

## Cinema semiotics: An application of Hodge and Tripp's Paradigm/Syntagm approach

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**Abstract.** Various scholars have defined the term semiotics according to their understanding but with a unifying central meaning which is the study of signs. Two important aspects of semiotics are syntagm and paradigm. The organization of signs by chain is referred to as syntagm, while by choice it is referred to as paradigm. According to Hodge & Tripp (1986), as far as syntagmatic structures are concerned, texts are examined from three different angles or variables: space, time, and continuity. Moreover, in film the interpretations of individual, shots depend on both paradigmatic analysis (comparing it, not necessarily, with the use of alternative kinds of shots) and syntagmatic analysis (comparing it with preceding and following shots). This paper, applies the concept of Syntagm and Paradigm given by Hodge and Tripp to analyse the structure of two films from Nigeria's film industries i.e. Kanywood and Nollywood industries.

**Keywords.** Cinema, Semiotics, Syntagm, Paradigm, Film, Kanywood, Nollywood.

**JEL.** Z00, Y90, H80.

### 1. Introduction: Semiotics and the semiotics approach in cinema studies

Various scholars have defined the term semiotics according to their understanding but with a unifying central meaning. Taylor and Willis stated that "semiotics or the science of signs is primarily the study of how signs communicate, it is also the study of rules which regulate the operation of each system of sign" (Taylor & Willis, 2007, p.19).

Based on the above definitions of semiotics from different scholars, semiotics involves the study of different linguistic and cultural signs and the way they make meanings in a given text. Text can be sound, image, spoken words, or a combination of all. The meaning for semioticians should have cultural significance. Rose argued that "Semiology offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning" (Rose, 2001, p.x). However, in semiotics, researchers are mainly concerned with the levels of meaning deduced, the implicit and explicit, surface and latent, and the connotation and denotation levels of signs.

On one hand, despite the importance of Barthes' method in the development of film theory, Metz is regarded as the most important contributor of semiotics method when applied to film. Metz's work revolves around the notion that film is not language, and even though linguistics concepts can be applied to film, care

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must be exercised. He examined the Langue system and how it differs from language. Metz subsequently offered his grand syntagmatique concept and how it can be applied to cinema studies.

However, despite Metz's ideas being narrowly revealed, other scholars such as Raymond Bellour, Umberto Eco, Steven Heath, and Sam Rhode have devised different semiotics concepts similar to or different from that of Metz.

Through various types of signs, everything in this world entails and imparts a certain meaning of its own in the eyes of the receivers. Chandler (2000) explained that in semiotics, signs are perhaps everything from which meanings can be deduced, like words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. To analyze semiotics in Saussure's approach, every sign has two concepts: a signifier, the form the sign takes, and the signified, the concept it represents.

Another two important aspects of semiotics are syntagm and paradigm. The organization of signs by chain is referred to as syntagm, while by choice it is referred to as paradigm. Chandler maintained that the difference between paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures is vital in Structuralists semiotics analysis. These two distinct concepts are often labeled as 'axes.' The horizontal axis is the syntagm and the vertical is the paradigm. These terms were coined by Roman Jakobson (Chandler, 2000). Syntagm is an orderly combinations of signs that make meaning together (sometimes called a chain or combination). Such combinations are made within a framework of rules and conventions. On the other hand, paradigm is a set of associated signs that all belong to a defining category, but in which each sign is significantly different.

Moreover, being one of the three theoretical bodies of knowledge that intervened in film theory, the signifier and signified and the syntagm and paradigm axes constitute the most fruitful theoretical thinking applied to film studies from the branch of semiotics (Hill & Church, 2000). Hill & Church (2000) examined these linguistics concepts in relation to classical film theory. First, they started with signifier and signified, where they argued that signifiers are compositions of arbitrary sounds related to one another, while the signified form the meanings of the signifiers. However, they said it is difficult for them to work with a medium like film.

However, Hill and Church argued that "the overall consequences of semiotics attention to cinema were to weaken concern with the issue of realism and strengthen attention to the cinema as a particular kind of textuality" (Hill & Church, 2000, p.51). In what resembled a development for semiotics, Hill & Church maintained that after 1968 these semiotics tendencies were reinforced due to the intrusion of an unpredicted quarter. Moreover, with regard to what concept of semiotics is appropriate for cinema studies, Christian Metz contrasted Hill and Church's viewpoint restricted to only signifier/signified and syntagm/paradigm concepts.

