit cultural and social expression and practices" (1). All the above definitions tell us that language is a system of signs that we use in communicating with ourselves and with one another, it may be verbal and non-verbal. However, language deals with signs which are speech sounds and also has written signs which are the alphabets that we use in writing. Paul Gee succinctly submits that:

There are many languages (e.g., Spanish, Russian, English). There are many different varieties of any one language...there are communicative systems that are not language (e.g., equations, graphs, images) these are all different sign systems. Furthermore, we humans are always making knowledge and belief claims within these systems. We can use language to make certain sign systems and certain forms of knowledge and belief relevant or privileged... (13)

Expressively, the linguistic sign and symbolic sign as language. Language is connected with the mental process of understanding. This is easily discernable when we look at how language is acquired, especially in play writing. However, it goes beyond how we learn it. Bamidele submits that:

Language is correct when it expresses thought in approved form. Language is clear when we understand readily the thought of the play. The language is forceful because of the impelled response that the play drags out of us. The beauty of the play arises from its correctness, clearness, forcefulness and pleasing thoughts and its immediacy is realised from the hideous painting... (62)

Communication is only possible because of the mental process of encoding and decoding information. Of course, this is quite complex. The complexity could be seen in our inability to decide information in a language whose system we have not acquired. However, our mental faculty would at the time be open to learning the symbols of any language, should one decide to learn it. Language are: “the words, their pronunciation, and the methods of combining them used and understood by a community” (*The Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* 645). It goes further to conceptualise language as: “a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings” (645). This foregrounds the main focus of this study because it talks about conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks because they have been understood by the community and it is a part of the peoples’ art.

However, in all these definitions, the language we are referring to in our topic is the language of the playwright which is the dictional presentation of the playwright through the character in the text. Ekweariri corroborates this as he posits that:

Playwriting is a complex art. In writing a play, the dramatist needs to make a number of critical decisions... in the process of weaving the dramatic piece together and finding ways of conveying the message (s), some meanings are sometimes subsumed in ambiguity and symbolism which require the intellectual insights of the reader to demystify... things that stand for another are usually employed to communicate meaning. (193)

It is also the playwrights’ arrangement of words in his playtext which brings about the comprehension or understanding of the text. According to Hansen, “Diction besides telling us a great deal about the characters who use it, it sets the tone of a play and conveys a great deal about a playwright’s world view” (95-96). Also, Duruaku submits that: “... diction is the choice of words and expressions which the playwright gives to the characters ... by this, diction communicates

thought. Language is a means of communication. So, the choice of words can reveal meaning” (20). These words could be in signs and other binary opposition for communication.

He further opines that a playwright’s world view is captured in every aspect of his or her work and language is no exception. So, diction here is the playwright’s choice of words to pass his or her message which must be clear and meaningful. Despite the fact that there is no any static meaning to the playwright’s language and character construct. Diction is:

The playwrights’ primary means of expression. It is the playwright’s primary tool. It serves many purposes such as characterization, to impact in formation, to direct attraction to important plot elements, top reveal the theme and ideals of a play to establish tone/mood and internal logic and to establish tempo and rhythm. (Brockett and Prober 44)

Kalu Okpi opines that the: “diction/ language of the play refers to the words that actors speak on stage. The function of language in a play is for the communication of the thoughts of the characters and thereby the playwright’s meaning to the audience. It must be clear, interesting and economic” (29). It is instructive to note at this juncture that language or diction which may be used interchangeably is a vital instrument to the playwright. This language is developed through the construct of a character or characters that must be able to carry the language of the text. Language in this context surpasses the linguistic leaning.

To what extent is modern man the enactor of his actions? In his actions man elaborates his entire being, he arrives at himself in them: how much are they really his? How much is the vital centre of man really deep in him? This relation will be the prime determinant of style in every drama (George Lukacs 428)

Language according to Duruaku, “does not necessarily refer to English, French, Igbo etc, even though linguistic medium is involved here, the level at which a particular linguistic medium is applied is instructive about the play and the characters” (21). Brockett defines diction as:

The playwright's primary means of expression. When a play is performed other expensive means (music, sound effects and spectacle) may be added, but to convey interactions to others, the dramatist depends almost entirely on dialogue and stage directions. Thus, language is the playwright's primary tool. (46)

Therefore, diction aids effectively for the easy comprehension of play texts by readers. Obiora posits that: "Language can also be a source of power, social mobility and opportunities, as it is used to empower the people by getting them informed about the on-goings in the society and to conscientize them" (57). This is subject to the ability of the reader and critic to adduce and deduce meaning through the play text. In another vein, Yerima opines that, "clarity and intelligibility of language helps to make clear the intellectual clarity and the lucidity of thought in the play" (116). Thus if language is not well spelt out, communication and the message of the play text is misplaced and misconstrued. Kalu Okpi further states that: "the language of the play refers to the words that actors speak on stage" (15). Beyond this, the signs, symbols, icon and other cues of non-verbal communication aid the understanding of the play. However, this study contends with this position here precludes the language usage in its actual context. The reader may have been subjected to compulsorily leaning to the playwright's language, this is an absurd as deconstruction has debunked this and argues that there may be difference in the language of the play and the language of the reader or critic. But their meeting point is that both the language of the playwright and that of the reader and the critic are geared towards communication.

Also, the research is concerned with the study of meaning of language both verbal and non-verbal codes, signs and symbols that could help in the deductions and adductions of meaning in the play texts selected for the study for a better understanding and comprehension. "... the literary text has an anthological status, that is, the being of literary work is grounded in language alone... the text is about something. Its reality is constituted in the language of discourse" (Onunkwo 124). Lack of a system for assigning conventional meanings for non-verbal codes and cues communication

suggests that non-verbal information is subject to more active personal interpretation (with the reader or critic)-more so than with language. The interpretation of non-verbal information, like semiotic approaches to meaning interpretation, are highly subjective and highly projective, which puts more demands on the receiver (reader or critic). Because of the resemblance factor for icon interpretation and the experience factor for index interpretation, the formal training needed may be less than for language. Although the life experience may be more demanding but regardless, the nonverbal cues and codes systems operate relatively untutored in our society, at least in comparison to language. Corroborating this, Paul Gee argues that:

Many people think that the primary purpose of language is to ‘communicate information.’... language serves a great many functions and giving and getting information, even in our new Information Age, is by no means the only one...but the following two closely related functions: to support the performance of social activities and social identities and support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions...these two functions are connected. Cultures, social groups and institutions shape social activities and identities... (1)

In language there are only differences. Even more importantly, a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. “A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass thought engenders a system of values” (Saussure 14). Language according to Gee, is conceptualised as having:

... a magical property: when we speak or write, we design what we have to say to fit the situation in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak or write create that very situation. It seems, then, that we fit our language to

a situation that our language, in turn, helps to create in the first place ...we always actively use spoken and written language to create or build the world of activities. We continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbols systems, objects, tools, technologies and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing. (10)

That is one of the main reasons why Fortier succinctly captures the position of Saussure when he asserts that: “Saussure is interested in language not only as a closed semiotic system but also as an abstract system rather than as a system used by the people in a changing world” (19). Thus, in some cases, the role of semiology or semiotics and aesthetics is limited to literary criticism and an appreciation of verbal and non-verbal communication, but this narrow focus can inhibit a more general study of the social and political forces shaping how different media are used and their dynamic status within modern culture.

According to Counsell, “Language is of course the most important and pervasive medium of human communication...” (192). Human communication assumes the presence of language and the presence of language assumes the existence of communication. Communication engenders language and not the other way round. However, communication is the evidence of language in motion, from the sender to the receiver. Where the receiver receives a message that was intended by the sender through codes, signs, symbols, and other non-verbal communication cues then, it is said that there is communication; effective communication has taken place. So it is, in the place of Nigerian playwrights, especially the ones selected for this study.

Human communication is inseparable from human language because, Olise posits that: “communication is as old as the existence of man. It is a means of exchanging ideas and thoughts between people.”(16). Language may not always convey meaning, even when it is recognizable as language. One may not understand Spanish. Yet one can recognize a piece of text as written in

Spanish and would know if someone is speaking the language through those signs and symbols, even though it conveys no meaning to the reader or the decoder. Sirajudeen asserts that: “language is an indispensable element of civilization, as its role in building socio-economic living of man cannot be overemphasized” (472). There are languages one hears on the television, radio and in the play without being able to identify what they mean. But the moment, they convey meaning, they become communication. That is why deconstruction is important to this study. It is because it helps to deduct and adduce meaning through binary opposition from the language of the text through semio-aesthetic enterprise for communicative tendencies.

Therefore, in as much as language is closely associated with communication, language and communication are not synonymous. Both may exist independently. In that respect, language is neutral until it becomes communication. Language facilitates communication, even though language seems to be the product of the need for communication. That is why Ineji defines communication as: “... simply the process by which individuals and groups share information, ideas and attitudes. The word ‘share’ is central to the definition of communication. It supersedes all other concepts such as sending, transfer etc” (1). In the same vein Jayaweera defines communication as, “an interaction process through which persons or groups relate to each other and share information, experiences and culture” (17). Communication therefore, is language in motion from the sender to the receiver. However, where the receiver receives a message that is purely intended then we say communication has taken place. The use of semiotic methods to reveal different levels of meaning and, sometimes, hidden motivations has led to critical discourse analysis in Postmodernism and deconstruction in Post-structuralism.

The quest for the author to write a literary piece like drama with the intent of communicating meanings he deducted from a different source to the decoder/interpreter, he encodes signs,

language, symbols, index, icon and other vital non-verbal codes. These elemental components are therefore picked by the reader who tries to make his meanings out of what he has read, different from the imbued meaning embellished in the piece by the writer/playwright. This expedition gives birth to another text and it will then lead to increase of texts that may have interlaced title, structures and this may affect communication. Hence for proper communicative enterprise, Derrida's deconstruction is critically needed and applied with semiotics and aesthetics for an ideal and well-guided interpretation and meaning generation in Nigerian contemporary drama.

2.5 African Semiotics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Nigerian Drama

Okunna and Omenugha conceptualize communication thus: "to communicate basically means to share ideas, information, opinions, feelings or experiences between people" (6). People within the same cultural milieu and domain have generated certain set of symbols and signs; language for communicative enterprise. These signs and symbols are received by the people within the same cultural setting and responded to accordingly. The playwright is one of those people living in the same cultural setting. Therefore, the dramatist's aim is for him to communicate with his playtext to the people. Relating with the peoples' art with certain signs in the community; these signs and symbols ranges from language, totem, gestures, metaphor and other non-verbal communication tools in the said community, and communicate with these signs and symbols proficiently within the members of that community. Hence, the need for semiotic and aesthetic study. Watson and Hill posit that, "semiotics is the general science of sign system and their role in the construction and reconstruction of meaning... there is practically nothing that is not a sign capable of meaning and signification" (261).

Therefore, it is imperative to set the foreground for semiotic discourse and how the elements fit into contemporary Nigerian drama. What exactly is semiotics? How does it apply to the practice of drama? What role does semiotics play when it applies to play writing? The answers to this can be found in the avalanche of plays by the contemporary Nigerian drama. Apparently, semiotics is often employed in the writing of playtexts and as such it must be explored in the analysis of contemporary Nigerian drama.

Here it should perhaps be noted that a 'text' can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both. The term text usually refers to a message which has been recorded/encoded in some ways, these could be written, audio- and video-recording so that it is physically independent of its encoder or decoder. Examples of the physically independent of its encoder (playwright) can be found in contemporary Nigerian drama. A text therefore, is an assemblage of signs such as, symbols, language, words, images, sounds and/or gestures shaped and interpreted with reference to the harmonies associated with a genre and in a particular 'medium' of communication. "Semiotics permeates all aspects of human communication and serves as a platform for the understanding and decoding of meanings" (Ekweariri and Nwosu 60). These aspects of human communication are enshrine in contemporary Nigerian drama.

In this regard, the playwright or contemporary dramatist fuses his playtext with signs, symbols, language, images and other non-verbal cues to communicate his idea to the people. For instance, the characters in Idegu's *Tough Man* are symbolically divided into two, the living characters and the dead characters. Efi-ile and efu-ojaegwu symbolize two worlds, the world of the living and the world of the dead. A replica example can also be drawn from Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, where Elesin Oba represents the black man and Simon Pilkings represents the White man. Hence for the interpreter to understand and interpret the play justifiably, he may understand

these worlds of the black and the white. The dramatist communicates with the two worlds as they are not just there for visual pleasing, they are there for semiotic and aesthetic purposes.

Semiotics according to different language scholars, critics and semioticians, is however the resting place for language- signs and signification. Chandler citing Saussure posits that: “The idea is to think of language as a system of signs” (51). Whether from the structuralists’ point of view or from the linguistics’ perception, in literary theory, language is the bedrock of sign system and signification. It is the quest for the different semiotic structures and languages that led the Russian cultural semiotician Yuri Lotman to coin the term ‘semiosphere’ to refer to, “the whole semiotic space of the culture in question” (Lotman 124-125). The contemporary Nigerian playwrights did not just explore language for nothing, but, for communicative purposes. When an interpreter/reader talks of the language of a play, he is equally talking of the signs and symbols in the play that will aid communication. Thus, the contemporary Nigerian drama strives on language to be able to communicate to its reader/interpreter.

Etymologically, the term semiotics may be used as semiology. Semiotics or semiology has: “over the years, generated a number of discourses, which have made its comprehension a difficult subject” (Epochi-Olise 181). She goes on to assert that: “...semiotics, has posed some difficulty, especially in terms of definition.” (181). But it is debateable however, that there have been different attempts to define semiotics in other fields like linguistics, sociology, psychology, theatre arts, but it has not been ascertained if the term semiotics or semiology has been properly placed in the study of theatre and drama. That is why from Greek’s perception; it is seen as “an interpreter of signs” (Epochi-Olise 181). The Nigerian contemporary drama is flooded with signs, symbol and language that should be understood by the interpreter/reader to enable him create meaning outside that of the dramatists.

Peirce believes that semiology was the foundation of logic itself. He describes logic as “the science of the general necessary laws of signs” (30). Much of his work involves an attempt to classify signs according to the nature of the relationships between and among signifiers, signified, and object. Peirce made two important contributions to semiotics. First, he showed that a sign can never contain a definite meaning. The fused sign and symbols in contemporary Nigerian drama can never contain definite meaning, therefore the interpreter/reader is endowed with interpretative licence to make his meaning. Second, he identified various types of signs, including the symbolic sign, which is randomly related to its referent. While on the other hand, Saussure’s work is primarily concerned with the linguistic sign, and his attempts at a classificatory system involve distinguishing between different aspects of language. The reader/interpreter takes into cognizance the two classes of signs as he makes to interpret contemporary drama; the linguistic sign and the symbolic signs for effective meaning generation. Thus, semiotics:

...could be anywhere. The shortest definition is that it is *the study of signs*. But that doesn’t leave enquirers much wiser... The kinds of signs that are likely to spring immediately to mind are those which we routinely refer to as ‘signs’ in everyday life, such as road signs, pub signs and star signs. If you were to agree with them that semiotics can include the study of all these and more, people will probably assume that semiotics is about ‘visual signs’. You would confirm their hunch if you said that signs can also be drawings, paintings and photographs, and by now theyd be keen to direct you to the art and photography sections. But if you are thick-skinned and tell them that it also includes words, sounds and ‘body language’ they may reasonably wonder what all these things have in common and how anyone could possibly study such disparate phenomena. (Chandler 3-4)

It implies that semiotics or semiology transcends the signs on the road to even language that we speak. Also, it transcends the beauty of the text to the language of Nigerian drama. Semiotics is frequently seen as having important anthropological and sociological dimensions; for example,

Umberto Eco proposes that: “every cultural phenomenon can be studied as communication” (45).

Schleifer gives his own conception of semiotics as:

...the great convenience of language, the power it affords us to represent or ‘signify’ absent entities. The science of such signification-which studies language more carefully, I think, than the scholars of Lagado-is semiotics. The term semiotics comes from the Greek word *semeion*, which means ‘sign’, and semiotics is the study-or the science-of the functioning of signs. Signs function all around us every time we use one entity to signify or represent another. (895-896)

Semiotics, “...is, therefore, concerned with the process of signification and communication, that is, the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged” (Doki 31). This happens between the dramatists and the interpreters/readers. Consequently, “semiotics is umbrella concept that aim essentially at analyzing and interpreting the sign system. It is a scientific method of inquiry into the workings of the process of signification” (Doki 30). The interpreter does the work if analysing and interpreting the sign system embedded in the contemporary Nigerian drama. According to Fiske, “At the centre of this concern is the sign. The study of sign and the way they work is called semiotics or semiology...” (43). He reiterates that: “Semiotics, then, focuses its attention primarily on the text” (43). This is perhaps one of the motivating factors that have galvanized the study of semiotics and aesthetics as they relate to the study of the selected texts, which would be seen in a short while as the discourse proceeds. In relation to work of arts like the contemporary Nigerian drama, the position of Zima about semiotics in relation to Marxist followers like Georg Lukacs is that:

Works of art can be identified with conceptual systems or clearly definable structures of signifieds... They tend to see the artistic sign as an ensemble of polysemic and interpretable signifiers that evokes ideas, yet cannot be tied to precise concepts. (2)

Through a binary approach to the structural properties of language, being the historic and current dimensions of language, Saussure identified that signs bear two elements: the signifier; meaning

the vocalisation of a word or gesticulation, and the signified; meaning the concept invoked by the signifier. The relationship between these two is arbitrary since there is no necessary or essential connection between the two. To explain; the word “book” does not mean the actual object. It is only a book once it is physically, vocally and/or visibly portrayed as being what we understand a “book” to be. The word itself (the signifier) has no connection to the object (the signified). Saussure also indicated that linguistics is made up of two components: *langue* and *parole*. “*Langue* is a particular language system, English for instance, which when written down shares the same linguistic and signification. *Parole* is the individual use of language through the spoken word, and is subject to dialect, accent etc which can have an effect on its interpretation” (Fortier 30). This is perhaps one of the reasons why there can never be one meaning to the language of any literary work; drama, prose or poetry.

In contemporary Nigerian drama we can deconstruct the *langue* (signifier) to alter the effect of the *parole* (signified), for instance; we can take the English word ‘book’ and deconstruct it by removing the first letter of the word to create ‘ook’, this ambiguously creates a new *parole* once it is spoken in drama or performance and opens the interpretation to a number of translations which further alienates the signified. In this regard, Ekweariri asserts that: “Symbolism is, unequivocally, a matter of representation. Its meaning is imbued in that which is represented” (195). The system Pierce devised allows for a simple technique for reading and understanding signs through three categories: symbol, index and icon: “Charles S. Pierce... (and) his classification of sign-functions has proved the most important and widely cited legacy in the field of theatre semiotics. His second ‘trichotomy’ of signs consists of: (i) icon ... (ii) index ... (iii) symbol” (Aston and Savona 157). The contemporary Nigerian drama may be fused by these elements, hence their clarification is needed for the understanding of drama.

A symbol, for instance a written word (with no punctuation), has an arbitrary relationship to the audience. It is arbitrary because, being a single written word; it has no stress, tone or meaning. However, adding a vocalisation or gesture such as pointing, the meaning is easily understood by a/an reader/interpreter. In pointing we have added a depth to the word, given it meaning, and thereby forced an interpretation onto the reader/interpreter. "...motifs portend and express communicative values in creative works" (Nwaozuzu 85). Symbols come in a variety of forms, from words to circles with lines through them. Numbers and alphabetical letters are also symbols. We accept a "k" to be a "k" because we have been told that it is, but without being taught this, a "k" is simply a symbol with no stress, tone or meaning. This Aston and Savona argue that: "We learn to respond to formal and stylistic signposting, to register significant detail, and to identify and interrogate the encoding of the symbol" (101). This can be understood and apply in the process of interpreting contemporary Nigerian drama. For example, Kehinde's acolyte with a bag and its contents may be understood to enable appropriation of meaning. Taye's acolyte with a bag and its contents may equally be understood for proper meaning generation.

Indexes are easier sign systems to read. They take the form of pictures/illustrations. Pictures, in general, have a clearly defined structure of tone, texture and stress, thus outlining an interpretation. An example of an index is a No Smoking sign. It is more than the symbol of a circle with a line through it as we identify the image of a burning cigarette. We become aware of its stress as it has forced an interpretation, thereby being more than a symbol. This can be directly likened to the covers of some play texts or some pictures created by the play director as he tries to put such play on set. The understanding of icon according to Charles S. Peirce will elucidate more on this. In contemporary Nigerian drama like that of Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*, the character of Amadi and the mark of a carrier on him may be understood to facilitate the interpreter's meaning

making. The masquerades at the village and their demonstration, are not left out in generating meaning from the play.

An icon is the representation of a thing or an event, for instance a photograph or an actor in a role. We understand an icon as the resemblance of something just like the aesthetic motif. It is a representation and not a reality. A photograph is an image of a physical thing or person; it is not the actual thing or person. Once we have developed a clear understanding of how to read this semiotic system we can begin to unravel the components. For instance, we can remove one index and replace it with another, thereby undoing and recreating the interpretation of that sign. For instance, a room filled with No Smoking signs indicates no smoking, but if, in performance or reading, we were to replace the image of a lit cigarette with an unlit one the meaning is altered, the sign could now be interpreted differently to suggest no unlit cigarettes. It has become deconstructed; people might now have to light every cigarette in the room.

This takes us to connect with aesthetic itself. What then is aesthetics? Let us start with a working definition of aesthetics. Aesthetics can be said to be the study of whether a work of arts or a non-work of arts deals with sensual perception or feelings. This definition emphasizes that the beautiful is according to the person studying that work and the ugly too. Accordingly, Holman and Harmon define aesthetics as: “The study or philosophy of the beautiful in nature, art, and literature. It has both a philosophical dimension. What is art? What is beauty? What is the relationship of the beautiful to other values?” (5). Beyond art, aesthetics goes to other areas like nature and literature. Thus follow by some rhetorical questions which are obviously things that will bring the meaning of aesthetics to the front burner. They equally go further to state the psychological dimension which is: “what is the source of aesthetic enjoyment? How is beauty perceived and recognized?

From what impulse do art and beauty arise?" (5), these are some of the questions this study seeks to address through the plays selected for this dissertation. Holman and Harmon did not stop at that; they equally went on to look at the main purpose of aesthetics in the study of literature. Perhaps, this may serve as leeway to this dissertation. According to Holman and Harmon, "The aesthetic study of literature concentrates its attention on the sense of the beautiful rather than on moral, social, or practical considerations" (5). Whether the contemporary drama is beautiful or ugly, it can be considered.

There is problem with aesthetic study of literature-drama simply because the concentration is always on the beauty and less attention is always accrued to moral, social and practical considerations. This is perhaps, the lacuna found in the extensive study of aesthetics. An attempt to open up on the contextual meaning of aesthetics, Effiong Johnson submits that:

If human beings had the privilege of suggesting how they wanted to look like to the Master human designer, I guess no one would have dared to suggest ugliness. Every man would have looked for what best appealed to him to the Designer in his fabrication for him to come out stunning... what is being said here is that everyone likes beauty or the beautiful or the handsome, the good, the attractive, the bright, the colourful... the aesthetically pleasing. (19)

Furthermore, Effiong Johnson citing Ruth Saw adds that: "Aesthetics is unique among the evaluative disciplines, in that it has to do importantly with feelings, feelings expressed in art and in the appreciation of art, and with the judgment that are usually taken to base on these feelings" (19). Therefore, aesthetic judgment is based on individual feelings about work of art and other works beyond the art: "We very easily and naturally tie our aesthetic experiences to works of art which are man-made objects" (Akpan and Etuk 22). Again, Zima explains from his deduction of what aesthetics means from the point of view of Kant as: "the beautiful in nature and art as a phenomenon which 'pleases without a concept' and which ought to be perceived by the observer

with ‘disinterested pleasure’” (3). These are what the Nigerian dramatist explores in his attempt to pass his message across, and any interpreter should endeavour to understand the aesthetic embellishment of the drama to make meaning from it.

There is no gainsaying that theatre or drama is a work of art as rightly opines by Johnson: “theatre is an art form” (20). Beyond art works or by extension, to other works of nature. But the crux of this study is aesthetic study in relation to drama, whether from the beautiful perspective or from the ugly perspective. One thing however, that must be noted in discourse of aesthetics is that the pleasure or the displeasure derived from aesthetic experiences makes the work beautiful or ugly in the eyes of the doer. That is sensual perception. For example, in *Akpakaland*. Human being growing a tail and the transfer of the tail to another person, through aesthetic judgement creates pleasure and displeasure because it is absurd for a man or woman to have tail, but equally communicate evil aesthetically and etymologically. Or the aesthetics of the dead communicating with the living physically in Idegu’s *Tough Man* and the aesthetics of a person eating raw yam in Iwuh’s *The Village Lamb*. Linking it with Johnson citing Etuk asserts that: “what makes an action or a piece of conduct good is that it brings pleasure to the doer and nothing more” (61). This is done through sensual perception or perspective.

The pleasure theory of aesthetics or aesthetical hedonism says that the immediate pleasure we derive from perceiving any object determines the aesthetic value of that object; the amount of pleasure derived indicating positive value, while the amount of pain or unpleasantness indicates negative value. (Johnson cited in Etuk 61)

This implies that aesthetic experiences would be incomplete if the experiences of the doer of an action relay the pleasure (beauty) he derives from such an action, and not even a reflex on the unpleasantness (ugly) he derives from an action. Therefore, aesthetic value deals with both pleasant and unpleasantness of a particular work, whether art or non-art. Especially, the

contemporary Nigerian drama. The case studies of this work are embellished with both semiotic and aesthetic elements, which intensively, will be discussed in the analysis subsequently.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION

3.1 Biodata of the Selected Nigerian Dramatists: Osofisan, Ukala, Okoh, Idegu, Ododo and Iwuh

Babafemi Adeyemi Osofisan born June 1946, known as Femi Osofisan, is a Nigerian writer noted for his critique of societal problems and his use of African traditional performances and surrealism in some of his plays and novels. A frequent theme that his plays and novels explore is the conflict between good and evil. He is in fact a didactic writer whose works seek to correct his decadent society. Born in the village of Erunwon Ogun State, Nigeria, Osofisan attended primary school at Ife and secondary school at Government College, Ibadan. He then attended the University of Ibadan 1966–69, majoring in French and as part of his degree course studying at the University of Dakar for a year, and going on to do post-graduate studies at the Sorbonne, Paris. He subsequently held faculty positions at the University of Ibadan, where he retired as full professor in 2011. He is Emeritus Professor of Theatre, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria and currently a Distinguished Professor of Theatre Arts, Kwara State University, Nigeria. Osofisan is Vice President (West Africa) of the Pan African Writers' Association. In 2016, he became the first African to be awarded the prestigious Thalia Prize by the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC).

Osofisan has three prose works *Ma'ami*, *Abigail* and *Cordelia*, first produced in newspaper columns, in *The Daily Times* and then *The Guardian* (Nigeria). One of his prose works; *Ma'ami* was adapted into a film in 2011. Several of Osofisan's plays are adaptations of works by other writers: *Women of Owu* from Euripides' *The Trojan Women*; *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* from Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector*; *No More the Wasted Breed* from Wole Soyinka's *The Strong Breed*; *Another Raft* from J. P. Clark's *The Raft*; *Tegonni: An African Antigone* from

Sophocles' *Antigone*, and others. Osofisan in his works also emphasizes gender: his representation of women as objects, objects of social division, due to shifting customs and long-lived traditions, and also as instruments for sexual exploitation; and his portrayal of women as subjects, individuals capable of cognition, endowed with consciousness and will, capable of making decisions and effecting actions.

He has the following plays to his credit: *Kolera Kolej*. New Horn, 1975, *The Chattering and the Song*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1977, *Morountodun and Other Plays*. Lagos: Longman, 1982, *Minted Coins* (poetry), Heinemann, 1987, *Another Raft*. Lagos: Malthouse, 1988, *Once upon Four Robbers*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1991, *Twingle-Twangle A-Twynning Tayle*. Longman, 1992, *Yungba-Yungba and the Dance Contest: A Parable for Our Times*, Heinemann Educational, Nigeria, 1993, *The Album of the Midnight Blackout*, University Press, Nigeria, 1994, “ in Leeds *African Studies Bulletin* 61 (1996), *Tegonni: An African Antigone*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa, 1999 and “Theater and the Rites of ‘Post-Negritude’ Remembering.” *Research in African Literatures* among others.

Sam Ukala Professor Samuel Chinedum Ukala, popularly known as Sam Ukala, was born at Mbiri, Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State on April 18, 1948. His late father, Godwin, was a co-founder of the Anglican Church there in 1922 and the co-founder of the All Saints C.M.S School in 1926. His late mother, Beatrice, was a well known church women leader as well as one-time Women Leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Umunede Zone, during the tenure of Professor Ambrose Alli, the first Executive Governor of Bendel State.

Sam Ukala obtained his First School Leaving Certificate from All Saints C.M.S. Primary School, Mbiri, in 1962, and his West African Examinations Certificate from Ika Grammar School, Agbor,

in 1967. He became a chorister in Primary 3 and grew to become the Choir Master at All Saints Church, Mbiri, and a prominent leader of the Anglican Youth Fellowship. At Ika Grammar School, he was in the school choir (along with Kaine Odiakosa, currently a prominent chorister in this Church); he was a poet, a leading school debater, President of the Dramatic Society and President of Student Christian Movement.

Still in those early years, Sam Ukala composed a number of songs, which became popular, including “Praise the Lord”, “Akwa Job” and “Kele Osolobue”. He preached his first sermon at All Saints Church, Mbiri, at the age of 16, the Sunday after his confirmation by Bishop Agori Iwe in 1964. He joined the civil service of Midwest State as a Produce Inspector in 1970 and worked in that capacity until he left for his undergraduate studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1973.

