Vol. 1, No. 2; December (2025)
E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

Semiotic Cultural Features in African Literature

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Abstract
Literary works of every land and clime are heavily weighted in semiotic features as linguistic evidence. Some cultural semiotic features are consciously or unconsciously, wittingly or unwittingly woven into literary works by literary writers to make thematic statements. Issues that border on public morality are consciously woven around semiotic issues of myth, whereby critics and readers of literary works are left to unravel and interpret the latent content of such features. These semiotic features are sometimes presented as linguistic features of myth, which abound in African Literature. This essay, discusses semiotic dimensions of some cultural features encapsulated in the literary works of some African writers, using selected works of Chinua Achebe and Chukwuemeka Ike as illustrations. These includes Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* as well as Ike's *The Porter's Wheel* and *The Bottled Leopard*. Inter-textual references are made to the works of other African creative writers to corroborate the position of the paper. These cultural semiotic aspects discussed in this study are *ogbanje, iyiuwa* or *ogbanje* stone, *osu,* reincarnation and other supernatural phenomena. This study is woven around Jacques Derrida´s Deconstruction theory, which argues that meaning in text is unstable, unreliable and never fixed.
Keywords: Semiotics, *Ogbanje, Iyiuwa, Osu*, Thematic statement, Deconstruction.

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

Introduction

To what extent does the African audience of African literary writers believe in the content and meaning of semiotic features of myth? What about the readers who are not of African descent? Are they *persuaded* to believe in these semiotic mythic corpora, simply because they are also available in their world view or in the literature of other lands? To what extent, also, has the adherents of Western religions watered down the attitude of African readers of African literary works to some semiotic elements of myth? Could we really sweep the latent content of semiotic myths under the carpet or dismiss them with the wave of the hand as heathen, savage, archaic or primitive? What actually motivated African literary writers to delve into these mythic features of semiotics? Should we really say to the African reader of African Literature who does not believe in the existence of semiotic features of myths that: *"You don't know your father!"?* These questions, constitute the thesis statements of this essay. Answers to these statements would be addressed as this essay advances. At this point, we enquire into available literature in theory and practice to foreground the paper.

Literature Review: Theoretical Studies

Available literatures unveil a lot about semiotic features in their realms from where literary writers enjoy the liberties to harness them in order to achieve literary corpus. Semiotics and semiology refer to the same term. While semiology is what the term is known as among western tradition of linguists, the chief proponent being Ferdinand de Saussure, semiotics is fashionable among American tradition of linguists.

Semiotics refers to "the theory or science of signs / sign systems and their meanings, specifically those involved with COMMUNICATION among human beings in different societies and cultures" (Wales 2001: 354). Semiotic theory also extends to the study of animal communication systems referred to as *zoosemiotics*. Wales explains that the scope of semiotics is broad, comprising verbal language in its different media of speech and writing, as well as nonverbal communication systems. Nonverbal communication systems include gesture and body movement, also known as *kinesics*, and other CODES of proximity or distance; we call these other codes as *proxemics,* dress and MASS MEDIA and others. In this way, the study of semiotics overlaps with other disciplines such as COMMUNICATION THEORY, linguistics, sociolinguistics and semantics (Wales, 2001:355). Following this line of reasoning, other phenomena that are present in ideological level of culture can be included. Thus Barthes, (quoted in Wales, 2001 355), argues that almost anything in society can be a significant sign germane in speech community. Even dress and dress styles and dress codes fall within the realm of semiotics.

M. H. Abrams (2005: 290-291) goes down memory lane to ascertain the etymology of the term semiotics. At the end of the nineteenth century, according to him, Charles Sanders, American philosopher, proposed and described a study that he called "semiotic." In Europe, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1915) independently proposed a science he called "semiology." The two proposals of the term have given rise to the acceptance of semiotics and semiology as synonyms for the systematic study of signs. Abrams further explains that *signs,* as applied to semiotics, become conveyors of meaning, which are not limited to explicit systems of communication such as language, the Morse code, and traffic signs / signals. The signs also pertain to a great diversity of other human activities and productions, such as bodily postures and gestures, the social rituals we perform, the kinds of clothes we wear, the meals we serve, the buildings we inhabit, the objects we deal with, all of which convey common meanings to members who participate in a particular culture; the whole lot of these can be analyzed as signs which function in diverse modes of signifying systems.

