

Research Article

Special Effects and the Making of Pseudo-Monsters in Nollywood Zombie Films

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Abstract: Horror movies are artfully constructed to simultaneously elicit fear and thrill audiences. They essentially integrate gory, frightful and obscene creatures (notably the living dead, the undead, paranormal beings and aliens), as well as scary or terrifying scenes all designed to build the fear appeal or the fight-or-flight response. The mobilization of such scary scenes and creatures always entails the use of relevant, realistic – and professional-quality – costumes, make-up, special effects and editing among other technical tools. These tools are generally extremely exorbitant and not affordable to small-budget African filmmakers like the majority of Nigerian videastes who most often rely on very meager resources to produce their movies. In effect, the inability to lay hand on professional-quality make-up and special effects causes most Nigerian video filmmakers to rely on sub-standard tools which do not always actualize the aesthetic and fear appeal expected in a horror film. This scenario could well be illustrated using the way monsters and apocalyptic scenes are treated in most Nollywood zombie movies. In such movies, the leverage of sub-standard and grotesque make-up and special effects most often leads to the creation of pseudo-zombies which, instead of instilling fear and the fight-or-flight response, are susceptible to baffle or amuse film viewers and critics.

Keywords: Horror Movies, Humor Movies, Nollywood Movie, Special Effect.



1. Introduction

If horror films are popular in almost all cultures, it is mainly because of the physical reaction they are able to elicit in their viewers. Good horror films elicit “pleasurable fear” in their viewers. Man’s psychology naturally predestines him to love being frightened by a film. In effect, the adrenaline and catharsis of being scared by a film becomes addictive. This natural phenomenon motivates human viewers to keep coming back for more horrors [1], [2]. As noted by Park, the paradox of a horror film experience is that fear ceases to be a negative emotion. “The aesthetics and psychology behind horror films explain “fear” can be a pleasurable experience. ‘Fear’ is an essential element in horror genre, which is why we constantly crave the adrenaline rush in scary films” [3]. In line with this, horror movies are categorised as body genre; that is movies whose popularity is attributed to the physiological reactions they instill in the viewers.

Although horror movies attract by the sensational nature of their titles and trailers, not all of them trigger the fight-or-flight response in the audience. Not all horror movies are constructed according to the principles of horror entertainment. Meanwhile, many are just replete with what Calvo calls jump scares [4]. This refers to scenes or “monsters” in horror movies which are intended to scare audiences but which are so poorly made that they end up having a contrary effect: they for instance instead baffle, mildly disgust or amuse the viewers. As he puts it:

Jump scares do not scare. They startle. Being startled is not the same thing as being scared. Being startled is like getting pinched—the pain is sudden and sharp, but you forget about it immediately. Being scared is like getting stabbed in the gut and having the blade twirl up your intestines like spaghetti—the pain is—quite uncomfortable [4].

Critics and filmmakers contend that for a horror movie to really be scary, it must satisfy at least three principles: first, its narrative must be situated in the theme of some universal fear, notably the dark, death, monsters, the unknown, the paranormal, Satanism, and black magic among others. In line with this principle, it is popularly argued that the best scary movies hinge on current societal fears and anxieties on one hand and transform current socio-cultural and political preoccupations into elements of horror on the other hand.

2. Literature Review

The second principle of good horror entertainment is that they must establish an emotional baseline that will enable the viewers to project themselves into the narrative. In tandem with this, Kendrick James argues that a good horror movie creates a situation where the viewers relate to characters and feel a sense of empathy for them. The atmosphere must be such that it engages the audience and provides an effective platform for fear. The third principle has to do with building tension and subverting expectations. In other words, a good horror movie is suspense-rich. As explained by Celtx, “atmosphere creates suspense, suspense is ratcheted into dread, and then you choose how to exploit that dread: was it just the cat making that noise? Or was it something worse? If all else fails, you can just go for the Jump Scare” [4].