Moreover, in film the interpretations of individual shots depend on both paradigmatic analysis (comparing it, not necessarily, with the use of alternative kinds of shots) and syntagmatic analysis (comparing it with preceding and following shots). Additionally, a syntagmatic analysis involves an analysis of how each shot, scene, or sequence in a film is related to the others. Metz illustrated syntagmatic categories for narrative film as follows:

**Table 1.** Metz's Grand Syntagmatique

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The autonomous shot (e.g., establishing shot, insert)
The parallel syntagm (e.g., montage of motifs)
The bracketing syntagm (e.g., montage of brief shots)
The descriptive syntagm (e.g., sequence describing one moment)
The alternating syntagm (e.g., two sequences alternating)
The scene (e.g., shots implying temporal continuity)
The episodic sequence (e.g., organized discontinuity of shots)
The ordinary sequence (e.g. temporal with some compression)

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Source: Chandler, 2000, pp. 8-9.

However, Chandler argued that “Metz's 'grande syntagmatique' has not been considered as an easy system to apply to some films. Hodge & Tripp (1986), in their study of children's understanding of television, divided syntagms into four types” (Chandler, 2000, p. 9).

The categories of the syntagm, as provided by Hodge and Tripp, are as follows:

**Table 2.** *Hodge and Tripp Syntagm categories*

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Synchronic/Synoptic (one place, one time: one shot)
Diachronic/Synoptic (same place sequence over time)
Synchronic/Diatopic (different places at same time)
Diachronic/Diatopic (shots related only by theme)

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Metz continues to argue that “film, like a verbal language can be used merely as a vehicle without any artistic intention, with designation (denotation) governing alone and consequently, the art of the cinema like verbal art is, so to speak, driven one notch upward” (Metz, no-date, 77). He however maintains that the semiotics should be applied to cinema studies with the greatest caution.

## 2. Gabar Cikin Gida (Domestic Enmity) film

### 2.1. Synopsis of the film

The screenplay of *Enemies in the House* provides vivid melodramatic narration and depicts strong intra-family enmity. The film revolves around a traditional ruler (emir) who lives an Arcadian life with his two wives. Each of these wives has one male child and the children are mature enough to get married but are subservient to their parents.

Within this family composition is a woman called Hanadi, who is a daughter to Alhaji's friend who lives in Kaduna. She gains admission to university in Kano and is brought to stay in her father's friend's home. Both Kamal and his elder brother Hassan fall in love with Hanadi and Hassan is the first to feel this emotion, but he procrastinates while Kamal does not wait; he dares to express to Hanadi the feelings he has and she accepts and loves him.

One day, Kamal tests his family to see whether they love him or not. He locks himself in the gate security's room, switches off his telephone, and warns the security not to tell anyone that he is there. The entire family becomes confused and bewildered, especially Hanadi and Kamal's mother. Because of this, Hanadi pledges to retaliate for the psychological hardship Kamal throws her and brings someone to the house and introduces him to Kamal as her fiancée, saying that their dating relationship is jocular. Immediately when she utters this to Kamal, he faints and, in a coma, is taken to hospital for treatment.

Hassan's mother, the co-wife in the family and Kamal's stepmother, goes to the hospital and connives with the doctor, bribes him to write a fake medical report about Kamal to say that when he fainted, he fell on a nail and as a result of that his heart is affected and will stop working in 60 days. The doctor does what she wants. Her aim in this evil plot is to pave the way for her son Hassan to marry Hanadi so that she and

Hassan will possess the wealth of Hanadi's father. Fortunately for her evil plan, the ill Kamal asks the embattled Hanadi to marry his elder brother Hassan since he is dying in 60 days. However, for the first time, both Hanadi and Hassan reject the offer. Kamal's mother also doesn't like it, but only Alhaji, who doesn't know what happened, and Hassan's mother, who is behind the fake medical report, want the swap of Hanadi from Kamal to his elder brother Hassan. Nevertheless, Hassan and Hanadi later agree and start to date each other because of pressure from Kamal, Alhaji, and Hajiya (Hassan's mother), while Kamal is suffering the psychological pain that he will die in a few weeks.

After the stipulated 60 days, Kamal doesn't die and his heart does not pain him. He meets his father when discussing with Hassan where to have the reception on the wedding day; he asks for the revocation of Hanadi since Kamal is no longer

sick. However, Alhaji lambasts him and even calls him stupid for such talk. On Hassan's side, his mother tells him not to surrender and that he must marry Hanadi. This issue is what breaks the family in two and causes their feud. There has always been a feuding exchange of words between the two co-wives and the two brothers. However, the householder (emir) remains at the center although he backs the marriage between

Hassan and Hanadi because he has already concluded with Hanadi's family that she will marry Hassan; thus, there will be no revocation of the arrangement. Moreover, as the feud continues within the family, Kamal takes a knife and goes to Hassan's house to kill him. When he gets into the room, he finds Hanadi, who is lying down confused as a result of what the medical doctor has told her about her mother-in-law's plot to take her away from Kamal. Hanadi wears her husband's sleeping dress out of love; thus, Kamal does not recognize her and he stabs her. Immediately, Hassan comes in and Kamal tells him that he wanted to kill him but has mistakenly stabbed Hanadi. Hassan says he will cover for Kamal and to say that Hanadi fell on a knife in the kitchen. As they are mournfully discussing her, they hear Hanadi moving and anxiously dash into the room.

