

From Script to Screen: A Semiotic Approach

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Abstract

The production of a film starts with the ideas of a script writer and ends with the audience seeing the film and reacting to the images cum message passed across. Therefore, the audience is compelled by the filmmaker to see what he has recreated out of the world, for reasons that are not always immediately apparent. In Nigerian films, sense of reality strives for results from a set of codes, rules that are implicitly accepted by Nigerian audience. This paper tends to explore the analysis of a medium or image through the eye of a semiologist. Equally, this paper assesses the use of thought and creativity to interpret scripts for a moving image and bring suggestive measures on improving visual interpretation in Nigerian video films.

Keywords

Film, Script, Screen, Semiosis

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1. Introduction

The art of transferring a script into a visual image requires high imagination. Consequently, setting a visual design for a moving image involves some visual components which set ablaze the manipulation of the audience emotion when seeing the film. It primarily establishes for an audience a physical and atmospheric environment in film for the duration of visual experience. In essence, the basic communicative qualities of a film depend greatly on the interpretative measures done by the director and other artistic personnel in film production. In this light, every creative mind has the ability to absorb and deal simultaneously with different activities and thoughts can be brought to bear on every kind of undertaking; it applies to emotional and intellectual as well as physical task. This implies that filmmaker takes the screen writers' script with the involvement of other artistic personnel ranging from director to the video editor to tell or retell the story to best communicate the idea of the film and give the audience the most rewarding journey. In doing so, shots are carefully selected to increase tension, to manipulate emotion, and to evoke laughter. All the technicalities and

visual features used connote or denote something, giving meaning to the story going on screen or being seen by an audience. Consequently, poor visual interpretation mars the storytelling and interrupts the audience understanding of the signs of the story told visually. Thus, every object and colour in film has been deliberately placed to amplify the power of storytelling. A certificate on a wall illustrates loneliness and one chair at the table indicates loneliness and isolation. Therefore, the filmmakers attempts to find techniques to help communicate specific ideas and complicate easy moral positions. Thus, the use of subjective point of view shots enables the audience absorption of the information describes above more often than not, subconsciously. In essence, filmmakers tend to use visual components which are forms of signs, connotation, icon among others to manipulate audience emotion and determining audience satisfaction.

The question now is; how do we relate signs and icons as semiotic terms to Nigerian video film. Video or film as a visual images express something and therefore, they are signs signifying something. Semiotics makes a sharp separation between a visual story from another and its content depends on the creative input and interpretation

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given to it by the film practitioners especially the director. Thus, visual elements such as costume, sound, visual effects, camera among others are interpretative icons used by the filmmaker as sign tools. In this vein, Stam (2000, p.186) that:

the film text is a function of semiology's focus on film as the site of systematically organized discourse rather than as a random "slice of life" ... The concept of "text" – etimologically "tissue" or "weave" – conceptualizes film not as an imitation of reality but rather as an artifact, a construct.

Semiotics studies the ordering and functioning of the signifying units used in the filmic message. Writing on the semiology of the cinema, Andrew (1976, p.216) also observes that semiology is "a method of uncovering the workings of cinema rather than a belief about the nature of cinema." The film semiotician therefore studies how the sign systems of film work. Film in the face of these arguments can be an object for semiotic inquiry. Film art participates in semiosis like language or any system of signification. In line with this position, Metz (1979:169) argues thus:

any work bearing on one of the nonverbal "languages," provided that it assumes a resolutely semiological relevance and does not remain satisfied with vague considerations of "substance," brings its contribution, whether modest or important, to that great enterprise, the general study of signification.

Film is a non verbal system of communication, a mode of signification. Its messages are communicated not only through oral speech. In reality, filmic messages include both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication with the non-verbal taking about 90% of the communication processes. As signs, the filmic images function as signification processes in the film text. In arguing for movie images as sign, Eco notes

We have a sign when material occurrence stands for something else to us. Since a word, a medical symptom, and a movie image are material occurrences sending us back to something else, all these are signs (1979, pp.217-233)

It is only appropriate, therefore, to infer that every image is an image for another. The filmic image is a sign because it stands for something else to us. It stands for the real object, a character, or an idea which functions in the context of the film narrative.

