

AESTHETICS IN NOLLYWOOD VIDEO FILMS

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Abstract

Nollywood filmmakers most often strive to evoke particular feelings in their audience –they try as much as it is possible to create prevailing effects on the minds of viewers', using widely shared conventions. This article reflects on the use of images, light and sound to create beauty and believability in Nollywood video films, using a semiotic approach to analyse select movies. The article suggests that certain aesthetic elements are used in sharing meaning in Nollywood movie productions. Such elements include but are not limited to signs, codes and conventions, and particular camera, lighting, sound and editing techniques, as well as some other specialized vocabulary of movie productions.

Keywords: *Aesthetics, Nollywood, Video films, Semiotics, Conventions.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nollywood video films are most often create aesthetic reality on the minds of viewers. Aesthetic reality, according to Akpan and Etuk "involves nature rearranged", it is a kind of reality that reflects through the filmmaker's personality and indicates selection and treatment given life by the filmmaker, with the aid of the camera, sound, light and available techniques of video production (AKPAN & ETUK, 1990). Of course, we all know that film is often arbitrated by the filmmaker, but the extent to which this arbitration takes place is what we may not really be able to measure. Chandler notes that television and film use certain common conventions often referred to as the 'grammar' of these audio-visual media. These conventions according to Chandler are important for conveying meaning through particular camera and editing techniques as well as some specialized vocabulary of film production (CHANDLER, 2001). Aesthetics lies in the ability of the filmmaker to utilize all the available tools at his/her disposal to pass a message across to his/her audience and make

the feel the way he wants them to feel. The actions of the audience while watching the movies are usually programmed by the filmmaker, who blends in diverse proportions, images, light and sound, with his wealth of experience and vocabulary as well as the diverse technique at his/her disposal. This article is an attempt to explain how filmmakers are able to make their audience react in different ways while watching their movies.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study specifically examines:

1. how shots are combined to give information or create an aesthetic reality on the minds of viewers
2. how unconventional camera angles are used to create aesthetics
3. how meaning is conveyed through objects and scenic elements that appear on the screen
4. how lighting, sound, and graphics add to the aesthetic reality of video films
5. how editing elements like fades, dissolves, jump-cuts, flashbacks, flash-forwards, etc. are employed to create aesthetics
6. how characters and emotions are used to create aesthetics in video films
7. how ideas and themes are employed in the creation of aesthetic reality in video films

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Nollywood moviemakers often utilise certain camera and editing techniques as well as some specialized vocabulary of movie productions in creating meaning and to arouse the feelings of the audience. Movies are a medium of

communication that must be effectively managed. Baran notes that, "along with books, movies are the only mass medium not dependent on advertising for their financial support". What this means is that moviemakers must satisfy their audience because they pay for the movies directly. The relationship between movies and their audiences differ from that of other media as movies must communicate effectively to arouse particular feelings in the audience as they view them (BARAN, 2004; MORLEY, 1992).

According to Udoakah, effective communication goes beyond the receiver's understanding the message as intended by the sender, to the message being communicated in a way as to arouse particular feelings in us as we receive it. For instance, how we communicate to evoke support, anger, sadness, joy, indifference, a sense of belonging, etc. Every effective medium of communication should be able to evoke human feelings appropriate to the messages it carries. These feelings according to Udoakah are known as aesthetic experience (UDOAKAH, 2000).

Aesthetics has so much correlation with movie production. Yearwood in Akpan and Etuk does not see big equipment as the guarantee for successful television production. He stresses that it is not the man or woman behind the camera who takes charge of that technology and puts it to beneficial uses (AKPAN & ETUK, 1990). What this implies is that apart from the equipment, and the people who handle them, there are other people who plan for the success of every television/video production thereby bringing out the aesthetic worth of the production. Such personnel range from the producer, script writer, director, casts, and other crew members.