Thus, two of the (cited in Gibson) most essential features of horror movies are scary creatures and scary scenes. As noted by Kendrick James, a horror movie is all about “character and the story, atmosphere and the monsters” [5]. These monsters are gory, frightful, and obscene creatures (notably the living dead, the undead, paranormal beings and aliens among others). The mobilization of such scary scenes and creatures always entails the use of relevant, realistic—and professional-quality—costumes, make-up, special effects and editing among other technical tools. These tools are generally very expensive [6]; as such, they are hardly affordable to small-budget African filmmakers like the majority of Nigerian video filmmakers who most often rely on meager resources to produce their movies. In effect, the inability to lay hand on relevant costumes, make-up, and special effects causes most Nigerian video filmmakers to rely on sub-standard tools which do not always actualize the aesthetic and realistically build the fear appeal expected in a horror film. This scenario could well be illustrated using the way horror bodies and apocalyptic scenes are treated in most Nollywood zombie movies. In such movies, the leverage of sub-standard and grotesque props, costumes, make-up and special effects most often lead to the creation of pseudo-zombies which, instead of instilling fear and the fight-or-flight response, rather baffles or amuse film viewers and critics.

Using a review of two Nollywood zombie films (Enonchong’s *Witchdoctor of the Living Dead*, and C. Obasi’s *Ojuju*), literary sources, and critical observations, this paper seeks to illustrate the above-mentioned phenomenon. The paper specifically seeks to answer three research questions: how

central are makeup and special effects in the creation of the monsters in horror movies? How is the making of the zombie aided by special effects and make-up? And how unrealistic are Nollywood zombies? In line with the above-mentioned research questions, the paper is divided into three main sections. In the first place, the paper examines the role of professional-quality horror special effects in horror movies. In the second place, it examines the principles guiding the making of the zombie as a horror body or monster in horror movies. In the last part, the paper explores the technical flaws that make Nollywood zombie unrealistic or ineffective. This last part also reviews critics' reception of these unrealistic zombies.

3. Methodology

This paper is based on a descriptive research design. By definition, descriptive research systematically describes the facts or characteristics of a phenomenon, a situation or a population. Such research involves such approaches as observing, examining and documenting the behaviours of a subject without influencing it in any way. In addition to this, descriptive research involves the examination of views and opinion pertaining to the subject under discourse. In this study, the author sought particularly to examine principles guiding the making of zombies in horror films and explore the extent to which the making of zombies in Nollywood films are in line with the above popular principles.

The study thus hinges on two principal methods of data collection. A critical exploration of secondary sources was used to address the first two objectives of the paper namely: 1) examine the role of professional-quality horror special effects in horror movies, and 2). explore the principles guiding the making of the zombie as a horror body or monster in horror movies. The secondary sources considered include journal articles, book chapters, encyclopedias, newspaper articles, edited collection and a variety of online contents. In addition to secondary sources, the paper hinges on a qualitative content analysis of selected relevant Nollywood movies to address the third objective of the paper. This objective is to explore the technical flaws that make Nollywood zombie unrealistic or ineffective.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Atmosphere, Makeup, Special Effects and the Fear Appeal in Horror Films

Many observers mistakenly believe that horror movies are not only easy to make, but also an easy road to notoriety [4], [6]. To such observers the making of horror movies offers any novice an excellent opportunity to test their skills at making monsters. Meanwhile, it is becoming increasingly complicated to produce a genuinely scary horror movie, due to the fact that it is increasingly challenging to scare "an audience that is only becoming more and more desensitised to gore and violence" [7]. This implies that any filmmaker who seeks to frighten audiences through their film will need to deploy exceptional creativity. To successfully use the fear appeal in a movie, the filmmaker actually needs to have a good understanding of what scares people and deploy the most appropriate techniques to create the atmosphere which is appropriate in the movie. In tandem with this, Calvo contends that:

The potential pitfalls you face when making a horror film are what's really frightening. Technique, execution, and timing are crucial. Yet many filmmakers don't think to model scare and suspense moments using tried-and-true design patterns, leaving themselves open to technical risks (on top of all the other risks of making a film — never mind making a good one). Consequently, we end up with an overabundance of horror films that don't work, that don't deliver on what they set out to accomplish in the first place: to frighten viewers [4].