Sam Ukala obtained his first degree in English from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in 1977. After his National Youth Service at Yola in the defunct Gongola State, he worked as a Personnel Manager, first at Lever Brothers Nigeria Limited, Apapa (now Unilever), 1978-1980, and then at the NNPC Refinery, Ekpan, near Warri, 1980-1982. He left the Refinery to obtain his Master’s and Ph.D. degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan in 1983 and 1986, respectively.

Ukala became a Professor of Theatre Arts and Drama in 1995 and has worked in that capacity in universities and theatres in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. He began his lecturing career at the defunct Bendel State University, Ekpoma, in 1985, and moved over to Delta State University, Abraka, in 2001. In 1993/94 session, he lectured at the University of Leeds in the UK while he was a Commonwealth Senior Academic Staff Fellow there. In 1998/99, he was a Folk Art Consultant and Writer- and Director-in-Residence at Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Waterfoot,

Lancashire, UK. From 2007 to 2010, Prof. Ukala was the Provost of the Asaba Campus of Delta State University.

Currently a retired Professor of Theatre Arts and Drama from Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Ukala has also been Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts at a number of Nigerian universities, including Edo State University. In 1993/94, as an academic staff fellow, he also researched and taught at the School of English Workshop Theatre of the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. As an academic, he propounded the theory of ‘folkism’, the tendency to base literary plays on indigenous history and culture and to compose and perform them in accordance with the aesthetics of African folktale composition and performance. He is currently Chairman of the Delta State Chapter of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA).

Ukala’s published plays include *The Slave Wife*, *The Log in Your Eye*, *Akpakaland* (winner of the 1989 ANA/British Council Prize for Drama), and *Break a Boil*. His “Iredi War”, a ‘folk-script’, won the 2014 Nigeria prize for Literature. It is based on the 1906 uprising of the Owa Kingdom (now part of Delta State) against oppressive British rule. As in previous pieces, he utilises and brings new life to oral literature and folk-based theatre forms.

Ukala has also worked with the British theatre Horse and Bamboo Theatre in 1999 and with Bob Frith wrote the visual theatre piece *Harvest of Ghosts*, which toured the UK and the Netherlands. This was an experimental piece for Ukala, which relied on dance, music, and powerful visuals rather than the spoken word. Professor Sam Ukala just retired from active at Delta State University, Abraka.

Professor Sam Ukala is a renowned scholar and theorist. To his credit are several books, and scores of essays published in national and international journals. The influence of his dramatic theory of

“Folkism” is increasing internationally. His life and work have been studied in two books, namely, *The Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*, edited by Steve Ogude, Ben Egede and Amen Uhumwangho and *Sam Ukala: His Work at 60*, edited by Austin Asagba, and in many theses, dissertations, and articles in books and journals.

Julie Okoh: Born at Ubiaja Town, Esan South East Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria on August 5th 1947, Juliana Okoh, had a humble beginning. Her father Chief Augustine, Azamuoisia Omoifo was a teacher, a produce examiner and finally a court clerk. Her mother was a seamstress and later, the shop manager in the UAC outlet store owned by her father. They had eight children, Juliana was the fifth. Her parents were not rich, but they were artistically endowed. Her father loved music and played the guitar. Her mother was a traditional story teller, singer, dancer and she participated in “Ikhio” performances. These were satiric 96 sketches organised and performed entirely by women in the open air, prior to the New Yam Festival. The first son of the family, Louis (now Chief Louis Omoifo), as a member of the Boys Scout, acted in Concert Party performances organized by that group. All these may have influenced the artistic development of Professor Julie Okoh later in life. Juliana’s formal education started in 1953 at the Sacred Heart Demonstration Primary School, Ubiaja, which was an all girls’ school, but later, she transferred to Saint Benedict’s Primary School, which was a mixed school, because her father wanted her to compete with boys. For her secondary education, she attended Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School, Uromi, from where she got five credits in West African School Certificate Examination in 1966. Her best subjects were English, Latin and Mathematics. While working with the Ministry of External Affairs, Lagos, after her secondary school education, she enrolled for the GCE ordinary level, after which she sat for GCE Advanced Level. With her brilliant performance in the two examinations, her employers decided to send her for a three year training programme at the Federal

Training Centre (FTC), Lagos, as a bilingual secretary. She was still undergoing the secretarial training when she was able to secure in 1972, an admission with tuition waiver and Work-Study Aid to study in the United States of America. She graduated with B.A (French and English literature) from Loyola University Chicago, USA in 1976, M.A. (French Literature) from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada (1979), DEA in Comparative Literature (1989) and PhD in Francophone/Anglophone Theatre and Drama (1991), both from the University of Bordeaux III, Bordeaux, France.

Julie Okoh is a playwright, an educator and a social activist. She has taught courses in Dramatic Theory and Criticism, Playwriting, Comparative Literature, Feminist Theatre, Women and Cultural Studies. Julie Okoh has written and staged more than Thirty (30) plays. Her Critical Essays include: *Theatre and Women's Human Rights in Nigeria* (2002) and *Female Circumcision in Nigeria: Myth, Reality and The Theatre* (2006). She has published over thirty (30) articles on theatre and on social, political, cultural and gender issues in both French and English languages in local and international journals. Professor Okoh currently retired from the active service of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Emmy Idegu: The playwright, Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegu was born November 3, 1962 in Odolu, Igala-mela/Odolu Local Government Area of Kogi State in the North Central Nigeria. Idegu is schooled in the field of theatre arts. This is evident in the degrees he obtained in this field of specialization. For instance, he obtained the B.A (Hons) in Theatre Arts, University of Jos. As a typical Oliver Twist, he proceeded to the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria to study English and Drama at the Post Graduate level. Significantly, he obtained the Master of Arts Degree in (Drama) in 1989, and Doctorate of Philosophy degree (Ph.D Drama) in 2004. He is married with children.

Idegu finally became a Professor of Drama in 2012. Idegu is a performing artist in the academia as manifested in his teaching artistic experience.

Emmy Idegu as an accomplished academic intellectual, has functioned in several routine administrative duties. In addendum to the above, Idegu is a distinguished playwright. Importantly, he has authored the following plays to his credit; “Amina”, “Chinyere”, “Hassana”, “Larai”, “Mairo”, and “Nike” in *INSTANCES* (1997). *Omodoko* (1998), a prose: *The People’s Choice* (2000), *The Legendary Inikpi* (2005), *Tough Man* (2007), *Ata Igala The Great* (2008), *Six and Half A Dozen* (2013), *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* (2015), *Another Odolu Kingdom* (2015), *The Humans are Not to Blame* (2014), *The Conspiracy and Truth on Trial* (2014), and *The Field Marshals Exeunt* (2016) . Idegu has published over fifty scholarly articles in reputable international and local journals, he has equally supervised M.A and Ph.D candidates in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. (Idegu, Personal interview 2012). Professor Idegu in 2016 moved to the prestigious University of Calabar. He is currently the Head, Department of Theatre, Media and Carnival Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Sunnie Ododo: The playwright, Sunday Enessi Ododo was born on the 21st October 1962 at Maiduguri, Borno State, North-east Nigeria. He hails from Okene in Kogi State, Nigeria. He attended Nural Islamic Primary School, Okene between 1970 and 1975, and attended Ihima Community Secondary School for one year, 1975-1976, before proceeding to Fatima Community College, Ekan-Meje, Omu-aran from 1976 to 1980, where he completed his secondary education. Ododo as a youngster was propelled by his academic appetite to obtain his university education at the Universities of Ilorin and Ibadan where he bagged his B.A (Hons), M.A and Ph.D degrees, all in performing and Theatre Arts between 1986 and 2004. His Master’s Degree in Ibadan, in 1988, is in Arts of the Stage and Media while his Ph.D at Ilorin, is in the same field. Besides his training

in Theatre Arts, Ododo has professional qualification and Diploma in Electronic Data Processing and Computer Aided Design programme at Kems Computer Training Centre Ilorin in 1986. After his first degree he was posted to the Department of English, Federal College of Education, Yola, during his NYSC days, where he first served as an academic staff from 1986 to 1987.

Ododo is an accomplished gentleman of the Arts. He is a poet in the theatre and multi-talented playwright and theatre activist of many parts. He has written plays for both the legitimate stage and the screen. These plays include *Illusive Force* (1984), *White and Black Battle* (1985), *The Revelation*, a TV drama (1987), *Political Reveries* (1987), a TV drama and *Africa Man* also a TV drama (1987), *His Return from the Void* an Opera has received encouraging performances between 1995 and 2006. His recent play *Hard Choice* was published in 2011. Sunday Ododo's creativity also manifests him as a poet; he has written and published a number of poems. Ododo has distinguished himself both as a stage actor and an artistic director of many productions. Ododo has published over a hundred scholarly articles in reputable international and local journals, he has equally supervised M.A and Ph.D candidates across Universities of Ilorin and Maiduguri respectively. The landmark contribution to theatre arts studies is his *Facequerade Theory*, which has immensely contributed to the world's measure of performance aesthetics and theatre technology. Professor Ododo currently teaches theatre and media studies at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, and he is a Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters (FNAL).

John Iwuh: Enyeribe John Jones Iwuh, born on the 25th December, 1963. A playwright and Associate Professor of Scenography and performance Aesthetics. He went to the university of Calabar, Calaber, 1985 – 1989, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, 2002 – 2004 and University of

Ibadan, Ibadan, 2005 – 20012. He is interested in Scenography and Performance Aesthetics, Theatre Administration & Performance Management and Performance Criticism.

Iwuh taught in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan as a Fulbright scholar from 2005-2007 and moved to Igbinedion University 2007-2008. He worked with the Collective Artistes, Performance Studio Workshop, Lagos and designed performances with local and international directors, among other commissioned projects. He worked as a pioneer manager with The MUSON Centre, Lagos before going into full blown academics.

Iwuh has the following published plays to his credit: *The Village Lamb* (2008), *Spellbound* (2009), *Ashes and Daydream* (2007), and *Birthright* (2016), and *Eshe* (2016). Iwuh is at present, an academic staff of Redeemer's University, Nigeria

3.2 Synopses of *Twingle-Twangle A Twyning Tayle*, *Akpakaland*, *Edewede*, *Tough Man*, *Hard Choice* and *The Village Lamb*

Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle A Twyning Tayle*

Twingle-Twangle is based on a typical Yoruba setting with two male characters (a twin – Taye and Kehinde) who went on adventure into a forest in search for better life. The play satirically portray that the world can be ruled even without strong hand – coercion or force, while at the same time, a leader can as well use iron hand to rule his people. Baba Ibeji (father of twins) and Mama Ibeji (mother of twins) happened to be victims of poverty and only to be given a twin as a solution to this problem. After a while, the twin took an adventure to go and search out for life with their father's consent. The journey is to take five years. Some years passed, these two brothers didn't return from their journey; this caused Mama Ibeji to be fearful as to whether they are still alive or

not, a highly tempered woman, insulting and rude she pounced on the Babalawo (herbalist) who she believed must have hand in the death or the non-return of her children. In order to avert terrible scandal, the Babalawo asked her to be patient and he took out his opele (divination beads) which he cast for divination to know the whereabouts of the twins. The man after casting the opele told Mama Ibeji that her sons are still leaving and assures Baba Ibeji who is standing helplessly.

The journey was not at all interesting and likewise very hard for the two brothers and their servants, Digbaro and Efundunke. It was energy consuming, redolent and stressful. A lot of argument came in at the crossing of frontiers due to the fact that the road has divided into two – one heading to the seashore and the other heading to the forest. At last Digbaro followed Kehinde to the way that led to the seashore with a bag full of weapons, while Efundunke followed Taye to the forest with a bag full of musical instruments. The writer made a comparison as to what it takes to be a leader and system of government, military rule and democracy.

Along the seashore, Kehinde and Digbaro wandered day and night and at last got to the outskirts of a town called Etido where Oba Moluwe, the Olodo of Etido reigns. At the outskirts, the Olodo and other prominent chiefs were coming for a great sacrifice to a demon called Bilisi (a monster of the river), that always demand for the most beautiful virgin every year. However, for that unfortunate year, the poor Olodo's only daughter, Lawumi, happened to be the victim and she is to be offered to Bilisi as sacrifice. At the point of sacrifice, from where Digbaro and Kehinde were hiding, the Olodo made frantic efforts not to release his only daughter after disclosing the concealed secret. The daughter notwithstanding insisted to offer herself for the sacrifice for the people's sake, with her is her servant, Aanu, who promised to die with her Mistress. Soon, all the people left the scene, leaving the two of them who were waiting for death, for Bilisi to come and prey on them. Bilisi

indeed came out and it was about to feed on them when the hiding Digbaro and Kehinde came to their rescue killing the monster.

Taye and Efundunke were not finding it easy in the forest. At last, they got to a small village where they thought they would be able to get food and water, but it seemed to them that it was a ghost village as there was no one in it. Nonetheless, the village was holding its annual festival where the Oba Elenon of Ereko will give out his daughter, Tinuade, and half of his inheritance to anyone who dare wins his last examination. The Officer, the business man, the professor lost out as they couldn't gulp the hot soup at once. However, Taye emerged from his secret place and as well as Efundunke to contest for the princess, but not with intention of winning but to quench his hunger. Efundunke tried to stop him, but he refused and rather preferred to face the trial in which any one that lost would be killed. At last, he won refused the princess for a wife. Rejecting the princess, was also a grave sin. This insulting action landed him in a prison.

In Etido village, Kehinde became the king; a problem arose because of a newly born baby who all the citizens were celebrating to be their king, but Kehinde saw this as idleness, coupled with an ongoing war wasting the lives of his citizens. He was called a dictator and they rose up against him and plotted his impeachment. He thus decided that before he would leave his throne, he needed to fight against one last village, Ereko village. Taye in Ereko village became the king after the incumbent king's death and he married the king's daughter Tinuade. He, notwithstanding of the news that the most powerful town of Etido is coming to wage war against his village advised his people not to be cowards but to be ready to welcome the enemy warriors with foods, drinks, etc. So they did, pounding foofoo, making soup, eating, marrying, while the war came even to their very door steps. Recognizing each other, Kehinde in spite gave series of conditions to Taye for

him not to destroy his village. Taye consented to all the conditions. The merriment continued for a long time so that all the enemy soldiers got drunk and slept off. All their weapons were packed and gathered and all of them bound, hands and legs, including their leader, Kehinde. So, Taye's village, Ereko won. The twins later went home after their adventure.

Ukala's Akpakaland

Akpakaland is based on an Ika folk story centred on a jealous wife who transfers a cow's tail to her co-wife in order to gain higher sexual and financial attention from their husband. In the play, Ukala twists the original tale beyond a mere polygamous frivolity into a very important state matter. This transcends the domestic context of the play, to a very serious political setting where the ruler and 'have-all' perpetually dominate and oppress the ruled and less privileged of the society. Akpaka, the President of Akpakaland, is married to five wives, in order: Fulama, Yeiye, Seotu, Unata, and Iyebi. He selected each of these wives from different geo-political zones. The first three wives are picked from the province of the rich, while he picked the last two from the province of the poor. Whenever he thinks of the dwindling state of the financial resources of his kingdom he finds solace in trying to knock out the solution of the problem from his bottle of gin. It is on one of these occasions when he is thinking of the state of insecurity, hunger, squalor, disease, corruption, empty treasury and armoury that have bedevilled Akpakaland that Fulama his first wife, who is the daughter of a very influential past president, Dan Mali the great, brings to his attention a flimsy gossip that one of his wives has a tail. Instead of dismissing Fulama and her domestic frivolity for the more serious state matters he is trying to solve, Akpaka handles the tail matter even more seriously than Fulama expected. He decrees that his wives must strip naked before the entire Akpakaland. Unata is the unfortunate wife with the tail. She and her father Idemudia seek spiritual solution from Enwe, the traditional Doctor who had earlier prepared a

charmed rope for Fulama's cow to regain its tail, which it lost to some thieves. On Unata's request that the tail be returned to the sender, the oracles asked Unata to bring, amongst other sacrificial items, an unripe plantain, which would be used as bait for the one who sent the tail. To further ridicule Unata, Fulama, in the company of Yeiye and Seotu, continuously mocks her to take her bath in their presence in order for them to see her tail. On one of these occasions, an unsuspecting Fulama smells a roasting plantain and begs for it. Unata who, with this symbolic act, transfers the tail back to the sender gladly gives her the food. On the day of the public tease, Fulama is the one with the tail and her shame escalates to high heavens.

Her mother tries to lobby for the dismissal of the case, while some of the corrupt ministers persuade Akpaka to administer a light sentence because of Fulama's parentage, and also because of the unavailability of armoury to execute her. Akpaka eventually pronounces a sentence of three months imprisonment, as against the public execution earlier decreed. Idemudia is not happy with this since, according to him, "...if my daughter were found guilty, the executioner would have had the wherewithal to execute her. If he has no guns and bullets to execute Fulama, we have our hoes and matchets"(50). This instigates a pandemonium in the crowd who becomes mad and seizes Fulama for jungle justice and execution. But fortunately, the law of nemesis catches up on Fulama as Afianmo (Akpaka's Minister for war, and the executioner) suddenly produces a gun that could not be found earlier to execute Fulama. In an attempt to shoot blindly at the irate crowd, a stray bullet however hits Fulama. The crowd, constituting mainly the poor impoverished masses, sees this as an opportunity and seizes power from Akpaka and his ministers.

Okoh's *Edewede*

The *Edewede* is an eponymous play meaning "the dawn of a new day". It derives its title from the name of the lead character, "Edewede" or "Wede" in short form. The plot is arranged into nine

segments each bearing a title that reflects the actions or the theme that preoccupies the actions of the segment. In *Edwede*, Julie Okoh uses a progressive plot of cause and effect from the crisis (which is the beginning) to the reconciliation (which is the resolution of the play). However, flashback technique is also a part of the plot which helps to fuel the dramatic actions of the play. The play centers on the issue of female genital mutilation and the struggle to eradicate it. Set in a remote village, Otoedo land of the Essan tribe, the setting represents a traditional African society struggling with the influence of Western civilization.

Ebikere is scheming to have her grand - daughter, Oseme circumcised, while Edwede is bent on preventing it having lost a sister and a daughter through infections as a result of circumcision. Ordia, Edwede's husband and Ebikere's only son is torn between his love for his immediate family represented in wife and daughter and that of his mother representing his tradition. Initially, the love for tradition and culture seems to take the upper hand, when he accepted to publicly renounce his wife. But towards the end of the play Ordia reasoned with the elders by narrating his personal experiences and dream. Majority of the elders saw circumcision as an ancient tradition whose validity is worth looking into. They reasoned that circumcision has lost its value and no one can prevent the necessary change as presented.

However, it is the solidarity of the women in the dilemma and the glimpse of hope they experienced that broke the resistance of the men. Though the men and the old women publicly renounced Edwede, this action somehow gives the younger women the urge to fight following enlightenment given by Mama Nurse. Understanding the true nature and consequences of circumcision, the women resolve to fight and abolish the act. They propose that the initiation ceremony for young girls can still hold but without circumcision which is normally the grand finale of the initiation rite.

Idegu's Tough Man

A mad rush, then a heavy bang suggests that a big massive auto crash has taken place and plucked down Steve Achema in his prime in Efile, the land of the living, from where he transcended to Efojegwu, the land of the dead to meet other beloved patriots and descendants of Igala land. In Efojegwu, Achema was accosted by Inikpi and Ameh who lifted him up to his feet and offered a seat among them. These three beloved descendants of Igala engaged themselves in a discourse on the purposeful leadership and good followership in Igala land. As the drama unfolds, Inikpi, Ameh and Achema agreed to take a look down and watch the activities of characters in Efile, the land of the living. From the echoes of reality in Efile, the land of the living, Inikpi, Ameh, and Achema were flabbergasted and bewildered as demonstrated by the sighs, shaking of heads, heads resting on the palms and similar postures. Inikpi, Ameh and Achema agreed that the future of Igalaland and the people is blurred. Achema provides reasons for the ugly state of affairs in Efile; the land of the living.

Inikpi believes that the solution lies on the institutionalization of selfless, purposeful leadership who will take the responsibility of moving people from passivity to active motion and progress similarly, the citizen in Efile; the land of the living, feel disappointed on the absence of selfless and purposeful leadership. They agreed that the present crop of political leadership cannot move Igala land forward because they are alien, not people oriented, lack vision and so cannot direct the people towards greatness.

Inikpi, Ameh and Achema nod their heads in agreement that hope is not lost. As they continued to gaze down unto the land of the living, they saw a boy in whom, they believe lies the future hope of the Igala land. The boy's memorable ruminations on leadership are worth recounting here

briefly. All in all, the playwright warns and explored language and character to make a statement that the future can only be bright if the present Igala man stops the negative and senseless blackmail and killings of man by man to settle political scores, quest for power and leadership. The Boy continues:

Tough Man treats the theme of probity, integrity, ethics and patriotism, honesty, selfless and responsible leadership in Igala land. In this play the legendary truth of the past is being made to guide ethical conduct in the present and in the future. The playwright uses the enigma of past historic personalities like Inikpi, Ameh, and Achema to express and promote the theme of ethical and patriotic goals, probity, integrity, and responsible leadership as a way of plumbing the political and leadership experiences of today towards reconstructing a better future in Igalaland and beyond.

Ododo's Hard Choice

The play, *Hard Choice*, opens in a joyous atmosphere where the prince of Igedu Kingdom and the Princess of Emepiri Kingdom want to get married. But there is pandemonium as some unidentified and masked youths invade the venue and snatched away the crown of the king of Igedu kingdom. This ugly scenario marks the beginning of the tragic events in the play. The quest to find the missing crown begins. The High Chief Ubanga is behind this ugly incident because of his selfish interest in marrying the princess of Emepiri kingdom. After the snatching the crown, it was handed over to the queen who is unknown to King of Emepiri, the chief plotter of the incident. As the play progresses, King Iginla who is in the hideout and his Bashorun begin to plan for war if the missing crown is not found. The missing crown is authority. The snatching of the crown is a disgrace to their kingdom, that act is on its own a taboo, because one the symbol of authority of Igedu kingdom is missing. They promise war which makes Eze Okiakoh to seek for peace, as a result, goes to meet King Iginla in his hideout.

The drama comes to limelight as Chief Ubanga is apprehended by Prince Oki and his body guards, they take him before both King Iginla and Eze Okiakoh, where Chief Ubanga confesses and the name of the queen comes out as the chief plotter. But, when they further investigate the matter, it becomes apparent that, it is a plan to give Chief Ubanga the Princess to marry. Unknowingly to Chief Ubanga that Queen is only playing him to the foolery. She wants to only make use of him and achieve her own selfish aim. The play proceeds and it is revealed that the crown in question is in Oguguru shrine and the only thing that can bring it out of that shrine is red wine which is human blood, and that is the Princess' blood. But it comes to the fore that it is the Queen who vows to sacrifice the Princess for her husband to become the king about twenty-one years ago, the event that leads to the death of Eze Okiakoh's brother.

On hearing this the Princess makes a hard choice by willingly presenting herself for the sacrifice as that is the only thing that will avert the impending war on the kingdom. As the play climaxes, the royal beads (which through deconstruction may be interpreted as symbol of love, unity or peace) on the Princess' neck is given to the Prince of Igedu Kingdom who will rule over the two kingdoms which restore peace to the lands, and the Princess dies in the shrine of Oguguru. Everybody returns back home in jubilation of the restored peace in the land and the war is averted with just the act of the Princess of Emepiri.

Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*

Amadi is a young and educated sharp like Olunde in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. Unknown to Amadi, he has a mark on him from birth as a chosen lamb. But he does not understand even when the signs occur. Amadi has been chosen from birth by the gods that he will be used as sacrificial lamb in the next victory festival as it is stipulated by the community's law that anyone

who has that mark must be trained; an all-important person. Amadi was sent abroad for further study. As Amadi was at the verge of rounding up his programme, he begins to receive series of letters from his father telling him not to return home because he knows the detail about his son Amadi. But Amadi would not listen because he vowed to help his people after his programme abroad. Ujowundu insisted that Amadi remains abroad and would not tell Amadi the reason for his insistence in telling Amadi to stay away from home because he is under oath.

But in his effort to avert death toll on his son he made different efforts by speaking to his son in different languages. But Amadi would ask himself question that why his friends' fathers want them to come home and his father would want him to stay back. Finally Amadi returns home. It was time to celebrate the victory festival. The elders start coming to remind Ujowundu of the lamb in his custody. They make him realized after much arguments with them that the lamb in his compound is the community's property and not his so he should release him. Amadi is suspicious of the incessant visit to his father's compound thought they were planning to fight his father. He prepares for them. Amadi's quest to know his true self was heightened as every attempt to touch any girl in the village they run away as the mark is understandable to them. This aggravated Amadi's quest to know why girls in the village would not want him to touch or cohabit with them. As Amadi makes effort to discover the mark the more it becomes complex.

Ujowundu however made Amadi to know that he is carrying the community's mark that any girl who touches him will die. Still Amadi will not understand the riddles. Finally, Okpoka and Udemba, succeeded in convincing Amadi to attend their gathering at the village square. Despite Ujowundu's effort to convince Amadi not to attend, Amadi insisted that he will attend because that is part of the course he went to abroad to study. Ujowundu dares not to tell him as Amadioha will strike him. On the deed day, the elders are gathered with chief priest, Amadi appears and is

coming straight to the Arena. He was persuaded to remove his shirt and climb the raised platform. The chief priest did some incantations, remove his beads and Amadi was in castrated. His manhood was removde. Before his father Ujowundu gets to know about it and the involvement of the police, it was late.

3.3 Language and Character Deconstruction in the Selected Playtexts

Character and language are two main instruments explored in modern Nigerian drama. From the different generations of playwrights in Nigeria, they have used language and character intensively to drive their message home for the understanding of the interpreters. Concisely, these elements are used to enable them communicate effectively to the readers/interpreters. Their plays are embodiments of language signs and signification and symbol. Therefore, these two elements of the Nigerian plays must be followed carefully by the readers/interpreters to enable them deduce meaning from reading and interpretation of what they have read in the plays. Apparently, the interpreter has the license to create his meaning of the play outside the playwright's fused meaning, but the interpreter creates his meaning through the playwright's meaning. If the reader/interpreter wants, he must understands the meaning of the language of a play to make his meaning, he must understand the character and language of a play. As opined above, they are the major vehicles that carry the meaning of a play by particular playwright. The interpreter must be well schooled in deconstruction for him to use the opposition or binary of the language and character of a play to make his meaning without prejudice to the playwright's fused meaning.

For instance, for an interpreter to do a good interpretation of Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*, he must have good knowledge of deconstruction. In deconstructing this play, the readers/interpreters must understand the characters of the four robbers, Alhaja, Angola, Hassan

and Major. Osofisan empowers these four characters with language and weapons that would need to be deconstructed before deducing meaning. The reason behind their language, action and the use of weapons must be known to enable the interpreter deconstruct the play. The interpreter should try to understand why the robbers took to crime before deconstructing the characters. The characters and language of the soldiers in the play must be understood by the reader like what could have made Osofisan bring in soldiers as characters in the play. For coherent interpretation, the interpreter must know why the soldiers did what they did in the play. Or the characters of Titubi in Osofisan's *Morountodun* and her revolutionary aesthetics must be understood for adequate meaning generation and creation. Or the existentialist intent of Omodoko and Inikpi in Idegu's *Omodoko* and *The Legendary Inikpi* respectively and Princess of Emepiri kingdom should be deconstructed in Nigerian Drama for meaning making.

These characters must be understood from their sociological traits, psychological hegemony and physiological engagement. The interpreter may want to say that it is the corrupt situation of the society that make the robbers to take to robbery. Nwosu affirms that: "The robbers...are products of the corrupt society took to robbery because of hunger and unemployment..." (248). The reader/interpreter may try to understand this before creating his meaning of the play which is different from that of the playwright. Though the interpreter takes into cognizance the meaning of the playwright, he deconstruct the fused meaning by the playwright and come up with his meaning which may be entirely be different from the playwright's. A reader/interpreter may decide to say that why will the robbers take to robbery and terrorizing the society and they the only people in that society? This perspective influences the interpretative acumen of the reader thereby making a different meaning from that of the playwright. For example, this can be seen in Osofisan's *Twingle Twingle...* as the researcher takes a mien into the plays selected for this study to look at some

salient issues and their interconnectedness with the study of semio-aesthetic analysis and deconstruction. The ability for the researcher to talk, discuss and analyse beyond the playwright's construct.

The language and characters in Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...* is worth deconstructing through semiotics and aesthetics if the play must be interpreted. We discover this from the opening of the play through to the end of the play. Osofisan uses language and character in the play to put leadership and mass consciousness in front line. For the reader to understand this, he/she must be ready to deconstruct and create his/her interpretation of the play around this. In the same vein, we may need to understand Ameh, Achema and Inikpi in Idegu's *Tough Man* to making meaning from the play. For example, the trio are dead in their real existence, they speak from the ancestral world in the play. An interpreter may need to understand the mystery behind their death and their ability to speak from the other world, to generate meaning from the play. Idegu also creates these characters with ancestral language because they do not speak like the living. Example of this can equally be drawn from Duruaku's *A Matter of Identity*, where Orie, Nkwo, Afor and Eke were explored as characters and their very heavy. Duruaku constructs these characters and their language to communicate to the reader. But for the interpreter to make and create meaning from this as Nigerian drama, these characters must be deconstructed along with their language.

For instance, all the aforementioned issues arising from the reading of Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...* and other plays prudently selected as the case study of this thesis shall be read beyond the playwrights' construct. The constructs of the dramatists are mere windows through which the reader, decoder and interpreter can lean on to weave his/her meaning. This is possible as no one artistic, creative or literary work carries a static meaning. The meaning imbued by the writer is his conceived meaning, which is open to other meaning creation by the reader/interpreter. The

Nigerian playwright only encodes his play with meaning through his characters and language from his preconceived idea/thought. As soon as the playwright as an encoder gives his play out, it is assumed that the writer is “dead”. Any meaning that is made/ created out of such work is attributed to the reader/interpreter.