2. Image Interpretation from a Semiotic Eye

Most times, film appears to be charged with emotions, it is

due to careful manipulation of images to give the illusion. Thus, certain expressive measures are used to convey messages in film which can be termed as codes, signs, etc. the challenge of the filmmaker is to make use of appropriate visual elements. Thus, costumes, sets, shots, sound effects, music are at the disposal of the filmmaker. Just as Ekwuazi (2006) opines that, "visual image is made up of all or some of the following nine intra-structures: persons, object ideas, filmic space, filmic time, visual composition audio composition editing; and conflict and resolution" (p.168). This implies that visual elements mentioned, film captures audience mind, putting them in the filmic world which makes them re-experience some real life activities. When visual components are used appropriately less word is required. For example, when two or more people are conversing with each other, and in the middle of their talk the camera slowly pans through the room, inviting us to watch the face of the listener and the speaker, their gestures and reaction, and even their wandering. Though aesthetically, the visual image is explaining in non-verbal terms, the goings-on in the film as the filmmaker has designed it. The audience willfully involved in the world of the film as he/she watches the film story. Thus, the visual elements carefully place by the filmmaker to tell the film narrative as a tool aids the audience understanding of the entire film narrative. In terms of understanding a film message depends on the image representation through shots taken. As a result, a director may tend to represent the passing away of a person in a film with the flying away of significant bird or breaking of a clay pot. Also, when two lovers are engulfed in ecstasy of sexual intercourse, the director may represent the peak and explosion of the action with the dropping of a glass cup from a table to the floor or with the flow of river current to the bank of the river. Thus, one will understand the effective use of symbolism in film which connotes and denotes lots of meaning to an audience. In essence, communication in film production makes use of signs and symbols. And both are grouped into sign systems which include the study of how meaning is constructed and understood. An ideology of the shots is created by the different angle shots according to the variation of the narrative pattern of the shots. This includes, the way to deal with the relationship of sounds and pictures, the way to connect the shots and lights and shadows into whole movement coding to our needs (Idris and Panchanahan, 2010, p.146-166 cited in Ajiwe and Okwuowulu, 2010, p.110). To this end, appropriate application of visual elements and sequential arrangement of shots enhanced with appropriate synchronized sounds encoded by the filmmaker to match the socio-economic, environmental, cultural and political context, facilitates visual aesthetics of a film. Moreover, film uses not only words, but different kinds of shots, angles and speed and sounds to communicate.

The non-verbal modes of communication in film denotes through presence and absence. In truth, the bulk of filmic messages are relayed through relations of presence and absence of objects, and techniques of the medium. Hence, Eco (1984:23) notes that “the elements of the signifier are set into a system of opposition. ... the presence of one element is necessary for the absence of the other.” In film images, the opposition between presence and absence then is the signifier. For instance, in an image with two characters (a male and a female) in a bedroom scene, if the male character is presented in his brief (boxer) and standing behind the closed door; while the female character is fully dressed and standing at the other end of the room, the opposition between the presence/absence of dress would have established the scenario for the viewer. The absence of dress for the male character is a signifier of his intended action towards the female character in the scene. At the same time, if the action in the image is reversed, a slight variation in meaning may be necessitated. Danesi (2007) also agrees that the difference between presence and absence constitutes the signifier. He notes thus:

... forms are recognizable as meaning-bearing structures in part through a perceivable difference built into some aspects of their physical constitution – a minimal difference in sound, a minimal difference in tone, a minimal difference in orientation, and so on. (p.53)

Thus, the connotation(s) from this singular image will be deciphered in conjunction with other signs which function in the same image to arrive at the signified.

3. Signifying Tools in Film

Signification is central in film medium. Signification as we have seen is the end-product of semiosis. The film art institute its meanings by reflecting and even playing on the socially or conventionally established interpretations of situations and objects at its disposal. However, one cannot set limit to the signifying process in film for everything in a film text is designed to signify. All the elements combine in a mesh with the story to form one inseparable whole. The images on a film screen are images of objects which can exist ordinarily as real situations. But when presented as film images, they not only reflect or reveal a verisimilitude of the situation, they are also constructed for the purpose of bearing meanings for the viewer. In art, semiotic study covers several areas. On this note, Danesi asserts thus:

It has been applied to the study of body language, art forms, discourses of all kinds, visual communication, media, advertising, narratives, language, objects, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, clothing, space, cuisine, rituals- in sum, to everything that human beings produce

and use to communicate and represent things in some psychological and socially meaningful way. (2007, p.5)

To buttress this point, Cobley & Janz (1997, p.3) notes that “you have to understand semiotics to understand contemporary culture.” Film art is a contemporary culture and it embodies all that Danesi above refers to as “in sum, everything that human beings produce and use to communicate and represent things in some psychological and socially meaningful way.” It is through the produced images of signs and symbols that film art signifies and communicates to the viewer. The meanings of these signs and symbols can only be understood within the context of the particular film text.