The story of a good horror film should be anchored in issues that are sources of societal fears or anxieties. Relying on very frightening creatures (notably ghosts, vampires or the undead) is only part of the job. Much more creative approaches should be adopted. The cineaste must think of drawing on popular themes that triggers fear on the collective or societal level. Actually, several authors have argued that what culturally frightens us from generation to generation is influenced by tragic world or national events [8], [9]. For instance, the surge of tragic world events such as the threat of nuclear wars, natural catastrophes and atomic contamination among others have at various points in world history caused collective fears in western society in particular and humanity at large. A case in point is the surge of atomic monsters in the 50s that exploited public fear of nuclear technologies during the Cold War [7]. This notion of the cinema's ability to exploit collective fear is considered by Joe Bob Briggs [10] in his assessment of Tobe Hooper's Texas Chainsaw Massacre. In his book *Profoundly*

Disturbing, he writes that: “[the Texas Chainsaw massacre] was the first baby-boomer shocker, in which pampered suburban children, distrustful of anyone older than thirty, are terrorized by the deformed adult world that dwells on the grungy side of the tracks—Chainsaw reflects the way the youth of the flower-power 60's reacted once they hit the real world” [10]. Thus, a horror movie enhances its prospect of scaring people when its subject matter hinges on national, regional or global anxieties or fears.

Besides drawing on collective fear the filmmaker needs to artfully build the right atmosphere and mood in their film. Calvo observes that a scary horror movie has an “underlying atmosphere, a moody visual undertone that creates a sense of dread, wonder and mystique” and leaves the audience “with snapshots of unforgettable imagery” [4]. Achieving such effects on the viewers often depends on the tactful use of suspense and jump scares. It also depends on the judicious use of cinematic techniques such as camera angles and professional makeup and special effect. Calvo uses three case studies (The Devil’s Backbone, The Orphanage and Tale of Two Sisters) to illustrate how appropriate cinematic techniques may help build the atmosphere and mood in a horror movie [4]. He writes that the movies “rely more on isolation—both literally (through creative use of location) and figuratively (in the mind of the characters)—coupled with evocative cinematography and production design” [4].

A good atmosphere is complemented by the use of suspense. In a horror film, suspense is construed as the art of making the viewer constantly feel that something evil is going to happen. Horror film experts contends it is elicited and amplified in a horror movie not only through an intelligently woven storyline but also through a good use of darkness and dramatic shadows as well as the use of such devices as the Dark voyeur point of view, ominous lighting, the sound of things like footsteps, a ticking clock, or a heartbeat. The cineaste can add to the suspense by building the viewers’ expectations and either delivering in a captivating way or by going for the fake one where for instance the viewer is given the impression that all is well with the actors and out of a sudden, the situation becomes critical. In line with this, the technique of the Dark Voyeur perspective is particularly appropriate in implying that the character is monitored or hunted by a malevolent other. The perspective also implies the vulnerability of the character to a threat that is unknown but around the corner.

Another key approach to making a movie scary is the use of professional and well-designed makeup and special effects. Such an approach is central to the conception of the film’s monsters (vampires, aliens, ghosts and living dead). As said earlier, the monster is a central feature of all horror movies. Its conception and use in the film must be done in a very convincing way to triggers the desired response from the viewers. As noted by Hellerman, horror movie makeup has the ability to make or break audience’s approval. In effect, film audiences are savvier these days [6]. This implies that, cineastes are compelled to use strong visuals and the most appropriate special effects techniques to frighten the audiences. Some of the special effects often used by filmmakers in the making of their monsters include Computer generated imagery (CGI), animated puppets, taxidermy toys, models, and real animals among others. Each of these techniques has its specific advantages and disadvantages. For instance, the use of CGI may be too prohibitive and represent a strain on the budget, specifically in a context of an indie production. Furthermore, although time effective, CGI may not always produce the effects desired by the cineaste. This truism is illustrated in Colin Trevorrow’s 2015 Jurassic World, where in spite of some evasive CGI innovations, the film director still saw the need to lobby hard “for one animatronic dinosaur on set, an Apatosaurus made of old-fashioned foam rubber” [11].