Sillars and Gronbeck describe aesthetic worth as simply beautiful –how texts (movies) take complex situations and characters and create a piece of formal beauty (SILLARS & GRONBECK, 2001). Beauty in this sense is not to be understood as simply pretty or charming but rather as something powerful in its effects on readers, listeners, and viewers. These authors note that formal criticism originated in ancient times from Plato's concept of a transcendental essence –a primary form that governed all phenomena. Knowing how something was formed and put together, so as to be different from other things

like it, was the heart of such knowledge. The essential art was not in visual reproduction, but in formal construction. Form, to Plato was comprised of both beauty and truth.

Plato's concept suggests that moviemakers are often conscious of the fact that human beings are essentially reasonable and literate and so, their movies, though essentially fiction must possess some elements of truth, verisimilitude, or a semblance of reality in order to arouse the interest of viewers and to keep them glued to their television screens, as anything that does not seem real distracts the attention of the audience (MONACO, 1981).

Since properties are inherent in their works and not ascribed by viewers –moviemakers are often careful in putting together the ideas and emotions to be conveyed in their movies as it is not the place of the viewers to create meaning but rather, to interpret the signals that have been presented to them. The viewer should not be left in a position to search for the intentions of the moviemaker, or to draw inference outside what has been presented.

Aesthetic excellence is the hallmark of movie productions; moviemakers make use of aesthetic elements like signs, codes and conventions, mise-en-scene, editing, shot types, camera angles, camera movements, lighting, diegesis and sound, visual effects, narrative, genre, iconography, star-system, realism, etc. to create meaning in their productions and to arouse the interest of their viewers (INYANG, 2013).

Aesthetic judgements are then based on the form in which the content is expressed, for it is the form that puts the various ideas and emotions into relationships that permit them to affect the lives of viewers. To an average moviemaker, the way in which his/her ideas and emotions are expressed is more important than the ideas and emotions in themselves.

Chandler posits that television and film use certain common conventions often referred to as the grammar of these audio-visual media. These conventions are not dissimilar to the aesthetic elements analysed in this study (CHANDLER, 2001). The conventions are however not rules as expert practitioners may break them for deliberate effects, which is one of the rare occasions that we become aware of what the convention is. These

aesthetic elements aid the viewer in sharing meaning from a movie as intended by the producer. The process of evaluating how aesthetic elements are employed in movies can be viewed as reading a movie; it requires looking at the movie in detail to see how it is put together.

In the process of evaluating the use of aesthetic elements in the movies selected for this study, it is pertinent to interpret the texts as we see them, to say why we think certain producer made certain choices and what the movie means to us. If we view a certain portion of the movie and it has a certain effect on us, for instance, it makes us scared, we can look closely at the way it is constructed to see how the producer, script writer, director, cast and other crew members have used certain aesthetic elements at their disposal to create fear.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is guided by Aesthetic Theory. Aesthetic Theory bothers about standard aesthetic obsessions such as the function of beauty and sublimity in art as well as the relationship between art and society. According to Adorno modern art's freedom from such restrictions as cult and imperial functions that had plagued previous eras of art has led to art's expanded critical capacity and increased formal autonomy, and with this expanded autonomy comes art's increased responsibility for societal commentary (ADORNO, 1997).

Aesthetic theory argues that overtly politicized content is not art's greatest critical strength but rather the true content. What this means is that the ideas and emotions communicated in a particular art form (film for instance) should be seemingly true, as every form of art seeks to imitate reality. Agreed, art is never real but a distance from reality in the arts can create dissonance –a mental discomfort that would render the art useless. Truth-content is desirable and is ultimately found in the manifold dialectical interactions that that emerge from the artworks position relative to the subject and greater collective tradition as well as internal dialectics within the artwork itself. For instance in the movies, the characters may be non-figurative but

the relationships between them must be symbolic, viewers must be able to make sense out of the role played by them –they should be able to compare their actions with what exist in the real world.

Film is not just a form of art but also a medium of communication, and so for the filmmaker to communicate effectively he/she must pass the message in such a manner that makes the viewer receive the signals as intended by the encoder. Filmmakers most often are able to sway their viewers by utilizing certain conventions of video production together with camera, sound, lighting and editing techniques to drive through their ideas and emotions (MILERSON, 1985).