Thus, filmmakers especially sound designer and editor create and fashion out ideas and style in which to express their thought. Certainly, video film in its artistic form of communication is a medium through which film-makers make representation of our world view. Based on the mode of film communication, it has its ways of system of sign coding, shots reorganization and sound making in synchronization to the moving image. Based on its complementary function in visual composition, filmic sound accompaniment reveals a vast field of communication. Sound in film acquires semiotic meanings as codes. Thus every piece of sound used in film contributes to the coding of sign to the viewer. The sound designers extract from the society and culture ideas with which they creatively synchronize in tune with the moving image. Sometimes, a sound that may seem noisy may be appropriately synchronized to a film and it gives meaning to the film story which aid audience understanding of the visual story. The sounds are determined by the visual images. Every sound applied to a particular scene denotes or connotes something. The sounds are applied in such a way that its actual meaning is identified by the audience and at the same time give an undertone meaning of the scene going on at that point in time it is being played. Therefore sound synchronization deals with precision to enhance the total coding of a film story.

Sound and image can be used synchronously or nonsynchronously to produce a number of meanings in film. Explaining how sound and image can be used to produce a witty and cynical juxtaposition in film; Giannetti (1996) used a sequence from Ernst Lubitsch’s musical *Monte Carlo* to exemplify. He illustrates thus:

While the spunky heroine (...) sings cheerily of her optimistic expectations, Lubitsch provides us with a display of technical bravura. Shots of the speeding train that carries the heroine to her destiny are intercut with Close-ups of the whirring locomotive wheels in rhythmical syncopation with the huffing and the chugging

and the tooting of the train. Unable to resist a malicious fillip, Lubitsch even has a chorus of suitably obsequious peasants chime in with the heroine in a triumphant reprise as the train plunges past their fields in the countryside. (p. 201)

Commenting on this form of juxtaposition, Gerald Mast observes that “this visual-aural symphony of music, natural sound, composition, and cutting is as complex and perfect an example of montage-in-sound as Eisenstein’s editing device in *Potemkin* were of montage in silents.” (cited in Giannetti, 1996, p.202) Sound provides the right ambience for the image thereby aiding the overall theme and mood of the film narrative. The mood creates the right emotion and feelings for the viewer. On this note, Patrick Williams (2004, p.117) proposes that a composer of film music must learn to be a “film psychiatrist” to understand how the characters progress emotionally through the narrative. He asserts that “films are full of emotions and feelings, and nothing goes to the heart of emotions like music.” However, a wrong use of sound in film narrative being its sound effect or music hampers the meaning and may lead to ambiguity of the message.

Camera movement is another strong signifying technique of film. Generally, the spectator in film sees through the camera’s eye. What we see is only what the camera saw while recording in the production process. The filmmaker chooses what he/she wants the viewer to see as the sequence of the narrative and also how he/she wants it to be seen. When discussing camera movements, variables like camera angles, pan, tilt, zoom, and dolly come into focus. The camera angle describes the positioning of the camera in relation to the subject in the process of recording an image. Mamer (2006, p.7) describes camera angles not just as the simple camera position, but also as camera resources in terms of the height and orientation, or level of the camera in relation to the subject. Consequently, the angle from which an image is recorded or photographed plays a vital role in the significance of the image. Following this position, Giannetti (1991, p.12) identifies the role of camera angles in film signification thus:

The angle from which an object is photographed can often serve as an authorial commentary on the subject matter. If the angle is slight, it can serve as a subtle form of emotional coloration. If the angle is extreme, it can represent the major meaning of an image. The angle is determined by where the *camera* is placed, not the subject photographed. A picture of a person photographed from high angle actually suggests an opposite interpretation from an image of the same person photographed from a low angle. The subject matter can be identical in the two images, yet the information we derive from both clearly shows that the form is the content, the content the form.