Thus, the use of each of the special effect techniques mentioned above depends on the size of the film budget and the type of monsters the cineaste seeks to make. In *Beast of the Southern Wild* for instance, five Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs are used to create Aurochs, some mythic beasts. Trained for months and subsequently dressed in scary costumes (tiny fur sweaters with horns) that transformed them on camera, the five pigs are an excellent example of the wonders a make-up or special effect artists may work by using real live animals. Close-up shots of the five pigs were composed in the lead character, Hushpuppy, to create the illusion of giant creatures. Similarly, John Hefferman used more than 450 real snakes on the set of his 2006 film, *Snakes on a Plane*, to hopefully create some fear not only for the audiences.

Using the two above mentioned films (*Beast of the Southern Wild* and *Snakes on a Place*), Harvey notes the complexity and effectiveness of using live animals to create special effects. She contends that “The brilliance in using live animals is the visceral quality of it. There is life and “acting” in an

animal's eyes that's impossible to truly recreate with a computer. In addition, your human performances will be elevated through their interactions with the creatures" [11]. However, the use of live animals implies the services of an animal wrangler which film directors may not be able to afford. Far too often, filmmakers need to use analogue methods to create their own convincing monsters. This necessity often implies the use of animated puppets, toys, and models. This is illustrated in John Carpenter's 1982 *The Thing*. This film has a scary scene where one character's head pulls off completely and simultaneously grows legs to become spider-like. The spider head effect is achieved with an animated puppet.

4.2. The Making of the Zombie in Horror Movies

Zombie lore has made significant inroads in the world of popular representations through books, movies, and television programs. Nonetheless, I want to explain several of the key features of these beings in advance of my main argument. According to the popular western imagination, the zombie is a hitherto dead person who, through supernatural means, becomes reanimated and then morphs into a brain or flesh-eating creature. By this western understanding, the zombie is a frightening creature which, in many Hollywood films, is portrayed as being without human qualities, a creature that is soulless, animalistic and dreadful. Additionally, the zombie in most western films is most often shown attacking or eating human beings [12]. Although the above popular imagination reveals some truths about the un-dead creature, there is much more to defining a zombie. Originally, zombies are born from some Afro-Caribbean religions, particularly Haitian voodoo. Actually, in the voodoo belief, there are two types of zombies. The first type called "zombi ko cadav" refers to a will-less and speechless person brought back to life by a voodoo sorcerer called bokor or caplata. Such a resurrected person is doomed to supernaturally be controlled and to work as a slave for the voodoo sorcerer who reanimated them. The second type of zombie is called "zombie astral" or "zombie bouteille". This typology refers to a supernatural power capable to enter into or reanimate a dead body [13], [14].

The foregoing suggests that popular Hollywoodian/western zombies are remarkably different from their Afro-Caribbean cousins. Although western conceptions of the zombie have often varied from one author to the other and from one period to another, the living dead has mainly been represented in films in a way that is different from African and Caribbean voodoo beliefs [15], [16]. In Hollywood films as well as in other forms of the western popular cultures, zombies are the product of biological/chemical contamination or infections. They have disgustingly damaged bodies or physiological malformations; they have a shambling or robotic walking style; and are dreadful cannibalistic beings who hunt humans and feed on human brain or flesh. Thus, Exelrod defines the zombie as "a relentlessly aggressive, singularly focused human being who has been altered by biological infection and is being driven by that infection" [17].

Contrary to their western cousins, African and Caribbean zombies are essentially the by-products of black magic. Although soulless and will-less as their western counterparts, they are not physically damaged bodies. Neither are they the result of biological contamination or infection. They are also not shambling and flesh-eating creatures. Contrarily, they feed on salty kind of food provided them by their bokors or masters. Also, contrary to their western counterparts who are singly focused on the destruction of the non-infected, African and Caribbean zombies are solely bent on serving their masters (the voodoo sorcerers). They are supernaturally controlled slaves working in an underworld economy while their western counterparts generally do not serve a spiritually empowered master [9], [18]. An African zombie can mingle unnoticed with the normal human beings while its western counterpart will easily be distinguished from humanity [19], [20]. In this paper attention will be given exclusively to the western zombie. This category of zombie has so permeated the Nigerian popular culture that it is present in many Nigerian video films.