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
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He further acknowledges that even though the study of language which has to do with specifically verbal signs may technically be considered as only one branch of the general science of semiotics, *linguistics* stands out eminent as the developed science of language. Indeed, linguistics has the most parts that supply the basic concepts and methods that a semiotician applies to the study of other social sign-systems. Abrams also cites C. S. Peirce who distinguishes three classes of signs, defined in terms of the kind of relation that exists between a signifying item and that which it signifies. One of these classes is *the icon,* which functions as a sign by means of inherent similarities, or shared features, with which it signifies. Examples that come to mind are the similarity of a portrait to the person it depicts, or the similarity of a map to the geographical area it stands for. The other class of the signs is *the index*. Index is a sign which bears a natural relation of cause or effect to what it signifies. Thus, smoke is a sign which indicates fire, and a pointing weather vane indicates the direction of the wind. The third class of the signs as given by Peirce is *the symbol* or *the sign proper.* This subset of the sign semiotics shows that the relation between the signifying item and what it signifies is not a natural one, but entirely a matter of social convention. In expatiating with examples, Abrams states that the social gesture of shaking hands in some cultures is a conventional sign of greeting or parting; a red traffic light conventionally signifies order to stop. The salient and most complex examples of this subset or this third type of signs are the words that make up a language.

De Saussure introduced a great many terms and concepts which are harnessed by present-day scholars in semiotics. Some of them include *signifier* and *signified;* these two terms or components are inseparable. Whereas signifier refers to a set of speech sounds, or of marks on a page, signified, on the other hand, pertains to a concept or idea which is the meaning of the sign. In Saussure's terminology, *a verbal sign* is like *onomatopoeia,* which is construed similar to the sounds they signify. He argues that in those sounds of onomatopoeia, there is no inherent or natural connection between a verbal signifier and what it signifies.

The other term among those introduced by Saussure as Abrams reports is described by way of explanation. He says that the identity of all elements of a language including its words, their component speech sounds, as well as the concepts which the words signify, are determined not by "positive qualities," or objective features in these elements themselves, but by *differences,* or a network of relationships, comprising distinctions and oppositions from other speech sounds, other words, as well as other sign fields that obtain only within a particular linguistic system. Another expression of Saussure is that he states that the aim of linguistics, or of any other semiotic enterprise, is to regard *parole* (which pertains to a single verbal utterance, or a particular use of a sign or set of signs) as only a manifestation of the *langue* ("the general system of implicit differentiations and rules of combination which underlie and make possible a particular use of signs)" (Abrams 2005 290).

John Lyons (1977: 57-94) perceives the whole lot of language as a semiotic system, which is composed of "verbal and non-verbal signaling" system. Commenting further, Lyons explains that the "meaning of linguistic expressions is commonly described in terms of the notion of signification." Put differently, he states that "words and other expressions are held to be signs which, in some sense, signify, or stand for, other things." Lyons candidly admits that "what these other things are" has long been a matter of controversy. However, we can conveniently state that in our discourse, scaffold of semiotic content means also to embrace even mythic issues of culture, naming enterprise among a people, ideological features of culture and the rest of the people's world view.

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
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Terence Hawkes (1983: 123-160) construes semiotics simply as "science of signs." He says that the field of semiotics is enormous. According to him, it ranges from:

> the study of the communicative behavior of animals to the analysis of such signifying systems as human bodily communication (*kinesics* and *proxemics*) or factory signs (the 'code of scents'), aesthetic theory, and rhetoric. By and large, its boundaries…are coterminous with those of structuralism...embracing (a) discipline called, simply, *communication.* In such a context, structuralism itself would probably emerge as a method of analysis linking the fields of linguistics, anthropology and semiotics (124).

Empirical Studies

In the theoretical studies of semiotics, we recall that Lyons perceives the whole lot of language as a semiotic system, which is composed of "verbal and non-verbal signaling" system. So, while doing a systemic text-linguistic approach to literary analysis, Adejare (1992: 6, 7) pursues the line of thought projected by Lyons. He states that the text is a unit of language that has been used in a specific context by a text producer with the purpose of communicating a message through the use of the linguistic signs which exist within a language's semiotic universe.

He opines that depending on the situational factor, a text can belong to what he calls either the prime order type or the second order type. Using this delineation, he argues that a literary text belongs to a second order text. By this, he implies that the literary text has three main levels of meaning where its message can be projected. These, according to Adejare, are the primitive order level, the prime order level and the second order level. He explains that these levels are determined by the combination of formal meaning with the two situational components, the simple situation and the complex situation, which operate within the second order text.