In the same vein, in Ukala’s *Akpakaland* for instance, he developed his characters in the play to create meaning through what they say and the actions they carry out in the play. Hence for an interpreter to make meaning from Nigerian drama, he painstakingly goes through the constructed characters and language in Nigerian drama to create his meaning. For example, a character starts a play without a tail suddenly developed one as the play progresses. This takes the artistic ingenuity of the playwright to achieve. This is done basically to encode meaning that would be decoded as the decoder picks up the play to translate/encode. Therefore, it requires the interpretative acumen of the interpreter to deconstruct these characters and the language, as the reader fuse them, he creates new meaning from the play.

Through what the characters say also helps in the deduction of meaning from the transfer of tail from Fulama and Unata. It takes the ingenuity of the reader/interpreter to make his meaning out of the play. Through deconstruction and semio-aesthetics, the reader adduces and deduces meaning other than that which the playwright imbued in the play. The elders’ roles and what they say which will be interpreted as the work proceeds, have avalanche of meanings embedded in the play will help in the deconstruction through semio-aesthetic elements. It must however be noted that there is no play that has a meaning. The playwright’s language may serve as a window towards making more meanings for communicative purposes and enterprises. The transfer of tail, the action of the characters and what was said before the tail was transferred may be well understood before critical interpretation can take place, because it is also symbolic nature.

That is why the character and language created in any given play should be well studied for difference in meaning to be generated. Both the character and language form parts of the components of the instruments explored by the playwright to create his/her meaning in the play. Therefore, if such play (s) must be deconstructed, hence the mode through which built character and language applied in the play should be deconstructed. That is the position of this thesis. In order to understand the meaning of any work it must be deconstructed through the study of semiotics and aesthetics for communicative enterprise. The writer/playwright is not there but his work opens the foreground for interpretation.

This in itself is a form of deconstruction, because, "... of all the arts, that involving the use of words remains most closely related to that aspect of his nature which makes man distinctive: language" (Hawkes 19). When a character is a main player, it is better to give the reader more information about them. When you introduce a character in detail but then that character only has one line and they disappear from the rest of the script it can be confusing for the reader. Therefore as you do this you give the readers tool for deconstructing a particular character or characters. This must be done with utmost care and interest of the reader or critic of the Nigerian drama. Irrespective of the fact that the reader/interpreter has the interpretative license to give the play his interpretation but he may also be guided adequately by the fused meaning by the playwright.

It is interesting to note that every character in a play whether with speaking or non-speaking role is important. That does not imply that there are no characters that are more conspicuous than the other. So, to undertake a critical discourse on the deconstruction of character and language in the selected plays of the selected Nigerian playwrights would be a herculean task to the reader. Hence in deconstructing the characters in the case studies, three aspects of character trait would be investigated, they are physiology, sociology and psychology. The reason may be that any character

that does anything in a play is either influenced by this three traits or by one of the three. Once the characters have been influenced by any or all of the three, we see the result in what they say through their language and critics can do a meaningful deconstruction for comprehension of the selected case studies.

By physiology, the study means what the characters look like. For instance, Kehinde and Taye in Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...* and Edewede in Okoh's *Edewede*. Are they strong, are they weak, are they tall and other physiological traits? The playwright may give us a visual picture of them. But he does not just list their physical traits. The playwright tries to be inventive and creative with the way he describes them. Rather than saying Taye or Kehinde is fat, he could writes Taye or Kehinde substitutes exercise for eating and his waist-line shows it. Remember, the playwright's job is to entertain the reader as well. When he writes dull, dry sentences the reader will start to check out. So, the more interesting he can write a sentence the more engaged the dramatist's reader will be in deconstructing his characters and language. The reader/interpreter according to deconstruction has the license to interpret the play in his own way. That is why the case studies for this thesis was carefully selected because of character construct and language embellishment for communicative perspectives and tendencies in Nigerian drama.

The next is sociology - where the characters and language in the plays fit into society. Like Achema, Inikpi and Ameh in Idegu's *Tough Man* and Princess in Ododo's *Hard Choice* call for cross examination and deconstruction if meaning must be generated. For example, are they kings and queens, are they beggars, are they royal Knights, teachers and others. This will go a long way in the study of deconstruction and semio-aesthetic discourse and analyses of the plays for interpretative purposes. The interpreter will be able to identify whether any of the character traits

affect the action, language of a particular character and other characters in the play to enable him deconstruct them for meaning generation. This shall be seen in the upcoming chapter. The next is psychology - their state of mind. The state of mind of Amadi in Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* and Unata and Bulama in Ukala's *Akpakland* need to be appraised for concerted meaning creation. For instance, are they balance psychologically, or imbalance, are they bi-polar, are they calm, are they quick to temper, and is the hate or love around them and other psychological traits. All these affect the manner in which the character uses his language and they equally influence his actions and reactions to other characters in the play as will be seen in the analysis. The reader himself must be well grounded in the spirit of deconstruction through the aforementioned elements to permeate meaning generation in perspectives.

The physiological, sociological and psychological impetus that motivated the Fulama, Unata and other wives of Akpaka in *Akpakaland* should be well studied and understood for the reader/interpreter to deconstruct and make more meaning. Taye and Kehinde even Baba Ibeji and Mama Ibeji must be well deconstructed psychologically, sociologically and physiologically before how and what they say influenced their action or how their characters were motivated to do what they did in *Twingle Twangle*.... Edewede as a character in the play should be studied sociologically, psychologically and physiologically for the reader/interpreter to know why she through her character and language waged a war against an age-long tradition. The princess of Emepiri kingdom who through the existentialist's eyes laid her life for peaceful co-existence may be well studied through her language and character for a proper deconstruction to permeate communicating effectively. The reason for selecting Achema, Ameh and Inikpi who are all dead must be viewed from the sociological, physiological and psychological strand and be identified and their characters before death must be well deconstructed for meaning creation. The

reader/interpreter may go beyond the text to research historically to equally know their psychological, sociological and physiological position when they were alive. Understanding all the above-mentioned qualities and elements would crave the easy way for deconstruction and semio-aesthetic analysis of the Nigerian drama.

3.4 Language and Character as Afro-Semio-Aesthetic Elements in the Selected Playtexts

Deconstructive readings, in contrast, treated works of art not as the harmonious fusion of literal and figurative meanings but as instances of the intractable conflicts between meanings of different types. They generally examined the individual work not as a self-contained artifact but as a product of relations with other texts or discourses, literary and nonliterary. Adanri posits that: “drama is a self contained dialectic, on that is free and refined from moment to moment” (109). These readings placed special emphasis on the ways in which the works themselves offered implicit critiques of the categories that critics used to analyze them. In dramatic studies, deconstruction plays a major role in the animation and transformation of literary studies by literary theory which was concerned with questions about the nature of language, the production of meaning, and the relationship between literature and the numerous discourses that structure human experience and its histories.

Language from the different discourses above is a system of conventional spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. According to Salaudeen: “...in drama as in all acts of communication, it is important to fully understand a message and capture all that is implied or ‘hidden’ in language... the natural languages do not say everything for certain economic or social reasons” (242). The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release. These conventional spoken or written symbols,

signs, codes, indexes have in one way or the other been accepted as part of the people's art and by extension as means of communication among the same people who live in the same cultural milieu.

Many definitions of language have been proposed. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, states that: "Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts." The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulate the following definition that: "A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates." Any succinct definition of language makes a number of presuppositions and begs a number of questions. (Encyclopedia Britanica online NP)

A number of considerations enter into a proper understanding of language as a subject. Every physiologically and mentally normal person acquires in childhood, the ability to make use, as both speaker and hearer, of a system of vocal communication that comprises a circumscribed set of noises resulting from movements of certain organs within the throat and mouth. By means of these noises, people are able to impart information, to express feelings and emotions, to influence the activities of others, and to comport themselves with varying degrees of friendliness or hostility toward persons who make use of substantially the same set of noises.

Different systems of vocal communication constitute different languages; the degree of difference needed to establish a different language cannot be stated exactly but through deconstruction and form semio-aesthetic elements and analysis. Generally, systems of vocal communication are recognized as different languages if they cannot be understood without specific learning by both parties, though the precise limits of mutual lucidity are hard to draw and belong on a scale rather than on either side of a definite dividing line. Substantially, different systems of communication that may impede but do not prevent mutual comprehension are called dialects of a language. Because Alabi submits that: "All texts are designed to appropriate designated meaning. A text in

its utter nakedness is multi-levelled, multi-ranked and multi-functional since meanings are not the sole property of the language user” (169-170).

Normally, people acquire a single language initially their first language, or mother tongue, the language spoken by their parents or by those with whom they are brought up from infancy. Subsequent “second” languages are learned to different degrees of competence under various conditions. Let us say English language in this context. Whether the mother tongue or the second language, they both contain certain superficial elements like, codes, signs, icon, symbol and others that constitute semio-aesthetic elements. How these semio-aesthetic elements are put together through the character and their languages and replicated as imbued in *Twingle-Twangle...*, *Hard Choice*, *The Village Lamb*, *Tough Man*, *Edewede* and *Akpakaland*. As Okon citing Okoh argues that: “language as the cultural embodiments of a particular group used to portray ideas, emotions, desire and thought-patterns of the people” (83).

Therefore, language, as described above, is species-specific to human beings. Other members of the animal kingdom have the ability to communicate, through vocal noises or by other means/signs. But the most important single feature characterizing human language, against every known mode of animal communication, is its infinite productivity and creativity. Human beings are unrestricted in what they can talk about; no area of experience is accepted as necessarily incommunicable, though it may be necessary to adapt one’s language in order to cope with new discoveries or new modes of thought. This would be conspicuously and critically seen in the subsequent discourses of semio-aesthetic analytical perception of these plays; *Twingle-Twangle...*, *Hard Choice*, *The Village Lamb*, *Tough Man*, *Edewede* and *Akpakaland*. Corroborating Bamidele’s position that: “... texts do serve as living source books to which we can go for valid insight about

sociological constructs of the group, the self, social class, social mobility, social change and institutions” (71).

One of the major challenges before Amadi is his inability to decode what his father Ujowundu was saying as can be seen here. In John Iwuh’s *The Village Lamb*. Amadi does not even understand his own existence and cultural background and thus finds it difficult to know himself. This may equally pose a challenge for a reader/an interpreter, because the character himself is an element of communication and symbolic in nature. We could say the character is an element of semiotics just as language does. In the same vein, a look at the character of Akpaka, Fulama or Unata requires a semiotic or aesthetic analysis and interpretation for meaning generation. That is why the researcher tries in this section to substantiate language and character as substantive elements of semio-aesthetic analytical. The researcher discovers the same issue that has to do with the peaceful co-existence between man and the gods ensued. The mark on Amadi as the chosen one that carries the burden of the community calls for appropriate deconstruction through semiotic and aesthetic analysis. The mark is a signifier that points at Amadi as the man that would be sacrificed to the gods to beseech blessing from the gods for a better tomorrow. Amadi like Olunde in Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* studied abroad but has a mark on him that portends him as a carrier. The character of Amadi, his father Ujowundu and other elders and their language require the interpreter/reader of the play to be well-schooled in Derrida’s deconstruction and also have background in semiotic and aesthetic analysis for meaning making. As it has been noted by many literary scholars like Terry Eagleton that texts are built from texts. This researcher posit that the quest to make meaning from one text calls for another text. That is why we have texts which have their sources from oral performances, from other existing texts and so forth and so on. This may be the reason why there is proliferation of texts with interrelated titles and meanings. Perhaps effort

to interpret in a bid to deconstruct the playwright's language and character and this leads to the birthing and transmutation of another play.

Amadi as a young sharp could not deduce meaning from the language of Ujowundu, his father. Or better still, one could say he was making a different meaning from what his father was saying and it landed him into serious trouble. Amadi is not aware of the reality of the mark and the signal he was receiving, but the community knows about it. That is one of the reasons why no girl in the community would want to marry Amadi. All the aforementioned call for the application of the principles of deconstruction and semio-aesthetic analyses for meaning generation through the eye of the reader/interpreter. The mark on Amadi like symbol, icon, sign and other non-verbal cues were meant for communication which the interpreter/reader must deconstruct if he must if he wants to make meanings from the text.

Therefore, for effective communication, the language and characters could serve as codes, symbols and signs of the playwright which must be well decoded as viable semio-aesthetic analytical tools for effective communication. Language can be verbal, which manifests in speech; non-verbal, that is, gestural and semiotic. Gestural language involves the use of gestures, facial expressions, posture, voice modulation, pitch, stress and intonation. Semiotic language is iconic, that is, the use of specialized symbols or signs to convey information. The same way that character is iconic; a character is an embodiment of signs and symbols for communicative enterprise. The character embodies both elements of semiotics and aesthetics, like the traffic signs, religious symbols, scientific and social symbols also populate the aesthetic and semiotic realm.

Language has many definitions as can be seen from the above. Dada defines language as, "an arbitrary vocal system of communication used among members of a speech community" (2).

Essentially, it is a set of contextual codes intelligible and meaningful to those who share the codes. Language meaning could be literal or metaphoric. Literal meaning is the surface meaning that is imaginative by connotations and undertones. For instance, the use of goat when it refers to the animal is literal. The statement: “Kabir speaks Arabic fluently” has a literal meaning, whereas, the expression, “For all I know, he might as well have been speaking Arabic” gives another connotation, not now as the language of Arabic, but Arabian. At this level, language begins to metamorphose beyond the literal to the metaphoric.

While metaphoric language on the other is imbued with underlying, underground meanings, connotations, allusions, referents and nuances. For instance, the word “cow” does not always refer to the familiar four-legged animal. Sometimes, it is used in speech metaphorically to refer to a person who is either stupid or stubborn. Amongst the Igala people, for example, when the expression “ela” is used, it could refer to an animal or it could be a derogatory referent to a person, not an animal. Metaphoric language is idiomatic and figurative. Corroborating Mark Fortier’s position that:

...nothing, no word, idea, text or subject, is what it was intended to be; nothing is identical with itself; the moment something is thought, said, written or intended, it becomes a trace of itself, no longer itself, no longer present; in this way, meaning, truth, identity, presence are always deferred and never arrived...Derrida is involved in the undermining of any search for origins, for an earlier moment when thoughts, words, self and truth were identical and present to one another, when writing had access to the real and truth. (39)

That is why this study set to deconstruct language and character in Nigerian Drama. In deconstructing language and character through semiotic and aesthetic analysis, to enable it establish the fact that no word, idea, text or subject is what is intended to be in the selected dramas. Nothing is purely identical with itself in the selected drama. This study intends to substantiate that

the moment something is thought, said, written or intended, it automatically becomes a race of itself, and it will no longer be itself. As an: “Active readers comprehend what they read and connect it to their own lives” (Little 52). This means that the reader/interpreter must have deduced meaning from what he reads and, the meaning he generated suits his life experiences or situation. It is obvious therefore that once a language and character are used in a play text, etymologically, they would no longer be the word, the idea, the text that they were intended to be through deconstruction. There is conspicuous examples in *Edewede*. The character of Edewede must be well understood as element of semio-aesthetic analysis, this would be understood only if what the character says about himself and what other characters say about him are all understood. Then, the reader/interpreter can make meaning from the original meaning infused by the playwright.

Okoh's *Edewede* is another play that caught the attention of the researcher. Still revolving around tradition and the gods. Edewede's quest to fight or revolt against an age-ling tradition is an action by the character through her language or words that calls for deconstructive interpretation through semio-aesthetic analysis. Her revolt against the tradition of circumcision was seen by her husband as an abominable act by both her mother-in-law, husband and the elders. But through her character and language as constructed by the playwright she was vehement in her intention and through her friend she mobilizes the market women against the position of the elders, her mother-in-law and her husband with assistance of Mama Nurse, they succeeded in deconstructing the tradition of circumcision. The same tradition was reconstructed through their action, and the King reviews the tradition. By saying that the initiation ceremony remains but circumcision is abolished. Beyond the extradition of circumcision, it is apparent that language and character played a veritable role in it. By way of interpretation, this could help in generating meanings that exude the meaning of the playwright. It is notable however that the reader is not limited within the circle of the

playwright. The death of Edewede's daughter is a signifier to her action. What the death signifies would not be left out in the bid to deconstruct both language and characters in the play. The reunion by both the husbands and wives in the play is an action that equally calls for creative and critical interpretation through semio-aesthetic elements. The women deciding that they should all close their narrow paths demands deconstruction through semiotic and aesthetic analytical dimension. For a conscious reader/interpreter to make meaning as to whether the women succeeded or not, the characters of the women must be well deconstructed through semio-aesthetic analyses of the play and other playtext selected for this study.

Semio-aesthetics (Afrosemio-aesthetics) is being proposed as a model to fill the gap created by Ricoeur's theory of interpretation and Langer's theory of symbols. The lacuna created by the theories is that they both fail to address the place of environment/culture in understanding of playtext. This, semio-aesthetics (Afrosemio-aesthetics) seeks that for a playtext to be understood, the cultural background of the playtext should be understood first. If the culture of the play is understood, then, the west and some diasporic Africans/Nigerians would not have the essence to misinterpret African/Nigerian playtexts. The Afro-semio-aesthetics model therefore, would serve as a means towards the deconstruction and deduction of meaning from African/Nigerian playtexts. Afro-semio-aesthetics emphasizes that every facet of the culture of the play crafted by the playwright in any part of Africa is crafted in the ethnographies of the people which the west must read first before interpreting African playtexts. Hence, language, symbols, codes, signs, logo etcetera which form the cultural elements; cultural background of African/Nigerian playtexts, African aesthetics and semiotics, may be well understood and comprehended through the reading of ethnographies of the culture of the playtexts before the White/African; Nigerian can interpret African/Nigerian playtexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Afro-Semio-Aesthetic Analyses of Language and Character Deconstruction in the Selected Playtexts

Derrida's method consists of demonstrating all the forms and varieties of the complexity of semiotics, aesthetics, and their multiple consequences in many fields. His way of achieving this was by conducting thorough, careful, sensitive, and yet transformational readings of philosophical and literary texts, with an ear to what in those texts runs counter to their apparent structural unity or intended sense (authorial creation). This is copiously found in the literary texts selected for this study. For instance, Emmy Idegu in *Tough Man* crafts the worlds of the living and the dead and the weaving of actions from both worlds call for knowing what the play is all about. Again, Ibilisi in Femi Osofisan's *Twingle Twanle...* fighting humans and the adventures underwent by Taye and Kehinde demand knowing what the text is all about. These authorial creation runs through all the plays selected for this study that demand knowing what the literary texts are all about. Hence, Ricoeur avers that: "the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play" (1624). In this sense: "By demonstrating the aporias and ellipses of thought, Derrida hoped to show the infinitely subtle ways that this... complexity, which by definition cannot ever be completely known, works its structuring and destructuring effects" (Powell 34). It must however be acknowledged that deconstruction is not destruction. Deconstruction in the context of this study, is exhuming meaning from the selected playtexts of Osofisan, Okoh, Ukala, Idegu, Ododo, and Iwuh. Reading these plays and locating the (authorial creation) or infused meaning and creating more meanings out of the playtexts through language and character, bearing in mind Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses.

Deconstruction denotes the pursuing of meanings in a text to the point of exposing the supposed contradictions, internal oppositions and areas of convergence upon which it is founded. For, example, the “red wine” or “royal blood” in Ododo’s *Hard Choice*, Masquerade in Okoh’s *Edewede*, growing of tail and eating plantain which to the transfer of the tail in Ukala’s *Akpakaland* and masquerades refusal to take yam at the village square in Iwuh’s *The Village Lamb* galvanise the pursuance of meanings in order to expose the supposed oppositions and internal oppositions therein. Supposedly showing that those foundations are irreducibly complex, unstable, or impossible. Hence: “It is an approach that may be deployed in philosophy, in literary analysis, and even in the analysis of scientific writings” (Royle 56). Deconstruction generally tries to demonstrate that any text is not a distinct whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings: “the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). Any text therefore has more than one interpretation; that the text itself links these interpretations inextricably; that the incompatibility of these interpretations are irreducible; and thus that an interpretative reading cannot go beyond a certain point. Thus Ricoeur succinctly caps it up that: “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627).

It is instructive to be noted that the language and character of any particular playtext have both the bad and the good sides. Therefore, for any interpretative surgeon, both sides; good and bad of these elements of play texts must be understood. This is what Derrida refers to as an “aporia” in the text; thus, deconstructive reading is termed “aporetic.” (Sallis 43). Derrida initially resisted granting to his approach the overarching name “deconstruction”, on the grounds that it was a precise technical

term that could not be used to characterize his work generally. Nevertheless, he eventually accepted that the term had come into common use to refer to his textual approach, and Derrida himself increasingly began to use the term in this more general. It is apparent from the characters of Edewede and Ebikere as binary oppositions; the good and the bad sides. The characters and language of Taye and Kehinde, through the authorial creation are fused with both bad and good sides. This is understood through Langer's discursive and non-discursive symbolism. In her words: "Symbols can be discursive or non-discursive. Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism" (Langer 70). The reader/interpreter gets these binary oppositions from the language (discursive), action (non-discursive) and what the playwright says about the characters, the language they for themselves and what critics say about them. Therefore, if meaning must be made from these elements, both sides; good and bad must be understood by the reader/interpreter through: "Symbols can be discursive or non-discursive. Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism" (Langer 70). That lays bare for Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses. This is explicit from Edewede, Ebikere and Oseme's exchange in *Edewede*:

EBIKERE: Circumcision is part of our culture. My mother was circumcised. So also were her mothers, great grandmothers and great, great, great grandmothers. It is a rite that every woman in this land goes through.

OSEME: Why?

EBIKERE: Well... well... well... em... em... Oh yes! It's part of the initiation rituals. Yes, yes. The initiation ceremony is an occasion that every young girl looks forward to in this land of ours. Oh! I can still remember how it went in my days... (2-3)

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? Regarded as sacrifice, they are left behind for vultures to feed on. Tell her also about those girls who do not live long enough to see the days of their marriage and motherhood because of the infection contacted during the operation. Go on; tell her about all of them.

EBIKERE: (*to OSEME*) My child, go inside the house. Your mother is about to let loose her evil tongue again.

EDEWEDE: Stay there! This is for your benefit as well. Mother-in-law, please sit down. Let us discuss woman to woman, the three of us.

EBIKERE: Me discuss with you?

EDEWEDE: Yes, Mother-in-law. Let us discuss circumcision. To be frank, I too want to know everything about it. Kindly educate us on the subject.
(*Edewede 6*)

This establishes the “differences” between the characters of Ebikere and Edewede. Both characters and their language are of the deconstructionists’ philosophical binary oppositions. They are binary oppositions because, the culture Ebikere praises, is the culture Edewede protests against. This is linked to Langer’s ‘non-discursive symbolism’. Their sensual perception of African aesthetics and semiotics varied because of ‘non-discursive symbolism’. Therefore, for proper interpretation of the play these ‘differences’ must be well understood through African semio-aesthetic analyses. Hence: “In this second stage, the interpreter explores about this question ‘What does this text talk about?’ In this level, the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625).

In the same vein, Saussure talking about language, explicitly suggests that linguistics was only a branch of a more general semiology, a science of signs in general, human codes being only one part. Nevertheless, in the end, as Derrida pointed out, Saussure made linguistics, “the regulatory model’, and for essential, and essentially metaphysical, reasons had to privilege speech, and everything that links the sign to phone” (Saussure 46). Derrida will prefer to follow the more formalization of a general semiotics without falling into what he considered “a hierarchizing teleology” privileging linguistics, and to speak of mark, symbol, sign, and code (non-discursive) rather than of language (discursive), not as something restricted to mankind, but as prelinguistic, as the pure possibility of language, working everywhere there is a relation to something else. In this regard, Onunkwo rightly posits that: “... in a literary text, each word contains only traces of

meaning. Hence, the text becomes a tissue of writing” (125). These traces of meaning is the efforts put in place by the reader/interpreter in the study of characters (non-discursive) and languages (discursive) in the case studies through semio-aesthetic analyses.

Emmy Idegu crafted his play; *Tough Man* by bringing together the world of the living and the dead. Hence, African semio-aesthetic concept. This lays bare for Langer’s “...discursive or non-discursive. Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism” (70). Hence through sensual perception of aesthetic and semiotic elements (non-discursive), he tries to bridge the gap between the world of the living and the dead. African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. Idegu artistically, looked into the cosmic world of the Igala culture to create smooth and peaceful co-existence between the world of the living and the dead. According to Ricoeur: “the interpreter explores about this question ‘What is this book about?’ And examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play” (1624). Substantiating the position of Soyinka in *Myth, Literature and the African World View*. Soyinka in postulating his theory of the “Fourth Stage,” locates the link between the world of the living, the dead and the unborn and opined that there should be link between these three worlds for a better tomorrow. The world Soyinka refers to as chthonic realm, mythonic helm or divinity essence. Idegu may have leaned on this to create communication between the Igala cosmic worlds of the living (Efi'ile), the land of the dead (Efoj'egwu), and the highest realm (the realm of Odoaba Oga'gwu-Ojo Chamachala). That is why African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political,

economic values. This is understood through what Ricoeur refers to as “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). Locating the synergy between Soyinka’s perception of the cosmological order of the African world and that of Idegu is an effort to deconstruct the play and others selected for this study through language, character and semio-aesthetic analyses. There is binary oppositions between the world of the living, the dead and the unborn through their characters and languages which must be understood via Afro-semio-aesthetic discourses.

This last realm alone may create difficulty for the reader if he is not well grounded in the art of interpretation through binary oppositions and sensual perception of Afro-semiotic and aesthetic analyses. Thus, Langer’s discursive and non-discursive symbolism comes to bare. Though through the playwright’s use of the character of Achema (non-discursive/person), we were able to deduce what Idegu meant by the last realm. These are all encoded through ‘non-discursive symbolism’ in the play for the reader to create meaning out of what he has read. It is clearly stated in the line of Achema thus:

Achema: “Ogbai Kolo. You know we have three worlds. I lived in the first, I tarried in the second with you. It is time to go and take a look at the third realm with Ojo chamachala. I cannot keep him waiting any longer. Odoba oga’gwu has waited for me enough.” (70)

Adopting Ricoeur’s Explanation that: “the interpreter explores about this question ‘What is this book about?’ And examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play” (Ricoeur 1624). This could be interpreted as whether Odoba is sitting there and waiting for the character of Achema or that is the third world. The reader/interpreter may equally find ideological disparity

between Idegu's interpretation of the three worlds and Soyinka's perception of the three worlds. This calls for a thorough knowledge of what Deriida's "Differences" is all about and what semio-aesthetics analyses imply in the act of generation of meaning through language (discursive) and character (non-discursive/person). From the character and language of the play one could create his meaning through the interpolation between characters who are dead and characters who are living, which coincides with Soyinka's communication between the three worlds, in line with Afro-semio-aesthetic values.

Character and language deconstruction in a play involves taking an existing character and language in that play, deconstructing them straight and examining the likely/realistic consequences or implications of that character and language that tend to be ignored by straight examples of them. This character in the play does the same thing, but when he comes to deconstruction you see the character making different meaning like a fictional character archetypes. This is leaning on Langer's theory that: "Symbols are ... vehicles for the conception of objects" (Langer 70). That is, a symbol is, "an instrument of thought" (70). Hence, "The character may be entirely fictional or based on a real-life person, in which case the distinction of a 'fictional' versus 'real' character may be made" (Dibattista 20). To this end, Johnson posits that: "When a script has indispensable characters, characters who, without them, the drama cannot stand, then there is a beautiful creation" (87).

Again, "Since the end of the 18th century, the phrase 'in character' has been used to describe an effective impersonation by an actor. Since the 19th century, the art of creating characters, as practiced by actors or writers, has been called characterization" (Bennett and Booth 160). For instance in *Akpakaland*, say the characters of Fulama and Unata may be seen in fictional or real

through Langer's 'non-discursive symbolism'. Having tail and transferring the tail to another is a situation that calls for deconstruction and Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of such play or plays. Thereby propagating Langer's theory thus: "Symbols are ... vehicles for the conception of objects" (Langer 70). We have the characters of Achema, Inikpi and Ame speaking from the ancestral world directly in *Tough Man* calls for critical deconstruction and sensual perception of Afro-semio-aesthetic discourse. This is part of what the study does in the plays selected as case study. In this sense, Euba argues that:

... the question of commitment must arise, wittingly or unwittingly for the playwright... he must ultimately come to decisions about the overall meaning, social and political, that he wishes his plays to express and how best he could collectively convey it, indeed, about his role. (469)

One way to do this is to take a familiar character type and place the character in a realistic setting, and then explore what happens as a result of the character being deconstructed. Leaning on Ricoeur's Appropriation: "the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter's) understanding and meaning gained from the text" (Ricoeur 1627). The reader/interpreter explores likely facets of the character's personality or background that straight examples of the character tends to overlook. As it can be seen that: "A character (non-discursive symbolism emphasise mine) who stands as a representative of a particular class or group of people is known as a type. Types include both stock characters and those that are more fully individualised" (Baldick 265). This can also be done as part of a genre deconstruction, if certain character archetypes are closely associated with a particular genre, a particularly interesting (and decidedly meta) way to do this is by taking a character in a play that is known only for playing certain kinds of roles and fit them in a role or what other character say about them.

On language, according to Iwara: “language is the gateway to the dramatic action as well as the instrument which the characters use to converse with one another and to influence the progress of the action from the beginning to its denouements” (30). The emergence of masquerade (which is an embodiment of non-discursive symbolism) as a character in *Edewede* and the use of what could be referred to as “ancestral language” which carries “Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism” (70). Calls for deconstruction through sensual perception of semio-aesthetic analysis for easy understanding by the reader/interpreter. This can be seen from the exchange among Edewede, Masquerade and His Assistant:

MASQUERADE (*to WEDE*): Bru brughu ghughu.