### 2.2. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic structure of the film

According to Hodge & Tripp (1986), as far as syntagmatic structures are concerned, texts are examined from three different angles or variables: space, time, and continuity. Additionally, while integrating these three variables, Hodge and Tripp proffered another four concepts Synchronic/synoptic (one place, one time: one shot), Diachronic/synoptic (same place sequence over time), Synchronic/diatopic (different places at same time) and Diachronic/diatopic (shots related only by theme) part of which are applied to a critical examination and identification of the scenic and shot structure of the film at stake. Regarding the paradigm, Metz argued, that "the image paradigm is fragile in film; often still born, it is approximate, easily modified and it can always be circumvented" (1974, p. 69).

However, all these scenes are put in episodic sequence of the narrative, as Metz maintained, and are separated by cuts and dissolves, among other montage techniques. Additionally, Hodge and Tripp asserted that "the important point is that both syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions carry meanings separately and in combination" (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, p.20).

### 2.3. Paradigmatic structure of the film

There are different paradigmatic codes in (*Enemies in the House*). These codes are different and dependent specific choices that reinforce the thematic discourse of the film. First, the name of the film itself (*Enemies in the House*) signifies a kind of social problem which bedevils communities, especially polygamous families. People living in urban centers are expected to be void of all such ominous behavior and to be wise and responsible. This is because they are modern, educated, and above all well-to-do. Also, the location of the film is another paradigmatic code. The film is set in a gigantic mansion among many of its type in an honorable area, which signifies luxury, riches, royalty, and charisma. Additionally, the dress in the film is another paradigmatic code. The attire worn by the emir and his two wives throughout the film connotes a decent and tradition-oriented family. The dress of Hassan and Kamal is mostly nontraditional, which shows the de-culturing phenomenon among youths in Nigeria who consider themselves as modern and free to dress the way they want. Hanadi and Salima's dress is also modern trado-Islamic fashion, which also signifies the infiltration of modernity into Nigerian societies.

Another paradigmatic aspect of this film is the choice of the protagonists' names: Alhaji, Hajiya, Umma, Hassan, Kamal, Hanadi, and Salima. These are all Muslim names and popular in Nigeria; however, the names are found more in northern Nigeria, a Muslim-dominated region, except for Hanadi, who in the film

is from Kaduna, a more cosmopolitan city than Kano where the film was produced. Additionally, the selection of different music and songs in the film is a paradigmatic aspect. The background music used, the different sounds used at times of happiness, anger, surprise, nervousness, or excitement, all contribute to the smooth flow of the film's dialogue and plot. Moreover, the selection of two co-wives and two male children and the selection of the embattled Hanadi, with Alhaji at the center of the household, are other paradigm angles of the film. This paradigm balances the central themes of the film, which are feud, love, wickedness, and greediness.

When we make a commutation test, for example, change these paradigmatic angles of the film, the film's theme might denotatively or enigmatically change. When you change the names and use more traditional ones, the change might not match the location or the cast. If you change the dress of the cast, the Alhaji (emir) as a royal father might look different and not have any charisma. Likewise, for example, when you put three wives with their children, the relationship will change within the family. Paradigms are the prerogative of the filmmaker to select this or that and decide to put it here or there. The above mentioned aspects, which are sequential and orderly in the film, are the paradigmatic angles of the film. They serve a common function and can easily be substituted with other elements without tempering the rationale of the film, but the meaning might change. All of them work together to make the meaning of the film.

### 2.3. Syntagmatic structure of the film

Syntagm, as Berger (2000) argues is the examination how events follow sequentially in a given text. With regard to this research work, the syntagm reveals how the scenes of the film's narrative flow and work together to complement the theme of the film. The syntagma of this film will be explained in two forms: diachronic/diatopic and synchronic/diatopic. Additionally, Kingston argued that "the syntagmatic analysis of media text involves studying it as a narrative sequence... it would involve an analysis of how each shot, scene or sequence related to the others" (Kingston, no date).

Additionally, the Syntagmatic category is normally large because the combination within the chain might be many. The more the Syntagmatic category is revealed in an analysis of text, the better its structures come out. For this reason, the Syntagmatic category receives more explanation than paradigm.