In the same vein, Mamer (2006, p.198) discussing how meanings are created in film also notes thus:

The foremost consideration in composing for film is that the image should be a meaning-producing instrument. The concept of images producing meaning has long been analyzed in painting, graphic design, and photography, but no single discussion could ever be definitive ... for the potential for any artistic expression is unlimited. It is not simply what is in the frame that creates meanings; it is also the way the subject is framed, arranged, and lighted...

The way the subject is “framed” and “arranged” here bothers on the positioning of the camera and the angle at which the image is photographed. There is a whole lot of meanings that can be signified through camera movements, and also the choice of camera lens. In film narrative, an image recorded with a high-angled shot suggests something different from that recorded with a low-angled shot. High-angle shots tend to suggest powerlessness, and entrapment. While low-angle shots can be used to signify a threatening situation.

A pan, a tilt, a dolly, and a zoom in any film narrative functions in the meaning-making process of the text. A pan involves a horizontal turning of the camera from left to right, or from right to left. A pan is used to direct the viewer’s attention to a particular interest in a film. It may be either to a source of sound – a door opening; footstep to signify the presence of another character coming into the frame, or to reveal an object of interest in the scene. Likewise, a camera tilt (up or down) can be used in focusing the viewer’s attention to a certain area of the image. Camera tilts are particularly useful in revealing little details of a character’s costume to aid the meaning-making process in the viewer. A dolly and a zoom perform almost similar function in film narrative. The difference is that dolly involves moving the physical camera towards or away from an object or subject, while zoom involves the mechanical changing of the focal length of the camera lens to bring the object/subject closer or farther from the camera.

Costume then, is a major signifying tool in the hands of filmmakers. For this reason, there are certain characteristics that are expected for costumes in a narrative. Cunningham (1989, p.3) as earlier noted identifies such traits thus:

The costume must (1) set the character in time (historical period) and space (geographical or imaginary place), (2) establish the approximate age and gender of a character, (3) establish the rank or social status of the character, (4) establish the personality of the character, and (5) reflect any changes in time, space, age, status, and personality that the character goes through during the play.

Similarly, Giannetti (1996, p.313) asserts that:

A systematic analysis of a costume includes a consideration of the following characteristics:

1. *Period*. What era does the costume fall into? Is it an accurate reconstruction? If not, why?
2. *Class*. What is the apparent income level of the person wearing the costume?
3. *Sex*. Does a woman's costume emphasize her femininity, or is it neutral or masculine? Does a man's costume emphasize his virility, or is it fussy or effeminate?
4. *Age*. Is the costume appropriate to the character's age, or is it deliberately too youthful, dowdy, or old-fashioned?
5. *Fabric*. Is the material coarse, sturdy and plain, or sheer and delicate?
6. *Accessories*. Does the costume include jewelry, hats, canes, and other accessories? What kind of shoe?
7. *Color*. What are the symbolic implications of the color? Are they "hot" or "cool"? Subdued or bright? Solids or patterns?
8. *Body exposure*. How much of the body is revealed or concealed? The more body revealed, the more erotic the costume. Is it form-fitting or shapeless?
9. *Function*. Is the costume meant for leisure or for work? Is it meant to impress by its beauty and splendor, or is it merely utilitarian?
10. *Image*. What is the overall impression that the costume creates—sexy, constricting, boring, gaudy, conventional, eccentric, prim, cheap-look, elegant?

These are possible inferences a viewer can deduct from the images in a film narrative. Therefore, when studying film costume as a signifying phenomenon, the semiotician looks at how well the costumes function in the images; considering the overall theme, concept, and mood of the narrative. Through this way, one can ascertain how well costumes function as signifiers to the signified in the image, or where costume fail to carry the message across properly.

4. Synopsis of the Amazing Grace

This is a story written and directed by Jeta Amata and produced by Alica Arce and Jeta Amata. It is a historical film based on the hymn song Amazing Grace. The story is set in the south-south part of Nigeria, Calabar. It showcases the height of slave trade in 1748, when John Newton sails to the coast of Nigeria and the port of Calabar in order to deceitfully and forcefully ship the people into slavery.