5. METHODOLOGY

This article employs semiotics as a method for analysing select Nollywood films. Semiotics provides a potentially unifying conceptual framework and a set of methods and terms for use in film analysis. In semiotics, the analyst seeks to connect the signifier with what is signified. Semiotics seeks to understand the underlining messages in visual texts. It is closely related to discourse analysis and forms the basis for interpretive analysis (DANESI, 1994).

Semiotics as a qualitative method applied in media research helps the researcher to discover the hidden meanings of a visual text (film) within the socio-cultural context, it implies the analysis of media phenomenon as a system through the manifested signs whether verbal or non-verbal that can be studied as Barthes proposed in his approach according to the two levels of signification i.e. denotation and connotation (BURN & PAKER, 2003).

Within the Saussurean tradition, the task of the semioticians is to look beyond the specific texts or practices to the systems of functional distinctions operating them.

6. SYNOPSES OF SELECT MOVIES

1. *The Illuminati Cult* is a 2013 movie produced and directed by Nwobode Obiora. It is a thrilling story set in a typical Nigeria society. It reflects the nature of wealth acquisition of

some Nigerians. The illuminati Cult is a story of Benson and Uju who are blessed with four boys, but they live in abject poverty. Uju's friend offers to help but instead initiates the couple into a demonic and blood sucking fraternity. Years go by and their sons become young men. The fraternity becomes blood thirsty and their sons are marked victims. They are left with regret, pain and sorrow. It takes more than their imbecile son Nnana, who speaks the truth at all times, and Judith, his born-again nurse friend to save their lives. Three of their sons are sacrificed to the fraternity, except Nnana, who is turned into an imbecile, and they have to pay the supreme price of death. After several prayers Nnana is set free and eventually marries Judith his nurse, they all live happily ever after.

2. *Bloody Carnival* is a 2012 movie, produced by Paul Ejike Afube and directed by Okey Zubelu Okoh. It features star actresses: Mercy Johnson, Chacha Ike and Queen Nwokoye (Nicole, Naomi and Victoria) respectively. These three are best of friends who happen to fall out. Nicole is from a poor home with a strict and disciplined father, Naomi is married with a child, while Victoria's mother is a pastor. The three girls gain admission into the university and become friends. They hide their identity on campus in order to gain wealth, fame and supremacy. In the course of this, they have misunderstandings and fall out – each of them forming her clique. The introduction of the carnival causes chaos, as each of them try to outshine the other. Ten million naira is set to be won and each of them would do anything to win the prize. Nicole's team is disqualified on grounds of misconduct; Victoria loses her life, while Naomi loses her husband and daughter.

3. *Who is the chosen* is a 2014 movie, starring Kenneth Okonkwo, Solomon Akiyesi, Adigwe Zulu, Patrick Doyle, Nwankwoude Joseph, Chinwe Isaac, Kyrie Ekwenze, and Emma Ayalogu. It is produced by Donatus Nwobodo and directed by Don Single Ndubuisi. The movie exposes wolves in sheep clothing's operating in a religious circle as pastors and prophets. These false men of God betray the

trust of their congregations in so many ways. Each man of God has his own congregation – Pastor Ezekiel is a poor pastor who believes in God and performs natural miracles, he is patient and dedicated but has few members in his church. Financial pressures make him heed his wife's counsel to consult Rev. Josiah who happens to be a fetish. He performs fake miracles to extort money from his members. To convince his members and gain more, he gives charity to the needy and still gets back the money spiritually. Pastor Collins on the other hand, sees the church as a business. He goes around having affairs with his female members, deceives them to get money from them, as well as misleads them. Because of him, Sonia misses the opportunity of marrying the man of her choice, who is well-to-do and loves her and ends up settling for Bro. Jude – the church accountant, who is arranged by Pastor Collins. He also makes Emeka's mother believe that Emeka's wealth is not genuine, thereby creating problems between Emeka and his family. The Lord Bishop has many followers amongst who are wealthy business men and women, politicians, and the less privileged. He only pays attention to the rich and mighty, which he extorts, money from, offering to fast and pray for them to win political seats in government. Father Thompson is a genuine Catholic Priest who believes in God's time. He convinces Emeka to return the money he and his friends stole from their master, and advises him to wait for God's appointed time. As a result of his prayers, Emeka is able to excel in life.