Creating a convincing cinematic zombie has most often warranted the use of various techniques. Chief among these techniques are professional makeup and costumes. According to Woods, the convincing making of a zombie implies that the makeup and special effect specialist takes into account the clothes of the zombie, its hair, the makeup, and the acting style of the person playing the zombie role [21]. Concerning the clothes, Woods says they should be old, ripped, tattered and dirtied following the belief that zombies are a clumsy bunch of creatures which stumble through barbs, fences, and mud. When ripping and soiling the costumes, holes should be placed at appropriate points. Burn or singe marks as well as fake blood should also be added on the clothes in line with the fact that

the zombie is all about the gore. Thus, the intent to scare viewers warrants that few rips be created in the cuff of jeans and in the bottom of the zombie's shirt/jacket for maximum effect. The clothing should be dirtied and stained with much mud to sell the zombie look.

Similarly, the zombie's hair should be styled to give the cinematic monster a scary look. The hair should be given a wet look. It should also be stained with fake blood, dirt, and leaves [22], [23]. In addition to these, the zombie's makeup should be creative and intelligent. If the zombie is freshly out of the grave, its skin should have a deathly pallor suggested by a white make up or white powder applied on its face. Extra effect can be achieved by making the region around the zombie's eyes really dark [22]. If the zombie is to have a rotting body look, a paste made-up of a mix of cornstarch and water can be applied on such body parts as the face, the neck, the arms and the hands and allowed to dry. Greater effects may be achieved by adding cotton balls or toilet paper to the mixture before application on the body of the zombies. When this fake skin mixture gets dry, it should be coloured with makeup or liquid latex. This technique may help give the zombies a disfigured look.

Besides the creative makeup and costumes, appropriate acting is required to make the zombie sufficiently scary to the viewers. The actors should develop and stay in the zombie character. In other words, they should convincingly portray the zombie. In line with the film script, they can be slow moving zombies or faster wide-eyed and rage-filled creatures. Woods explains that "for classic zombies, the leg drag and long, loud moans should suffice" [21]. Meanwhile for a modern take on zombies, the actor should enact growling and twitchy body movements.

4.3. The Horror/Zombie Genre in Nollywood

By definition, a horror movie is a film which seeks to elicit fear or disgust in the viewers for entertainment. It aims to scare, shock, and thrill its audiences. In tandem with this, horror movies are most often anchored in stories that involve supernatural forces, monsters, and characters of evil origin. Although it is common to come across critics such as Dayo who think the gothic is very rare or non-existing in Nollywood, scary movies – particularly evangelical and witchcraft horror—can be said to have characterised the Nigerian video film industry right from its debut. Chris Obi Rapu's *Living in Bondage* (1992), the film that started the Nollywood movement for instance, involves voodoo, ritual killing and other occult scenes which are intended to scare viewers [24], [26]. The film recounts the story of Andy, an opportunistic and selfish businessman who sacrifices his wife's life to a satanic cult for the sake of upward economic and social mobility. His macabre ploy backfires when the ghost of the defunct woman emerges from the afterlife, only to avenge the death of Andy's wife. The vengeful spirit haunts and torments Andy to the point that he becomes mad and loses all his material possessions. Andy finally finds redemption at a church.

Like *Living in Bondage*, many, if not the majority of Nollywood films involve supernatural themes, sorcery, monsters and divine intervention/miracles [22], [24]. In effect, some of Nollywood dominant themes are black magic, ritual killing, cultism or the occult, a development which has caused many observers to brand the industry "the spectre of an occult economy" [24], [25]. Corroborating this observation, Dayo writes that: "Nollywood was founded on horror movies and although they were lo-fi and kitschy, they had a certain appeal, remarkable for blending our superstitious beliefs, mythologies, folklores and phobias into a prodigious golden era" [27].