Explaining the primitive level of meaning, he says that the component of the text is where primitive linguistic meanings are decoded. Primitive or sign meanings, he continues, are derived from the phonological, grammatical and the lexical elements of this level. Adejare adds that these meanings are universal within a particular language's semiotic universe and they are a common possession of all the speakers of such a language; he quickly clarifies that those primitive meanings are not text meanings.

Adejare talks about "semiotic variation", which he argues is a crucial factor in the interpretation of second language varieties. He explains that:

> "Omovo shaved" in British English semiotics is likely to be interpreted as implying that Omovo is a social rebel because the skin head sub-culture of the British has this attribute. But in a second language text, such as the Nigerian speaker of English produces, a shaved head has the semiotic meaning, (of) "bereavement." (Adejare 1992: 7).

The message Adejare seems to be passing across here hinges on Achebe's (1982:61) caution while espousing the necessity in and relevance of using the English language as international medium of exchange in African Literature. Achebe notes:

> The African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience.

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In effect, the Nigerian or African literary writer, while using English, still in the words of Lyons, cited above, as a semiotic system, which is composed of "verbal and non-verbal signaling" system, should use it in such a way that the language "brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost." By so doing, the issue of ambiguity in meaning will not be there; neither will he fail to pass his unique vision – message to his audience. It is probably to avoid this situation that may have prompted some pioneer writers of African Literature such as Chinua Achebe and Chukwuemeka Ike to provide glossary in their works at the end of their novels (*Things Fall Apart* and *The Potter's Wheel*), so that their audience from other speech communities or semiotic universe or environment will follow through.

While writing on "Igbo Traditional Design and Contemporary Dress Wears", Obiora Udechukwu (n.d: 2-14), unveils interesting semiotic features among this semiotic environment. Those semiotic features of Igbo culture are referred to as "*Nsibidi* signs". In his play entitled *A Grain of Rice,* Anyachonkeya (2006: 48) raises some semiotic features of myth called *Ogbanje* and *akara aka* (predestination). In the play, Amina is worried that her daughter, Nnenna, might belong to such wicked set of children who when they are born die early in their life and come back to be born again in that cycle to torment their mother or parents. Her daughter is ignorance of what Ogbanje is, and Amina takes the rigour to explain the meaning to her daughter, even going to an informative length of explaining with names what this semiotic matter is called and known in different semiotic environments of Nigeria. She, therefore, explains:

> *Ogbanje* is one of those wicked and treacherous children born, but soon they die and enter their mothers' wombs to be born again. In the process, they torment their mothers. The Igbo call such *Ogbanje*; the Yoruba, *Abiku.* In Gongola State, my State of birth, *Ogbanje* is known by various names among different ethnic groups. For instance, the Fulani, who speak Fulfude, call him *Wabi;* the Nyandang, *Risa;* the Mumuye, *Tori;* the Koma, *Jobi* and the Chamba refer to such as *Urum.* Even down South, Cross River and Akwa Ibom States, *Ogbanje* is called *Esseiemmana* among Efik, Ibibio and Eket, while Annang refer to such as *Okponsanha.*

The semiotic issue of *akara aka* raised in the play revolves around the couple, Obinna and Amina, who have lost their three sons at the battlefield during the Nigerian-Biafran War. Their only surviving child, Nnenna, gets put in a family way through wayward life as a student; and in an attempt to abort the pregnancy dies in the process. The parents are childless. They end up as people of bad *chi.* Obinna soliloquizes in melancholy and says that they are a people of bad chi and adds: "We sneezed and lost our eyes in the process. And going to pick up our eyes, we broke our hands. *Chei! Omere ma chi ekwe, onye uta atana ya*" (69). The person who struggled and failed because his *chi* said *No*! No one should blame him.