4. *Occultic Power* is a 2013 movie, produced by O. Christian and directed by Mike Ogundu. It features Chinwetala Agu (Ukaegbu), Pete Eneh (Okaka), Walter Anga (Copper Maxwell) and Vitalis Ndubisi (Emeka)

The movie presents the travails of a secondary school student – Collins, who strives to study hard in order to liberate himself from poverty and provide for his sister after the death of their parents. Collins is hunted by fate even to the point where his life is threatened. His misfortune arises from the village, where his father (Okaka) testifies against Ukaegbu in the council of elders meeting, that he killed his

brother and is having an affair with his brother's wife. Ukeagbu denies the allegation and they are to swear to Amadioha (the gods of the land). After the Swearing, Ukeagbu buries a charm in Okaka's compound and places a curse on Okaka's house hold. Upon the death of Okaka, the whole village reject Collins and his sister, but their uncle takes them to the city and enrolls Collins in a secondary school. Tragedies keep befalling Collins -he is kidnapped and buried alive in the bush, this makes him miss his WAEC Examinations. He also ends up impregnating two of his classmates, which makes him feel frustrated. His uncle later finds him and gives him a second chance register for WAEC examinations, while Ukaegbu later dies out of his evil deeds.

7. INTERTEXTUALITY

The movies under review are selected based on certain shared characteristics. *The Illuminati Cult*, *Bloody Carnival* and *Who is the Chosen* share the same quest for wealth acquisition. Although *The Illuminati Cult* acquires wealth through occultic and ritual means, *Bloody Carnival* shows moral corruption and in particular the passionate drives of some Nigerian women in pursuit of wealth, fame and supremacy at the expenses of self-dignity. *Who is the Chosen* shows false men of God betraying the trust of their congregations in pursuit of wealth. Although the *Occultic Power* does not share same wealth acquisition, but it presents a boy who is determined to study hard in order to beat poverty.

The three movies have a typical Nigerian setting and use basically Nigerian artists to interpret the roles of each character. Each movie has a moral lesson.

8. RHETORICAL TROPES

Rhetorical tropes are aesthetics elements that are used in persuading or influencing others to believe that what is signified is real. In *Occultic Power*, the actions of the supposed images of Amadioha (gods of the land) that follows Ukaegbu around, even as he goes to Okaka's

compound to bury a charm, without his knowledge is used to portray that no matter what anybody does in the hidden or openly, be it good or bad, someone is watching and there is always a consequence, be it immediately or thereafter. The four movies make use of lightings, sounds, graphics, special effects, camera distance and angles, as well as mise-en-scene to tell their stories. Such rhetorical tropes are meant to aid viewers in drawing meaning from the movie.

9. MODALITY

Modality is the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign or text, whether in fact or fiction, actuality or acting; live or recorded. It assesses the plausibility or the possibility of the events depicted or claims made in it. It is a classification of logical propositions according to their asserting or denying the possibility, impossibility, contingency or necessity of their content.

Special effects are used in the selected movies to create an impression that the action(s) or word(s) have certain effects on some individuals. One of such effects is the kind of lightning that is used to connote that some kind of actions have taken place. This is seen in *The Occultic Power*, where Ukaegbu and Okaka are to swear in the shrine. Lightning and thunder synchronized with the action and creates fear and a good impression in the minds of viewers. It indicates that something terrible is about to happen.

The same sign is employed in *The Illuminati Cult*, especially the scene where the vulture attacks Nkuma in his village and plucks off his eyes and intestines, and also in the scene where Ugo charms him to go blind and dumb. Special effects and sounds are also used in combination to create actions and impression of fear.