Some of Nollywood scariest movies include *Feast of Horror* and *Juju*, *Karashika*, (1996), *Witches* (1995), *Raging Storm* (2007), *End of the Wicked* (1999), *Last Burial* (2000), *Billionaire Club* (2003), *Daughters of Lucifer*, *The Cannibals* (2009), *Diamond Ring* and *Ghost in my House* among others. A particularity of these films is that they are based on stories involving black magic in Nigeria. According to Nigerian artist Santi [22], Nollywood horror differs remarkably from its Hollywood counterpart. First, Hollywood horror hinges on professional makeup and special effects while its Nollywood cousin is plagued by low-budget special effects which has serious negative impact on the technical quality of the films. This creates a situation of lo-fi aesthetics. Second, the narrative structure and themes remarkably vary from one industry to the other: while Hollywood horror tends to let it all rise on the scary characters, Nollywood horror movies emphasize the fact that the evil depicted onscreen is a real phenomenon and a social anomie. In Santi's language: "every horror movie had to do with witches and the lengths people will go to to be rich—all which seemed to be completely conceivable and happening in the real world" [22]. Santi further explain the veracity of the depiction of evil in Nollywood horror thus:

In the late 90s and early 2000s, there was a period of time in Nigeria where people were kidnapped for blood money and rituals, which made these films even scarier. At the end of some films the credits even began with the warning: BEWARE. MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL [22].

Santi thus recognises that the concept of rituals, is by far the most popular theme in Nollywood horror movies, besides exorcism, sorcery, and the church. As he puts it, “no Nollywood horror film is complete without a ritual. It could be a woman sleeping with a witch doctor to ensure the love of her life loves her back, or having to roam a treacherous forest for days on end” [22].

Horror movie making in Nigeria—like in many other Black African countries—is plagued by a multitude of problems, three of which are 1) low budget special effects, 2) unprofessionalism, and 3) lack of creativity on the part of filmmakers [26], [28]. This situation has seriously affected the technical quality of Nigerian films and inspired pessimistic critics to view the horror genre as the “sick man” of the Nollywood industry. According to Dayo, the horror genre doesn’t much exist in Nollywood [27]. Elsewhere, he says Nollywood direly needs to have a horror film renaissance [29]. In the same line of thought [30] argues that genuinely scary horror movies are only something of the past. Present day Nollywood films popularly described or classified as horror do not deserve this appellation if judged by the technical quality. In his language:

There are few things in this world more mindlessly entertaining than a Nollywood film. Add horror into the mix and you're in for a spooky—often unintentionally—funny viewing experience, replete with references to juju, low-budget special effect portraying demonic spirits, and intensely hyperbolic performances [30].

In effect, issues such as low-budget special effects, inappropriate costuming, and funny makeup have led to the making of unrealistic monsters and pseudo-jumps scares in many Nollywood horror films. One only needs to watch sorcery-oriented films like *Night of the Vulture* to confirm this assertion. In her assessment of the above film, Witt contends that the above film exemplifies typical Nollywood horror movies in which make-up, costuming, and special effects are glaringly unprofessional [31]. In her words, the movie features an indeterminate diplomat from the spirit world with a grotesque latex vulture claw that could only baffle viewers. “The claw could have been the lingering effect of some ill-advised hex but seems more likely to have been conjured up from a post-Halloween bargain bin at Wal-Mart” [31]. Witt adds that the special effects and costuming in *Night of the Vulture*, like in a good number of Nollywood horror movies that she has watched, are “pretty campy good humoured stuff”. She explains: “Given the pace, the low cost and the technical means available, it should not be surprising that most Nigerian movies are bad. [...] In the case of Nollywood, “bad” means, on the technical side, a home video aesthetic, poor sound mixing, blinking special effects in primary colours, jarring lapses in continuity and boom microphones sinking into the frame” [31]. A similar observation could be made about Nollywood zombie films. This will be done in the subsequent section of this essay.

4.4. The Making of Monsters in Nollywood Zombie Films

As earlier mentioned, discussion in this section will be based on a review of two Nollywood zombie movies namely Charles Abi Enonchong’s *Witchdoctor of the Livingdead* (1986) and C. J. Obasi’s *Ojuju* (2014). It will be helpful, from the outset to briefly present the films.

