

## Language Deconstruction in Some Selected Contemporary Nigerian Drama

Mohammed-Kabir, Jibril Imam (Ph.D), Samson Idakwo

### Abstract

It has been observed that readers, especially Nigerian young readers and interpreters often misread/misinterpret and misjudge language construct in Nigerian play texts. This is because African playwrights especially Nigerians have been dominated and influenced by Western playwrights and writers with the styles writing their play texts.

Thus the problem of this study centres on the Euro-American perceptions of writings on the sensibilities of Nigerian playwrights. The study aims at evolving means of interpreting Nigerian play texts through language and other artistic components and compositions from the point of view of the playwrights and interpreters. Objectives of the study include: to examine the object of language as foundations of semiotic and aesthetic analyses and interpretation. To deconstruct the selected plays through analyses and appraisal of language usage. The study is hinged on the theoretical premise of Derrida's deconstruction that made the researcher's meaning generation feasible. The study adopts random sampling, case study and content analysis approaches of the qualitative research method. The findings reveal that from the African deconstruction standpoint, language in Nigerian drama is aimed at effective generation and communication of meaning. The study recommends that language deconstruction should be key anchor for the interpretation of contemporary Nigerian play texts. The study concludes that cultural elements add to the construct and impart of the dramatic products. Hence, deconstruction should be applied as analytical tool for language deconstruction in contemporary Nigerian drama

### Introduction

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. *Otti* asserts 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* posits that, "***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 captures it that: "***Language, 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. Saussure treated language as a sign-system, and his work in linguistics has supplied the concepts and methods that semioticians apply to sign-systems other than language. One such basic semiotic

Mohammed-Kabir, Jibril Imam (Ph.D)  
Department Theatre Arts  
Alvan Ikoku Federal  
College of Education,  
Owerri, Imo State.  
Email: kabirjib@gmail.com  
kabirm96@yahoo.com

**Samson Idakwo**  
Department Theatre Arts  
Alvan Ikoku Federal  
College of Education,  
Owerri, Imo State.

Correspondence to  
Mohammed-Kabir, Jibril Imam (Ph.D)  
Email: kabirjib@gmail.com  
kabirm96@yahoo.com

concept is Saussure's distinction between the two inseparable components of a sign: the signifier, which in language is a set of speech sounds or marks on a page, and the signified, which is the concept or idea behind the sign. Among the most influential of these thinkers are the French scholars Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva.

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).

### Theoretical Framework

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 text's meaning, 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 deconstructing language and character, 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).

### Language in Contemporary Nigerian Drama

The drive for contemporary drama (plays) in quest for a productive communication over the centuries has been commended by various literary scholars and critics. *Gowon Doki* opines 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).

Just as the thrust of playwriting is also communication. Following this trend, *Brilhart* 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. It 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 play text, relating

with the people with certain signs in the community.

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)

Conspicuously, any dramatic piece's quest is to communicate effectively. It is the quest for effective communication that makes the playwrights, critics, directors, theatre managers, theatre technicians and the performers whether conventional plays or cultural plays put their searchlight on some basic elements of communication like language, symbols, metaphors (both verbal and non-verbal codes of communication) to enable them flow with their communication as will be seen in this work in due course. In the process of encoding as encoders (playwrights) put these non-verbal cues together, they send same to the decoder (interpreters) who give meaning or makes meaning from these encoded cues for adequate and effective communication. Thus, they deconstruct the language and other elements of communication embedded in the play. Indeed, **“Derrida argues that since the author is no longer the source of meaning in a text, deconstruction becomes an accessory to the death of the author”** (Nwabueze 57). Hence the reader/interpreter or critic endeavours to deconstruct objectively to permeate meaning making and communicating effectively. Adeoti citing Ayi Kwei Armah that interpretation: **“has never been a simple work, the critic needs to be cautious and sensitive, not only to his own prejudice, but also to the prejudice of his audience”** (39).

### Synopses of the Selected Plays

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.

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.

### 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.

### Language Deconstruction in Iwuh's The Village Lamb and Osofisan's TwingleTwangle A Twyning Tayle

The depth of language is highly placed by the playwrights through the character construct, which should be understood for interpretation and communication essence. Language runs through Twingle-Twangle..., 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! Olukowa!

**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. 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 TwingleTwangle...:

**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)

Language as a discursive and non-discursive symbolism can be deduced from TwingleTwangle..., 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. 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's principles.

The people have promised to sacrifice virgin for Bilisi, but Bilisi's 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 completion 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 decided to contest and people were surprised as he was not among the finalists. But after much argument and convictions he was allowed to contest.

A cosmological deconstruction of language of Kehinde and Taye as it is most believed in most African world view is displayed through their exchange. Also, the meaning of semiotics and aesthetics is found through their dialogue. This excerpt from the play TwingleTwangle... 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)

Through the principles of deconstruction it was discovered from the exchange (language) 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). 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. Taye apart from being an epitome of peace and tranquility, 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, mesamis, Da mihi locum standi, et mundumvelos. (Twingle...36)

Taye turning down the offer of marrying the princess threw everybody off balance. But, the researcher observes through the interpretation of the play text that Taye has a mighty plan which was later revealed. 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. (TwingleTwangle... 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 a 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.

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 play text. Similarly, in Iwuh's *The Village Lamb*, the elders' language and the textuality of the play are fused with meaning in the play, which the playwright may want the reader/interpreter to discover. 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)

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.

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. 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 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 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. 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 and semio-aesthetic perceptions analysis. 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. 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 semio-aesthetic analysis. In line with 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. Amadi's attempt like Elesin Oba in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, to deposit a seed proves abortive as the ladies who understand the mark on Amadi know the consequences if he eventually mate with them. This is symbolic because it connotes continuity. 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. 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. 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)

Again, there is a shocking revelation about Amadi. Confusion like Pilkings intervention

in the ritual suicide mission of Elesin because of the former's lack of understanding of the culture of the people of old Oyo. 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 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 of the elders and that of Ujowundu call for binary opposition through 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 Juliet 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)



## Recommendations

Consequently, the contemporary African/Nigerian playwrights should begin to think the way of African postmodernism and embrace the model of semio-aesthetics as an Afro postmodern idea/model/theory to enable integration of theories / approaches in a multi-cultural world of today.

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 play text interpretation in Africa/Nigeria.

Critic/interpreter should stimulate ideas and concept in their effort to interpret African/Nigerian play text. 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 play texts by the reader/interpreter in a multi-cultural society.

## Conclusion.

Thus, language, symbols, codes, signs, logo etcetera which form the cultural elements; cultural background of African/Nigerian play texts, aesthetics and semiotics, may be well understood and comprehended through the reading of ethnographies of the culture of the play texts before the White/African; Nigerian can interpret African/Nigerian play texts. The above elements deal with sensual perceptions, 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 monographs written by critics of African/Nigerian origin who are well grounded in the culture of the people is important and inevitable.

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