Also, in *Who is the Chosen*, the scene where Vincent is seen throwing money around the village, the producer uses special sound effects to express the idea that the money is used to claim the destiny of those who get in contact with it (the money). The same sign is employed in *Bloody Carnival*, where Nicole slaps her partner for touching her. At any point where the director wants to establish that the perpetrators of some

kinds of evil have relinquished their power, a particular kind of effect is used.

10. SYNTAGMATIC STRUCTURES OF THE MOVIES

The Illuminatti Cult starts with music at the background while displaying the names of casts before the title, followed by the name of crew members before the movie actually builds up. The movie opens with a long shot on vultures flying round Chief Benson's compound, before progressing to cover Chief Benson and his wife, Ugo. The camera continues to focus on them as Nkuma –the gateman sights them and is cursed to go blind and dumb for what he has seen. The next scene shows the maids in the house expressing concern and confusion over Nkuma's sudden misfortune. The next scene opens in Chief Benson's room with his children worried about his ill health, while Nnama the eldest son who happens to be an imbecile is sent out of the room for trying to say the truth with regards to their father's health.

The opening sequence sets the pace for the progression of other scenes and the rest of the story. The progression of shots, scenes, and sequences are achieved through cuts, fades and dissolves, which add beauty to the entire work, as well as the different camera shots which create particular effects. Graphics and special effects are also used to construct reality in the movie. The setting of the movie is dominantly in the city. The various props used in the movie are well selected.

Bloody Carnival opens with names of cast and crew members displayed alongside the scene of girls cat walking with the aid of frontier. This is closely followed by a medium shot of Biggy and Osas cooking in the kitchen, the scene is quite lengthy and eventually cuts to a scene where Biggy and Osas are waiting for their guest, who eventually doesn't turn up. The next scene shows Ibenabo (Naomi's husband) in his home, very furious about the fact that Naomi is not taking his calls. This is closely followed by the scene where Victoria's friend introduces the carnival to her. Subsequent scenes also show her talking

Naomi into the carnival. Closely followed is the scene where Victoria's team clashes with Nicole's team. The movements, cuts and fades add value to the entire work. The three friends seem to have misunderstandings and arguments whenever they come in contact with each other. Close up shots, zoom-ins, long shots and medium shot creates impressions as well as a particular effect to the audiences. Entries and exists of characters were well handled.

The choice of shots and their placements in relation to size, aspect ratio and screen-forces are quite in order. There are clear distinctions of various times depicted in the film viz; morning, noon, evening and night. Both outer and inner orientations of light are properly handled to create colours and shadows. Most of the locations are in the city and in the ship. Dialogues, sound effect and music are proportionate as none dominates the other.

Who is the chosen? opens with the theme music, before the names of cast and closely followed by a medium shot of a pastor praying for his members and performing miracles. This is done after the name of each cast, without any other sound apart from the theme music, before the title of the movie. In the process, the camera establishes a medium shot of a woman running to Pastor Ezekiel's house, carrying her sick son as the name of crew keeps displaying underneath. The camera continues to focus on the pastor praying for the boy as he gets well again. The next scene opens with Sonia and Lisa in a boutique discussing about Sonia's achievements. The next scene opens with Sonia and Lisa in a restaurant having lunch etc.

The opening sequence sets the pace for the rest of the story. Although the producer is careful in his selection and placement of dialogue, music and sound effect, he is not careful to check the music and sound track dominating the dialogue in some scenes. There is a relative interplay between sound and mood, sound and time, and sound and light. In some scenes the dialogue extends to the next scene even as the scene fades away.

The film makes use of music and mood sound. There is colour blurring in some scenes. Vincent's secret room does not reflect a mysterious and

sober atmosphere but is bright and revealing, thus fails to establish appropriate mood of the environment. The various camera shots in combination create the desired effect in the production. In some scenes, camera is shaky. The producer makes use of both village and city setting. The progression of shots, scene and sequence, are achieved through fades, cuts and dissolve.