HIS ASSISTANT (*to WEDE*): Body of a woman! Do you know me?

EDEWEDE: Spirit of our ancestors! Your identity is beyond common knowledge.

MASQUERADE: Khio khior khioeu.

HIS ASSISTANT: They say you claim to know things even beyond common knowledge.

EDEWEDE: Those who say so do me great wrong.

MASQUERADE: Yhou yhou yhing yhwing

ASSISTANT: But you claim to know more than your mothers do about womanhood.

EDEWEDE: Ah! On that subject that may be true to some extent,

MASQUERADE: Hue, hoe hum foe fou.

HIS ASSISTANT: How far can this knowledge of yours take you?

EDEWEDE: For the moment I know not. All I know is that knowledge is valuable. Through knowledge one learns to conduct oneself wisely in a world that is always in the process of becoming.

MASQUERADE: Ghri Ghru ghan. Ghru ghri ghrin ghrim.

HIS ASSISTANT: Of what use is a knowledge that is alien and obscure? The community is the source of knowledge for the living.

EDEWEDE: Some knowledge may seem useless for the present but may not be so for the future. Before you came the women over there spoke out their mind boldly. Today is the dawn of a new day. The things of the past belong to the past. Henceforth we look forward to a brighter future. Edewede!

MASQUERADE: Yegulu gulu gho ghoo.

HIS ASSISTANT: You have spat on the tradition of this land. Temper is high. Go before it becomes tempestuous.

EDEWEDE: No matter how violent a storm may be, it will surely calm down afterwards.

MASQUERADE: Ahiana! Aikhelu! Ufidon! Ughogholo!

HIS ASSISTANT: Forbidden! Abomination! Cursed! Crushed! Go away quickly.
(*Edewede* 43-4)

African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. This is conspicuous from the excerpt above.

The character (non-discursive symbol) and language (discursive symbol) of Masquerade here calls for deconstruction through Afro-semio-aesthetics analyses. The masquerade speaks in what may be referred to as “ancestral language” that needs the African/Nigerian man to do sensual and binary interpretation for easy comprehension. The assistant is a replica of that African man who is gifted in the art of interpretative through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements. As he does his interpretation of masquerade’s language for Edewede if not, Edewede like the reader/interpreter who would have confused with the language of the masquerade, got the meaning the masquerade’s language through an interpreter. The same thing plays out in Sunnie Ododo’s *Hard Choice* thus:

EZE OKIAKOH: Debia, what is the message?

DEBIA: The sun and the moon are on a course of collusion and the stars are trembling. Why? A vow is abrogated but appeased. The object of appeasement is sacrosanct and restless. Your Highness, only the original vow will avert this calamity, but it is too dear to let go. My king, When a medicinal pot of soup sits on the fire boiling, only the brave and courageous attempt a leak from it. My lord, fire is burning inside water and water is helpless. Otapaipoh says that only the red royal wine will quench this fire and if... (27)

There are characters and languages here for deconstruction through sensual perceptions of African semiotics and aesthetics for meaning generation and for adequate understanding of the playtext. However, that an actor deconstructing their established persona or character type is not automatically an example of this character, unless their persona is a recognizable character archetype in its own right. This is because: “The only certainties about postmodernism are that it

is deeply sceptical and that this doubt derives from an obsession with language and meaning” (Robinson 35). This is reflected in the exchange among Baba Ibeji, Mama Ibeji and Babalawo:

BABA IBEJI: [*Touched, going to her*]. But... what’s the matter with you? Are you a small kid? What kind of show is this?

MAMA IBEJI: [*Crying the more*]. I’ll die! Just let me die! Why should I still be alive when my precious boys are dead?

BABALAWO: Dead? But who says they’re dead?

[*He hastily collects his things together to begin the divination*]. Dead! [*To BABA IBEJI.*] Did you tell her that?

BABA IBEJI: Not me! How could I? We all saw them leave the town five years ago. We haven’t heard of them since.

MAMA IBEJI: [*Wailing*]. They’re dead! You just don’t wish to tell me, that’s all! Ah, all my life’s wasted!

BABALAWO: But calm yourself, Mama Ibeji! Calm down and I’ll ask *Ifa!* (*Twingle Twangle... 6*) [*He begins the divination*]

BABALAWO: Well, just sit down and be patient. And you others, if you wish to know what has happened to our dear twins, sit down too. It won’t take that long, for five years is a short space on the divining tray! (*Twingle Twangle... 7*)

The excerpt buttresses Mark Fortier’s submission that, “Derrida is interested in translations and the inevitable differences that occur from one language or semiotic system or context to another” (39). For the reader/interpreter to understand the conversation between Bulama and Enwe here, he should be ready to deconstruct their language and character through semio-aesthetic analyses and Ricoeur’s Explanation: “the interpreter explores about this question ‘What is this book about?’ And examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play” (Ricoeur 1624). In Ukala’s *Akpakaland*, it is reflected in the following dialogue:

FULAMA: Enwe, healer-and-killer-at-the-same-time! What business have you with Unata’a tail? What have you done with her tail?

ENWE: Tail? Unata? Does she have a tail? (FULAMA *is silent.*) Your jokes are always peculiar... Please, sit down. How is the cow now? You dropped the rope across it way?

FULAMA: Yes.

ENWE: How did it behave after that? Didn't it go rubbing its itchy spine against the wall?

FULAMA: Yes... em... Well, I didn't take note.

ENWE: It has grown the tail, hasn't it?

FULAMA: It has. (*Akpakaland*27)

The above is fused with language (discursive), character and action (non-discursive), which may require Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses. It could make the reader/interpreter lost the story, because Enwe who just finishes with Unata few minutes ago, is the Enwe that is talking with Fulama and never made her to know that he is aware of Unata's tail. The same discourse about language was discovered in Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* thus:

UZOKWE: (Clearing his throat) Like a goat and cords, the tapper with roots and herbs.

UJOWUNDU: (Not looking back) How does the hen feed her chicks but by sound?

IKEKWE: Whoever inherits a good tradition guards it jealously. His father was the finest wine tapper that ever lived, have you forgotten?

ALL: Who will? (They all laugh). (9)

Through language, the above exchange reveals a lot about the character of Ujowundu and his background; his family. This may need to be deconstructed through Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis to drive home more meaning from the play text by the reader/interpreter. According to Langer, "Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal based..." (70). Enwe's character needs to be analysed Afro-semio-aesthetic values. But Enwe reveals to Fulama that, he is aware of the whole thing. This is espoused through the following exchange:

ENWE: Go well, my sister. (FULAMA *moves to the door.*) You said you were quarrelling with Unata?

FULAMA: Well, just a minor misunderstanding.

ENWE: And you transferred the cow's tail to her? (*Akpakaland* 27)

In furtherance, Enwe continues to speak in parable (the language which needs Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses) to Fulama, but Fulama like the reader/interpreter need to deconstruct the language through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses, so that she can understand Enwe to allow communication flow. Again, this is explicit from Enwe and Fulama's dialogue thus:

ENWE: So the cow's tail is on the cow?

FULAMA: The cow's tail is on the cow.

ENWE: Those flies that used to trouble the cow so much so that you shed tears, the cow now drives them easily?

FULAMA: Yes.

ENWE: Good! You need not quarrel with Unata then. (*Akpakaland* 28)

Based on Ricoeur's appropriation: "the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter's) understanding and meaning gained from the text" (Ricoeur 1627). Through Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses, it is revealed apparently that they are not talking about cow here, but referring to Bulama's co-wives, especially, Unata as cow. Hence, 'differences' and binary oppositions of deconstruction and Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses are required for more comprehension of the language, character and action of the play.

4.2 Afro- Semiotic and Aesthetic Concept in the Selected Playtexts

Avalanche of African scholars and critics like Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, JP Clark, Okot p'Bitek, Rowland Abiodun, Kofi Agawu, Zulu Sofola, Obiakor, Sam Ukala, Sunnie Ododo and Canice Nwosu among others have succinctly captured the term African aesthetics directly or indirectly in their quest to propagate Afro-postmodernist drive. As it is said that: "The term *African aesthetic* refers to the African perception and appreciation of the nature, beauty, and value of artistic expressions or representations" (Shava 11). The conversation between Amadi and Janet in *The Village Lamb* reveals a lot:

AMADI: I have a deadly sickness. I'm told it was planted in me but I don't believe it. (*Janet is too shocked to talk*) But something tells me there's a cure. (*Pause*) You'll be the first to extract this secret from me, because you're the first, the only and probably ...

JANET: How sweet and romantic! But you haven't told me anything yet.

AMADI: Listen. I have a problem beyond medical capability. Tests prove me a normal human being. But believe me, I'm not. The cure is only in my country. (38)

Janet could not deduce meaning because she is not an African. The sensual perceptions of Africans about their works, nature and culture (Afro-semio-aesthetics). By extension it is the perception and appreciation of nature, art and beauty of artefacts by Africans and for Africans at home and in the diaspora. It is embedded in the plurality of African cultures, and embodied in people's art and practices within their lived African societal contexts. Which are in line with Langer's "Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal based..." (70). It draws from and is directly related to the diverse geographical, environmental, historical, cultural, religious, or spiritual experiences of African peoples, which is the position of African semio-aesthetics. This can be seen in Okoh's *Edewede* explicitly thus:

EBIKERE: My beloved grandchild!
 She who knows to warm the heart of an old widow!
 She who knows when my drinking pot needs fresh water!
 She who knows when my fire place needs fresh wood!
 She who knows when my hut needs scrubbing and fresh coating!
 May you be blessed abundantly! May you live long to harvest all the joys of womanhood! (*Edewede* 1)

This speaks volumes of African Semio-aesthetics and pinches it tent with Langer's "Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning" (71). It is therefore a significant component of African people's tangible and intangible cultural heritage that simultaneously affirms their diversity and reinforces their cultural unity and togetherness. These cultural

conponenets of the African people is reflected in Okoh's *Edewede* through the language of the Masquerade thus:

MASQUERADE (*to WEDE*): Bru brughu ghughu.

HIS ASSISTANT (*to WEDE*): Body of a woman! Do you know me?

EDEWEDE: Spirit of our ancestors! Your identity is beyond common knowledge.

MASQUERADE: Khio khior khioeu.

HIS ASSISTANT: They say you claim to know things even beyond common knowledge. (43)

Afro-semio-aesthetics provides the ground for the understanding of the Masquerade's language, because is symbolic representations that communicate what it is to be an African to future generations on the continent and in the diaspora. Most Africans in the diaspora have retained some of their traditional semiotic and aesthetic elements in their sensual perceptions, which are exhibited in their dress, hairstyles, ornamentation, music (song and dance), and artworks. These various artefacts are symbolic elements defining and sustaining their identity and origin in 'non-discursive wise'. This Rowland Abiodun succinctly captures it that:

While it may have been useful to utilize only Western theoretical paradigms in the study of African art history and aesthetics early in the twentieth century, it has now become imperative to search carefully within the African cultures in which the art originate, and to use internally derived conceptual frameworks in any critical discourse on African art. (17)

The essence of the African semiotic and aesthetic concept is its representation as a construct of African people on the continent and people of African descent in the diaspora that articulates African culture. Hence, "Africanist art historians have begun not only to reexamine their Western-derived methodologies but also to search for theoretical alternatives, lest they lose the 'African' in the African Art" (Abiodun 20). To this study, African semio-aesthetic perception may be seen as how Africans consciously define their own concept of beauty that is, the African-derived standards of perceiving, appreciating, appraising, or applying Afro-semio-aesthetic values or knowledge of things in Africa. This is seen in Ebikere's explanation to Oseme thus:

EBIKERE: May your ancestors protect you!

OSEME: May you too protect me from circumcision!

EBIKERE: I can not do that, my child.

OSEME: Why can you not, Nene?

EBIKERE: Circumcision is part of our culture. My mother was circumcised. So also were her mothers, great grandmothers and great, great, great grandmothers. It is a rite that every woman in this land goes through.

OSEME: Why?

EBIKERE: Well... well... well... em... em... Oh yes! It's part of the initiation rituals. Yes, yes. The initiation ceremony is an occasion that every young girl looks forward to in this land of ours. Oh! I can still remember how it went in my days... (*Edewede* 2-3)

There may be the need to apply Ricoeur's explanation, understanding and appropriation and Langer's symbol, object and person in the study of contemporary Nigerian playtexts. The African semio-aesthetics is African centered, and it reveals the cultural bond between Africans in the continent and abroad. Corroborating this Susan Vogel posits that: "African artists place a high value on fine workmanship and mastery of the medium" (43). Which may need proper understanding by the West to avert misjudgement of the African/Nigerian conceptions of their cultural practices. Hence, the Africaness in Africans is captured in Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...* thus:

NEIGHBOURS: Ha-ha! Mama Ibeji! Duro Na! Patience! What is the matter? Isn't he your husband? You want to kill him?

MAMA IBEJI: Out of my way! I say out of my way! I warn you, let no one intervene, if they don't wish to smell the odour of Soponna this morning! If they don't want to see the red embers in the eyes of Esu! Just stand back and leave us alone!

BABA IBEJI: That's right! We-e-e-re! That madness inside you is awake again! Come and kill me!

MAMA IBEJI: You hear him! How his mouth is running loose! Why not wait? Let's see if all it takes to be a man is the ability to unbutton your sokoto! (*Twingle...* 1-2)

Therefore, African semio-aesthetics embraces a rich variety of creative forms and styles peculiar to people of African origin that incorporate a combination of practical, physical, material,

temporal, and spiritual aspects. Laying bare for Langer's "Discursive symbolism, this is language based thought and meaning while Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal based..." (70). To this end, Adams posits that: "While the African continent is vast and its peoples diverse, certain standards of beauty and correctness in artistic expression and physical appearance are held in common among various African societies" (45). It includes African artistic expressions: visual and performative images, signs, symbols, verbal arts (poetry, oratory performance), rhythm, music (song and dance), dress, hairstyles, cosmetics, designs (African architecture and decorative patterns), and crafts in and from Africa. These are what Langer in her theory refers to as: "Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal based emotion and meaning; art, drama, music, dance" (71). This is succinctly seen with the contents of the bags carried by Digbaro and Efundunke in *Twingle Twangle*... thus:

KEHINDE: Oh yes, we must share the luggage.

TAYE: Right, one bag each.

KEHINDE: Which one do you want?

TAYE: I leave you the first choice, brother.

KEHINDE: I don't really mind which I take. But since Digbaro is coming with me, he'd better just bring the bag he is carrying.

TAYE: Which means you are taking the bag of weapons.

KEHINDE: And you the bag with herbs and musical instruments.

TAYE: It's not fair, but I accept.

KEHINDE: Would you want to switch then?

TAYE: No. Digbaro does not respect me any way-

KEHINDE: No, and Efundunke fears me. So it's a deal (*Twingle*... 12-13)

Theory of semiotics and Langer's theory of symbol become evidently important to this study as they both deal with non-discursive symbolism which are nonverbal based emotion and meaning; art, drama, music, dance. African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their

religious, social, political, economic values in both discursive and non-discursive perceptions.

Again, it is captured in *Akpakaland* thus:

FULAMA: (*Cocking up her nose.*) What's smelling like this? (*Looks round and notices well-roasted plantain by the fire.*) Ah! It's that plantain? Is it yours?

UNATA: Is any food mine these days? I just can't eat.

FULAMA: This one will be really tasty. Try it.

UNATA: I can't chew anything without worsening thus headache.

FULAMA: This one will be really sweet. I like roasted plantain very much, but it's yours and you've eaten nothing.

UNATA: It doesn't matter, if you want it.

FULAMA: Mm? I... I should take it?

UNATA: If you like.

FULAMA: (*Reaching for the plantain.*) You mean I should ... (*Licks her lips.*) eh? (*Picks up the plantain.*) Eh?

UNATA: Hhen!

FULAMA: (*Eating avidly.*) Mmmm ... This is more than the sweetness of plantain ... I must sit down and finish it here. (*Sit.*) That daughter of mine is greedy ... If she as much as sniffs this, she will pounce on it and devour it all ...

Mmmm ... (*Having eaten up the plantain, she licks her fingers.*) Em ... is it ... do you have more?

UNATA: I think is only that one that Unani left for me. Check the fire. (*Twingle... 40-1*)

Via Afro-semio-aesthetic approach, it was discovered that without engaging African sensual perceptions to plantain, one would be forced to ask if ordinary eating of plantain could cause one to grow tail. But through interpretation of their characters and the language, it was also discovered that there is jealousy and rivalry between the Unata and Fulama, the two wives of Akpaka both of the provinces of rich and poor respectively. Plantain itself depicts 'non-discursive symbol'. The crafting of this in the play depicts the through African history that a non-African and some Africans may not understand.

Beyond the rituality of African art history, Afro-semio-aesthetics goes a long way to portray other values like communication, social interaction, meaning making values that are critically perceived and conceived by Africans in Africa and Africans in the diaspora. Thus: "Taken collectively, these

values and standards have been characterised as comprising a generally accepted African aesthetic” (Welsh-Asante 60). African artefacts have generally been exhibited with reference only to cultural context and use. In view of recent studies of African aesthetic principles and related moral and religious values, there is good reason to emphasize the formal African semio-aesthetic aspects of the objects and the moral and religious ideas they express. The exchange between the trio in Idegú’s *Tough Man* will implicitly help in the interpretation of the play text through Afro-semio-aesthetic values. The trio enumerate their sordid experience and ordeal in the world of the living.

Achema: They pursued me from birth.

Ame: Oh yes, I remember. Yes, from birth they sharpened their swords against you.
Odoaba used me to defend you.

Achema: That is true. Your concern before you left us helped me to a point.

Inikpi: (*Smiling.*) What a joy to hear that. It is good you both are here now.

Ame: (*To Inikpi.*) But you started it all. You gave your all for those of us coming after you to emulate.

Achema: That is correct. But they always have a way of pushing their best into early exit from *ef’ile*. (21)

The connect between the living and the dead was established by Inikpi as she tries to champion the way forward on how to ameliorate the problem of the people. What is most important is that, the relationship between the living and the dead should be well understood by the reader/interpreter through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements for proper interpretative purposes.

If one goes by the content of Ricoeur’s and Langer’s theories: “Understanding, Explanation and Appropriation and symbol, object and person”. They present adequate instruments for interpretation, but did not emphasise the environment of the play, which is one of the cardinal elements of African semio-aesthetics as a model/an approach proposed by this researcher.

African semio-aesthetics generally has a moral basis, as indicated by the fact that in many African languages the same word means “beautiful” and “good”. It is consistent with the use and meaning of African art that it should be both beautiful and good, because it is intended not only to please the eyes but to uphold moral values and communicate meanings. The ethical and religious basis of African art may explain why the principal subject is the human figure; African art often appears in ritual contexts that deal with the vital moral and spiritual concerns of the human condition. To corroborate this, Abiodun submits that:

No single traditional discipline can adequately supply answers to the many unresolved questions in African art history. Because of the aesthetic, cultural, historical, and, not infrequently, political biases, already built into the conception and development of Western art history... (18)

Hence Afro-semio-aesthetics is an ideal enterprise in the arts which is used to evaluate, judge and interpret artistic consumptions in Africa. This is to say aesthetics is not alien to Africa as well as other climes like Europe, America and Asia. Aesthetics was also explored in the Greek and Roman arts as found in their art forms, be they, sculpture, artefacts, literature and performing arts, among others. African aesthetics has been dominated and influenced by the West which misjudges African semio-aesthetics. Barry also argues in favour of African aesthetics in the arts, maintaining that: “African cultural aesthetics has been dominated and characterised by Euro-western tradition and culture because of the influx of colonialism” (61). Hallen comments further that:

The study and analysis of African art and aesthetics have been dominated by Western culture. Initially the aesthetic sensitivities of African cultures were characterised as ‘primitive’ and of low intellectual calibre. Africans reacted to such negative stereotyping by articulating their own, deliberately by non-western aesthetic theories. (61)

Therefore, African critics and writers have done a sort of re-writing or re-examination to the practice of Euro-western misconception of African cultural aesthetics in many instances, such as,

in drama, poetry, music, novel, and film, among others, as it is evident in *Twingle Twangle...*, *Hard Choice*, *The Village Lamb*, *Tough Man*, *Edewede* and *Akpakaland*. Corroborating this, Sesan further argues that:

At the turn of twentieth century, African philosophers, anthropologists and literary historians began with frantic efforts to examine and revamp African art and aesthetics from the moribund state it was forced to be by the western critics. Their argument was that the aesthetic quality of any art cannot be appreciated without due consideration for the culture that produces it. Before full aesthetics of African art can be appreciated, there should be close consideration of African culture. (10)

African semio-aesthetics thus, provides these feelings, going beyond beauty which our knowledge and understanding of semiotics (science of signs and symbols) will make us understand. Consequently, we are not only concerned in the cultural signs and symbols explored in the plays selected to be studied and analysed as African cultural symbols of Afro-semio-aesthetics which eventually produce the desired taste, beauty, and communication, rather we are also concerned about the different meanings they (cultural symbols) project ‘non-discursive’ wise. Therefore, we are looking at cultural signs and symbols in *Twingle Twangle...*, *Hard Choice*, *The Village Lamb*, *Tough Man*, *Edewede* and *Akpakaland* as African cultural semio-aesthetic signs, symbol, codes for communicative hegemony. A critical reading of *Hard Choice* will be a pointer.

In Ododo’s *Hard Choice*, a clash of interest exist between Chief Ubanga and the Queen. Owing to the philosophical binary oppositions that can be found in a person which is not open to the two of them. There is an indication that the Queen was only using Chief Ubanga to deter the princess from marrying a prince from another community (tribe) and Chief Ubanga carries out the action for his interest in marrying the princess. This action alone cries for deconstruction of both characters and language of the play. Beyond this, it was also discovered that in order for the Queen to achieve her defiant aim, she indulges in the use of hooligans or touts through Chief Ubanga.

Who invaded the venue of the marriage and snatched away the crown of King Iginla. The crown (a non-discursive object) here caught the attention of the researcher; the symbol of authority to King Iginla and Igedu Kingdom. After the crown was snatched away, what becomes of the character of King Iginla? Because the crown is an embodiment of meaning. Because the sensual perception of Africans about the crown which culminate African semiotics and aesthetics is apparent to Africans/Nigerans. Hence, the need for deconstruction of this action through African semio-aesthetics. This is evident from Bashorun's line in Ododo's *Hard Choice* thus:

BASHORUN: Good to know, but Your Highness, your search is rather too slow for us. In case you don't know, the life of our king hangs on that crown. If in three days, it not recovered and surrendered, we shall be left with no other choice but to march on your kingdom and recover the crown ourselves. I believe you know what that means. In one word... WAR! (*Turns and leaves with his men. The others remain speechless as the message sinks.*) (Ododo 23)

The crown that propelled Bashorun to threaten Eze Okiakoh and the entire Emepiri kingdom with war demands interpretation through deconstruction and Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses of the play. The crown holds sensual perceptions of Afro-semio-aesthetics. The three elements (explanation, understanding and appropriation) of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation become necessary to the study of these playtexts. A reader/an interpreter needs to know what these plays are all about. He needs to know what the plays talk about and he appropriates the plays to existing phenomena in the world. The priest in Africa means a lot. They all resort to consulting him and Eze Okiakoh in *Hard Choice* asks:

EZE OKIAKOH: Debia, what is the message?

DEBIA: The sun and the moon are on a course of collision and the stars are trembling. Why? A vow is abrogated but appeased. The object of appeasement is sacrosanct and restless. Your Highness, only the original vow will avert the calamity, but it is too dear to let go. My king, when a medicinal pot of soup sits on fire boiling, only the brave and courageous

attempt a leak from it. My lord, fire is burning inside water and water is helpless. Otapaipoh says that only red wine will quench this fire if...

CHIEF UBANGA: (Cuts in.) Enough of these incomprehensible statements.

DEBIA: It's not me, it is Otapaipoh. Otapaipoh says that what belongs to the gods is being forcefully substituted; deceit and connivance are conveyor belts in this act. Your Highness, your clue to solving this impending calamity is to offer royal red wine to the gods. I speak no more ... (Packing his things to depart, other chiefs intercepted him.)

CHIEF BEMBE: Debia, the gods have spoken through you in their own language. To leave without speaking to us in the idioms we understand is to leave us more confused and far withdrawn from the answers we seek. (27-8)

Bringing the Debia in and consulting the gods is African. The language of the gods is equally African and it only the Debia that can interpret it. That is why through the priest, it was discovered that the crown is in the shrine of Oguguru. Of all the places, why the queen decides to drop the crown at Oguguru shrine? Afro-semio-aesthetic concept played out here. This demands hermeneutic interpretation, according to Paul Ricoeur. It was discovered as the play progresses that Oguguru shrine requested for Royal red wine. This royal red wine which was latter translated to be royal blood (African semio-aesthetics) must be well deconstructed to allow meaning to flow. Hence, Langer conceives symbols as: "vehicles for the conception of objects" (Langer 70). Again, symbol is: "an instrument of thought" (70). The Princess of Emepiri's neck less that she handed over to the Prince of Igedu kingdom is symbolic and the jubilation by the two communities in unity is a signifier; these are all elements of African semio-aesthetics, which must be well deconstructed for communication enterprises. This is explicit from the following dialogue thus:

PRINCESS: (*She removes the coral beads on her neck.*) Oki my love, with this coral beads I decorate you to reaffirm the vision we both share...

DEBIA: Yes, she's right. It is one aspect of our customs that has remained a guided secret because of fear of abuse. Apart from marital ties, any male that an only-child-princess gives her royal coral beads, automatically becomes the crown prince of Emepiri Kingdom... (*Hard Choice 50-51*)

African cultural semio-aesthetics constitutes the factors both tangible and intangible in form and ideas to represent African world-view. In recent times, African cultural semio-aesthetics is at the core of Nigerian plays directly or indirectly. For more than two decades now, Nigerian playwrights have explored African semio-aesthetic approaches to present and explore African sensual perceptions through cultural symbols and signs that peculiar to Nigerians/Africans in the writing of their plays. This has helped them in great measures to achieve presentation of African semio-aesthetics through the medium of playwriting. The examples are: Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Sofola's *Sweet Trap*, Nwadigwe's *Udoji* and *The Installation*, Clark's *Song of a Goat*, Julie Okoh's *In the Fullness of Time*, Nwosu's *Hopes of the Living*, Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* and the plays under study among others. The influence Nigerian plays and playwrights have enjoyed or derived from African semiotics and aesthetics in practice over the years can never be over-emphasised. This is as a result of African sensual perceptions of their literature, character and language. Consequently, literary critics have attempted to discuss this development to reveal the extent of influence of African semiotics and aesthetics on Nigerian plays of both the English language and indigenous languages like Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and others. This cultural representation is obviously captured in the exchange between Ebikere and Oseme in *Edewede*.

Nigerian plays have covered avalanche of issues as they relate to women and their virginity, rights and other issues as they affect women. These are purely Africa's. This brings us to the importance of this sacred part of a woman's body in African society which we take very serious to observe certain aspects of our life, be they, sacrifice, marriage, or maintaining fidelity, among others. In line with Langer's theory of symbol. "Symbols are ... vehicles for the conception of objects" (Langer 70). This is replicated in *Edewede*. The age-long tradition plays around the narrow path

of women. Through this narrow path women get infected which is one of the major reasons why Edewede protests against the obnoxious practice of circumcision in Okoh's *Edewede* thus:

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? Regarded as sacrifice, they are left behind for cultures to feed on. Tell her also about those girls who do not live long enough to see the days of their marriage and motherhood because of the infection contacted during the operation. Go on; tell her about all of them. (*Edewede* 6)

Therefore, womanhood can be seen as a symbol (non-discursive symbol) with vital implications. Taking into cognisance sensual perceptions of African semio-aesthetics and looking at the attributes and features of importance attached womanhood, such as, procreation and reservoir for new life, among others. Consequently, in Africa, womanhood is adored and celebrated. This is why young women are welcomed into adulthood in most African communities, to express their sanctity, chastity, purity and others. To this end, Ododo posits that: "The cardinal focus of these various ceremonial practices are to ensure the sanctity, purity and chastity of womanhood; ethics and moral alertness, endurance, courage and thorough grounding in home management, philosophy and world view of the society before legal betrothal into marriage" (153). This is the focus of semiotics and Langer's theory of symbol, which deals with discursive and non-discursive symbolism.

This implies that African aesthetics and semiotics and their features, and narrative devices, among others, are part of the people's art for the appreciation of it and for communicative purposes. They culminate both discursive and non-discursive symbolism. Arguing in favour of African semiotics and aesthetics, Alamu strongly believes that aesthetics should be used to project beauty and greatness of art work. He argues in his opinion that:

... the features of goodness in a work of art are also responsible for its greatness. Though the serious content is necessary for art, but it is necessary only because it

affords a richer material for aesthetic use. The greatness of art also need not be in terms of the intrinsic value of serious content, but rather in terms of something resulting from its use aesthetically. There should be a meaningful distinction between serious content constituting great art and serious content making for great art. The presence of serious content in a work of art is not enough to adjudge it as great. Rather what should constitute its greatness is the device employed to make the serious content appealing. (42)

The sensual perception and “differences” in cultural signs and symbols as elements of African semiotics and aesthetics is sensually perceived by Africans in general and Nigerians in particular. Furthermore, the manner to generate more meanings in Nigerian drama can be determined by exploration of African semio-aesthetics as a tool for communication in Nigerian drama. This can be actualized through deconstruction of the fused meanings through: “Discursive symbolism... and Non-discursive symbolism...” (Langer 70). In particular texts for a better understanding by the reader/interpreter.