The same *akara aka* assumption is presented in John Munonye's(1971) *The Oil Man of Obange,* in the case of the principal character, Jeri. Jeri Oko labours and toils to train his children left for him by his deceased wife; he later dies in a bicycle accident in one of his laborious trips to go and sell his palm oil. Ngugi wa Thiong'O (1984: 125) firmly believes in the semiotic implications of names and naming among Africans. To him a name is serious to the African, not a mere tag or label; that is why average Africans do not just give names to their children. To the culturally disoriented Africans, who fail to appreciate the semiotic implications of name and naming, from historical, cultural, religious, anthropological, etc., considerations, Thiong'O berates them unreservedly:

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

> 'It is not that I don't believe in names. For what could be a more ridiculous caricature of self than those of our African brothers and sisters proudly calling themselves James Philipson, Rispa, Hottensiah, Ron Rodgerson, Richard Glucose, Charity, Honey Moonsnow, Ezekiel, Shiprah, Winterbottomson – all the collection of names and non-names from the Western world? What more evidence of self-hate than their throwing a tea-party for family and friends to bribe them never to call them by their African names? It is rather that I believe in the reality of what is being named more than in the name itself.'

Thiong'O´s position provides insight into the semiotic implications of naming and names in Africa. So, name is among the signs and icons in semiotic system, which is composed of "verbal and non-verbal signaling" system. Sign, composed of signifier and referent, as applicable to the name of an individual is a mental concept or construct, we derive from the meanings of those names in certain semiotic environments. In other words, names are symbolic. Commenting on sign and symbol, Ochigbo (2011: 96) observes that: "A sign is made up of the signifier, a mental concept or referent"; and a symbol is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by members of a culture…." This expose on theoretical framework has broadened our knowledge of semiotic features. The paper now proceeds to address the task of semiotic content of myth in African literature. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*and Chukwuemeka Ike's *The Potter's Wheel* and *The Bottled Leopard*, respectively are the texts used for this critical inquiry.

Semiotic Features of *Ogbanje, Ogbanje* Stone or *IyiUwa in Achebe and Ike's Novels*

One cannot see or touch semiotic features of myth in a speech community but they are believed to exist; It is best acquiesced that they are in vogue and are ascribe to the relics of traditional religion. Our customary practices, belief system and normative idiosyncrasies are deeply rooted in our culture, vis-à-vis, traditional religion of our forebears. Literary writers, therefore, have no option than to document them as part of local colour in their making of realistic literature. A non-African who delights in reading African literature may wonder about the literary corpora of these semiotic features. Let some literary writers of African descent educate us better.

Soyinka (1969:28) calls "*Ogbanje" "Abiku*" among the Yoruba speech community, and goes further to say of him: "(A) (w)anderer child. It is the same child who dies and returns and returns again and again to plague the mother." Of course, Soyinka admits that *abiku* is part of "Yoruba belief system". Achebe (1986:152) intones: *Ogbanje* is "changeling: a child who repeatedly dies and returns to its mother to be reborn. It is almost impossible to bring up an *ogbanje* child without it dying, unless its *iyiuwa* is first found and destroyed." In this exposition, Achebe provides us some insightful details into this enigmatic child.

Chukwuemeka Ike (1973:20) regales us as he declares that *Ogbanje* is a "child believed to be capable of being born over and over again, to the same parents or to different parents, literally, he who goes and comes several times." Anyachonkeya (2006:48), through authorial voice, reveals the personality of an *ogbanje*, but goes to the length and breadth of some speech communities in Nigeria to reveal their names that have the semiotic myth strongly entrenched in their world view. From this random survey of *ogbanje* we find out that it is prevalent in many African culture. Thus, Achebe documents this semiotic existentiality in *Things Fall Apart* in the character of Ezimma while Ike presents it as Obuechina, in *The Porter's Wheel* Anyachonkeya project it as Nnenna, in *A Grain of Rice*, while Soyinka captures it in his poem entitled. "*Abiku" Abiku* is the main character. Closely associated with *ogbanje* is what Achebe has mentioned in

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

his exposition as *iyiuwa*, which needs to be "first found and destroyed" in order to stop the *ogbanje* child from replicating the evil cycle of dying, and coming back to be reborn and tormenting the parents in the process. Ike, in *The Porter's Wheel*, calls "*iyiuwa"*, this semiotic feature of myth among the Igbo of Nigeria, "*ogbanje* stone." In *Things Fall Apart*, we read in the following excerpt the rigorous length undergone by the medicine man, Okagbue, to make Ezimma to open up and cooperate in revealing the exact spot where she has buried her *iyiuwa* (ogbanje stone):