Occultic Power opens with music, then the names of casts and the title, followed by names of crew members, before the movie eventually builds up with a medium shot of Maxwell and Uju in a dark room discussing. The next scene opens with a medium shot of elders in council having a gathering with the king to settle a dispute. There is a flashback to the scene where Okaka is in his compound and Ukaegbu's brother runs to him, to tell him that he saw his brother having an affair with his wife, and that he has threatened to kill him, if he tells anyone. Immediately after that, he is spiritually attacked. After the narration via flashback, the next scene is in the shrine, where Okaka and Ukaegbu are to swear in order to affirm the accusation. The next scene is established showing Ukaegbu in Okaka's compound burying a charm. Subsequent scenes are in the school setting which involves the disappearance of Collins and other misfortunes.

The images which represent Amadioha (the gods of the land) in the shrine scene looks so artificial and the producer repeatedly makes use of it, even in the scene where Ukaegbu goes to bury a charm in Okaka's compound. Camera shots are not carefully selected, the camera cuts the heads of some characters. The producer however, is able to establish lightning and thunder, using special effects, the movie makes use of both village and city settings. Some scenes are unnecessary, while some unnecessarily lengthy.

11. PARADIGMATIC ANALYSES

The Illuminati Cult is meant to reflect the nature of wealth acquisition of some Nigerians. The movie suggests that when a covenant is taken, it ought to be fulfilled and that it takes

only the grace of God to break it. More of extreme long shots should have been used to establish the various settings. The producer makes use of continuity editing to link up the entire work instead of jump-cut editing. Fades and cuts, are used to create a sense of motion. Zoom-in lens movement is employed to create emphasis. The producer chooses to use popular stars such as Kenneth Okonkwo, Chacha Ike and Walter Anga to play the leading roles.

Bloody carnivalis a movie that portrays the social life style of some women. It shows moral corruption and in particular, the lustre drives of some Nigerian women in hot pursuit of wealth, fame and supremacy at the expenses of self-dignity. The movie specifically dwells on the fact that no matter the amount of wealth, fame and recognition one gets, if it does not come from the right means, there is always a consequence. Fades and dissolves are used to establish each scene and create a sense of motion. The producer makes use of jump-cut editing to establish scenes instead of continuity. More of long shots and medium shots are used in passing the messages across, close-up shots should have been used to express anxieties. Star actresses Mercy Johnson, Chacha Ike and Queen Nwokoye are used to play the leading role unlike *Occultic Power*, where less known character is used to play the lead role.

Who is the chosen is religiously inclined. It exposes the activities of false pastors and prophets. The movie is meant to warn viewers to beware of false prophets, as they are everywhere, deceiving people with sweet words, visions, prophesies, healings, revolution, signs and wonders, miracles, even the devil manifests as the Angel of light. The movie employs jump-cuts editing, which add a sense of speed to the sequence of events, instead of continuity editing which aims to give the appearance of continuous time and space. Fades and dissolves are used to achieve progression. The movie makes use of medium shots, long shots and close-up shots in passing its messages across, Kenneth Okonkwo, Solomon Akiyesi, Zulu Adigwe, Patrick Doyle, Nwankwoude Joseph, are the star actors used in playing the leading roles. The producer should have used silhouette light which symbolizes danger in the

secret room scene, to create a mysterious and nocturnal mood.

Occultic Power has a moral lesson, it suggests that one can be cursed with or without his/her knowledge; also the sins of the father can come upon the children and generation to come. The producer chooses to tell two stories at the same time before linking them. This is achieved through juxtaposition of Okaka and Ukaegbu's dispute with the school scenes. This could have been done by telling one story first before linking it with the other. Jump-cut editing is employed at the early stage of the movie, but continuity editing subsequently takes over. The movie constantly makes use of close-up shots and medium shots in telling its stories. Graphics, lighting, and sounds are generally not well utilized. The special effects used are not convincing enough. Cuts and fades are used to achieve progression, flash backs are equally used in telling the story for emphasis. Star actors Chinwetalu Agu, Peter Eneh and Walter Anga are used to play minor roles, while less known characters are cast to play the leading roles such as Collins, some scenes are blurring, unnecessary shadows appear here and there, a fill light would have eliminated the shadows.