However, when the slave traders (whites) invade Etim Ubong's Village, they raid the village and kill some of the inhabitants of the village because they think that using force and weapon will be safer and faster. Though John Newton initially does not agree with the cruel treatment meted out on those villagers but his partner Oliver Plact initiates the act and insists on using guns on them (villagers). However, Etim who is thought to have passed out in the cause of the fight for freedom wakes up the next day when the slave traders had gone with their captives. Seeing that the son is dead, he asks from one of those that are still alive the route they followed. Immediately, he gets his answers, he runs out tracking their footsteps till he gets to where he ambushed them. He tries to kill one of the guards that instruct the slaves but he is subdued and taken captive.

However, the villagers held into captives are chained like animals and are kept in a dungeon. Later, they leave the Nigerian coast with a shipload of slaves, a violent storm brings John Newton to the point of death in which Etim saves him. When the storm is over, Oliver Plact kills more than half of the slaves while Newton is still unconscious. Thus, Oliver wheels the ship back to Calabar to get more slaves.

This time, they convince Etim to help them talk to the people of the village they went to. However, Etim goes alone while the others wait because the whites are seen as traitors. Etim gives the inhabitants of the village the gifts of mirror and convince them that the whites will make them great if they follow them to their land. Thus, the head of the village and his subjects are convinced by his words and decides to let some of their sons and daughters to follow Etim to the white man's Land.

However, John Newton feels for Ansa and asks her to stay back but Ansa refuses because she has fallen in love with John Newton. John tries to convince her by explaining to her that she will be sold to a man who will be her master but Ansa refuses. Thus, Ansa takes the gun from Newton's waist and threatens to kill herself, which she finally does. Etim runs to the scene, seeing Ansa lying dead in John's arms he brings out a machete to kill John but Oliver Plact comes to John's rescue by shooting Etim dead.

5. An Appraisal Design of the Amazing Grace

The film Amazing Grace has a good interpretation and remained consistent through the various sets, costumes and location in it. The sets and locations fit in with the story and blends with the actors movements and actions which brings out the aesthetic purpose of the film. Thus, every single

design in the film is justified and constitutes the elements of design. However, in the beginning of the film when the villagers were shown as the narrator introduces them as people living in free and happy world: the sets, location and costume synchronized well, giving the true picture of what the narrator is saying.

Nevertheless, Sets like huts, seats and trees were basically built for the scene. That notwithstanding, the huts and thatched houses surrounding the village square where they were gathered in their usual manner performing their local hymns and wrestling context established a good setting and period of the film as well as lightening up the mood of the film. This is same in the second village in which Etim was sent to go and convince them. The positioning of the huts and the trees around gives it a natural and realistic setting. Likewise, the dungeon or cage where the captives were kept is built purposely for the film and it is more of an impressionistic setting than realistic. Such a cage can easily be broken because it is not strong. Likewise, the chaining of the captives were more like it should be, though it is also an impressionistic set. In spite of the impression given by Newton that it was locked with a key during the storm; he unlocked Etim and gave him the key to rescue others.

The costumes for each character in the film expressed the personality of the character, as well as the culture. The villagers that inhabited Calabar had black sack clothes wrapped round their waist for men, and both the upper region and lower region of the women. The colour of their costume blends with the whole picture, background, and setting which reveal their status as uncivilized people; unlike the white slave traders that captured them, who had more of the Elizabethan costumes depicting the Briton of that period. Same with the narrator's costume which gives a picture of the western wear worn by servants and savages during that era.

The colour brown, blends with the environment, which depicts depression and oppression. The same applies to the white ladies and children that sang at the cemetery where John Newton was buried towards the end of the film. Their costume depicts their status. Though it had almost the same design with the narrator's own but they are of rich materials and brighter colours unlike that of the narrator. This aids to communicate the meaning, period and mood of the film. Also, the make-up for the characters were good, and the stripes given to one of the lower slave traders who flouted the rules was convincing. Moreover, the setting of the cemetery where John Newton was buried though it was shot in Nigeria depicted the foreign or western environment, which includes the stone house beside Newton's tomb. Again, the ship used to transport the captives depicts the period of the film, same with the guns and touch lights, which enhanced the mood of the film. As a result, all materials used for the production

were carefully chosen to fit in for its purpose.