> "Where did you bury your *iyiuwa*?" Okagbue had asked Ezimma… What is *iyiuwa*?" she asked in return."You know what it is. You buried it in the ground somewhere so that you can die and return again and to torment your mother." Ezimma looked at her mother, whose eyes, sad and pleading, were fixed on her. "Answer the question at once," roared Okonkwo, who stood beside her.… "Leave her to me," the medicine-man told Okonkwo in a cool, confident voice. He turned again to Ezimma. "Where did you bury your *iyiuwa*?" "Where they bury children," she replied, and the quiet spectators murmured to themselves. "Come along then and show me the spot," said the medicine-man…. When she came to the main road, Ezimma turned left as if she was going to the stream. "But you said it was where they bury children?" asked the medicine-man. "No," said Ezimma, whose feeling of importance was manifest in her sprightly walk. She sometimes broke into a run and stopped again suddenly. …When she got to the big udala tree, Ezimma turned left into the bush, and the crowd followed her. …Ezimma went deeper and deeper and the crowd went with her…. When Ezimma finally stopped outside her father's *obi.* Okagbue's voice was unchanged. It was quiet and confident. "It is near that orange tree," Ezimma said. "And why did you not say so, you wicked daughter of Akaliogoli?" Okonkwo said furiously. (*TFA*, pp. 73,-75).

Achebe went to this length in order to reveal the semiotic reality of the phenomenon in the Igbo world view. The phenomenon is deeper than we think, difficult to fathom.

Osu, a Semiotic Feature in African Literature

Osu, is an intangible cultural matter; yet its effect in the Igbo social fabric is manifest and its presence in our ideological culture is felt everywhere. No Igbo man or woman consummates marriage unless one's status regarding *osu* is ascertained. Marriage, like death or funeral, is a joint or family business, hence "one person alone does not climb the ladder of death" and "marriage is not palm wine to be tasted" (Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya 2011:301). *Osu* is a nagging issue in which the new religion in *Things Fall Apart* has to grapple with. Mr. Kianga, the white priest and teacher, is unable to obliterate this complex knot completely as the. authorial voice explains:

> 'You do not understand,' the convert maintained. 'You are our teacher, and you can teach us the things of the new faith. But this is a matter which we know?' And he told him what an *osu* was: He was a person dedicated to a god, a thing set apart-a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could neither marry nor be married by the free-born. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Whenever he went, he carried with him the mark of his forbidden cast -- long, tangled and dirty hair. A razor was taboo to him. An *osu* could not attend an assembly of the free-born, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died, he was buried by his kind in the Evil Forest. How could such a man be a follower of Christ? (*TFA*, 1975, Chapter Eighteen: 113, 114).

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E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

The new convert fails to convince Mr. Kianga, in spite of his powerful and analytic logic. He announces his resolve: 'Then I shall go back to the clan…. And he went' (*TFA,* 114). This stigma and complex continues unabated even in Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* that is set in an Igbo society that has embraced the new Christian religion. This time the champion is Isaac (Nwoye) Okonkwo, the son of Ogbuefi Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, who left his father's house with a father's curse because he had joined an abominable gang –*Christianity!*

Isaac Okonkwo, a devout Christian, in fact, a catechist, flatly refuses his only son Obi Okonkwo to marry an *osu*, an outcast. Isaac tells his love ravished son: 'We are Christians' he said. 'But that is no reason to marry an *osu'* (*NLAE,* 120). Isaac explains further with a powerful analogy:

> '*Osu* is like leprosy in the minds of our people. I beg of you, my son not to bring the mark of shame of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children into the third and fourth generations will curse your memory…. You will bring sorrow on your head and on the heads of your children. Who will marry your daughters? Whose daughters will your sons marry? Think of that my son. We are Christians, but we cannot marry our own daughters' (*NLAE,* 121).

Obi's mother, Hannah, a catechist's wife, is more vehement and defiant on the contentious issue, and deals a death blow on it. She gives Obi her final word, in a polemic style:

> 'I have nothing to tell you in this matter except one thing. If you want to marry this girl, you must wait until I am no more. If God hears my prayers, you will not wait long'…. But if you do the thing while I am alive, you will have my blood on your head, because I shall kill myself' *(NLAE*123).

"What is *this thing*?" (*NLAE,* 120) Obi soliloquizes, and the reader is forced to join him in sympathy, in the soliloquy. It is unfortunate that this semiotic feature of myth still persists in the social fabric of the Igbo people. It is only in the western land that a young man or young woman could pick up a (cell) phone and calls: "Dad" or "Mom," we wedded yesterday"! You *can't do* such a thing in Africa. It amounts to a kind of an unheard-of situation or a form of madness.