However, all these techniques of filmmakers use editing to suture different parts of the film together. Also, the meaning of diachronic/diatopic and synchronic/diatopic will be clearer as the argument progresses. A detailed analysis and categorization of the scenes as either diachronic/diatopic or synchronic/diatopic brings a clearer picture of the terms.

### 2.4. Diachronic/Diatopic (shots related only by theme)

Almost all the syntagma of this film are Diachronic/Diatopic. They are shots related by theme. The film is chronologically presented. The first scene in the film contains a Chinese roofing type shown on many different houses, sending signals of an honorable area. The camera switches to the interior of a home, marvelously decorated with modern furniture, where a fully covered woman and a young man casually dressed meet in a corridor. Both of them looked puzzled and they discuss Kamal's whereabouts as he has not been seen for a day. The next scene is of the emir with one of the co-wives standing and chatting, the other co-wife comes and tells them that Kamal has not been seen for a day; here music signifying anxiety is used and the emir's face suddenly changes. The camera shot then changes to a staircase, showing Kamal coming up, and moves back to where the emir (Alhaji), Hassan, and the two wives are seated. As they see Kamal, they quickly stand in anxiety. Here again, music is used to connote a mixture of happiness and anger. This scene is followed by another scene which is sutured together to create the



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meaning; Hassan admonishes his younger brother Kamal not to do this again as it is not Islamic or proper.

Another diachronic/diatopic scene is where Hanadi (the girl Kamal dates) complains to him about what he did in hiding himself. She shows her anger and Kamal apologizes for what he did. However, she pledges to retaliate in the following scene, where Hassan tells Kamal about Hanadi's plan to take revenge. After this scene is one related to the theme where Hanadi introduces another person as her fiancée to Kamal and he immediately faints. The next thematically linked scene is in the hospital where a female nurse tells her male colleague what happened to Kamal and the result of the test.

After leaving the hospital, they go back home where the emir tells Hajiya, the other wife, and appeals to Kamal's mother to stop crying. This scene is followed by a scene where Hajiya cheerfully informs her son Hassan about the health condition of his brother Kamal, that his heart will stop working in 60 days according to the medical report. Additionally, the camera shot switches to Alhaji coming outside of the compound and meeting the weeping Hassan; he asks what has happened. Hassan replies that his mother has told him what is going on in the family. Although Alhaji asks the wives not to tell the children anything about the issue, she defiantly does.

As the film flows diachronically/diatopically, another scene of this structure is when Alhaji meets Kamal and tells him the result of his health tests. Immediately, he faints again. The next scene is where Hanadi and Kamal are in discussion and he tells her the medical results. Next, Hassan meets Kamal in his room, appeasing him, trying to calm him down, and saying that falling sick is not death. Hassan even rejects the medical results and says that many quack doctors don't know what they're doing. In the next scene, Kamal asks his elder brother Hassan to marry Hanadi just to complement his lifelong dream since he is dying; he assumes his brother can replace him, but Hassan rejects Kamal's request and restates his rejection of the medical report, saying Kamal might not die.

The next thematically related combination of shots is when the family meets and pleads with Hanadi to marry Hassan as a result of his condition. Another closely related shot is where Kamal meets Hassan and Hanadi chatting and tells them he understands that the two have started to love one another. After this, Kamal asks both Hanadi and Hassan to get married before he dies so that he can witness their wedding ceremony, but they refuse saying no one knows what will happen. The next two consecutive diachronic/diatopic scenes are when Alhaji, Hassan, and Kamal leave and Alhaji gives a car key to Hassan to go to a different hospital for another check-up. At the hospital, the doctor tells Kamal that there is no any problem with his heart. However, Kamal pessimistically denies what the doctor says to him, claiming it is just his father's plan to calm him down. Kamal stands and leaves the doctor in wonder.

After they come home, Hanadi's father comes to Hassan's house to confirm the relationship with his daughter; he agrees to give her to Hassan for marriage. Another scene in this category is the sixtieth night, on which Kamal will die. His parents and Hassan stand with him while he lies in bed crying asking why his father told him about his death time. The father apologizes and they all wait till dawn and Kamal doesn't die. He stands and goes to have a bath and barb. Similarly, the next consecutive shots in this category are where Kamal's mother asks him to ask for the revocation of Hanadi to him since he is now okay and he hasn't died. He goes and meets his father to tell him what he wants. Also, in another diachronic/diatopic scene, Hajiya, Hassan's mother, calls him and stresses her stance, asking him not to surrender and leave Hanadi. Another similar scene in this category is when Hassan and Kamal exchange words about Hanadi; they pledge to become rivals and enemies for life. After this scene, Kamal, Hassan, and their mothers meet and discuss the revocation of Hanadi. However, Hajiya and Hassan reiterate their stance. A similar scene with this structure is when Kamal meets Hanadi separately to ask her to return to him. He even calls her a traitor,

hypocrite, and lover, but she says if he can convince his family, she will come back and marry him. The next diachronic/diatopic structure is where Hassan comes home and meets friends of the bride waiting for him to collect the traditional money from him that a groom should give the bride's friends before she can speak to him. This is a sign that Hassan and Hanadi are married. In this first night, Kamal and one of his friends intrude into