4.3 Intertextuality and Afro-Semio-Aesthetic Concept in the Selected Playtexts

In the words of Peter Barry, intertextuality theory is a postmodernist literary canon and tradition. Postmodern critics do not deny the existence of intertextual engagement in the studying of literary texts. They often: “... foreground what might be called intertextual elements in literature, such as parody, pastiche, and allusion, in all of which there is a major degree of reference between one text and a safely external reality” (Barry 91). He thus conceives intertextuality as: “the shaping of a text meaning by another text” (19). Intertextual figures include: “allusion, quotation, caloque, plagiarism, translation, pastiche and parody” (Hallo 608). Obviously from the foregoing, intertextuality therefore, is a playwright’s borrowing and transformation/transmutation of a prior text or to a reader’s referencing of one text in reading another. William Irwin argues that, the term “has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva’s original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence” (227).

Owing to the above, numerous literary theories and canons in literary worlds have strongholds with intertextuality before its coinage by Julia Kristeva in 1960.

One distinctive feature which is recurrent in the plays selected in this study with regard to intertextual relationship is the weaving of the ideas of the plots into culture. *Twingle Twangle...* is weaved around culture, the same way *Edewede* is intertwined with culture and *Akpakaland* is laced in culture and tradition. Other plays are *Hard Choice*, *Tough Man* and *The Village Lamb* are all interlaced with the cultural practices of the people. This reality about African cultural heritage was revealed through Achema's line from the world of the dead, as he expresses the truth of the matter which may be understood by the reader/interpreter before meaning can be deducted thus:

Achema: Let the people themselves solve the problem they created for the land.
None of us can go back there for any reason...
Inikpi confirms the saying of Achema as she says:
Inikpi: ... none of us can go down there. Alapa correctly said it all that the solution
to the problem of the land lies with the people themselves. (23)

Thus, making the study more interesting as it looks at the character and language construction in the plays, which revolves around cultural milieu of the people. Furthering the search to deconstruct these characters and the ways they meddle with language through the study of African semiotics and aesthetics for proper understanding of the plays and the meanings they portend. Issues arising from the interpretation of the plays, which should be interpreted by the reader/interpreter, and how they relate to interconnectedness of the case studies, therefore, need engaging discourse and analysis for clarity.

Language: the depth of language (discursive symbolism) is highly placed by the playwrights through the character (non-discursive symbolism) construct, which should be understood for interpretation and communication essence. Language runs through *Twingle-Twangle...*,

Akpakaland, Edewede, Tough Man, Hard Choice and *The Village Lamb* as can be seen obviously from the lines culled from the plays below:

TAYE: My people, we should always learn from nature! Roses are pretty, but don't they also grow thorns? The patanmo plants learns to be prudent and closes its thighs when the prying gaze grows bolder and threatens to become wanton caress. Yes, the snake wears a coat of diamonds, but carries a pouch of poison. Why, I ask you, why should it be different with human beings?

CITIZEN: We are listening! Teach us! Oluko wa!

TAYE: There are people who are like flowers, for beauty, or like herbs; with hands of healing. But there are those who are weeds. And there's always an answer, in nature, for weeds! (*Twingle-Twangle... 79*)

This and many more languages can be found in the play. They must be well understood and appropriated according to Ricoeur's theory of Interpretation for proper interpretation. Language is seen in *Akpakaland* thus:

NAR: The wind will blow-

NAR & M.O.A.: And we'll see the arse of the hen! (*Akpakaland 24*)

ENWE: So the cow's tail is on the cow?

FULAMA: The cow's tail is on the cow.

ENWE: Those flies that used to trouble the cow so much so that you shed tears, the cow now drives them easily?

FULAMA: Yes.

ENWE: Good! You need not quarrel with Unata then. (*Akpakaland 28*)

Character: as an important instrument used by the playwrights in their various plays to convey the messages of the playtexts can be seen clearly from their construct. The plays are well built around characters, who may be understood from their lines (language). The reader/interpreter may understand them more through what the playwright says about the characters, what the characters say about themselves and what other characters say about them. This can also be seen conspicuously from *Twingle Twangle...:*

KEHINDE: Would you want to switch then?

TAYE: No. Digbaro does not respect me anyway-

KEHINDE: No, and Efundunke fears me. So it's a deal.

TAYE: Come, Efundunke. Come and say goodbye to my brother.

KEHINDE: And you Digbaro. Here's where we split up. Say goodbye to them.
(*Twingle-Twangle...* 13)

For the proper understanding of the play, Ricoeur's theory should be well understood and appropriated. Language and character as discursive and non-discursive symbolism can be deduced from *Akpakaland* thus:

FULAMA: I'm going nowhere. This is also an important state matter. When rubbish is too much in the soup, the blind notices it. I won't leave. (To AUDIENCE.) Everyone says, "the president is good. The president is imperial. The president is straightforward. The president is this. The president is that... You thought that would give her the heir to the throne? Men do not decide such things for the gods. I have just a daughter, but I'm not barren. The Beautiful One may have two children, but aren't they also girls? (*Hoots.*) Excessive beauty may not beget an heir.... (*Akpakaland* 14-15)

Ebikere's words to her granddaughter say a lot about her in *Edewede*:

EBIKERE: My beloved grandchild!

She who knows to warm the heart of an old widow!

She who knows when my drinking pot needs fresh water!

She who knows when my fire place needs fresh wood!

She who knows when my hut needs scrubbing and fresh coating!

May you be blessed abundantly! May you live long to harvest All the joys of womanhood! (*Edewede* 1)

Human sacrifice: this sacrifice runs through the play texts selected for this study. In Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...*, Kehinde encounters Bilisi who as a result of terrorizing Eriko, has made the people to be killing their maidens every year as sacrifice. Until the arrival of Kehinde, which saw the end of Bilisi. Kehinde averted sacrificing Lawunmi, the King's daughter and the princess of Eriko to Bilisi. The same sacrifice runs in Ukala's *Akpakaland*. For instance, Fulama's interest was to sacrifice Unata for the wives that are from the rich province. In her quest to succeed in killing her, she went as far as planting a tail on her through Enwe the medicine man. At the end

we saw a reversal of event as the tail went back to her and all the effort to make her live was nipped in the bud as she was mistakenly killed at the end. This is not far from human sacrifice. The above is African semio-aesthetics which is the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. This expression of arts and culture is revealed in Ododo's *Hard Choice*:

BASHORUN: I am afraid not. I saw Baba Onifade before I set out early this morning from Igedu. He consulted ifa and reveals that the crown is in the custody of some fiery gods fuming with anger. If not recovered in seven days from now, he dies (Points to the king. Shocking expressions by all present.)

CHIEF SHAMU: You're the Bashorun, the grand-commander of Igedu army, what do we do...we cannot go home without the crown; what is masquerade without his mask?

ATTENDANT: Facequerade.

CHIEF SHAMU: Shut up, is this a time for careless jokes?

ATTENDANT: It's not a joke, sir. A masquerade without a mask is a facequerade. (Ododo, 19)

It is obvious from the exchange above that the crown is a symbol of authority, which is referred to a masquerade without a mask as facequerade and such that should not be taken for granted. The snatching away of the crown signifies that the pride of Igedu kingdom, the authority of Igedu kingdom, the power of Igedu kingdom have been snatched away. This is weaved in language and character which requires Afro-semio-aesthetic elements for interpretation.

Okoh's *Edewede* deals with female circumcision during initiation, which of course, leads to the death of the victim (maiden). Until Edewede rose against the obnoxious killings to save the lives of young girls in the community. This makes the play suitable for the study with other plays selected for this study. This is found in Edewede's line thus:

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? ... Tell her also about those girls who do not live long enough to see the days of their marriage and motherhood because of the infection contacted during the operation. Go on; tell her about all of them. (*Edewede* 6)

Idegu's *Tough Man* is centred on the death of Ame, Inikpi and Achema. Ame and Inikpi sacrificed their lives for the betterment of the people, while Achema on the other hand was believed to have been killed by his people. This was really hammered on in the play which makes it studious with other case studies. Ododo's *Hard Choice* captures human sacrifice too. Like Lawunmi, the princess Ereko in *Twingle-Twangle...* and Inikpi in *Tough Man*, the princess in *Hard Choice* voluntarily laid down her life for peaceful co-existence between Igedu and Emepiri kingdoms. Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* is not left out of the interrelatedness of the case studies. The lamb in the play in the character of Amadi has a mark on him as the sacrificial lamb no matter the height he attains. Amadi like Olunde in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is to die so he could carry the people's burdens to the gods. He was truly killed at the end of the play despite his status in the society as a medical doctor like Olunde who could have been more useful for the community.

Thus, intertextuality means to intermingle while weaving. It denotes intertextual relationship or interconnectedness between a work and the tradition it belongs to which helps define it. This goes beyond text influencing a text. Rather, it is a form of signifying system that constitutes the manner in which texts transform earlier signifying systems (texts). Judith Still and Michael Worton submit that: "the theory of intertextuality insists that a text (for the moment to be understood in the narrow sense) cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (1).

The term intertextuality did not begin in 1969 or there about when it was coined by a French literary critic and scholar of Bulgarian origin, Julia Kristeva. Kristeva believes that a text is not

simply a product of a single author, but of its relatedness to other texts and to the structures of language itself. She argues further that any text: “is constructed of a mosaic of quotation; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (120). The theory’s existence could be predated to the classic eras of both Greece and Rome. This is in line with Kolawole’s argument that: “... Plato and Aristotle did not use the word intertextuality, by defining literature as mimetic, as an imitation of other pre-existent texts, they located the earliest definitions of literature on intertextual terrains and connections”(8). Furthermore, Lawal posits that intertextuality as a theory:

... is not the business of today but an old literary practice. African dramatists have employed intertextuality theory when many existing works of arts such as drama, poetry, fiction, myth, and so on, are re-worked and amended to suit a new medium of their choice based on their artistic selectivity. (Lawal 41)

Following this and confirming that the practice of intertextuality as a theory is not of today, Adeoti observes that:

... African dramatists have relocated Greek texts into African contexts. Efua Sutherland’s *Edufa* was based on Euripides’ *Alcestis* while Athol Fugard, John Kani and Winston Ntshona turned *Antigone*’s story of deliberate disobedience of the establishment into a protest play: *The Island*, against the apartheid regime in South Africa. (13)

The position of Adeoti above, like other African critics and literary scholars, is to see critically, the impact of the theory of African literature. Intertextuality has long been in existence and practice in Africa before the Euro-American literature. Eminently accurate is Ayo Kehinde’s submission that:

The theory of intertextuality, despite the Euro-western origin, is not entirely alien to African oral literary practice. In fact, African oral literature among many other features is marked by its status of non-authorship. That is, often than not, oral literary genres in Africa are taken as having no individual authors as in the case of written literature. Rather, oral literature is conceived as a communal artefact. It is communally owned and transmitted from generation to generation (163).

Lawal corroborates Kehinde as he posits that: “it is not only Euro-American by nature; it exists in any society where literature exists. In intertextuality, a text is said to speak to another text, be it in the same genre or different genre entirely” (42). Therefore, the essence of intertextual endeavours (adaptations) adopted by Emmy Idegu with the interrelatedness and connectedness among his plays, is to take into practice, the theory of textuality and intertextuality in his play, *Tough Man*, from the legends of both Omodoko and Inikpi to texts. Idegu has successfully and clearly synchronised and synthesised the literary relationships between the society and the dramatic texts through the exploration of the art of adapting the story of Inikpi and Omodoko to playtexts, noting the intertextualization of the texts. One of the critics and modern literary theorists, Terry Eagleton in his *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, argues that intertextuality is a normal practice in the literary worlds, as all literary works are re-worked, re-shaped, re-written:

All literary works ... are ‘rewritten’ if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a work which is not also a ‘re-writing’. No work and no current evaluation of it, can simply be extended to new groups of people without being changed, perhaps almost unrecognisably, in the process; and this is one reason why what counts as literature is notably unstable affair. (Eagleton 12)

In supporting the foregoing, Nabil Alawi maintains that: “intertextuality anticipated and catered for the age of information while it attended to the present time of its inception in 1960s and 1970s” (6). Expatiating this, Alawi tries to bridge intertextuality with Darwinian biological evaluation theory that: “There is growing trend among exponents of intertextuality to link the evaluation of texts to the biological evaluation whereby texts are seen as members in a chain similar to the *scala naturae* (the great chain of beings) of Darwin” (8). Lawal posits that: “New texts come into existence from the existing ones with the exploration of intertextual time and space” (44). The playtexts selected for this study may all be re-written of oral texts evolving from the playwrights’ etymological

backgrounds. These backgrounds must be understood for proper interpretation. This is what semio-aesthetics is proposing; for a play to be understood concretely, the backgrounds of the playwrights and the plays should be understood. This may be applicable to most Nigerian plays and playwrights.

As the theme of sacrifice is wholly an Afro-semio-aesthetic affairs which runs through *Twingle Twangle...*, so it runs through Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed* and *Red is the Freedom Road* and *Morountodun*, Julie Okoh's *Edewede*, *Closed Doors*, *The Trials* and *Aisha*. Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland*, *Break a Boil* and *Odour of Justice* and other plays. Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man*, *Omodoko* and *The Legendary Inikpi*, Sunnie Ododo's *Hard Choice*, *Broken Pitchers*, *To Return from the Void* and other plays and John Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*, *Birth Right*, *Ashes and Daydreams* and many other Nigerian playtexts. In *Twingle Twangle...*, it was discovered that Lawunmi was to be sacrificed to Bilisi to buy more life for the people, as can be seen below:

MOLUWE: Lawunmi, my daughter, do you know the purpose of this journey. On which we are sending you?

LAWUNMI: Yes father, kaabiyesi! I salute you, you the Olodo of Etido, this our beleaguered town: And I answer boldly: I go to buy more life for our people.

MOLUWE: I ask, daughter, do you know where you are going?

LAWUNMI: I am going, dear father, To a market far, far away, The birthplace of fable and of song, the market where our ancestors, they say, Trade with the gods.

MOLUWE: And what will you buy there?

LAWUNMI: New births, new harvests, A new cloth for the earth, a colour Different from the colour of drought, New alliances, just as you send me, A green renewal with the fountains Of our people's beginnings...

MOLUWE: The journey may be rough.

LAWUNMI: And you taught me how to go, to steel my flesh from pain.

MOLUWE: You yourself, my dear daughter, you yourself will not return.

LAWUNMI: No: But that is even why I go gladly, For I shall be among immortals, I shall enter into our legends. (*Twingle...* 19)

The end of Lawunmi's song is important to us as it connects to Kehinde's bag of weapons (Non-discursive symbolism of Langer's theory). In the words of Lawunmi: "One may gather guns, take

to soldering, But will not bring goodness back as booty” (*Twingle...* 21). In line with deconstruction, language, character and Afro-semio-aesthetics, Kehinde’s encounter with Bilisi at Etido signifies what Kehinde represents which is war. Kehinde fought Bilisi and killed it as a monster which has been disturbing and tormenting Etido people for years. The people have promised to sacrifice virgin for Bilisi, but Bilisi’s physical combat with Kehinde saw the end of Bilisi. Kehinde marries Lawunmi and became the king of Etido. Taye on the hand peacefully and gently walks into Ereko at the time that there is competition. The winner of this competition is billed to marry the Princess too. He peacefully won the competition with patience and endurance. When all the contestants like Priest, Mullah, Professor, Businessman and Officer tried to drink what is in the pot they couldn’t. Taye decides to contest and people were surprised as he was not among the finalists. But after much argument and convictions he was allowed to contest.

However, from the post-structuralist approach, Kristeva’s coinage of “intertextuality” represents an attempt to synthesize Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotics, his study of how signs derive their meaning within the structure of a text with Bakhtin’s dialogism; his examination of the multiple meanings, or “heteroglossia”, in each text and in each word.(Irwin 228). For Kristeva, “the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity” (69). When we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, “codes” imparted to the writer and reader by other texts. For example, when we read Emmy Idegu’s *The Legendary Inikpi, Omodoko* and *Tough Man* we may decode these plays as modernist literary experiments, or as a response to the epic tradition, or as part of some other conversation, or as part of all of these conversations at once. This intertextual view of literature, as shown by Roland Barthes, supports the concept that the meaning of a text does not reside in the text, but is produced

by the reader/interpreter in relation not only to the text in question, but also to the complex network of texts involved in the reading process.

More recent post-structuralist theory, such as that formulated in Daniela Caselli's *Beckett's Dantes: Intertextuality in the Fiction and Criticism*, re-examines intertextuality: "as a production within texts, rather than as a series of relationships between different texts" (Genette 70). Some postmodern theorists like to talk about the relationship between "intertextuality" and "hypertextuality"; intertextuality makes each text a "living hell of hell on earth" (Kristeva 66). Part of a larger mosaic of texts, just as each hypertext can be a web of links and part of the whole World-Wide Web. Indeed, the World-Wide Web has been theorized as a unique realm of reciprocal intertextuality, in which no particular text can claim centrality. Yet the, "Web text eventually produces an image of a community; the group of people who write and read the text using specific discursive strategies" (Mitra 1).

Stephen Awung consenting to the theory and principles of intertextuality opines two principles embedded in intertextuality, which are imitation and quotation respectively. Just as Kolawole argues earlier in this work that intertextuality goes beyond imitation, she again steps further to say that: "...intertextuality transcends naïve assumptions of imitation of other fictional works" (9). She believes that it is literal to look at intertextuality from the realm of imitation. She asserts that: "one could perceive literary intertextuality in the light of literature as metaphor, as extended metaphor, as allegory and as symbol, looking at literature beyond the literal" (9). Stephen Awung explaining further the notions of 'imitation' and 'quotation' in intertextuality: "by imitating a text, one tends to mix one's ideas with the ideas contained in the imitated text-thus leading to a product of

hybridity” (4). Which are some of the elements of interrelatedness found in the selected Nigerian playtexts.

In the same vein, Awung explains the ‘quotation’, “by the theory quotation in intertextuality, one strives to incorporate the quotation into the unified textuality which makes the text a semiotic unit” (4). The theory of quotation therefore, is the second theory of intertextuality. It is the art of quoting a word, sentence or a whole text from existing text. While imitation which is the first theory in intertextuality is paramount as it has reliable position contrary to ‘naïve’ and ‘literal’ as posited above. The most pertinent is that the artistic imitation must involve artistic creativity and ingenuity. Apparently, what the current study does is of course, is undertaking and attempting a critical reading and analyses of the texts, and this requires a conglomerate of intertextual rapport between the primary texts and their origins, that is, their backgrounds. These backgrounds are the emphases of African semio-aesthetic model as opined by this researcher. For any reader/interpreter to interpret any play he should be well-schooled in the context of the playtexts.

Furthermore, Sturrock argues in favour of intertextuality that it goes beyond the ‘influence’ of writers on each other. To structuralists, “language is powerful but it also determines subjectivity. Structuralists sought to counter what they saw as a deep-rooted bias in literary and aesthetic thought which emphasised the uniqueness of both texts and authors” (120). Kolawole shares in this opinion as she posits that: “a writer of a work of art is also the first reader of existing texts before it. The work of art, is, highly influenced directly or otherwise by other existing texts, ideologies, literary traditions or linguistic patterns and belief systems of a particular social milieu” (8). This attests to the fact that no author just like Osofisan, Ukala, Okoh, Ododo, Idegú and Iwuh is an original owner of the text, because the sources of their texts are definitely from somewhere and somehow. It is pertinent to recall the position of Still and Worton here as they observe the:

“cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material if you like, book by all the texts which reader brings to it” (1). Again, Kolawole argues that intertextuality goes beyond texts influencing texts: “Not only do texts fertilise each other, readers’ experience of a literary tradition or theory enriches interpretation beyond the authorial intention” (8-9). Afro-Semio-aesthetics plays a vital role in this regard.

Some critics and theorists have argued that the convulsion of the term “intertextuality” in postmodern criticism has mobbed related terms and important distinctions. Lamenting, Irwin William says that: “intertextuality has eclipsed allusion as an object of literary study while lacking the latter term’s clear definition” (Irwin 227). Linda Hutcheon argues that extreme interest in intertextuality discards the role of the author, because intertextuality can be originated “in the eye of the beholder” and does not entail a communicator’s intentions. By contrast, in *A Theory of Parody* Hutcheon notes that: “parody always features an author who actively encodes a text as an imitation with critical difference” (70). However, there have also been attempts at more closely defining different types of intertextuality. The Australian media scholar John Fiske has made a distinction between what he labels ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’ intertextuality. “Horizontal intertextuality denotes references that are on the ‘same level’ i.e. when books make references to other books, whereas vertical intertextuality is found when, say, a book makes a reference to film or song or vice versa” (Fiske 70). Similarly, Linguist Norman Fairclough distinguishes between ‘manifest intertextuality’ and ‘constitutive intertextuality’ (177). The former signifies intertextual elements such as presupposition, negation, parody, irony, etcetera. The latter signifies the interrelationship of discursive features in a text, such as structure, form, or genre. Constitutive Intertextuality: “is also referred to interdiscursivity” (Agger 4). Generally interdiscursivity refers

to relations between larger formations of texts. In the same direction, James Porter classifies intertextuality into two types:

... *iterability* and *presupposition*. Iterability refers to the “repeatability” of certain textual fragments, to citation in its broadest sense to include not only explicit allusions, references, and quotations within a discourse, but also unannounced sources and influences, clichés, phrases in the air, and traditions. That is to say, every discourse is composed of ‘traces,’ pieces of other texts that help constitute its meaning. . . . Presupposition refers to assumptions a text makes about its referent, its readers, and its context--to portions of the text which are read, but which are not explicitly ‘there.’ . . . ‘Once upon a time’ is a trace rich in rhetorical presupposition, signaling to even the youngest reader the opening of a fictional narrative. Texts not only refer to but in fact *contain* other texts (126).

The quest to clarify the notion of intertextuality propelled us to make distinctions between the notions of “intertext”, “hypertext” and “supertext”. Take for example the Dictionary of the Khazars by Milorad Pavice. As an intertext “it employs quotations from the scriptures of the Abrahamic religions”. As a hypertext “it consists of links to different articles within itself and also every individual trajectory of reading it”. As a supertext “it combines male and female versions of itself, as well as three mini-dictionaries in each of the versions”.

Daniel Chandler contends that intertextuality is a major feature of text and as well as the ‘contract’ which reading brings forth between its author(s) and reader(s). He further stresses and maintains that: “intertextuality suggests that art imitates art” (45) Chandler reiterates that: “intertextuality blurs the boundaries not only between texts, but between texts and the world of lived experience” (48). This presupposes that the primary texts under study are not only the product of the texts themselves, but, the product of the society that gave birth to them. This makes semio-aesthetics a vital model to be used because it among other things emphasized the environment as one of the major factors to be consider in the interpretation of any playext.

In traditional literary theory, it is assumed that when we read a work of literature we are trying to find a meaning which lies inside that work. Literary texts possess meaning, and that is why readers extract meaning from them. Hermeneutically, the process of extracting meaning from texts is called interpretation. However, in contemporary literary and cultural theory such ideas have been radically altered. It is now believed that works of literature are built from systems, codes, and traditions established by previous works of literature. Crucial to the meaning of a work of literature are also the systems, codes, and traditions of other art forms, such as films, and of culture in general. These codes, systems and tradition must be well established in line with the existing codes of the environment.

It is claimed that the act of reading, rather than the interpretation of one work, engages the reader in discovering a network of textual relations. Tracing those relations is, in fact, interpreting the text, that is, discovering its meaning, or meanings. Reading thus becomes a process of touring between texts. This is because: “meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations” (Allen 1). Ubiquitously, this is the interpretation we intend giving to the plays under study for magnificent and meaningful interpretation of signs and signification as embedded in the play, culled from the society for adequate communication.

4.4 Afro-Semio-Aesthetics of Language, Character and Intertextualization in the Selected Playtexts

Semiotics is the science of signs and semiotic analysis is used in studies of sign processes in such fields as communication, cognition, linguistics, anthropology, marketing, medicine and cellular biology. The contemporary focus that most concerns us in this study is on the communication

aspects of semiotics, particularly the elements relevant to communication. This aspect of Afro-semio-aesthetic elements for communication is revealed in the stage direction below:

Everywhere is quiet, tense and pensive, only the incantations and jumbled words of DEBIA distort the air. Suddenly he stands up with a yell of disagreement and whirls round in fit of spiritual ecstasy; some of the chiefs try to stop him as the intensity increases but the motion is too strong for them to contain as they fall down in that attempt; rumbling thunder brings DEBIA to a sudden halt, he regains consciousness and looks up searching the faces of all present. (Hard Choice 27)

The stage direction above signifies a lot of things. That is why the communication focus of Afro-semio-aesthetics is reflected in the definition of semiotics given by Jakobson that: “the exchange of any messages whatever and of the system of signs which underlie them” (60). Fiske adds another dimension to this definition: “the generation of meaning.” (42). In other words, messages are made of signs and conveyed through sign systems called codes; the more we share the same codes in a communication exchange, the closer our meanings will be. Presumably that is true for non-verbal as well as verbal communication and a comparison of those two communication repertoires will be an important instrument to this study.

A cosmological deconstruction of language and the characters of Kehinde and Taye as it is most believed in most African world view is displayed through their exchange. What Ricoeur avers as: “...the interpreter explores about this question ‘What does this text talk about?’ In this level, the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). Also, the meaning of Afro-semiotics and aesthetics is found through their dialogue as non-discursive symbols. This excerpt from the play *Twingle Twangle*... is important in this regard:

KEHINDE: Me! Listen to that! Have you ever seen me beaten in a fight?
TAYE: That’s what I mean. You always fight first, and think afterwards!

KEHINDE: And you think so much that cobwebs grow under your armpit! If I wasn't always around to protect you!

TAYE: You wish to test it now, who's stronger between us?

KEHINDE: Don't be ridiculous. I'll pound you to a pulp, you piece of vegetable!

TAYE: [Coming forward] Perhaps it's today you'll find out that some vegetables are too strong for some teeth. (*Twingle... 12*)

KEHINDE: Oh yes, we must share the luggage.

TAYE: Right, one bag each.

KEHINDE: Which one do you want?

TAYE: I leave you the first choice, brother.

KEHINDE: I don't really mind which I take. But since Digbaro is coming with me, he'd better just bring the bag he is carrying.

TAYE: Which means you are taking the bag of weapons.

KEHINDE: And you the bag with herbs and musical instruments.

TAYE: It's not fair, but I accept.

KEHINDE: Would you want to switch then?

TAYE: No. Digbaro does not respect me any way-

KEHINDE: No, and Efundunke fears me. So it's a deal. (*Twingle Twangle... 13*)

Through the principles of deconstruction it was discovered from the exchange (language and character) between Taye and Kehinde above, that the bag Digbaro is carrying signifies war, battle and unrest because the bag contains weapons. And Kehinde as a symbol of warrior prefers the bag with weapons. According to Langer a symbol is: "an instrument of thought" (70). While Taye on the other hand who is an epitome of peace, tranquillity and joy chooses the bag that contains herbs and musical instruments; semio-aesthetics of language. Which is in line with non-discursive symbolism. These two (herbs and musical instruments) through Afro-semio-aesthetic connote cure for problems/sickness or other ailments. While musical instruments on the other hand, denote joy, merriment, jubilation and celebration. If connect, after sickness there should be merriments. This is not too far from what Paul Ricoeur opines in his theory of interpretation. Appropriation, is the ability of the interpreter/reader to be able to tent his deductions from the playtexts to his personal experience. This however comes after what he postulates as 'understanding', which implies knowing what the play is talking about. Again, through Sussane Langer's theory of symbols, the researcher finds out that the bags as instrument of thought symbolize different things. For instance,

a bag contains weapons and another bag contains herbs and musical instruments. They both connote and symbolize different things which according to the researcher is war/unrest and peace/tranquillity respectively. This is why the current study is important to the reader/interpreter of play texts or any literary text or literature.

The exchange did not only portray the symbolic representation of what it contained, but also revealed the characters and language of both Taye and Kehinde. Through Afro-semio-aesthetics analyses of language, the dialogue reveals Taye as a peace lover and reveals Kehinde as a war monger/war lover. Hence, “The study of a character requires an analysis of its relations with all of the other characters in the work” (Aston and Savona 41). Thus, through character and language, we were able to see both Taye and Kehinde from these lights. Their quest to choose the bags which Digbaro and Efundunke are carrying exposed both characters to the reader/interpreter of such plays. Meanings can be found in both non-discursive and discursive symbolism. The principle of the theory is that every sign has meaning and the potential for multiple meanings (both inherent and non-inherent meaning), which can be adduced and deduced by the reader and critic.

Furthermore, according to Hopes, Eco and other semiotic scholars: “A sign is anything that stands for something else that is, a sign stands for an object or concept” (Eco 15). The “stands for” process is the point where meaning is created both through encoding (by the source) and decoding (by the receiver or “reader” in semiotic analysis) as in these stylized representations of people. Hence, “The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure developed a similar construct which he described as a sound or image called a signifier, and the concept for which it stands-called the signified” (Fiske 43-44). Because of his background as a linguist, Saussure saw the relationship between these two as arbitrary, in other words, the link between the sign, or expression, and what it stands for is

understood by convention. This arbitrariness is true in most spoken and written language - such as the names for these individuals depicted in these sketches however, that may not be so for other types of signs such as non-verbal that provides stylized cues to stimulate recognition through resemblance. Sign is a code that can be used instead of language or used to compliment spoken language. The American C. S. Peirce, who is characterized as the founder of American semiotics, disagrees with Saussure on the arbitrariness condition. Because Peirce is first of all a cognitive philosopher, he defines signs in a broader way than language and focuses on how they are logically or semiotically linked to their objects. Peirce's foundational contributions to semiotics have shaped the field, as Berger explains, to largely focus on meaning and modes of cognition (the codes needed to understand a text). These codes are found in *Twingle Twangle...*, *Akpakaland*, *Edewede*, *Hard Choice*, *Tough Man* and *The Village Lamb* respectively.