Nevertheless, realism is effectively applied in the production that gave a good artistic image. This is seen in the technicalities applied in the film, for example the rain storm effect looks so realistic like in real life. This aroused fear and pity in the audience. So also, during the clash between the slave traders and the captives when they were being raid at the village, the burning of the huts was believable. Even after the raiding when the camera nosed around showing the spoils of the raid, a burnt human body was seen on the ground beside the ashes of the burnt huts. The burnt human body looked so realistic that it affects the audience emotions. Even the shots taken were accurate and right at each scene and intervals.

6. Synopsis of the *Egg of Life*

The film *Egg of Life* is set in a typical Igbo rural area. The story centers on a king who has difficulties in getting a male child. When the gods finally answer him, he is happy and relieved of anxieties. As the boy grows up, strange things begin to happen around him. A royal maid started seeing him play with invisible persons. She also sees him eating with people that she cannot see. When she confronts *Ikemefuna* he denies. The Queen (Ikem's mother) comes out questioning what the problem is. As she turns to show her the crumbs of yam as a proof of what she saw, it all disappeared. The Queen asks the maid to go get more food for *Ikemefuna* when he said he was not satisfied yet.

One night, the mother visits *Ikemefuna* in his hut, while he is sleeping. She sees him sweating profusely. Whereas on the other side of the world he was playing with his *Ogbanje* friends the mother started calling on him but he did not wake up. The Queen starts noticing unusual behaviours by *Ikemefuna*. She gets worried and complains to the king who in anger warns the wife not to refer to his son as an *Ogbanje*. He chooses to believe that *Ikemefuna* is just sick. The strange attitude continues till *Ikemefuna* is asked to fulfill his promise in the *Ogbanje* world. That means it is time for him to die. But he refuses due to his love for the family he is with. At the appointed time he faints while shouting in disagreement with the spirits. While in coma, the priestess discloses to the king that *Ikemefuna* is an *Ogbanje*. And the only way to save him is by getting the egg of life from the *Ogbanje* world. The people that will embark on such a journey are seven virgin maidens and after the maidens have been chosen and prepared for the task, they bid good bye to their relations and leave for the evil forest.

As they go far into the evil forest crossing the boundaries between the living and the dead, they encounter different obstacles. Each time they encounter an obstacle, a maiden is

taken. Towards the end, two maidens get to the spirit children (*Ogbanje*) world and carry the egg of life. But on their way back they encountered more obstacles where they fought with warriors in the spirit world and one of them gets injured. The two finally overpowered the spirit warriors. And they return the egg of life to the King's palace before the death of *Buchi*. As the priestess places the egg of life over *Ikemefuna* and prays thunder strikes and *Ikemefuna* wakes up. The King fulfills his promise by joining the hands of *Ikemefuna* and the only surviving maiden *Oma* in acceptance that the two will rule the kingdom.

7. A Critical Semiotic Reading of Andy Amenechi's *Egg of Life*

In *Egg of Life*, the first sequence presents the contemporary, a story telling section between the narrator and his listeners. This session locates the narrative in the present. The filmmaker dissolves into the flashback of *Ogbanje* myth, which is an excursion into a romantic and surreal world. In this film *Egg of Life*, the sound design sometimes gives a pre-information of some actions and events in the film. For example, in the first scene when the king is pacing about the palace while the queen is in labour, the musical sound used is very high in pace and rhythm. It evokes the rising tension and pressures of the Queen in labour. Then at the point the music changes to a lighter mood, it implies the woman in labour has given birth. Sound equally, lightens up the mood of this particular scene. As a result, it serves as a tool for switching the mood of the film from sadness to happiness. Thus, sound denotatively tells what the character (King) is worried about, and connotatively highlights the king's innate personality and passion. The chorus sung by the acolyte of *Efuru's* priestess, the bell sound and the sound from the scepter inform us of the priestess of *Efuru's* entrance into the palace to dedicate the child. The narrator equally, intimates the viewer about the Spirit world. This gives the viewer an idea of the character's significance to the theme of the film.