4.4.1. A Brief Presentation of the Films

Charles Enonchong’s 1986 *Witchdoctor of the Living Dead* recounts the story of a vicious witchdoctor who terrorises a whole Nigerian/African village. Using black magic, he sows general panic in the village; forces people to flee the village; transforms into a goat and destroys crops, and blows chalk into villagers’ faces to curse them. This witchdoctor has the power to resurrect the dead and turn them into ravenous zombies for his service. He also has the power to mystically manipulate dreadful animals such as cobras and to use them to achieve all manner of dark purpose. The witchdoctor raises an army of zombies who assist him actualise his evil plans in the village; unfortunately for him and his minions, there is a local priest who is spiritually equipped to stop them. As things get worse, the priest calls in the help of a detective to neutralise the powers of the witchdoctor.

The movie opens with a road scene: a cab driver takes his fare through the dusty rustic roads. He has an unknown passenger in the back seat of his cab. In an attempt to converse with this unknown passenger, he learns that the latter is in fact a skeleton-like and very repugnant creature. On realising

this, he screams. The skeleton screams back frightening the driver the more and prompting him (the driver) to leave the car in an attempt to flee. Unfortunately for the flier, an army of angry zombie's springs from nowhere and confront him. The zombie menace forces the driver to return to his cab where he is finally killed by a rubber snake that had been vomited by the skeleton. The skeleton had patiently been waiting for the driver to return to the car. Witch doctor of the Living Dead is replete with gory scenes. In one instance, a goat is gruesomely slaughtered on camera with the use of an axe. These unnecessarily gory scenes coupled with other issues such as poor editing, low budget special effects and poor plot construction and character development have contributed to attracting a mainly negative review from critics [23], [32], [33]. It is hard to find critics who positively appreciated the film in the literature available.

C.J. Obasi's 2014 *Ojuju* is another interesting minuscule budget zombie thriller. It recounts the story of Romero (Afolayan) and two of his friends Emmy (Kelechi Udegbe) and Peju (Omowunmi Dada) who overnight, are compelled to survive a strange, unpredicted, and unprecedented epidemic that is turning almost everybody in their neighbourhood (a Nigerian slum) into flesh-eating zombies. This mysterious and zombifying epidemic starts after the main source of water in the slum becomes infected. Majority of the slum dwellers (including Romero's girlfriend) are infected. They develop strange symptoms of rabid river blindness which in the long run make them morph into flesh eating creatures. The infected people spread the infection by biting sane slum dwellers. The first person to become infected by biting is Fela (Chigozie Nzeribe), a local drug dealer. Romero and his two friends track the disease to the slum's sole source of water supply and try to understand its genesis in a bid to find a solution to the situation. However, they have no time to ponder the situation as they must fight for their survival and prioritize their escape from the infested slum.

Contrary to Enonchong's *Witchdoctor*, Obasi's zombie film has been acclaimed by a number of critics. It won the Best Nigerian Movie award at the 2014 African International Film Festival; and the *Hollywood Reporter* (cited in Dayo) gave it a fairly positive assessment [34]. This critic actually commented that, although Obasi's film is glaringly limited in terms of special effects, it has many positive features. Obasi overcomes the technical limitations of his film by developing his characters and storyline in a sufficiently captivating manner.

4.4.2. Pseudo-Monsters in Obasi's *Ojuju* and Enonchong's *Witchdoctor of the Living Dead*

As earlier mentioned, *Ojuju* and *Witchdoctor of the Living Dread* are low budget films. This predestines them to be seriously limited in terms of special effects, a phenomenon common with Nollywood films. In effect, low-budget special effects significantly affect their directors' monster making potential. In Enonchong's film in particular, this problem is more accentuated. The film's special effects are essentially limited to the use of rubber snakes which many film critics qualified as been laughable and ridiculous. The director's inability to use professional special effects is more evident in the fact that he chose to create extremely gory scenes in his film where animals are gruesomely slaughtered on screen. These very violent scenes were done in the name of depicting the aggressive nature of his witchdoctor and zombies. Meanwhile, it goes without saying that relevant special effects such as animated puppets or CGI could have been used to deal with this aspect of the mise-en-scene and avoid obscenity.

What is even more striking, particularly in *Witchdoctor* (as well as in Obasi's *Ojuju*), is the pseudo nature of Enonchong's zombies. This could be illustrated with two points. First, the actors' make-up applied and their style of acting both affect the authenticity of the film's zombies. In fact, the undead in *Witchdoctor* are everything but zombies from a Western/Hollywood point of view. Some of them have a very light white paste applied on their faces to suggest the pallor which is typical of the western/Hollywoodian zombies (see Figure 1). The application of the paste is so grotesque that the zombies instead have the appearance of clowns or masquerades.