To Peirce, "signs are of three types - *icons*, *indexes*, and *symbols*" (Hoopes 239). Symbols are arbitrary, but icons and indexes are, in semiotician language, "motivated," that is they are more likely to resemble their object in some way, rather than being arbitrary. Peirce defines an icon as similar to its subject; a representation such as a drawing or photograph where likeness or resemblance is a determining characteristic. An index is physically connected with its object-as an indication that something exists or has occurred, such as a footprint that means someone just walked by or smoke that means there is a fire. A symbol such as a leaf on a flag is arbitrarily linked with its object - something that has acquired meaning through convention. Symbols, like most spoken and written words, are arbitrary. Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man* reveals this explicitly. As the play returns to the world of the dead, we hear the lamentation of Inikpi, Ame and Achema. They are worried about the happenings in the living world, especially the one that concerns their people in the land of the living.

Inikpi: (Deep silence.) Oh, what a shame. Is this the same land I died for? (Silence.)

Ame: Their intrigue, blackmail and sabotage that brought me here before my time has not ceased.

Inikpi: Will their intrigues ever end?

Achema: How? They are terrible students of history. They refused to abide by the selfless sacrifice that Inikpi stood for. They rejected the focus and development dream of Ogbai kolo Ame.

Ame: (Looking at Achema.) And they terminated the vision, mission and pragmatic people-oriented leadership you stood for. (64)

The character of the boy who ends the riddle and competition for leadership in the play must be understood and deconstructed for meaning generation. The boy came with his way as created by the playwright to settle the leadership problem bedeviling the people in the play, after the demise of Achema. This brings us to character deconstruction through African semio-aesthetic model as one of the major variables of the study. Again, the power of language was also seen in the dialogue between Unata and Fulama:

UNATA: Is any food mine these days? I just can't eat.

FULAMA: This one will be really tasty. Try it.

UNATA: I can't chew anything without worsening thus headache.

FULAMA: This one will be really sweet. I like roasted plantain very much, but it's yours and you've eaten nothing.

UNATA: It doesn't matter, if you want it.

FULAMA: Mm? I... I should take it?

UNATA: If you like.

FULAMA: (*Reaching for the plantain.*) You mean I should ... (*Licks her lips.*) eh? (*Picks up the plantain.*) Eh?

UNATA: Hhen!

FULAMA: (*Eating avidly.*) Mmmm ... This is more than the sweetness of plantain ... I must sit down and finish it here. (*Sit.*) That daughter of mine is greedy ... If she as much as sniffs this, she will pounce on it and devour it all ... Mmmm ... (*Having eaten up the plantain, she licks her fingers.*) Em ... is it ... do you have more?

UNATA: I think is only that one that Unani left for me. Check the fire. (40-1)

Through African sensual perception of semiotics and aesthetics, meanings would be deduced from the exchange above. Peirce's categorization of signs provides a richer context for understanding non-verbal; codes, symbols, signs etcetera and how they convey meaning than Saussure's signified and signifier - although Saussure's dyadic relationship is included in Peirce's categories and it is

at the base of all semiotic analysis. This African semiotic and aesthetic interpretation is need in the following dialogue from John Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*:

BOY: (*Panting*) Please help me. They... they ... they're after my manhood! (*Runs his hand across his face and with some realization*). Oh no! You can't help me. You're on the run as well. (*Sadly*) From our act you receive the baton of your race. (*Runs out*)

AMADI: Come back! (*Almost going after him. Ujowundu entering with a bag, catches the sight*)

UJOWUNDU: Who was that with a lightning speed?

AMADI: I can't tell. (*Pause*) Reminds me of what happened today, Father.

UJOWUNDU: Where?

AMADI: At the village square during the new yam outing ceremony.

UJOWUNDU: It is a big event, something is always happening. All who were there merely sniffed a popular o dour. Let us hear it, anyway.

AMADI: It was magical. I can't tell actually what transpired. But at appoint two youths, a lad and a beautiful maiden tore their apparels to consume some raw yams. They could have been possessed or mad. Now I know they're mad. I recognize the boy to be that... (28)

This requires Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis in the interpretation. Another important element, particularly in a comparison of verbal and non-verbal communication, is the notion of code or sign system. A code functions as a system of rules. These codes, symbols, index among others are elements of semiotics and aesthetics. They deal solely with sensual perception of the reader/interpreter. Language on the other hand, is a code and linguistic competence, that is understanding the elements and structure of language, should be foremost on the agenda of the reader/interpreter. The concept of semiotic code, however, is broader than just language and includes such sign systems as kinesics or body language, braille, sign language, and algebra and chemistry. Language is captured in the long of the character of Boy in Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man*:

Boy: Nothing is my size here, as you can see. The shoe is too large for my feet, the cap is too big for my tiny head. However, with these eye glasses, I can see the vision and mission very clearly. I can see the future, our future and our collective destiny very clearly. I agree that my feet and head are too tiny for the objects I wear. I will lead us if you allow me. With time, I will grow to the size of the shoes, and the cap will fit my head. Then you can willingly and collectively put me on this highly exalted seat as your leader. I will not

be your ruler; I will be your leader. I will be a people-oriented leader because I live with you. I know you. I feel what you feel. I see our collective vision very clearly. These are the tenets of Alapaic philosophy that we must maintain and develop. But you must let me grow. Let me grow... Don't kill our vision. Don't kill our collective vision any more. That is our hope, our future, our destiny. Cut me down before I grow and we all remain an eternally damned people. Enough of the killings... (67-8)

Taye in Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle...*, apart from been an epitome of peace and tranquillity, is also endowed with saturated wisdom. He equally borrowed a leaf from professor's words through language, when the Voices were commanding him to drink. The following dialogue exposes this:

VOICES: [*shouting.*] The stew! Drink the stew!

PROFESSOR: Patience, patience, *mes amis*, *Da mihi locum standi, et mundum movelos.* (*Twingle...36*)

Taye turning down the offer of marrying the princess threw everybody off balance. Through non-discursive symbolism, espouses on the character of Taye. But, the researcher observes through the interpretation of the play text that Taye has a mighty plan which was later revealed. Hinged on Ricoeur's: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (1625). Taye insists on filling his stomach:

TAYE: NO! NO! I don't want her! [There is general consternation.]

ELENON: What insolence!

TAYE: Right now, all I can think about is my stomach. It's killing me. I think the stew only made the hunger worse. So please, if you could just ask them to lead me to the kitchen. (*Twingle Twangle... 41*)

Taye's insistence that on his stomach in terms of hunger speaks volumes of the character of Taye. This is equally discovered from Taye's language. This makes language and character strong instrument for interpretation. Also important is the notion of the *interpretant*, another concept which is important to Peirce's semiotics and particularly relevant to an understanding of how visual communication operates. It was mentioned earlier that the sign/object relationship is the

basis of semiotics. Peirce adds the concept of interpretant to that dyad to create a triadic construct of sign/object/interpretant. By interpretant he means: “the idea contained in the concept as it is decoded or a subsequent thought to which the sign gives rise” (Hoopes 34). He explains that a thought is a sign requiring interpretation by a subsequent thought in order to achieve meaning. Our memories, which provide the foundation for the meaning process, are, as Sebeok puts it: “reservoirs of interpretants” (131). This is primarily concise, as Deely explains in his book on semiotics that Peirce’s primary contribution was the full development of semiotics as a distinct body of knowledge and this discipline rests on the notion of “a dynamic view of signification as a process” (Deely 23).

The reason Peirce’s concept of interpretant is so important to us in non-verbal communication is that non-verbal meaning is more open for interpretation than verbal. Contrary to conventional wisdom and the views of some leading semioticians and most linguists, the interpretation of a non-verbal codes message may be more complex and more demanding of the decoder because of the inferential dimension than is the interpretation of a verbal message. Again:

Saussure...admits that signs can be other than words, his work privileges language as the most important sign system. Likewise, the Soviet school of semiotics (Ivanov, Lotman, and Toporov among others) calls language a “primary modeling system,” because it uses natural language as its base, and all other sign systems as “secondary.” Natural language, in other words, is the primary substructure for all other sign systems. (Sebeok 50)

Other semioticians disagree and point to development learning as a better source for the primary designation: as infants we develop visual skills before language skills; in this sense visual communication should be considered primary rather than secondary. Language thus plays a vital role in Julie Okoh’s *Edewede*:

EBUN: Women have weapon!

A very powerful weapon for that matter!
 It brings the kings from their high throne,
 Down on their knees before their slaves,
 Creeping and Peeping.
 It makes even the Chief High Priest of the oracle
 Shiver like a leaf before his helpless client,
 Fluttering and Flapping
 It disarms even the most powerful man on earth,
 Jinglelet Yekpete.
 Yes, women have a wonderful weapons.

SECOND MARKET WOMAN: What weapon is that? Name it.

EBUN: Our bottom. Yes, our bottom is our power. As from this day lock it up until they crawl to us for reconciliation. Is that clear!

MARKET WOMEN: Yes, it's very clear.

EBUN: Good. If death does not kill the sacrificial hen, some day it will bear some chicks. (46-7)

There is language here for deconstruction through semiotics and aesthetics for meaning generation for adequate understanding of the play text. Sebeok also disagrees with the language-as-primary theory and points out that language evolved first as an adaptive function principally to enhance imitative signaling - the evolutionary focus was more on language-as-modeling-system than on speech-as-communication. On this, Sebeok argues that: "properly speaking, language itself is a secondary modeling system" (57). He is comparing language based sign systems with other visual and nonverbal systems which are equally as complex, as well as antecedent to language. He concludes that "the general belief that language replaced the cruder systems is totally wrong" (Sebeok 57). This complexity is found in Osofisan's *Twingle...*, Ukala's *Akpakaland*, Okoh's *Edewede*, Ododo's *Hard Choice*, Idegu's *Tough Man* and Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*.

4.5 Textuality, Character and Language as Semio-Aesthetic Elements in the Selected Playtexts

When the term textual is mentioned what rightly comes to mind is the thematic preoccupation of the playwright. Thus, at times this could transcend just mere thematic engagements of the playwright to include almost every critical issues raised in the play by the dramatist himself. Also,

it may encompass those things that the dramatist hide from the reader that he wants the reader to locate with perilous assessment of the play. Roland Greene contends that a text must necessarily be thought of as incomplete, indeed as missing something crucial that provides the mechanics of understanding. He posits that: “The text is always partially hidden, one word for the hidden part in literary theory is the subtext” (Greene 51). Textual therefore covers all other aspect of the play that the playwright left hidden for its readers and critics to identify them for the message he the playwright wants to pass across to be seemingly clear. For instance, in *Twingle Twangle...*, Osofisan made use of the African way of seeing beyond here through Babalawo to monitor Taye and Kehinde:

MAMA IBEJI: [*Crying the more*] I’ll die! Just let me die! Why should I still be living when my precious boys are dead?

BABALAWO: Dead! But who say they’re dead?

[*He hastily collects his things together to begin the divination.*] Dead! [To BABA IBEJI.] Did you tell her that?

MAMA IBEJI: [*Wailing.*] They’re dead! you just don’t wish to tell me, that’s all! Ah, all my life wasted!

BABALAWO: But calm yourself, Mama Ibeji! Calm down and I’ll ask *Ifa/i* [He begins the divination, chanting]...

MAMA IBEJI: [Calming down]. Thank you *jare*, *Baba Adahunse*...

BABALAWO: Well, just sit down and be patient. And you others, if you wish to know what has happened to our dear twins, sit down too. It won’t take that long, for five years is a short space on the diving tray! (6-8)

This is purely Africa’s and it is embedded in the body of the text as part of its textuality which needs semio-aesthetic analyses and thus serves as African semio-aesthetic elements. Babalawo conjuring and Baba Ibeji and Mama Ibeji seeing Taye and Kehinde in a far a way land is entirely African and thus requires Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis for the understanding. When the where

about of Taye and Kehinde was revealed through Langer's: "Discursive symbolism and Non-discursive symbolism is nonverbal" (70). This is another important aspect of textuality that is significant to African semio-aesthetic elements:

MAMA IBEJI: [*Crying the more*] I'll die! Just let me die! Why should I still be living when my precious boys are dead?
 BABALAWO: Dead! But who say they're dead?
 [*He hastily collects his things together to begin the divination.*] Dead! [*To BABA IBEJI.*] Did you tell her that?
 MAMA IBEJI: [*Wailing.*] They're dead! you just don't wish to tell me, that's all! Ah, all my life wasted!
 BABALAWO: But calm yourself, Mama Ibeji! Calm down and I'll ask *Ifa/i* [*He begins the divination, chanting*]...
 MAMA IBEJI: [*Calming down*]. Thank you *jare, Baba Adahunse*...
 BABALAWO: Well, just sit down and be patient. And you others, if you wish to know what has happened to our dear twins, sit down too. It won't take that long, for five years is a short space on the diving tray! (6-8)
 BABALAWO: [*Shouting our suddenly.*] Look! Yes, look in my eyes! In my pupils, you can see them both now, can't you? Yes, Tayelolu and Kehinde, on the first stage of the journey! At their first stopping place, where the journey began! At the crossroads of Abuja! See for yourself!... (9)

These and many other issues relating to intertextualization, sign and signification in reading/interpretation of Nigerian plays such as that of Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle*... Ukala's *Akpakaland*, Idegu's *Tough man* and other plays selected for this study. It is apparent that the plays selected for this study have something that makes them interlaced. That is the area of hiding something to be discovered by the reader/interpreter. A critical mien into *Akpakaland* revealed a lot of textuality and language as semio-aesthetic elements. In *Akpakaland*, A tail grows from Unata's body calls for African semio-aesthetic analyses as it is not ordinary, it is African. Enwe the medicine man who planted the tail through divination (Non-discursive symbols) like Babalawo in *Twingle Twangle*... and Debia in *Hard Choice* needs textual and Afro-semio-aesthetic interpretation through language and character used for Afro-semio-aesthetics to thrive. Glaring from *Akpakaland* thus:

AKPAKA: (*To UNATA.*) What do you say to that?

UNATA: What should I say? When one sees a weakling, does one not hunger for a fight? ...If my husband who slept with me a few nights ago, believes I have a tail because Fulama has said so, then I ha... ha... (*Begins to weep*)

IYEBI: (*Moves over to her.*) Don't cry! Don't cry because of this witch? Did she not say the same thing about me just now? If you or I have a tail, what is his business? Is she our husband? (17)

Fulama's character, language and emotional attachment to the issue of wife has a tail or no tail sets the conflict on the move. Iyebi's character and language can also be seen from her statement and action and what Akpaka says about her, as they try to clarify the issue of tail. These are textualities and languages that call for proper interpretation for semio-aesthetics to thrive. Textuality, character and language are parts of the core elements of African semiotics and aesthetics. The aforementioned lines espouse the characters of Fulama, Akpaka and Iyebi which of course, may be understood through deconstructive hegemony and Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis for meaning generation by the reader/interpreter. Fulama's action may be studied from envious perception and that of Akpaka may be studied from his physiological, sociological and psychological traits, which can be seen apparently from his action against Fulama above.

Thus, Textuality is a practice. Though a text's textuality, it makes itself mean, makes itself be, and make itself come about in particular way. Through its textuality, the text relinquishes its status as identity and affirms its condition as pure difference. In indifferences, the text "dedefines" itself, etches itself in a texture or network of meaning which is not limited to the text itself. A quick look at Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* and Okoh's *Edewede* exposed these networks of meaning that are not limited to the text. In *Edewede* for instance, the language of Ebum and other women is textually loaded:

EBUN: Women have weapon!
A very powerful weapon for that matter!

It brings the kings from their high throne,
 Down on their knees before their slaves,
 Creeping and Peeping.
 It makes even the Chief High Priest of the oracle
 Shiver like a leaf before his helpless client,
 Fluttering and Flapping
 It disarms even the most powerful man on earth,
 Jinglelet Yekpete.
 Yes, women have a wonderful weapons.

SECOND MARKET WOMAN: What weapon is that? Name it.

EBUN: Our bottom. Yes, our bottom is our power. As from this day lock it up until they crawl to us for reconciliation. Is that clear!

MARKET WOMEN: Yes, it's very clear.

EBUN: Good. If death does not kill the sacrificial hen, some day it will bear some chicks.

FIRST MARKET WOMAN: Women!

MARKET WOMEN: Bottom power!

FIRST MARKET WOMAN: Women!

MARKET WOMEN: Bottom power!

FIRST MARKET WOMAN: Together!

MARKET WOMEN: WE stand!

FIRST MARKET WOMAN: Divided!

MARKET WOMEN: We fall!

FIRST MARKET WOMAN: Women!

MARKET WOMEN: Bottom power! (*Edewede* 46-7)

The textuality and language here are creatively loaded as elements of semiotics and aesthetics, they require semio-aesthetic analyses for meaning generation and adequate understanding of the playtext. Similarly, in *The Village Lamb*, the elders' language and the textuality of the play are fused with meaning which are fused that the playwright may want the reader/interpreter to discover. As Ricoeur puts it that: "the interpreter explores about this question 'What does this text talk about?'" In this level, the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (Ricoeur 1625). Ujowundu's conversation *The Village Lamb* with the elders is explicit on this:

UJOWUNDU: Well, after a successful tour the king's kola returns to him. The orange peel that reaches the refuse dump has indeed got home...

UZOKWE: I'll say why we're here quickly and briefly. There's no need for details because if we probe our past with serious scrutiny we shall uncover the

albino's privacy. (*Sternly*) Ujowundu! The lamb is back. Have you told him what he should know, or do you require a special skill to do so?

UJOWUNDU: You don't force a mother on the child. A sensible child would ask for his mother.

MADUAKO: Must we wait until then? Enough! We're tired of your slipperiness. We need not breast-feed you on matters of our tradition!

UZOKWE: Maduako, be patient. Stones and grains don't go well in the mouth. The tooth should know better. Ingrates forget the importance of their toilet sticks until they are pressed. (*Pause*) Ujowundu, where is Amadi? (*The Village Lamb* 11)

The exchange above through language and character needs Afro-semio-aesthetics for interpretation. Barry describes this as the structuralist approach to literature. In Barry's words he submits that: "there is a constant movement away from the interpretation of the individual literary work and a parallel drive towards understanding the larger abstract structure which contain them" (91). It is claimed that the act of reading, rather than the interpretation of one work, engages the reader in discovering a network of textual relations. Tracing those relations is, in fact, interpreting the text, that is, discovering its meaning, or meanings. Reading thus becomes a process of 'touring between texts'. "Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations" (Allen 1). Once the text is identified other texts in the play would be linked to it, then meaning will be deduced from the conglomeration of texts which will in the end provide the ground for the message's standpoint of the play. We contend at this juncture that text hence goes beyond just mere thematic preoccupation of the playwright, to a more comprehensive stance, that congregation of texts and their connectedness to make/bring out the meaning of the play text. When we read a text our intent is to extract meaning, it is supposed that when we read a work of literature we are trying to discover a meaning which lies inside that work. Literary texts possess meanings, and that is why readers extract meaning from them. Hermeneutically, the process of

extracting meaning from texts is called interpretation, but to succeed in this, the hidden part of the text must be discovered. Ododo's *Hard Choice* is explicit on this:

PRINCESS: Tonight I shall carry the burden of Emepiri kingdom to the gods so that war is averted and lives saved. Chinelo, what could be more honourable. Please, I'm in high spirit today don't dampen it...

PRINCE: I know you're upset with me.

PRINCESS: I'm not, the prince of Igedu Kingdom.

PRINCE: I tried to reach you but the Queen's security network around you was impenetrable.

PRINCESS: I know, Chinelo told me everything.

PRINCE: My Princess, look we don't have much time. My people are getting set for the ritual slated for Oguguru shrine to recover the crown with your life. I've come to elope with you to far distance, far away from this entire weird atmosphere. Hurry...

PRINCESS: It's too late, Prince Oki. Can we really escape from our shadows? No. The life of your father, the King of Igedu Kingdom, and that of the entire people of Emepiri Kingdom are enmeshed in this weird atmosphere. It would only take a life, my life, to save them and you want me to walk away?

PRINCE: What then happens to me? (*Hard Choice* 48-9)

The character of Princess was revealed as courageous fellow which must be deconstructed for meaning generation through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements. The meta-textual reflections of the play; this imply reading the play outside the playtext; Ricoeur's appropriation of course, the material for the play was picked or gotten from the society, hence, the play must have a link with the society; having a reflection on the society. Some critics believe that any literary work that does not have a reflection of the society in its thematic standpoint should be thrown away because it is the society that gave birth to such text. Which is: "the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter's) understanding and meaning gained from the text" (Ricoeur 1627). Needless to ask whether, there may be any work of literature that will exist in a vacuum; without an iota of reflection on the society? This is one of the reasons why the play may be fused

with textuality and language because the environment/society gave birth to it, as Emmy Idegu's *Tough Man* captures actions from both this world and the other world thus:

The connect between the living and the dead was established by Inikpi as she tries to champion the way forward on how to ameliorate the problem of the people. What is most important is that, the relationship between the living and the dead should be well understood by the reader/interpreter through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements for proper interpretative purposes.

Inikpi: (*Sighing*.) Humnnnn. So what do we do? How do we help our people? Things cannot continue like this. (*To Ame*) What do you think?

Ame: There you come again. You sacrificed yourself for Igala people. Your death was never appreciated... (22)

Afro-semio-aesthetics model is hinged on the environment of the play texts, therefore, textuality and language are central to Afro-semio-aesthetics analyses. Because for a reader/interpreter to understand the communication between the dead and the living, he should understand the cosmic order of the African world of the living the dead and the unborn, which is naturally Africa's. this cosmic order of the world are reflected in some Nigerian dramas that require the concept of Afro-semio-aesthetics for proper interpretation and meaning generation.

4.6 Deconstruction, Language, Character and Meaning Making in the Selected Playtexts

For instance, a masquerade can be viewed with the eyes of both semiotics and aesthetics. Semiotics in the face of the signifier and the signified; what the masquerade communicates. Therefore, deconstruction should be applied to enable the interpreter deduce/make meaning from the masquerade's language. Accordingly: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (Ricoeur 1625). It is believed that a masquerade from the African World-view is the presence of the ancestral world and masquerades mediate between the world of the living and the dead. Julie Okoh's prowess in

crafting masquerade as character in Edewede is important to a study like thus. The masquerade's language is rendered thus:

EDEWEDE: Some knowledge may seem useless for the present but may not be so for the future. Before you came the women over there spoke out their mind boldly. Today is the dawn of a new day. The things of the past belong to the past. Henceforth we look forward to a brighter future. Edewede!

MASQUERADE: Yegulu gulu gho ghoo.

HIS ASSISTANT: You have spat on the tradition of this land. Temper is high. Go before it becomes tempestuous.

EDEWEDE: No matter how violent a storm may be, it will surely calm down afterwards.

MASQUERADE: Ahiana! Aikhelu! Ufidon! Ughogholo!

HIS ASSISTANT: Forbidden! Abomination! Cursed! Crushed! Go away quickly. (43-4)

Aesthetically, the same masquerade's language and costume can be viewed through African sensual perception/feelings for meaning making. The appreciation of it could be seen from the side of what it represents. That may be the reason why the playwright construct an assistant who may help in the interpretation of the masquerade's language. African semio-aesthetics deals with the application of sensual perception of African to the interpretation of his culture and arts. That is why Emoruwa and Amali in breakdown of the elements of semiotics: signs, codes, signifier and signified assert that:

the first indicates something that stands for another thing outside of itself, the second is the rule that govern the relationship of what it stands for, and the third is the material that function as a sign while the fourth is the thing/concept which the signifier represents. (191)

In another term, Shittu refers to these semiotic element as "semiotic triad: icon, index and symbol" (79). The case of Fulama and Unata is a topical example of why semiotics and aesthetics can be studied from the same perception/corner. In the language and action of Fulama she went to Enwe for a medicine to enable her cow grow a tail in Ukala's *Akpakaland*.

The above play is fused with language and action. It could make the reader/interpreter lost the story, because Enwe that finishes with Unata few minutes ago, is the Enwe that is talking with Fulama and never made her to know that he is aware of Unata's tail. But Enwe reveals to Fulama that he is aware of the whole thing. Which is Langer's position on discursive symbolism. In furtherance, Enwe continues to speak in parable to Fulama, but Fulama like the reader/interpreter needs to deconstruct the language through discursive symbolism to enable him understand Enwe to allow communication flow and meaning making. This is apparent from their exchange in *Akpakaland*:

ENWE: So the cow's tail is on the cow?

FULAMA: The cow's tail is on the cow.

ENWE: Those flies that used to trouble the cow so much so that you shed tears, the cow now drives them easily?

FULAMA: Yes.

ENWE: Good! You need not quarrel with Unata then. (28)

The cow refers to Unata as it was not clear from the standpoint of the playwright as to whether Fulama as the first wife to Akpaka has a cow or not. African semio-aesthetics deals with the application of sensual perception of African to the interpretation of his culture and arts. This is explicitly re-echoed in *Akpakaland* thus:

ENWE: Go well, my sister. (FULAMA *moves to the door.*) You said you were quarrelling with Unata?

FULAMA: Well, just a minor misunderstanding.

ENWE: And you transferred the cow's tail to her? (27)

Yerima opines that: "In drama, the language and characters must be progressive" (40). He further states that: "in the use of language in drama, the new playwright discovers that three aspects emerge: aesthetics, dramatic criticism and stylistics" (39). In the same vein with Langer's discursive symbolism. Hence, the need to deconstruct the outlined aspects by Yerima to enable one as a reader/interpreter make meaning or communicate meaningfully.

There is also African semio-aesthetic motif in the effort to transfer the tail back to the sender. Because, African semio-aesthetics deals with the application of sensual perception of African to the interpretation of his culture and arts. The move by Unata and his father who went to the same priest to help them send the tail back to the sender is a strong premise to interpret the tail as not really meant for any cow. This can be deduced through Langer's symbol, object and person with signs of semiotics. This is part of deconstruction; the reader's deductions must go beyond the meaning instilled in the play by the playwright. Another intriguing aspect of the play is the transfer of the tail from Unata back to Fulama. What they seek from the Priest was to send the tail back to the sender. It was obvious later that both Unata's father, Enwe and Unata herself know the sender and the sender, Fulama knows herself which makes the story more interesting.

The researcher's concern here is the African semio-aesthetic motif of the action and deconstruction of both character and the language they used. That is both discursive and non-discursive symbolisms of Sussane Langer are put to the fore. Simply put that in order to understand Fulama, the researcher opines that we must deconstruct her character and the way she uses language. Why she uses language that way and what prompts her use of language in that manner and her character construction.

In the same vein, a critical mien into Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle A Twyning Tayle* shows that a reader/interpreter should be well-grounded in the art of deconstruction. The reader must deconstruct the imbued character and language construct by the playwright. As the: "... readers do not have the benefit of the interpretation made by the director, actors, and scene designers... these interpretations are all critical judgements based both on their ideas of how the play should be presented and on their insights into the meaning of the play (Jacobus 6). He argues further: "A

reading of a play is largely an idealized version of the play. The interpretation remains in our heads and is not translated on the stage” (Jacobus 6).

Owing from that, the war Kehinde embraced is the war Taye turned his back against. The peace Kehinde rejected that Taye accepted and his people are doing greatly well. The dancing that Kehinde abhors that Taye encouraged. This is purely opposite each other. Afro-semio-aesthetically, right when they parted ways and chose bags, both connote peace and war. Langer’s Theory of symbol plays a vital role through symbol, object and person with signs and symbols of semiotics. Taye’s subjects were scared of the impending war between Etido and Ereko; Kehinde and Taye’s villages respectively. They nurse fear, they plan to run away as the citizens discuss it with Taye through language and character for meaning making.

For instance, as Kehinde was preparing for war, Taye was also preparing for feast unknowing to both brothers. Taye’s prowess was later revealed to us in the play. Kehinde became the king of Etido village and Taye became the king of Ereko village. Both discursive and non-discursive symbolisms play out. Kehinde plans to invade Ereko with war, while Taye on the other hand, plans to welcome them in peace. Engaging binary oppositions which require deconstruction through African semio-aesthetic elements. To Kehinde’s surprise, as they approach Ereko village what they saw was different from what they expected. Kehinde and Taye discovered their identities. There is a kind of double reunion here between Taye and Keyinde and between Efundunke and Digbaro their acolytes respectively. But the exchange between Taye and Kehinde caps it again in *Twingle Twangle*:

TAYE: Welcome then. I suppose I ought to have guessed.

KEHINDE: So should I. but you know of course that we have come to fight you.

TAYE: Yes, but it won’t be necessary. We have no wish to resist.

KEHINDE: Perhaps you don’t understand? There are terms which-

TAYE: Whatever the terms. We hate bloodshed. We hold life to be sacred.

KEHINDE; You will always be sissy, won't you? Perhaps it was inevitable, as I always told Digbaro, that such a day like this would come.

TAYE: I am not provoked. Only don't be too hasty to count your chickens before they are hatched. Tell us your terms. (86)

The construct of the characters of Taye and Kehinde in the play is symbolic that needs understanding of Afro-semio-aesthetic motif to enable the reader/interpreter do a deconstruction of the structured characters. The same way the meddled language in the play by Osofisan calls for creative and artistic understanding of the playwright's language to deconstruct the play semiotic and aesthetic wise. In this vein, Binebai and Olayiwola submit that:

Character in drama on the other hand is defined by Aristotle as the people represented in the play. A character is the representation of a person in a narrative or dramatic work of art. Characters guides [sic] readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes [sic]. (36-37)

The character of Babalawo is very important to this study. The researcher upholds that Babalawo as he is called is a priest. In the African world-view the priests meditate between the people and the great beyond. For a reader to understand this character therefore, he must understand the elements of both African semiotics and aesthetics. These elements deal with the language, signs, symbols and environment/culture of the people. By extension, the reader/interpreter should equally be well-grounded in Derrida's deconstruction. The activities of the Babalawo may be viewed through sensual perception of African semiotics and aesthetics and philosophical binary oppositions of deconstruction. His character as Babalawo, if he does good or bad this may be seen from the point of view of semiotics and aesthetics because it deals with sensual perception. Babalawo communicates with signs and paraphernalia of divination. In line with Yerima assertion that: "The budding playwright must know right from the beginning that character is a material from which plots are created. The idea remains the raw material from which characters emerge" (90). This explains the characters of Taye and Kehinde.