The Semiotic Features of the Supernatural

Myriads of semiotic elements that deal with the supernatural are amply documented in the two literary works under review. In Ike's *The Bottled Leopard*, for instance, when Amobi gets admission into Government College, he has to learn the secrets of the white man's knowledge. But the white man's education system is limited, for it does not investigate African traditional beliefs in the supernatural. Amobi, while in school, goes through a baffling dream experience with the leopard, which the formal education of the white man fails abysmally to unravel. It is only Dibia Ofia who is able to explain the link between Amobi and the intriguing leopard of his dream experience. Oguzie (1991:82) admits that belief in the supernatural is a mystic or mythic reality, not only among the Africans, but also among the western sons of Adam. He states that: "[S]ome of our traditional beliefs are held today, by both the uneducated and educated Christians. Besides, exorcism is accepted now in Europe, even by the church. Even witch-craft appears to have gained international recognition.

While the African who professes Christianity believes in the Christian God, but when he is faced with an intriguing and perplexing problem, he takes solace in the traditional religion of his ancestors. *Ihe siere onye (n'eje) uka ike, obaa n´alusi, ma obu ,obaa n´agbara.*" When the African Christian is confronted with a troublesome perplexing situation, he or she turn to the native oracle or spirit for assistance. As Oguzie (1991:81) declares: "When the education

Vol. 1, No. 2; December (2025)
E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

system fails to investigate and help Amobi grapple with his environment, he clings to (the) traditional beliefs and practices of his people."

Amobi, as used here, is a composite personality; he represents the African. Achebe in *No Longer at Ease* documents reincarnation as another semiotic feature of the supernatural. Old Odogwu identifies Obi Okonkwo as the incarnate of his grand-father. Old Odogwu, an unapologetic traditional African religious man avers thus:

> He is the grandson of Ogbuefi Okonkwo who faced the white man single-handed and died in the fight. Stand up!' Obi stood up obediently. 'Remark him', Said Odogwu. 'He is Ogbuefi Okonkwo comeback. He is Okonkwo *Kpom-kwem*, exact, perfect. 'Obi's father cleared his throat in embarrassment. 'Dead men do not come back,' he said (*NLAE*, 48,49).

However, Isaac Okonkwo dismisses this mythic existentiality as untrue or un-Christian; yet the semiotic matter gains ground and is gaining attention among professed Christians. For instance, Anyachonkeya (2006: 71, 118) admits that the belief in reincarnation continues.

On the psychological and sociological reality of these cultural semiotic features, Akwanya(2004:103) throws further light:

> But there are primal experiences which cannot be directly named or got hold of by language, unless by the form which signifies by pointing to a certain situation of man in respect to realities beyond his compass, namely *symbolic language*. Such is the experience of *evil*, of *guilt*, of *the sacred*, and of *power*.

In all, semiotic cultural elements are both fact and myth. They make up the world of man, in the dualities of life, be they transcendental or terrestrial. In effect, none can be treated with levity or glossed over without tremendous unpleasant consequences or distorting social equilibrium.

Conclusion

Cultural semiotic features in African literature, appear as factual as they are mythic. They as well represent the phenomena of dualities in the life of man; to ignore them will likely not be a smart option. The analysis, carried out in this study, leaves us, in no doubt, about the psychological, cultural and eschatological reality of cultural semiotics in literature. Literary writers document them, for they are vestiges of our cultural heritage. Besides, they make universal appeal and they also represent an exemplum of our local colour, in African literary creativity. Thus, literary writers document them with the motivation to teach, that is, for their didactic import.

This paper has succeeded in unveiling another dimension or perspective of semiotics as linguistic features in our search to explore the realm of language as a system of signs and symbols that expresses ideas and thoughts (Omatosola, 2008). It also extends scope of cultural semiotics as amply shown in the literary works of some writers of African descent. Since language is culture-carrier, it is expedient that we recognize, assimilate and internalize the epistemological langue and parole of the ideological facets of our culture as rejecting one´s culture is tantamount to repudiating one´s identity. So, the works of Chinua Achebe and Chukwuemeka Ike which we have discussed in this paper are filled with ample examples of cultural semiotics and these have helped to generate the depth of meaning and varied forms of interpretations that have greeted the novels since their publication.

Vol. 1, No. 2; December (2025)
E-ISSN:3121-8539
ISSN:3121-7710

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