Secondly, Enonchong's zombies have no markers of body malformation or decay. This strips them of any dreadful characteristics. Worse: Enonchong's zombies fail to perfectly enact the shambling walk style. They also fail to adopt the wide-eye appearance that is typical of Western zombies (see Figure 2). These flaws and many other factors make's Enonchong's undead less pseudo-zombies and less scary creatures. One can therefore understand Beveridge who describes them thus "All of the hallmarks of a great-awful Nollywood movie are here [in the film]: the hilarious attempts at English [...] the tacked-on religious messages, the laughable special effects, the awful acting. But the mid-eighties was well before Nollywood had standardized any of its conventions" [32].



Figure 1. Image of a Zombie in Witchdoctor of the Living Dead



Figure 2. A Zombie Enacting Vampirish Attitude in Witchdoctor of the Living Dead



Figure 3. A Zombie in Obasi's Ojuju

Obasi's zombies are remarkably better than Enonchong's own. However, they are not exempt from a number of flaws. Their major weakness is their being too realistic. Although they bear light markers of body decay (sort of thick paste applied at various part of their body) and exhibit a somnambulistic appearance, they are not convincingly zombies (see Figures 3 and 4). They have no pallor and are barely dressed in a way as to suggest the shabbiness characteristic of zombies. Only the widely opened eyes of some of them could suggest zombification. No doubt, many of these zombies are mistaken for drunkards even in the film.



Figure 4. Image of a Zombie in Obasi's Ojuju

It should also be underlined that there are some inconsistencies in Obasi and Enonchong's development of the zombie concept. Their undead are largely Western (by their appearance and mannerism) but with few troubling features of African zombies. The film directors actually base their films on a number of tropes that turn out to hybridize their undead and affect the logic of their storyline. In *Witchdoctor* for instance, Enonchong chooses to hinge his interpretation on the African concept of the Afro-Caribbean concept of the bokor (the sorcerer who raises dead and zombifies them). Meanwhile, his zombies enact the attitudes of Western/Hollywoodian zombies. Similarly, Obasi reproduces the Western myth of the zombie who is a by-product of contamination or infection. However, he calls his zombies "ojuju", a local word which means "masquerade" or the "zombie astral". Masquerades in Nigeria have a frightening appearance, but neither are they "zombi ko cadav" (as suggested by the nature of the undead in *Ojuju*), nor do they behave as zombies. As earlier said, the Nigerian zombie (like the Haitian one) is the product of black magic. He can mingle unnoticed with members of the society. He is also not aggressive to "unzombified" humanity. By hybridizing their zombies, two film directors create a confusion. In other words, the hybridization affects the logic of their model of zombie construction. The two directors thus fail, to some extent, to draw on popular themes that can trigger fear on the collective societal level.

5. Conclusion

Horror movies are artfully constructed to simultaneously elicit fear and thrill audiences. They essentially integrate gory, frightful, and obscene creatures (notably the living dead, the undead, paranormal beings, and aliens), as well as scary or terrifying scenes all designed to build the fear appeal or the fight-or-flight response. The mobilisation of such scary scenes and creatures always entails the use of relevant, realistic—and professional-quality—costumes, make-up, special effects and editing among other technical tools. These tools are generally too expensive for small-budget African filmmakers working in the Nollywood tradition. As their budgets prohibit access to professional-quality make-up and special effects, most Nigerian video filmmakers are compelled to rely on sub-standard cinematic tools, and therefore are unable to actualise the aesthetic and fear appeal more commonly found in larger budget films. This scenario has been illustrated in this paper with close reference to the way monsters and apocalyptic scenes are treated in most Nollywood zombie movies. It has been argued that in such Nollywood movies, the leverage of sub-standard and

grotesque make-up and special effects most often leads to the creation of pseudo-zombies which, instead of instilling fear and the fight-or-flight response, are susceptible to baffle or amuse film viewers and critics.

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