Costume style changes from a romantic world of the human beings to the surreal representation of the spirit world made up of animals and elements. In all, *Egg of Life* presents three different styles of costuming- realism, romanticism, and surrealism. Realism as seen in the prologue and epilogue scenes; romanticism as seen in the narration about the community in the flashback sequence; and surrealism as seen in the spirit world of the flashback scenes. Though humans are used within each of these sections of the narrative, it is only costumes and accessories that visibly create the difference. Romanticism and surrealism in costume style are characterized by imagination and exaggeration of situations

through costumes and accessories. These combining with the sets (locations) create a fantasized outlook of the storyline, theme and idea of the folktale that furnished the screenplay. This can be seen in the human and the spirit worlds of the *Ogbanje* myth. Realism in costume style on the other hand is characterized by the representation of the real. The images are photographed replications of the real objects and subjects as in real life. Costumes in the prologue and epilogue scenes represent the contemporary period; the everyday clothes of today are used in costuming the characters. The narrator is adorned in a garment reminiscent of the groit in the West African folkloric tradition. The flashback sequences which present the main story about the *Ogbanje* myth, costumes are used to portray two distinct worlds through the styles. The first part is the human world costumed in romanticism costume style. This form of narrative style is a fable; therefore, it is purely imagination at work. However, the costumes can still be analyzed in terms of character(s) status; age; sex; background/locale; image; period; and the function of the particular costume within the narrative structure. In *Egg of Life*, costume is used to signify the different social/economic class of the characters. The Igwe and his Lolo; the priestess of *Efuru*; the Elders; the Prince; the virgins; and the peasants are all classified through costume and the accessories. In every traditional society, there are markers of socio-economic status. This may be just an accessory or the way dressing. In this narrative, the elders and the Igwe can be identified by their dress patterns just like the women and the children. For the Igwe and the Elders, the feathers in their caps are a marker of status. The position Priestess of *Efuru* is clearly marked by her dressing. Though a woman, her importance in the affairs of the community is clearly stated through her costumes. Apart from the costume of the Lolo, every other costume is in consonant with the Ibo culture. The Akwete cloth or "Akwa Mmiri" in the local parlance is associated with the Ibo tribe of Nigeria. For the Lolo's costumes, the design of the fabric is reminiscent of the Kalabari culture of the South-South Nigeria.

In the treatment of sound, the aesthetic factors are ground principle, sound perspective and sound continuity. All these treatment mentioned enable sounds to create specific moods in the films. The ground principle refers to the relationship between visual and sound which draws the attention of the viewer to what he/she sees on screen. For instance when two people are seen whispering their thoughts in each other's ears while standing at a busy street corner in a long shot, the visual figure/ground relationship between the couple, the other people, and the cars on the street are indistinct. The visual aspect of a scene in a film is equally prominent. Consequently, the couple's voices can be mixed liberally with traffic and other ambient (environment) sounds. Sound

perspective depends on the figure/ground relationship. For example when we see two people in a long shot standing on a busy street corner, we should hear their voices coming from a faraway distance. In the film *Egg of Life*, we see the echoing voice of mother beckoning on Ikemefuna as if it was from a far despite the medium close shot we were given when he was playing with his *ogbanje* playmates. This equally puts the viewer in fear and suspense of what is going to happen at that point.

8. Conclusion

Nigerian video films reveal a wealth of the life and aspirations of the Nigerian citizenry. The films are dramatizations of the ideologies of the society. The themes found in these film texts exist within the society and the audience can recognize them. The films then become signifiers of the cultures in the Nigeria society. The significant areas through which these films communicate these codes, conventions, and ideologies are through visual elements costume, sound, Set (Location), Camera among others. This study has also highlighted the fact that most 'Nollywood' films sound designers have demonstrated their ignorance in making apt music and sound effects for video films, on account of their shallow research on the area of sound design. Little wonder the sound designer of *Egg of life* employed the use of piano in creating the bulk of sound effects in the video film instead of exploring natural sounds to achieve the same effect.

Conclusively, this study has been able to examine the role of some visual element as a signifying tool which enhances communication in film narrative if creatively and appropriately applied. Thus, its contribution in enhancing visual images cannot be over-emphasized.

Filmography

Ezeanyaeche, E.(Producer), & Amenechi, A. (Director). (1996). *Egg of life* (Epic movie) Nigeria, OJ Production.

Jeta Amata (Producer) , & Alisa Arce, Amata. J (Director).

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