Taye's and Kehinde's conversation reveals that they discuss through both linguistic signs and symbolic signs. Their departure signifies a symbolic departure, which needs Afro-semio-aesthetic concept and analysis. Hence deconstructing the fused meaning in this departure which will help the interpreter/reader make meaning different from that of the playwright's. The luggage have symbolic and semiotic values. The bags are symbolic because of what is contained in the contents. The bag with Digbaro contains weapons, which symbolically, may mean war/unrest. That is why African semio-aesthetics deals with the application of sensual perception of African to the interpretation of his culture and arts. The bag with Efundunke, which content are herbs which through symbolic signs could mean peace or wellness. Which is in line with Langer's Theory of Symbol; non-discursive symbolism. These bags, Taye took the later and Kehinde took the former, which may equally be translated as Taye, is a man of peace and wellness, and Kehinde, a man of war and unrest. Their characters are constructed along their language to portray them and communicate efficiently to the interpreter/reader. What they say about their servants also signifies binary oppositions. Both Taye and Kehinde could be interpreted through discursive and non-discursive symbolisms of Langer. They both engage the two servants in their conversation which needs an African semio-aesthetic analyses to generate meaning. After Taye won the contest Elenon's line needs an Afro- semio-aesthetic interpretation and analysis through the elements of deconstruction; binary oppositions, langue and parole for an understanding by the reader/interpreter.

Making Ibilisi a character in the play is another thing that calls for semio-aesthetic understanding of that character. Ibilisi's actions in the play are all non-discursive in nature. Ibilisi is a monster, who should not be seen with the eyes by any human being. Ibilisi is (Satan) that cannot be seen. But with creative ingenuity, the dramatist weaves it among the characters of the play. For the

reader to grasp with the meaning of the play, the character of Ibilisi must be well-deconstructed to permeate a genuine understanding of the play. The deconstruction of the character and what he says should be broken for the reader's reconstruction. The environment created those signs as Okoye submits that: "when a reader encounters the signs in the texts of a message, he reads them according to the codes operative in the socio-cultural systems and derives from them a meaning coloured by his socio-cultural constitution" (45). This submission applies to the reading of texts by the reader/interpreter and infers meaning from what he reads or is reading. In track with Ricoeur's appropriation: "the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter's) understanding and meaning gained from the text" (Ricoeur 1627).

Taye and Kehinde's emergence as leaders after their departure and leading their communities against one another is symbolic. Semiotics theory and theory of symbol play out. It communicates meanings through non-discursive symbolism that require the reader/interpreter to deconstruct to enable him create his own meanings through Afro-semio-aesthetic elements. Taye's style of poisoning the meal for his guests who threatened to fight his community is symbolic. It also communicates beauty and ugliness; aesthetics. Taye's and Kehinde's language in the last scene is worth exhuming for Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis of language and character. It should equally be noted that the language also helps in defining the characters of Taye and Kehinde. For the interpreter/reader to get the meaning of such play, he must be grounded in deconstruction. This is clearly seen from the world of *Twingle Twangle...* thus:

KEHINDE: Taye! You!

TAYE: Kehinde! I can't believe it!

TAYE: Welcome then. I suppose I ought to have guessed.

KEHINDE: So should I. But you know of course that we have come to fight you.

TAYE: Yes, but it won't be necessary. We have no wish to resist.

KEHINDE: Perhaps you don't understand? There are terms which-

TAYE: Whatever the terms. We hate bloodshed. We hold life to be sacred.

KEHINDE: You'll always be a sissy, won't you? Perhaps it was inevitable, as I always told Digbaro, that such a day like this would come.

TAYE: I am not provoked. Only, don't be too hasty to count your chickens before they are hatched. Tell us your terms. (85-86)

As Roser argues that: "In literature, characters guide readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes" (548). That is exactly the role of Taye and Kehinde in Osofsan's *Twingle-Twangle*...

Emmy Idegú's *Tough Man* is another interesting play that calls for the understanding of semiotics and aesthetics analyses for the deconstruction and deduction of meaning by the reader/interpreter. The play captures the world of the living with the world of the dead simultaneously requires a splendid interpretative nuances to enable the reader entangle with the meaning or making his own meaning as he has the poetic justice to do so. The interconnectedness between the two worlds demands giving kudos to the playwright. What has been heard in terms of the African cosmological order has always been seen on the pages of papers. That why African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. But Idegú graciously deviated from the normal way of presenting the issue of the three world view of the dead, the living and the unborn as postulated by Soyinka in his *Myth, Literature and the African World View*. He views it from the Yoruba cosmology just as Emmy Idegú views his from the Igala cosmology. This is obvious from the playtext thus:

Inikpi: Once again, on behalf of Ame, I welcome you.

Achema: Thank you.

Inikpi: As you may have observed, we three share a lot in common.

Ame: That is correct, the fact that we lived at different periods in the history of our people notwithstanding.

Inikpi: For even while we lived differently, evidently we shared the same vision for our people. (*Achema looks at Inikpi and Ame and smiles*). (14)

The reader/interpreter may need to investigate into the vision and a lot in common in the trio of Inikpi, Ame and Achema shared to enable him do an African semio-aesthetic analyses of the play. The environment that produces the play is important, in line with African semio-aesthetic model. This may go a long way in helping the deconstructive hegemony and the philosophical binary oppositions and sensual perception of the trio and the society they lived in and shared the same objectives to flourish.

While the first forms of leaders breaded by the land and for the land led a selfless leadership, which has the interest of the people at heart. The depth of this variation must be understood by the reader/interpreter if meaning must be made from a playtext. According to Ricoeur: “the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). This is happening in the land of the living, while Inikpi, Ame and Achema watch them from the land of the dead, this concretely, Afro-semio-aesthetic enterprise. This creation by the playwright must be deconstructed by the reader/interpreter to enable him grapple with the fused meaning by the playwright and crave the ground for the reader/interpreter to make his own meaning from the playtext. No playtext has a static/lopsided meaning, but rather there are avalanche of meanings weaved around the character and language in the playtext for the interpreter to deconstruct. Thus, Brockett argues that: “Character is the primary material from which plots are created, for incidents are developed through the speech and behavior of dramatic personages” (44). As the action of the play returns to the world of the dead, we see Inikpi, Ame and Achema discussing the predicament of their people especially leaders without focus. This is obvious from *Tough Man*:

Inikpi: (Brief silence) We are back to the same question again. What do we do?

Achema: Nothing. Until the people themselves discover where they threw their key away and find it, their door will remain shut against them.

Ame: Once again, I totally agree with you. (53)

Inikpi's lamentation and the call for Odoaba Oga'gwu's intervention needs critical deconstruction to make meaning. The exchange between the trios explicitly and implicitly helps in the interpretation of the playtext. Thus, That why African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. The trio enumerate their sordid experience and ordeal in the world of the living thus:

Achema: They pursued me from birth.

Ame: Oh yes, I remember. Yes, from birth they sharpened their swords against you.
Odoaba used me to defend you.

Achema: That is true. Your concern before you left us helped me to a point.

Inikpi: (*Smiling.*) What a joy to hear that. It is good you both are here now.

Ame: (*To Inikpi.*) But you started it all. You gave your all for those of us coming after you to emulate.

Achema: That is correct. But they always have a way of pushing their best into early exit from *ef'ile*. (21)

The connect between the living and the dead was established by Inikpi as she tries to champion the way forward on how to ameliorate the problem of the people. This is purely an Afro-semio-aesthetics to play interpretation. Leaning on the Non-discursive symbolism of Langer. What is most important is that, the relationship between the living and the dead should be well understood by the reader/interpreter as it is grounded in the elements of Afro-semio-aesthetics, for interpretative purposes. Accordingly, "The characters are embodied by specific individuals" (Worthen 1). How a given character or other characters say and interpret his personality through language tends to shape the interpretative acumen of the reader/interpreter.

John Iwuh's *The Village Lamb* beams the same searchlight on man and gods. For any reader/interpreter to deduce his interpretation with the quest to generate meaning must have to deconstruct the language and character construct in the play and be acquainted with Afro-semio-

aesthetic elements. Like Biokun in Osofisan's *No More the Wasted Breed*, who never knew he is a carrier and his lineage until Saluga calls his attention to it. Amadi in *The Village ...* with the mark on him never knew he is a carrier until the end of the play. By the time he realizes the reality of what was happening to him, it was late. One must be ready to deconstruct the construed language and character of the play to make meaning from it through Afro-semio-aesthetic values.

The prologue is embellished with meaning which will be opened as the play progresses. However, let us begin the analysis with the prologue as, it will help the reader/interpreter in deconstructing the fused meaning and making meanings outside that of the playwright. Amadi in *The Village Lamb's* prologue:

AMADI: My name is Amadi Ujowundu, I've just returned to my native land, and everybody seems to read through me like a book. For this reason, I feel uncomfortable with a crowd. Not that it scares me but I do not like discomfort. I love my country and I'm proud of my people. It's good to be home. (*Blackout*). (*The Village Lamb* 8)

The prologue sets the ground for African semiotic and aesthetic study of the play through the binary oppositions of deconstruction of the characters and language in the playtext. If a reader/interpreter grasps with this, as it is loaded with meaning, the interpreter has the playtext in his palm already. As Ricoeur opines that: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (1625). The character of Amadi must be understood as a product of the playwright and his language. According to Styan, "In drama 'character' is not an author's raw material; it is his product. It emerges from the play: it is not put into it" (123). This explains the characters in the selected case studies. Corroborating this, Robert Cohen submits that:

The characters of a play are the human figure - the impersonated presences – who undertake the actions of the plot. Their potency in the theatre is measured by our interest in them *as people*. The most brilliant plotting in the world cannot redeem a

play if the audience remains indifferent to its character; therefore, the fundamental demand of a play's characters is that they make the audience care. (39)

Just as the most brilliant plotting in the world cannot redeem a play if the reader/interpreter remains indifferent to its character and their language; hence the fundamental demand of a play's characters is that they make the reader/interpreter care.

It is a practice in the community that a carrier with the mark of the village lamb on him must be all-important person as the gods have ordained Amadi to be in line with Afro-semio-aesthetic components. The Community has to train Amadi to an extent that he was sent abroad for studies as was revealed later in the play *The Village Lamb*. Ujowundu, Amadi's father knows about this mark, but could not tell Amadi because if he does Amadiho will strike him, therefore, he could not. Despite that with the aid of language he tries in his way to convince the character of Amadi not to return home after his programme. As Amadi could not understand his father's language, so, any reader/interpreter who cannot deduce or deconstruct language through binary oppositions and sensual perceptions of African semiotics and aesthetics may find it difficult to understand what the playwright construed/fused through language and character. This exchange speaks volumes of the happenings in the society and needs deconstructive power and understanding of the reader/interpreter to make meanings. In doing this he: "examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play" (Ricoeur 1624). That is why Amadi in *The Village Lamb* exclaims that:

AMADI: Father, why are those men here? Twice I've seen them and each time you cried like a child roused from a horrible dream. (*Pause*) Perhaps, I've been away for too long. Do they envy you? (*No answer*) Perhaps, I'd prepare for a fight. I'm sure they will come again.

UJOWUNDU: No, son, you can't do that while I live. The lame says his first loss was enough lesson, adding his eyes would be more than sacrifice. No matter how difficult, a man doesn't use his thatch-roof for real.

AMADI: Don't mystify them, father. Those men were mortals; I could strangle them all in one hold! I'm trained in various acts of self-defence, you know.
(25)

Even Amadi could not understand the language of Ujowundu, his father. Ujowundu talks about the gods while Amadi refers to the elders. Again, the exchange here could only be understood through deconstruction with Afro-semio-aesthetic values, the interpreter: "examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play" (Ricoeur 1624). African semio-aesthetic elements lay bare for play analyses of the case studies. How his happiness is not at home, but he can find happiness anywhere in the world. This is reflected in *The Village Lamb* in the following dialogues:

UJOWUNDU: Stop crying, my son. (*Pause*) Indeed, and by all means I wanted you to take a wife there because your happiness and safety is anywhere but here.
AMADI: In my native land, Father, is such rejection?
UJOWUNDU: Things could work in reverse order. We're haunted so much by our past. The termite is a dangerous insect to swallow alive, my son.
AMADI: But could I have stayed there all my life without you? No, I couldn't. I'd rather die.
UJOWUNDU: Now I see that what is dead is not worth living for.
AMADI: What are you really talking about? Well I sojourned and came back to my place of birth. I am happy, the people love me, and the elders almost worship me.
UJOWUNDU: You assessed yourself wrongly; Son. You assessed society wrongly too. An escaped prisoner of war doesn't walk back into the enemy's camp.
AMADI: Is anywhere better than home, and with you? (27)

Ujowundu's language speaks volumes that Amadi cannot understand. Because: "discursive and non-discursive symbolism" of Langer lay bare. The reader/interpreter needs to carefully deconstruct their language (texts) and characters, as the exchange possesses binary oppositions. Through this, the 'difference' between Ujowundu and Amadi is explicit. The conversation may be interpreted from the hegemony of positive like that of Amadi and it could be interpreted also from the perception of negativity, just like the interpretation of Ujowundu. Both are of binary oppositions or differences according to deconstructionists. We could still see copiously from the lines that they

demand deconstruction and Afro-semio-aesthetic analysis. In line with African semio-aesthetics, the environment of the play and the playwright need to be understood through deconstruction for meaningful interpretation to take place.

Again, for a reader/an interpreter to deduce meaning he must be able to deconstruct the character through psychology, physiology and sociological influence of Amadi, then he would know why Amadi could not deduce meaning from the whole thing. In Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*, this is apparent from Ujowundu and Amadi dialogue thus:

UJOWUNDU: Now I see that what is dead is not worth living for.

AMADI: What are you really talking about? Well I sojourned and came back to my place of birth. I am happy, the people love me, and the elders almost worship me.

UJOWUNDU: You assessed yourself wrongly; Son. You assessed society wrongly too. An escaped prisoner of war doesn't walk back into the enemy's camp.

AMADI: Is anywhere better than home, and with you? (27)

Amadi's attempt like Elesin Oba to deposit a seed proves abortive as the ladies (Africans) who understand the mark on Amadi know the consequences if he eventually mate with them. Linking this to African semio-aesthetic values, this is symbolic because it connotes continuity. It can also be understood from the point of view of Langer's non-discursive symbolism. Aesthetic wise, it also denotes beauty and ugliness, leaning on non-discursive symbolism. Beauty in the realm of begetting a son even when the father has a death mark on him. The ugliness of it is that he is going to be born without a father or he who impregnate a maiden is going to die before the baby is born. This abovementioned can only be understood through Afrosemio-aesthetic analyses. The matter heightens up when Amadi narrates his ordeal in the village when he come across a girl to Ujowundu. This is succinctly captured in *The Village Lamb* thus:

AMADI: Father, I met a girl any man should desire for a wife. But she told me scornfully that rats of different colours do not cohabit. Is that one of the numerous proverbs?

UJOWUNDU: My son, there's something about the shrew that makes it smell.

AMADI: What do you mean?

UJOWUNDU: Let me advice you, son. Don't think much of what a lady tells you; else you will embrace a quick suicide. Their tongues are sharp and their words are sour. (*Laughs*) But seriously, son, you can't get a wife here.

AMADI: (*Surprised*) Father! (26)

Again, the exchange here could only be understood through deconstruction and Afro-semio-aesthetic analyses. It should also be understood through Langer's discursive and non-discursive symbolism. The white lady Janet (European) who saw the mark on Amadi and the scratching of body never believe in it perhaps because of cultural variations/differences and Euro-centric sensual perceptions. Here the interpreter: "examines the texts inside nature thereby developing the quest to take an adventure into knowing what the play is all about on the part of the reader of a play" (Ricoeur 1624).

The cultural variations could be studied also through binary oppositions. There is variation because the cultures are saying something opposite of one another. What the African culture accepts, is what the white culture rejects. This alone calls for deconstruction and application of Afro-semio-aesthetic values to the interpretation of African play texts. We see more from the discussion between Amadi and Janet in *The Village Lamb*:

AMADI: I have a deadly sickness. I'm told it was planted in me but I don't believe it. (*Janet is too shocked to talk*) But something tells me there's a cure. (*Pause*) You'll be the first to extract this secret from me, because you're the first, the only and probably ...

JANET: How sweet and romantic! But you haven't told me anything yet.

AMADI: Listen. I have a problem beyond medical capability. Tests prove me a normal human being. But believe me, I'm not. The cure is only in my country. (38)

There is a shocking revelation about Amadi. Confusion like Pilkings intervention in the ritual suicide mission (African cultural practice) of Elesin because of the former's lack of understanding of the culture of the people of old Oyo. Hence: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper

understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). Janet does not understand Amadi’s plight because of cultural binary oppositions. Amadi tries to explain further:

AMADI: My village is a community of few literate people. They look up to people like me for ideas toward development.

JANET: Shall we go together, there’s nothing stopping us now? (*Begins to kiss him all over*) I’ll love to have a baby for you, Amadi. A black boy.

AMADI: I’ll love him; I don’t mind the colour. A life of brotherhood has no eyes for colour or race.

JANET: I’ll love to go to Africa, meet your parents. Will they welcome me? (*Pause*). (41-2)

The conspiracy by the elders to kill Ujowundu and their conversations calls for deconstruction and application of Afro-semio-aesthetic elements to drive meaning home. There is binary opposition of Derrida’s deconstruction. It may be deconstructed that they see Ujowundu as a barrier as he hesitates to surrender Amadi for the ritual. The feelings/perceptions of the elders and that of Ujowundu call for binary opposition through Afro-semio-aesthetic perceptions. Again, Amadi stripping naked before the elders is a thing of concern because he has been hypnotized. This calls for deconstruction and semio-aesthetic analyses for communicative enterprise. The interference by the police and the arrival of Janet at that time needs the act of interpretation and deconstruction to enable the reader makes/create meaning from the play. These are characters that interface with the lines/language and actions of the play. They must be analysed for adequate meaning derivation.

This is apt as:

A play’s language ...can be analyzed purely for its verbal and rhetorical features, but it is more interesting to ask how the language affects our understanding of the characters or invests the play with certain thematic possibilities. Similarly, while we may regard the play’s themes as inside the play, they actually arise only in our interpretation of the play. The themes are something we create by asking certain questions about the play’s plotting, its characterization, its use of language. (Worthen 9)

Ododo's *Hard Choice* is another play that is well crafted in language and character construction that needs the ingenuity of the reader/interpreter through Afro-semio-aesthetic values to deduce meaning from the play, through "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (Ricoeur 1625).. The play is constructed around semiotic, aesthetic and deconstruction elements that must be well understood for meaning generation. In *Hard Choice*, from the beginning of the play, it can be seen that there are many cultural signs or symbols in the play that are meant to communicate meanings to the reader/interpreter. Let us look at the play from the opening glee where the atmosphere shows that there is an occasion going somewhere in the Eastern Nigeria. Where everything seems to be going on fine without binary opposition. All of a sudden there is a commotion and the crown of King Iginla is snatched away. Importantly, African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values.

The reason behind the snatching of the crown must be well deconstructed beyond the meaning fused by the playwright. The selfish interest of the Queen and that of Chief Ubanga should be deconstructed if meaning must be generated beyond that of the playwright's. The King wants their daughter to marry Prince Okin and the Queen for selfish interest does not want their daughter to marry the Prince. This is in itself, is pointer to binary oppositions; differences. This can be seen from this dialogue form *Hard Choice* thus:

CHIEF UBANGA: For now, retreat into hiding and wait for further instructions.
 (Laugh cynically.) I now wait to see how the princess will be betrothed to a Yoruba prince.
 JASPA: Never! Is my chief not good enough for her?
 CHIEF UBANGA: Ask me again. The princess thinks otherwise. More importantly, Eze doesn't see anything wrong in marrying his only child to

a Yoruba prince simply because he wants to strengthen friendship ties with King Iginla.

EGBESU: Friendship my foot! Has Eze lost sight of the consequence?

CHIEF UBANGA: That's the point, Egbesu. As the only child and being a woman, her son automatically becomes the heir apparent to throne of Emepiri Kingdom. Should such an opportunity be dubiously given to an outsider just like that?

ALL: No way!

CHIEF UBANGA: That exactly was my bone of contention at the meeting of council of chiefs. (17)

This, perhaps, may be called binary oppositions which may equally need the interpretative acumen of the reader through African semio-aesthetic analysis to enable him make meaning out of the playtext. It was revealed again that in the quest to find the crown the gods were consulted (African) as reported by Bashorun, the crown is in the custody of some blistering gods (Afro-semio-aesthetic) that are angry. Bashorun's approach to Eze Okiakoh is crafted with language and language in *Hard Choice* thus:

BASHORUN: (Approaches EZE OKIAKOH frontally.) I am Bashorun, the Akogunmogun and generalissimo of Igedu armed forces. The Igedu aristocratic structure is about to crumble because of security breach in your domain. You betrayed friendship and humiliated the crown essence of Igedu Kingdom, why Eze Okiakoh, why?

EZE OKIAKOH: Bashorun the incidence of the abducted crown is indeed an unfortunate one. My chiefs and I have been brainstorming on how to recover it and save ourselves this mutual embarrassment.

BASHORUN: Good to know, but your search is rather too slow for us. In case you don't know, the life of our kingdom lies on that crown. If in three days it is not recovered and surrendered, we shall be left with no other choice but to march on your kingdom and recover the crown ourselves. I believe you know what that means. In one word... WAR! (Turns and leaves with his men. The others remain speechless as the message sinks.)

EZE OKIAKOH: Summon the royal deities at once! (23)

Out of the places in Emepiri kingdom, the queen and her cohorts decided to throw the crown at Oguguru shrine, creatively, African semio-aesthetic values. The location alone shows African semio-aesthetics. Where it was finally revealed that the crown is in Oguguru shrine and was further

discovered that the only thing that can bring it out of there is royal blood. The revelations here are critically intandem with the elements of Afro-semio-aesthetics. Here,: “the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). The Debia’s argument with Chief Ubanga sets the ground for binary oppositions or ‘differences’ according to Derrida which should be understood for meaning generation through Afro-semio-aesthetics elements. The philosophical binary oppositions could make the reader/interpreter to understand where the crown is in the play, as it was seen below clearly thus:

EZE OKIAKOH: Debia, what is the message?

DEBIA: The sun and the moon are on a course of collision and the stars are trembling. Why? A vow is abrogated but appeased. The object of appeasement is sacrosanct and restless...

CHIEF UBANGA: (Cuts in.) Enough of these incomprehensible statements.

DEBIA: It’s not me, it is Otapaipoh. Otapaipoh says that what belongs to the gods is being forcefully substituted; deceit and connivance are conveyor belts in this act. Your Highness, your clue to solving this impending calamity is to offer royal red wine to the gods...

EZE OKIAKOH: Sobriety gentlemen, sobriety! The emotions you have all expressed are directed for the common good of the land; finding solution to our current crisis. Debia, all we want to know is simple. Tell us in plain terms where the crown is and how we can recover it to avert this war threat the Igedus have issued on our kingdom.

CHIEF BEMBE: And who is behind this?

DEBIA: Otapaipoh’s language is plain enough only our insights are not penetrating enough. Otapaipoh says a vow was made and circumvented. The Igedu crown is the object of circumvention. Otapaipoh says the crown is in the Oguguru shrine deep in the forest right now. ALL: (Alarmed.) What, Oguguru shrine?

DEBIA: Yes, Oguguru shrine, and only the blood of the princess will provide the tonic of recovery. (27-9)

Etymologically, royal blood implies the blood from the ruling house, example of African semio-aesthetics elements. But aesthetic wise, royal blood to the beholder could be appreciated through beauty or otherwise. Beautiful because it deals with royal entity and ugly from aesthetic perspective because a human live is going for it. This: “the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625).

The elders could not understand the Debia because his language is embedded with philosophical binary oppositions. The character and language of Chief Ubanga and that of the Queen are revealed as both are equally different to each other. They both have different plans against each other. This was revealed in *Hard Choice* through their exchange thus:

QUEEN: Chief Ubanga, What's urgent that can't wait till tomorrow?

CHIEF UBANGA: The crown, the crown ...

QUEEN: What about it?

CHIEF UBANGA: My Queen, you didn't tell us you're taking the crown to Oguguru shrine.

QUEEN: How does that bother you, you fretting chief?

CHIEF UBANGA: A lot and if you know what I know, I'm sure it would bother you, too.

QUEEN: What?

CHIEF UBANGA: According to Otapaipoh, our kingdom oracle, Oguguru demands the princess' blood in exchange for the crown. And with the war threat from Igedu people, looks like Eze may not be left with any other choice but to offer the princess. (36)

Even though existentialism plays out as the Princess of Emepiri kingdom willingly gave herself in for the sacrifice as against the Queen's will. This sets the binary oppositions between princess and queen. Thus, intandem with Ricueor's theory of interpretation. Another unique thing that runs across the plays selected for this study, is the human being as sacrifice. But as the princess of Emepiri kingdom sacrifices herself she handed her necklace to the prince which could be viewed sociologically, as icon, symbol of authority, peace, unity and progress. It is glaring from Ododo's *Hard Choice* thus:

PRINCESS: (*She removes the coral beads on her neck.*) Oki my love, with this coral beads I decorate you to reaffirm the vision we both share... (Ododo 50)

DEBIA: Yes, she's right. It is one aspect of our customs that has remained a guided secret because of fear of abuse. Apart from marital ties, any male that an only-child-princess gives her royal coral beads, automatically becomes the crown prince of Emepiri Kingdom... (Ododo 51)

These, coupled with the jubilation between both kingdoms permits the peaceful co-existence that both kingdoms were yearning for. Now, with or without the Princess now, the prince through the Debia's language (non-discursive symbolism), we got to know that he will still inherit Emepiri kingdom, as the custom demand. Corroborating Ricoeur's view that: "the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter's) understanding and meaning gained from the text" (Ricoeur 1627).

4.7 Language, Character and Effective Communication in the Selected Playtexts

There are several definitions of communication. DeVito defines communication as: "the act, by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages that are distorted by noise, occur within a context, have some effect, and provide some opportunity for feedback" (4). The definition acknowledges that communication is inherently distortable, because communication can come in both discursive and non-discursive symbolism, and it is capable of influencing the communicators and is context-driven. DeVito's assumes conflict as inherent in communication since the elements necessary for conflict such as noise, distortion, effect, and context constitute the definition. Krause and Morsella define human communication as: "the process by which ideas contained within one mind are conveyed to other minds" (104). Unlike DeVito's, definition Krause and Morsella's definition provides a linear view of communication without the benefit of feedback. However, Adejimola's conception of communication, like DeVito's, contains the vital feedback component. The author considers communication as: "a process that involves the transmission of a message from a sender to a receiver and which has the goal of eliciting a reaction or reactions (feedback)" (3). This is appropriation according to Langer. Feedback is the signal that the message has been

received. Conflict is a feedback product. Hence, the study ventures into investigating the vital role of language and character in effective communication through semio-aesthetics.

Language and character as one of the vehicles of communication should be well deconstructed for effective communication. This is because the act of play writing is intended for communication to the reader/interpreter. The playwright through the medium of conceiving and delivering his idea or thought selects the choice of diction which translates to language for effective communication. The playwright does this through a careful selection of his character construct and language to enable him communicate to his reader/interpreter extemporaneously. Interestingly, as a communicator, the playwright encodes his message and meaning then, he sends them through the medium of the character and language (he does this carefully by embellishing his play with signs, symbols, codes and text through his choice of language) for interpretative purposes. Through: “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). The reader/interpreter carefully does this with this fact behind his mind, that no text, language, presence, truth and reality according to Fortier, remain the same after going through interpretative process. This is apt with the study as the researcher prepares to undertake a painstaking enterprise of interpreting the Nigerian play texts selected for this study. In this regard, “Language was not a mere string of word. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words” (A tongue twister cited in Ngugi 290).

In order for the character to transform, her traits also transform. If the protagonist needs to tell the truth in order to achieve her goal and face her greatest fear, in the beginning she is the antithesis of honest. Throughout the middle, the reader learns all the subtle ways the protagonist lies to others and mostly to herself. Which is: “the gained understanding is used for expanding the text into a life world, here the interpreter seeks to achieve the writers thoughts and feelings but does this through (the interpreter’s) understanding and meaning gained from the text” (Ricoeur 1627). Pretending to like something because someone in authority likes it, saying only partly of what she believes, evading a question rather than telling the truth, shaping her words to fit what she knows is acceptable, smiling when someone intends to be funny, agreeing when she has not even thought over the matter trip her up more and more often and cause her to react more and more emotionally.

When you have written the climax once, then you are able to perform a task analysis of each step the character must accomplish and what he says influences him to reach or attain his goal at the end. You are also able to determine the character’s emotional reaction to each of these challenges. By this, we say the reader/interpreter is deconstructing the character through what he says and his actions. Hence, through what other characters say about him or action taken in his favour or against him. They can never be the same with the truth, reality or essence of the character. The moment the character leaves the middle of the story after the crisis and ensuing threshold, he enters the end when he takes the first step toward the completion of his final goal. For instance, in Iwuh’s *The Village Lamb*, the following dialogue can be considered for what the character know about himself and what other characters know about him:

BOY: (*Panting*) Please help me. They... they ... they’re after my manhood! (*Runs his hand across his face and with some realization*). Oh no! You can’t help me. You’re on the run as well. (*Sadly*) From our act you receive the baton of your race. (*Runs out*)

AMADI: Come back! (*Almost going after him. Ujowundu entering with a bag, catches the sight*)

UJOWUNDU: Who was that with a lightning speed? (28)

From here Amadi becomes fully aware of his ownership of his newly discovered consciousness.