The producer was unable to manipulate sound effectively. The problem of jamming dialogue, music and sound effect results to noise. The producer should have used a boom microphone to make voices audible and clear. In the beginning of the movie, there was constant drum sound which tends to be louder than the dialogue. Light like music can evoke a great variety of specific feelings within viewers, but the producer failed to effectively manipulate it.

12. CONNOTATIONS AND DENOTATIONS

In *The Illuminati Cult*, the death of Benson and Ugo's sons to the blood-sucking fraternity indicates that, when a covenant is taken, it must be fulfilled. It takes only the grace of God to break it. And that nothing goes for nothing –the devil does not give anything free, as there is always a price to pay. Vultures are portrayed as

agents of death. They stare it in the face and eat death for breakfast (literally). The vulture has the ability to "smell" death as much as three days in advance.

Hence, should it hover over a house, such is said to be an omen of impending death. Vultures are used to create an impression on the minds of the viewers about the agony Nkuma was going through and the series of deaths in the Benson's family. The sight of the vultures and the signals that are signified are meant to connote the forces opposing Nkuma and the household of Chief Benson.

In *Bloody Carnival*, the lustre drives of some Nigerian women in hot pursuit of wealth, fame, and supremacy at the expense of self-dignity, and the subsequent repercussions is aimed at discouraging viewers from going into unwarranted competition and to encourage them to be content with what they have. Three sets of ladies who are supposed to be best of friends end up being worst enemies due to the drives of being superior, famous and wealthy.

In *Who is the Chosen*, it appears that pastors occupy a special place in the hearts of people. This seems true because people see them as the link between them and God. But these men of God portray something different –they appear to be wolves in sheep clothing. The church has become a source of hope and succour to the helpless and especially in this trying times, people tend to believe and revere their pastors and take their teachings seriously. This belief in pastors has culminated into a means of wealth acquisition for some pastors. Viewers are however, made to believe that it is not all who call on the name of the Lord that are holy hence they should not be deceived by their secret words, visions, prophecies, healings, revelations, signs and wonders, miracles, because even the devil can manifest as an angel of light.

In *Occultic Power*, the snake and cat which are graphically used in the shrine scene are meant to create an impression in the minds of viewers that they represent Amadioha (the gods of the land). The charm Ukaegbu buried in Okaka's compound is believed to be the root of Collin's problems and misfortunes. Amadioha continuously following Okaegbu, in the scene where he goes to bury the charm, connotes that,

no matter what anyone does in secret or in open, he or she is being watched .

However, apart from the visual codes discussed, sounds, lightings, special effects, graphics, camera distance and angle, and mise-en-scene are also employed to connote and denote meanings in the selected movies (ZETTL, 2005).

13. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Certain aesthetic elements are used in constructing reality (creating meaning) in movie productions. Such elements include but are not limited to signs, codes and conventions, and particular camera, lighting, sound and editing techniques (conventions), as well as some other specialized vocabulary of movie productions. These conventions are however, not rules as they are sometimes broken to produce deliberate effects.

A summary of the analyses in this article reveals that from the moment one starts watching a movie, he/she begins to get involved. The first few images of movies (the opening sequence) are often very important as they give clues about what the movie is all about. The viewer would look at the opening shots of place and time and put them into context, he/she would also look at the actors that are presented and make assumptions about their characters and roles in the movie and their relationships with each other. One would look at the title of the movie –the way it is worded and the style of lettering and try to guess what genre of movie it will be. He/she would listen to the sound which is often predominantly music at this

stage, and the tone and beat again give further clues as to how the movie will develop. All these are done automatically –at this time, the viewer is receptive and actively involved. Without realising it, he/she has entered into the movie world and has begun to read the signals presented to him or her.

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