Hassan's room, meet him with his wife, and disgrace them by saying he is still in love with Hanadi and she must come back to him. Next, Alhaji warns Kamal not to interfere in the new groom and bride's affairs as he says he will curse him if he dares. Kamal goes and tells his mother what his father has said but she challenges the father's stance and instigates Kamal again to go and get Hanadi back from Hassan. In a similar scene, Hassan's mother reiterates to him her position not to surrender and Hassan vows to use all means against his brother Kamal. They fight with big, sharp knives and injure one another. After this bloody scene, Alhaji warns Kamal again and Kamal tells him that it is his mother behind what he has done to his brother Hassan. Then Alhaji meets Hassan and tells him that it is Kamal's mother disturbing his life. Hassan goes and meets her, he is angry with her and she cries and calls her son Kamal to tell him what Hassan has done to her. Kamal furiously takes the knife and goes to Hassan's home for another fight.

Before Kamal reaches Hassan's home, two nurses in the hospital are depicted and the female nurse tells her male colleague about the evil plot of Hassan's mother. The medical doctor who connived with Hassan's mother and wrote the fake result informs Hanadi about this then tells the truth to Kamal, too. The next similar scene is when Kamal goes to Hassan's house and meets Hanadi lying on bed, thinking she is Hassan because she is wearing his sleeping dress. Kamal stabs her with the knife. All of them leave, but they hear Hanadi moving and they say that she hasn't died. Here marked the end of the film.

### 2.5. Synchronic/diatopic scenes (different places at the same time)

There are a few synchronic/diatopic scenes in the film. The first is when Hassan tells Kamal that Hanadi pledges to take revenge for what he did to her; at the same time, Hanadi and the man she introduces to Kamal appear on camera. Another scene of this syntagma is where Hassan and Kamal sit in different shots, each of them reflecting back on something that once happened (flash back). Hassan reminisces that he was the first to start having feelings for Hanadi. Kamal, on his part, thinks about something similar to what is happening to them now. At the same time, they fall in love with the same girl.

The girl is their father's accountant, named Salima. This accountant accepts both of them and they accidentally meet in her house. From that day, they give up all for her and she returns to square one.

Also, when Kamal comes to kill Hassan, a dark background is shown outside, signifying danger. In addition, before any scene that takes place in the house, the roofs of the houses in the area are shown.

## 3. Two Brides and a Baby Film

### 3.1. The synopsis of the film

The entire collection of events in the narrative of the film, both those that are explicit and those we infer, together make the story (Thompson & Mordwell, 2008). However, in this section, a synopsis of the *Two Brides and a Baby* would be buttressed. According to the plot of *Two Brides and a Baby*, there is a young man called Kole. He dates a young woman called Ketché. Both Kole and Ketché have been engaged and it is now time for their marriage the next day. Additionally, Kole has a bosom friend Maye who dates another young woman Ugo. He also has a cousin brother Deji who is married to Ene. Both Ene and Ugo are friends to Ketché. Also on the other hand, Ketché lives with her sister and she has her best friend Ugo. Apart from these, by another side, there is another woman called Ama.

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Ama is the ex girl friend of Kole who dumps her for Ketche. Ama also has a bosom friend Omo. However, Omo is a business partner of Maye, the bosom of Kole. This is a total form of weepies. However, the themes of woman's film includes affliction, obsessive sacrifice, love stories, domestic role of women, fetishism of woman's body, their tragic and tragedies among others, which emanate as a result of social imbalances. Judith Mayne in her paper 'the women at the key hole: Women's cinema and feminist criticism' has given many examples of such weepies which include; Stella Dallas (1937), Magnificent obsession (1954), Julia (1977) and the Turning point (1977) (Mayne, 1984).