The boy ran away by discovering the mark on Amadi through non-discursive symbolism of Langer. But at a point he does not know who he is. Hence: “the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625).

The dialogue reveals Amadi’s character for effective communication:

UJOWUNDU: Stop crying, my son. (*Pause*) Indeed, and by all means I wanted you to take a wife there because your happiness and safety is anywhere but here.

AMADI: In my native land, Father, is such rejection?

UJOWUNDU: Things could work in reverse order. We’re haunted so much by our past. The termite is a dangerous insect to swallow alive, my son.

AMADI: But could I have stayed there all my life without you? No, I couldn’t. I’d rather die.

UJOWUNDU: Now I see that what is dead is not worth living for.

AMADI: What are you really talking about? Well I sojourned and came back to my place of birth. I am happy, the people love me, and the elders almost worship me.

UJOWUNDU: You assessed yourself wrongly; Son. You assessed society wrongly too. An escaped prisoner of war doesn’t walk back into the enemy’s camp.

AMADI: Is anywhere better than home, and with you? (27)

The character needs practice incorporating into his being the depth and breadth of learning and connectedness to other characters, languages and actions of the play. As the play progresses the character more and more painfully realizes each time his actions and/or speech do not align with his new understanding of himself and the world around him. Princess and Queen were explicit through discursive symbolism in *Hard Choice*:

PRINCESS: (Rushes to hug QUEEN.) Mother, why am I being detained after all I have gone through?

QUEEN: Detained? No, my dear, we are just making sure you don’t join the train of irrationality, which could crush all of us.

PRINCESS: I don’t understand, mother.

QUEEN: Well, I do. Right now you are emotionally unstable and you can’t be left all by yourself. (*Hard Choice* 25)

If a reader/interpreter succeeds in doing the above through the character and his speech or language he is at the verge of deducing meaning from both the character's traits and the meaning embedded in the play by the dramatist. By extension, he communicates effectively with them. This is done through: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (Ricoeur 1625).

For many characters and the language imbued in the plays by the playwrights, especially those in character-driven stories, the character's backstory or the upcoming story represents the loss of the imperfect imprint of his original self. In other words, something happens to the character that causes him to begin to doubt himself or other character and to fear the world around him. Which: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (Ricoeur 1625). To this end, Queen explains:

QUEEN: Yes, your life, but now the gods are set to fail me ... oh God save me (she breaks down in tears.)

EZE OKIAKOH: (Steps out and moves towards her.) the gods never fail except we disregard our bargain with them ... what was the bargain, my dear Queen?

QUEEN: When your coronation as the Eze of Emepiri Kingdom were suspended twenty one years ago, because of the sudden appearance of your step brother who was thought dead, I couldn't stand the agony and shame it would have brought upon us not to be crowned as king. I had to do something. (44-45)

EZE OKIAKOH: (Now anxious) And what did you do?

QUEEN: I went to Oguguru shrine to secure the throne for you and for us with her pregnancy.

EZE and PRINCESS: Aah! (45-46)

By this, the reader or critic is deconstructing the character for meaning generating and adequate comprehension of the play through Ricoeur's position: "the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text" (1625). Thus craving avenues for Afrosemio-aesthetic ideology and analyses in Nigerian drama thereby creating

leeway for further discourses, analyses, deconstruction, and exposing the binary oppositions that exist in the language (discursive symbolism) and characters (non-discursive symbolism) of the plays.

Because of all the dramatic action that takes place in the front story, by the climax the character has uncovered and rediscovered his true authority over his own life. In realigning himself to his inner purpose, for the first time since the backstory robbed him of himself, he meets himself as he truly is meant to be therefore, helping the deconstruction process through their exchange, actions and reactions in the play, *Hard Choice*:

QUEEN: Chief Ubanga, What's urgent that can't wait till tomorrow?

CHIEF UBANGA: The crown, the crown ...

QUEEN: What about it?

CHIEF UBANGA: My Queen, you didn't tell us you're taking the crown to Oguguru shrine.

QUEEN: How does that bother you, you fretting chief?

CHIEF UBANGA: A lot and if you know what I know, I'm sure it would bother you, too.

QUEEN: What?

CHIEF UBANGA: According to Otapaipoh, our kingdom oracle, Oguguru demands the princess' blood in exchange for the crown. And with the war threat from Igedu people, looks like Eze may not be left with any other choice but to offer the princess. (36)

The same thing was seen between Enwe and Fulama in Ukala's *Akpakaland* thus:

ENWE: So the cow's tail is on the cow?

FULAMA: The cow's tail is on the cow.

ENWE: Those flies that used to trouble the cow so much so that you shed tears, the cow now drives them easily?

FULAMA: Yes.

ENWE: Good! You need not quarrel with Unata then. (28)

In the same vein, the characters and language of Edewede and Ebikere in *Edewede* espouse the reader's/interpreter's mind on the way character and language deconstruction in playtexts brings about effective communication and interpretation through semio-aesthetics. For this to happen:

“the interpreter digs deep into the text for deeper understanding and seeks to bring out the hidden ingredients of the text” (Ricoeur 1625). This is apparently captured thus:

EDEWEDE: What about those girls who do not return to the village and are never even mourned, after bleeding to death? Regarded as sacrifice, they are left behind for cultures to feed on...

EBIKERE: An young person can have fine clothes like an elder, she can never have rags like an elder. So, what do you know about circumcision that I do not know? (6)

Though sets the philosophical binary oppositions between Edewede and Ebikere, but through their characters (non-discursive) and language (discursive) or, “an instrument of thought” (Langer 70). An interpreter or the play can communicate effectively to the reader. The tone and depth of their conversation is important to the reader/interpreter for communication. The characters of Ame, Inikpi and Achema open up on the ways character and language can help in communicating effectively. This is it as it is captured from the playtext:

Inikpi: If you say so. (*They all smile. Silence.*) You see, in my time, there was purposeful leadership and good followership.

Ame: That is true. I met the tradition and greatly cherished it.

Inikpi: One was always ready to defend not just himself and his interest, but the question remained how the generality of the Igala people will be affected by any action.

Inikpi: I am glad you are aware.

Achema: And so all those I left behind. (*Looking at her with great admiration.*) Here am I personally beholding your beauty, your elegance and your royalty. What an honour. (15)

The dialogues through symbols say a lot about the characters themselves which an interpreter must understand before interpreting a playtext. The discursive and non-discursive symbolism of Langer play a vital role. As that happens, the antagonists in her life intensify their resistance to her change and growth. This is replicated in the language of the characters as imbued by the playwright, the emotion of the story rises ever higher. As the emotion of the play rise higher; this emotion is

vehemently discovered and rediscovered through the character's language and action. Therefore, no character like language remains the reality, truth and essence of itself. This is one of the critical position of this study. As a character in a play learns who respects his feelings, he makes better choices about how to spend his time and who to spend it with. Because a symbol can be discursive and non-discursive according to Langer. For instance, Taye and Kehinde's *Twingle Twangle...* exchange opens the reader/interpreter's mind to the feelings of their characters for communicative purpose:

TAYE: I'm older than you, don't forget. I'm entitled to some respect.

KEHINDE: Nonsense. You came out of our mother's womb first only because I, as your elder, sent you forward. You were running an errand for me!
(*Twingle... 10*)

Furthermore, it is explicit thus from Taye and Kehinde's character and language thus:

KEHINDE: Me! Listen to that! Have you ever seen me beaten in a fight?

TAYE: That's what I mean. You always fight first, and think afterwards!

KEHINDE: And you think so much that cobwebs grow under your armpit! If I wasn't always around to protect you!

TAYE: You wish to test it now, who's stronger between us?

KEHINDE: Don't be ridiculous. I'll pound you to a pulp, you piece of vegetable!

TAYE: [Coming forward] Perhaps it's today you'll find out that some vegetables are too strong for some teeth. (*Twingle... 12*)

Through their language and character the reader/interpreter could be able to communicate effectively. Their language and character will pave way for the reader to do adequate and concise interpretation and communication flow through semio-aesthetics. The intent of the playwright is to communicate effectively through these characters and others within the confine of the play. This is done through discursive and non-discursive symbolism of Langer. This goes straight to equally help the reader/interpreter to interpret the play effectively. This can be seen from character and language of Fulama and Unata in *Akpakaland*:

FULAMA: I'm going nowhere. This is also an important state matter. When rubbish is too much in the soup, the blind notices it. I won't leave. (To AUDIENCE.) Everyone says, "the president is good. The president is imperial. The president is straightforward. The president is this. The president is that"... the president slumbered in the arms of the Beautiful one while joints of my waist grew cold and stiff. (To AKPAKA.) ... 14-15

AKPAKA: You are going to annoy me just now.

FULAMA: You're charmed, darling, and it should be said. You are charmed, you remain tethered to her tail because she has charmed you. She has wrapped you into her wrapper, alongside her tail, and there, you sweat and swoon for one daughter in eight- (AKPAKA *lashes at her.*) ... You choose not to see it because she's not Fulama. If she were Fulama, you would have said, "Execute her! Execute the long-tailed iguana!" (15)

One is able to deconstruct the character through his language and character as infused by the playwright and determine who he is as he begins the story. And thus, better control when and where to offer deepening information about him throughout the play. The process of discovering the character, what he does through his language and action even though it cannot be measured with what the character does that cannot be replicated with truth, reality and essence. This is purely and constructively the process of deconstructing the character for a better understanding and clarity of the play. This is captured by Amadi in *The Village Lamb*:

AMADI: My name is Amadi Ujowundu, I've just returned to my native land, and everybody seems to read through me like a book. For this reason, I feel uncomfortable with a crowd. Not that it scares me but I do not like discomfort. I love my country and I'm proud of my people. It's good to home. (*Blackout*). (8)

This perhaps is one of the reasons why Jacques Derrida studied the necessary effects of writing any text from a philosophical binary opposition's standpoint. He unravels literary and philosophical works to expose contradictions and flaws within the text and undermines the authority of that text. Not only does Derrida consider written language but also, as he terms, 'arche-writing' being the spoken word and anything else considered to be text – for instance sign systems. Derrida is sceptical about the underlying meanings within all writings, text and spoken

language. Derrida believes that: “nothing is identical with itself; the moment something is thought, said, written or intended, it becomes a trace of itself, no longer itself, no longer present...” (iii). For Derrida, “If nothing can legitimately claim to possess a stable, autonomous identity, then there is nothing which can be invested with the authority of logos” (iv). Therefore, ‘truth’ and ‘meaning’ can never actually arrive as they are always deferred.

Hence, for effective communication, language and character as major elements in Nigerian playtexts should be clearly understood through deconstruction and semio-aesthetic elements. For these elements of a good play to be understood, the reader/interpreter should equally make attempt to deconstruct them. As the interpreter tries to deconstruct, there is the need to be conscious of the philosophical binary oppositions; which is both sides of language and character. The good/bad or man/woman of the character. The interpreter/reader should consciously do this through African semio-aesthetics analyses, which is the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings and Observations

Extensively speaking, if deconstruction deals with binary oppositions as can be observed from the above analyses, then, the need to summarise some binary oppositions in the characters and their languages in the selected playtexts and other contemporary Nigerian drama, as materials fused with meanings. For instance, the character of Taye and Kehinde in Osofisan's *Twingle-Twangle...* are in philosophical binary oppositions. Taye's character may be seen from the angle of peace/good, while Kehinde on the other hand may be viewed as bad/war. The binary oppositions are, good/bad or peace/war. These oppositions may be seen from their language, either as discursive or non-discursive actions and character portrait.

In the same vein, the characters of Efundunke and Digbaro; the servants of Taye and Kehinde respectively are in binary oppositions. The two servants carry bags which contain different contents; a bag contains weapons and the other bag contains herbs. Weapons and herbs are binary oppositions as it was seen when Kehinde and his warriors invaded Taye's territory. The characters of Lawunmi and prince Tinu are equally on the opposite sides, in line with the position of deconstructionists. Therefore, for quick and easy understanding of playtexts, greater attention may be placed on the way these differences are constructed and maintained in the playtexts. Philosophical binary oppositions can be observed from the characters of Baba Ibeji and Mama Ibeji as can be seen from the study. It is apparent from who each supports between Taye and Kehinde. Baba Ibeji loves Taye's action while Mama Ibeji would praise Kehinde's action. The aforementioned are in line with deconstruction and semio-aesthetic analyses. This is done through

discursive and non-discursive symbolisms; language and actions/signs and symbols, which are connected to African semio-aesthetics.

There are equally binary oppositions in the characters of Fulama and Unata and other wives of Akpaka in Ukala's *Akpakaland*. The first opposition noticed is the fact that Akpaka's wives are from different provinces; the province of the rich and the province of the poor; different classes. The class oppositions is a sociological binary oppositions that may be understood by the reader/interpreter through semio-aesthetic analyses. Noticeable also, is Fulama's behaviour/action and Unata's action/behaviour in both discursive and non-discursive manners, are different and are opposite of one another. Their language calls for binary oppositions or "differences" as Derrida and other scholars of deconstruction would put it.

These oppositions call for semio-aesthetic analyses. Which is what the study has done for implicit and explicit understanding of Nigerian playtexts. Thus, making meanings from the playtexts. Hence, the false power of hegemonic knowledge of the playwright can be challenged by a counter-hegemonic discourse and ideology by the reader/interpreter so that alternative understandings of reality can be attained. Once this is achieved, the important role played by binary oppositions, such as rational/irrational, truth/falsehood, man/woman is put to the fore. Meaning is given in such a way that primacy, legitimacy and superiority is allotted to that first term of each of those oppositions as noticed, in the aforementioned and other Nigerian play texts.

In Okoh's *Edewede*, the binary oppositions are clear. One of the ways this can be discovered is through semio-aesthetic analyses of the oppositions in the characters, language and actions. As it was done in the above analyses. Looking at oppositions in *Edewede*, one is compelled to start from the character of Edewede and her husband. When she told her husband about her plans, the husband

disagrees with her which marks the genesis of oppositions in the play. Edewede and her mother-in-law is another oppositions discovered in the play. Edewede standing on the opposite side contrary to the tradition and culture of the community is in itself oppositions or 'differences'. These 'differences' could be understood through semio-aesthetic analyses of the characters, language and actions. Edewede's mother-in-law and Edewede are binary oppositions because they never agree, always on the opposite sides. The elders infringing into Edewede's action to stop the tradition of circumcision is opposition. Oppositions set in as soon as there is different opinions, views, ideology and thought.

In Idegu's *Tough Man*, binary oppositions are noticed from the interchange/interswitch from the world of the living to the world of the dead and vice versa could be studied from the point of view of deconstruction through its elements; differences and philosophical binary oppositions. The action in the world of the living and the action in the world of the dead call for deconstruction through Afrosemio-aesthetic analyses. The understanding of the actions in both worlds will in turn lead to deconstruction in order to discover the ways in which meanings are constructed and used in the selected playtexts.

These and many other issues relating to intertextualization, sign and signification in reading Nigerian plays such as that of Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle...* Ukala's *Akpakaland*, Emmy Idegu's *Tough man* and other plays selected for this study, were looked into. These plays were reviewed for explicit and implicit understanding of these technicalities required of these elements and components in intertextualization, transposition, adaptation and transliteration. So, intertextual language, sign and signification in studying plays were equally analysed. Especially when it comes to location of meaning which also leads to the transmutation of other plays, hence we have

proliferated and interlaced titles and stories of play with iota of variations in ideology, aesthetics and semiotics. This is a tradition that has been in practice for ages.

This goes to say that if a playwright reads a play and the play galvanises his appetite to create another play, then intertextualization which deals with the interrelatedness of a text to another text sets in. For instance, Nwadigwe's *Widow's Might* and Mbachaga's *Widows' Might*. However, Derrida's deconstruction concept, the reader/interpreter has the license to deconstruct the language of the play for effective communication. To do this, it requires serious intellectual engagements. For instance, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Wole Soyinka's *Bacchae of Euripides* is an adaptation of Euripides's *Bacchae*. And Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni an African Antigone* is an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. In an interview, Osofisa affirms that: "You see when I come across a great work of theatre, I am seized at once with the passion to translate it, to interpret it, for our stage and for our time. That is why at any moment you will find me working on a number of adaptations" (232).

In Osofisan's *Twingle Twangle... and Ukala's Akpakaland* for examples, the monster and the human with a tail are representamen respectively, a sign vehicle of what African cultural perspective of monster and human with tail represent. The object is the significance attached to this cultural ideology while the interpretant is the interpretations that surround the monster and human having a tail in African cosmology which an interpreter may understand before interpreting a play through African semio-aesthetic. Though, these are creation of the playwrights respectively to communicate to their readers/interpreter. This is an aspect that makes Langer's theory of symbol and Theory of semiotics relevant to this study. These theories deal with symbols, objects, codes and signs etcetera. The crown in the shrine in *Hard Choice*; the dead communicating with the

living in *Tough Man*; Human being growing tail and the transfer of the tail from one person to another in *Akpakaland* and others call for exceptional thinking and sensual perceptions about something else apart from its immediate meaning. These are all Afrosemio-aesthetic elements for interpretation and communication. To affirm to this, Gowan Doki asserts that: “Non-verbal communication as an aspect of human communication has, over time, attracted quite a number of social psychologists” (40). Thus, explaining the place of non-verbal communication in the spheres of communication generally. Doki reiterating this, he posits that: “Non-verbal communication is continuous. Meanings in communication can be deduced through proper perception. The implication of this is that, it is only when non-verbal symbols are clearly perceived and interpreted by the recipient that they really become effective” (42). It becomes pertinent on the receiver of non-verbal symbols, codes, and signs to try and do a herculean interpretation of these symbols to be able to give adequate and proper meanings to the symbols received for communicative purposes.

Therefore, from the summary above, the research observes and believes that theorists and critics of Nigerian drama are capable of achieving or attaining the feat of developing models/theories/approaches that can help in the further study and interpretation of Nigerian playtexts. This will help Nigerian drama to make more meaning and communicate effectively and efficiently to the reader/interpreter.

Another shocking revelation from the observation of this study is that drama or playtext is universal phenomenon that cannot be studied in isolation devoid of Euro-American theories and approaches with their mono-culturalism. Hence, the need for African/Nigerian theories that can

help in bringing forth the cultural background of Nigerian playtexts and synergise it with Western theories for integration and multi-culturalism.

It is also observed that there are dearth of African/Nigerian theories that can help in the exploration of meaning and communication in the Nigerian playtexts. Effort can geared towards the evolvement of theories and approaches that can help in the interpretation of playtexts with emphasis to the backgrounds of the playtexts, as bases for African semio-aesthetics.

It is also observed that avalanche of playtexts are either constructed from fiction or oral performance of the people. In fact studies revealed that average stories of the Nigerian playtexts are gotten from oral literature/performance. Hence, the need for more and concise theories or approaches to be used to exhume these infused cultural elements.

The researcher observes that the threat of mono-culturalism in this postmodern era is still on the alarming. Thus, it has affected the interpretative acumen of the West and some African/Nigerians who now misjudge and misconstrued the Nigerian/African playtexts. There is therefore, the need for a multi-cultural approach or theory that will absorb the oral literature/performance of the Nigerian/African people that form the sources of their playtexts.

The research discovers that there is lack of relevant theories and approaches by Africans/Nigerians, theories that can infuse vitality into the interpretative acumen of the critic, reader/interpreter in their bid to interpret existing playtexts.

It is also discovered that lack of/or dearth of relevant African theories of interpretation has contributed to the misinterpretation by the West and some Africans/Nigerians who misjudge and misconstrued African/Nigerian play texts.

5.2 Recommendations

Consequently, the contemporary African/Nigerian playwrights should begin to think the way of African postmodernism and embrace the model of African semio-aesthetics as an Afro postmodern concept/model to enable integration of theories/approaches in a multi-cultural world of today.

There is need for Nigerian/African playwrights to aspire towards the attainment of theoretical backing/leaning of his art of playwriting, while the critic/theorist must aim at concretization of the theory in the interpretation, analysis and study of African playtexts.

The threat of mono-culturalism in this postmodern era is on the alarming. Thus, it has affected the interpretative acumen of the West who now misjudge and misconstrued the Nigerian/African playtexts. There is therefore the need for a multi-cultural approach of theory that will absorb the oral literature/performance of the Nigerian/African people that form the sources of their playtexts.

The relevant aspects of Euro-American theories and approaches should be employed in the study of Nigerian drama. This is vital because the world is a globalised world, therefore the need for theoretical integration rather than theoretical isolation, especially, now, that there is call for multi-cultural environment that can accommodate theories and practice irrespective of where such theories emanate from.

African theorists have made concerted efforts in the evolvments of theories that can fit into the study of African/Nigerian playtexts. Efforts should be invigorated to evolve more to assist in the study of indigenous playtexts such as the ones selected for this study. There should be struggle geared towards the evolvment of theories and approaches that can help in the interpretation of playtexts with emphasis to the background of the playtexts.

In this postmodern era, critics should make vital commitment towards the appropriation of the existing theories by Africans in the interpretation of African/Nigerian playtexts. And they should equally see to the survival of new theories that would be evolved by African/Nigerian theorists to allow smooth and hitch-free interpretation of African/Nigerian playtexts.

The study also recommends that it is apparent that the African/Nigerian playwrights/dramatists require the evolution of interpretation friendly theories/approaches for the realisation of African postmodernism because of the mutual understanding and interaction that exists among society, drama and theory.

It is discovered that in this postmodern age, there is the threat of mono-culturalism to African art of playwriting. Thus, there is the need for multi-cultural theories that will engender in the playwright and critic, embrace of radical revival strategies that will rejuvenate the playtext interpretation in Africa/Nigeria.

Critic/interpreter should stimulate ideas and concept in their effort to interpret African/Nigerian playtexts. This should be done through the engagement of discursive and non-discursive symbolism in their interpretation to derive meaning for communication purposes.

Playwrights should endeavour to construct their plays with enough instruments of discursive and non-discursive symbolism, so as to provide avalanche of tools for the interpretation of such playtexts by the reader/interpreter in a multi-cultural society.

5.3 Conclusion

There is need for Afro-semio-aesthetics approach which posits that for interpretation of playtexts to take place, the origin of such playtexts must be put into consideration, which is why the White

misinterpret African, especially Nigerian playtexts. Because the background of these playtexts are neglected. Therefore, not put into the front burner of textual analysis. African semio-aesthetics therefore can be seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values.

The West and some diasporic Africans/Nigerians are not conversant with the backgrounds of the African/Nigerian playtexts, and efforts are not geared towards getting other critical works done by indigenous critics to help refill their interpretative vacuum. One may argue that this may be why Ricoeur's Theory of Interpretation and Langer's Theory of Symbols as sound as they seem, have shortfalls. They have shortfalls because they never mention understanding the background/environment that produces playtexts, after the three cardinal elements of Ricoeur's theory of interpretation: explanation; understanding; and appropriation and Langer's theory of symbol: symbol, object and person. These elements can be used to study contemporary Nigerian drama in multicultural society. But, semio-aesthetics holds that for a reader/interpreter to understand a playtext, he must understand the background of the playtexts linked to Ricoeur's theory, will call for multi-culturalism. Or in a broader term, afro-postmodernism in a globalised world. We may move further to create room for integration of Western theories with African theories and practice; integration of theories in a globalised or multi-cultural society. This involves the process of identifying a core set of connectors within a topic and showing how they fit together or are related in some ways to the theory or theories. It is the structure that can hold or support a theory or theories of interpretation of playtexts, and this involves bringing the interrelated theories in the interpretation into one, through a combination or synthesis which explains their interrelatedness.

Afro-semio-aesthetics therefore, is seen by the current study as the way African conceives his numerous artefacts, the meanings of these artefacts and their religious, social, political, economic values. And is being proposed as a model to fill the gap created by Ricoeur's theory of interpretation and Langer's theory of symbols. The lacuna created is that they both fail to address the place of environment/culture in understanding of playtext. This, Afro-semio-aesthetics seeks that for a playtext to be understood, the cultural background of the playtext should be understood first. If the culture of the play is understood, then, the west and some diasporic Africans/Nigerians would not have the essence to misinterpret African/Nigerian playtexts. The Afro-semio-aesthetic model therefore, would serve as a means towards the deconstruction and deduction of meaning from African/Nigerian playtexts. Afro-semio-aesthetics emphasizes that every facet of the culture of the play crafted by the playwright in any part of Africa is crafted in the ethnographies of the people which the West must read first before interpreting African/Nigerian playtexts.

Thus, language, symbols, codes, signs, logo etcetera, which form the cultural elements of African semio-aesthetics; cultural background of African/Nigerian playtexts, may be well understood and comprehended through the reading of ethnographies of the culture of the playtexts before the White/African; Nigerian can interpret African/Nigerian playtexts. The above elements deal with African sensual perceptions and feelings, and as such, the only people that can give adequate interpretations to them without criticism and prejudice, are the owners of that culture. Therefore, reading of other critical essays and ethnographies and anthropology written by critics of African/Nigerian origin who are well grounded in the culture of the people is important and inevitable. Hence, Miller argues that:

No responsible Western reading of African literature can take place in the vacuum of a "direct" and unmediated relationship with the text. What the literary text says

is necessary but not sufficient, other texts must be brought into dialogical exercise of a good reading...any non-African reader (or even an African reader from a different cultural area) seeking to cross the information gap between himself or herself and a African text will probably be obliged to look in books that are classified as anthropology. (446)

This must be observed in the effort to interpret any playtext that has African/Nigerian background. The submission by Afro-semio-aesthetics is aimed at repositioning the interpretation of Nigerian playtexts to their origins/backgrounds. Thus, understanding the culture of the playtexts plays a vital role in its interpretation. Because it is lack of the understanding of the people's culture that pushed Simon Pilkings to what he did in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. In corroboration, Adeoti observes that: "Pilkings attitude to the people and their culture, like those he represents, is condescending. Unfortunately, with his unsolicited but supercilious intervention, he ends up bringing upon the people and their cosmology, incalculable damage" (Adeoti 18). There is therefore, a repercussion in interpreting African/Nigerian culture as portrays in Nigerian plays without understanding their culture. Most times, it is derogatory and catastrophic.

African semio-aesthetics is used as a model/approach by this researcher to test the ground for proper interpretation of African/Nigerian playtexts. This is done through African sensual perception and feeling the cultural elements and sociological influences portray. This model/approach is galvanized by some of the postmodern and Afro-postmodern theorists/scholars and critics like Wole Soyinka, Ola Ritimi, Emeka Nwabueze, Sam Ukala, Sunnie Ododo, Canice Nwosu, who emphasised that there should be evolvment of indigenou African/Nigerian models/approaches to help in the proper interpretation of African/Nigerian playtexts in a multi-cultural society of the world. This is the position of African semio-aesthetics as one of the Afro-postmodern models/approaches to be used in the analyses and interpretations of playtexts. Especially, playtexts that are written in Africa/Nigeria and by Africans/Nigerians. This is because

the playtexts contain some cultural elements and symbols that have sensual perception, feeling and interpretation to the African/Nigerian dramatists.

The concept of Afro-semio-aesthetic dwells on the premise that every clime has its culture, so does Africa. African semio-aesthetics lean on idea and correctional impetus against the Euro-centric domination of the African semiotics and aesthetics. The correctional impetus is that Africa has semiotics and aesthetics. African semiotics and aesthetics deals with the philosophical sensual perception of the African man and his cultural heritage. The African perception of his culture lies with how he perceives his culture and tradition, his arts and artifacts, mythologies, legends, symbols and signs which are relatively African. Thus African has that aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities that are different from the Euro-American aesthetic and semiotic sensibilities. In other words, African semio-aesthetics is the manner Africans evaluates, assesses and judges his arts and culture.

African semio-aesthetics therefore, is geared towards evolving a concept or theory that can be used in the reading and interpretation of African playtexts with a view of revealing those afro-semio-aesthetic ingredients fused in those playtexts by the playwrights that can assist in the generation of meanings and communicating effectively. Concretely, African semio-aesthetics emphasizes that Africans have aesthetics and semiotics; that Africa has semiotics and aesthetics which deal with the way Africans perceive their culture and arts, these perception influence the reading and interpretation of African playtexts. This is the position of the current study. It does this through Afro-semio-aesthetics.

Furthermore, Afro-semio-aesthetics deals with the ethnographies of the African people as most of the African plays are re-written of African culture, tradition and arts. Thus, they are reflected in

the plays conspicuously in the process of the construct of their plays. Hence, the ethnographies of the African people should be well understood for the reading and interpretations of African plays to enable free flow of deconstruction for meaning generation and effective communication. The ethnographies include – the language, food, clothes, ceremonies, medicines, burials and so many others. Therefore, in an African play, before a reader condemns the character and language of any play, he must understand why such character does what he did? This is simple, because he should understand what does the culture of the people permits and what it does not permit. Thus the reader/interpreter will be well guided through all the aforementioned element of African semio-aesthetics.

Conclusively, this research proposes African semio-aesthetics as a model/approach for play interpretation because from the researcher's perception, it deals with true environmental conditions which must be understood by an outsider (a foreigner) who wish to give adequate interpretation to the African/Nigerian playtexts. This model/approach argues with Ricoeur and Langer in their theory of interpretation and theory of symbol respectively. Because their theories deemphasized the need to understand the environment that produces playtexts which is a major concern of this study. African semio-aesthetics, as an African postmodern model/approach is to work with the analyses and interpretation of existing texts and produce its own texts. Also, tries to synergise between the existing texts and Euro-American theories for integration of theory and practice in a multicultural and globalised world. There is a lacuna as a result of the misinterpretation because of lack of understanding of the environment of African/Nigerian play texts. That gap is what Afro-semio-aesthetics fill by proposing the environment of a play as a key element in a bid to interpret playtexts for meaning creation and generation.

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