A day to the formal wedding of Ketche and Kole, at the rehearsal ground of the wedding activities, as few close relatives gathered and Kole is standing facing Ketche, suddenly Omo and Ama get in. Kole upon seeing Ama, feels guilty and nervous, he couldn't withstand to wait. He went out while Ama and her friend get seated. While outside and confused, Kole thinks (flash back) on their way coming to the party ground, his friend Maye received a call and asked the caller to come and meet him at the wedding rehearsal. Coincidentally, the caller is Omo, Ama's friend. Additionally, when Omo gets ready to come and meet Maye, Ama visits her and as such they go to the wedding rehearsal saloon together and Ama discovered that it is her ex planning to marry the next day.

Ever since Ama discovered that her ex-boyfriend is getting married tomorrow, she starts plotting against him in order to foil the wedding and take him back. First at the wedding saloon, she comes out with Omo telling her how much relationship she had with Kole. Additionally, she vows to take what has been taken from her. And as she gets out, Ketche follows her and hears all she uttered. However, Ama continued plotting and creating fractions between Kole and Ketche. She one time gets the Ketche's telephone number and calls her. Ama reiterates her plans to take Kole away from Ketche, and Ketche says is never possible. In another time, when Kole visits Ama to tell her that he will not marry her, Ketche calls his phone and Ama quickly picks the call and says "Hello Ketche, this is Ama". This evil act of Ama has caused a lot of damages for Kole. As a result of this, Ketche starts believing what Ama says that she shares much more with Kole than Ketche. Throughout the film, Kole gets bewildered and more terrified. He even goes to appease with Ketche but she instead of listening rather blasts and drives him away.

Moreover, Ketche through her friends Ugo and Ene learns about the baby Ama has for Kole. She goes and meets him in hotel and says she is no longer interesting in marrying him. She even gives him their engagement ring. Kole has tried and to calm Ketche and she agrees to wed him tomorrow. However, Ama has not stopped from her struggle to divide Kole and Ketche. She asks Maye to tell Kole that she forgives him and wants to see him to have a last conversation. Kole comes, as he enters into the Ama's room, sees her with a baby on her laps. He stops out of surprise and she asks him to come and meet his daughter who is part of his blood. Here Ama cunningly snaps their picture and sends to Ketche. When the Ketche receives the message of the picture, she was with her friends preparing for tomorrow's wedding. Ketche gets more disillusioned but her sister says to her if she didn't marry Kole, Ama will marry him. Nevertheless, Ama is not successful in her plans as Ketche and Kole gets wedded. Ama has attended the wedding ceremony and Kole acknowledges that he and Ama were in love but now dumps her for Ketche.

Moreover, the entire features of this film are shots, cut edited and gets ready for screening. Saro-wiwa argues that Nollywood films are not aesthetically good and the production directors tend to be novice and inartistic. They fail to subscribe an intellectual or political agenda in Nollywood plot and commercial rule (Saro-wiwa, 2008).

### 3.2. Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic structure of the film

Both syntagm and paradigm are significant in the analysis of text and they are very important to semiologists. In the syntagmatic angle of signs, the signs gain



their meaning from other meanings that surround them in a still image. On the other hand, paradigmatic signs get their meaning from a contrast with all other possible signs (Rose, 2002). However, Berger argues that “Semioticians use the term Syntagmatic analysis for interpretation of text that look at them in terms of the sequence of events that give them meaning” (Berger, 2000, p. 44). He further maintains that in contrast to Syntagmatic focus, paradigm concentrates with how oppositions within a text work together and provide meaning.

### 3.3. Paradigmatic structure

There are various paradigmatic aspects in ‘*Two Brides and a Baby*’ film. These aspects are the different choices of the film’s director with which make a given film to become meaningful contextually, and tally with the set plot. The name of the film its self reinforces how the climax of the film will be. The two different brides and one baby tells that something must be attached to that which will make the viewers to be more inquisitive.

Another paradigmatic angle in the film is the choice of the protagonists’ names. Here, the selection of the name reflects the geographical location and immediate background of the filmmaker, although it is not meant for specific region. This practice has been the order in any film industry. In Hollywood, the names of the protagonists represent American culture even though the films target the whole world. Outfit and dress is another paradigmatic choice of the film’s director. The way both men and women dress in the film is carefully selected. Nevertheless, the dress signifies and reinforces the de-culturing of Nigerian youths in the name of westernization. Additionally, the women’s dress in the film attests to the core exploitation of female body. This is despite the fact that the film’s producer and simultaneously assistant director is woman and popular Nollywood films actress.

The different music selected and used in ‘*Two Brides and a Baby*’ complement the meaning to the viewer with regard to the scenario it is placed. At the time of anger, anxiety, happiness, emotion or surprise, a wise selection as part of the film’s paradigm is made. Mostly, the music used for actualities in Nigerian cinema is outlandish, borrowed into the Nigerian culture. Saro-wiwa argues that “the incidental music tends to consist of dissonant chords and sound escapes produced on synthesizers, reminiscent of the Latin American techno vellas that are still popular in Nigeria” (Saro-wiwa, 2008, p.2). Moreover, the two opposing teams from both Kole and Ketché, and the Ama, causing the latter two to quarrel is another paradigmatic viewpoint in the film.

According to the plot of the film, Maye and Deji back Kole while Ene and Ugo back Ketché. Ama serves as the source of all the problems and disagreement among the aforementioned two sides.

When we make a commutation test to replace some parts of the film’s paradigm, the meaning might change or there wouldn’t be a climax at all. When you change the casts or their names to different ones, additionally, when another clique or group of friends is added, there might not a balance at the climax state of the plot. However, depending on the film director’s prerogative in the mise-en-scene of a given film, the film’s paradigm might take any form of structure. However, Metz argues that “the image paradigm is fragile in film; often still-born. It is approximate, easily modify and it can always be circumvented” (Metz, 1974, P. 69). This Metz’s assertion attests that paradigm can take any form of structure base on the way the filmmaker wishes.

### 3.4. Syntagmatic structure of the film

The Syntagmatic structure of *Two Brides and a Baby* would be discussed in two ways; Diachronic/Diatopic (shots related only by theme) and Synchronic/Diatopic (different places at the same time). However, the more we get into the analysis of these scenes the clearer we understand the above mentioned concepts.

### 3.5. Diachronic/ Diatopic scenes (shots only related by theme)

Starting with the first scene of the film which comprises different consecutive shots, it begins with a close up shot of Ugo's half naked body majestically walking towards a building. The camera shots change as she moves into the house where she supervises a decorated wedding saloon. After then, the camera switches to another scene of Ketche sitting in front of a dressing mirror doing make up and waiting for Kole to come. Immediately Ugo gets in and their discussion tells the situation they are in.

Being a scene or shot related only by theme, the next diachronic/diatopic scene is where Ama and her friend Omo through whom she comes to the wedding rehearsal, come back home and discuss the issue about why Kole will dump her for another girl, despite the fact that they have since been engaged. Additionally, Kole too, gets back home with Maye chatting on how Ama gets to be there. Another scene of this category is when Ama presents her engagement ring with Kole to her friend Omo. Immediately after this, Ketche's friend Ene and her husband Deji shown quarrelling about that he is left hungry because of the wedding rehearsal they attended, and Ene insists to go back again and sympathize with Ketche for what happened in the morning during the wedding rehearsal. Moreover, another scene of this sub type of syntagma is when Ketche is at home, looks worried and her elder sister tries to calm her down. On his part too, Kole is with his mother discussing the issue at hand. All these diachronic/diatopic scenes are constituted and related to the theme of the film as in each of them; there is a story idea or the development from one scene to another.

Similarly, the embattle Ketche and her two friends Ugo and Ene are shown discussing the issue as Ene backs Ketche to investigate why Ama gets to attend the rehearsal while Ugo insists that Ketche should not worry and just forget about it. Another Diachronic/Diatopic scene is when Maye comes to meet with Ama and first sees Omo. She ushers him in where they discuss with the Ama and she cunningly asks him about their relationship with Ugo. Maye seems to be guilty. She just tries to justify what Kole did to and the vengeance she is planning against Kole and Ketche.

Still on the matter at Ene's house, when she comes back home from Ketche's visit, they quarreled again with her husband, and he insulted her, saying she is disgrace to womanhood, just because she didn't cook for him in just one day. Maye and Ugo too quarrel as Ugo suspects him of having an affair with another girl and she asks him where he is coming from. Because she is scare of what happens to Ketche might happen to her. Another similar scene in structure is at hotel when Maye meets with one of the hotel workers asking for Kole and immediately Deji comes and they dash into the main hotel building while discussing the long time engagement of Maye and Ugo.

The next diachronic/diatopic scene is when Kole comes to Ketche's home to appease her and justify why Ama picks his telephone when Ketche calls him. Instead of giving him a chance, Ketche insults and drives Kole away from their home. She even asks him out of anger and jealousy to go to Ama. She says she doesn't want to see him at all since is having affairs with another girl. Additionally, the scene when Ketche sits in her car, confused and helpless. Her sister comes over her and appease with her that she should stop worrying herself. The same scene of this category is when Ketche plans to leave Kole's home as she packs her goods when she meets Deji and asks him to leave the home for her. Deji immediately goes and tells Kole the development and asks Kole to go and stop her from going. Simultaneously, they discuss about the baby which Ama says she has for Kole.

At this time, Ugo sneaks and listens to what they discuss about. So also the scene when Kole meets Ketche to plead with her not to go and he explains to her why he goes to Ama saying is just to apologize with her since he dumps her for Ketche. Ketche naively believes and forgives him. As we describe the scenes, they flow and make meanings in relation to the theme of the film

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Moreover, immediately after that reconciliation is the scene which marks the climax of the plot, it is a diachronic/diatopic scene where Keche tells Ugo and Ene that Kole has just visits Ama to apologize with her as he dumps her. But they wanted to tell her the truth and she gets into a room, they say men are liars today and she hears and asks what lies? Here she comes to know about the baby issue. Immediately after this scene, the camera switches to where Ugo regrets revealing the matter to Ketche and again Maye gets in and questioned them why would they tell her?

Another diachronic/diatopic scene is when Ene and her husband Deji quarrel. She challenges him on why would he be a party to such a cruel act. In response, Deji asks her to keep quite or say something good. Ene asks for their wedding ring signifying she might seek divorce. At the end she gets highly angered and picks their hanged enlarged photo in glass and breaks it. Ketche on her side always cries. Another diachronic/diatopic tells this is when Ama is seen weeping and wondering why Kole would have a child and didn't tell her. Then to where Ama makes a phone call reiterating her stance to divide Kola with Ketche and take him back again.

The next is where as part of her plans Ama invited Maye to her home. As he comes she tells him that she forgives Kole and wants to see him just to have a final discussion. Upon hearing that, Maye gets out. In between the arrival of Kole to Ama's home, the narration takes us to Ene and deji as they resolve their differences. Then to where Kole kneels down and seek Ketche's forgiveness, she forgives again and agrees for the wedding the next day. The last diachronic/diatopic scene in the film is where the wedding takes place.

### 3.6. Synchronic/Diatopic scenes (Different places at the same time)

The first synchronic/diatopic scene in the film is when Kole gets out of the wedding saloon on the rehearsal day due to the attendance of Ama. Here Kole thinks (flash back) when his friend Maye asks someone to come and meet him at the wedding saloon. Additionally, the way Ama gets there is revealed in this flash back. Different palace at the same time is shown here. Another scene of same structure is when Ugo boils water and thinks (flash back) of what Deji tells her about when she is getting married with Maye. Here also, another place is shown at the same time then back to Ugo in the room pouring the hot water in a cup.

The next synchronic/diatopic scene is when Ama calls Ketche. Both of them are shown at the same time using different shots. Similarly, when Ketche calls Kole and Ama picks the phone, again both of them are shown. Additionally, when Kole is at home, he thinks (flash back) of a discussion he had with Ketche about their wedding, here also different places are shown at the same time. Also when Kole gets into Ama's room and sees her with a baby, he stops and she asks him to move in. here another different scenes are shown at Ketche's house when Ama sends her the picture she snaps with Kole and the baby.

Moreover, as Maye and Ugo lie on bed, Ugo thinks and reminisces (flash back) when they had a discussion with Maye about their relationship. Then the camera switches back to them. Additionally, there are consecutive close up shots of Ene, Ugo and Ketche crying in their different places but at the same time. The last scene of this category is when both Kole and Ketche are shown preparing for the wedding.

## 4. Conclusion

In film semiotics, researchers try to bring out the meaning of any given sign at the two levels of meaning. Buckland argued that "film semiotics adopts their two-tier hierarchy between perceptible and non-perceptible levels of reality and formulates probable hypotheses describing this underlying non-perceptible level" (Buckland, 2008, p. 4; see Berger, 2000, and Fiske 1990). Buckland's stance represents the central goal of film semioticians as he continued to maintain that "the ultimate objective of film semiotics is to construct a model of the non-

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perceptible system underlying all films” (Buckland, 2004, p. 10). However, in understanding the latent meaning of film text in semiotics, early film semioticians used the methodology of segmentation and classification (Buckland, 2004).

According to Berger (2000), the paradigm involves how oppositions in a text work together and make meaning. However, in this analysis, the concept of paradigm is applied to determine the selection of different major parts of the film’s structure. The paradigmatic structure of a film depends on how the filmmaker or director wants to organize his or her materials. Sykes defined film as an “assemblage of speech and movement images that function communicatively between the director, actors and audience” (Delueze, 2009, p.71).

Syntagm is a combination of different collaborative and dependent elements within a given film narrative. In other words, syntagm refers to the way filmic fragments (scenes, shots, transition) are sutured together in making meaning.

Semiotics of the cinema should be done with utmost care and caution as buttressed by Christian Metz. Nevertheless, it is very important to apply the concept on the third cinema i.e. the cinema of the third World especially on the films produced in the post colonial era.

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