

NATURAL CONTENT CREATION AND FILM MAKE-UP CREATIVITY IN NIGERIA:
A PERSPECTIVE OF *MO ABUDU'S BLOOD SISTERS* PLAY

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60787/aasd.vol3no1.78>

Abstract

The need for believable illusion in film has made filmmakers to rethink the reliance on natural science for content creation, following the massive patronage of foreign films over the indigenous conceived to be more proximal to life. This is an indication that the circumstance of illusion is made more believable in foreign films than the local subgenres. Drawing from the tenets of realism in content analysis methodology, this paper dissects Mo Abudu's Blood Sisters with intention of unraveling the realistic illusions in its makeup. Findings show that a film is a piece of creativity art made to adhere to the logic of human reasoning. Makeup in film can be used to substantiate the believable factors in the period the film is made, the approximated age for each actor, the emotional state of the actors and the dramatic actions that require special spectacle. In Blood Sisters, the use of eye-lashes, nails, hairdo, congeal-blood, and facial expression has situated the time; cosmetics is used to delineates the old from the young and to establishes the actors' mindset, presenting the illusions as a slice of life. The paper concludes that makeup should be done in precision with the logic of nature, taking cognizance of the human biology and mindset for cardinal human emotions as established by natural science. This will make arts to be scientific. Makeup requires insight to harness artistic illusions in the logic it requires towards promoting film making as creativity made from precision of scientific order for human reform.

Keywords: Creativity, Film, Illusions, Makeup-Design and Realism.

Introduction

The attempt to capture nature in its most proximal form may appear illusive especially when art and life differ in substance and form based on approach. As Tam Azorbo conceives, "arts and culture are unavoidably rooted in a specific socio-cultural setting" (236); and in Stephen's Umoh view, life suggests "a scientific procedure to...arrive at an acceptable standard" (208). The two ideas are juxtaposed as illusion and realism in the attempt to present the outlook of life as life itself from the creative imaginations of a

makeup artist for film and stage productions. Makeup is an innovative arts and "innovations have birthed new ideologies in theatre practice especially in Theatre Technology" (96).

A common tradition that is found in stage and film production is the attempt to sustain nature in appearance and reality. As Akpan and Udo, (1990) put, "appearance of nature is represented in imagination" (37); and by imagining the outlook of nature, a believable semblance made to evoke appeal from the

powers of human faculty is brought to bear. On that fact, the artist may understand the nature of God as said, the outlook of angels as preached, the physique of Sampson as described, the height of Goliath as hyped, the outlook of Caesar as projected or the rage of Dionysus as written; yet it is the appearance of those models he works in mind to create the illusions of their nature not to present them as they actually are if there are at all. According to Socrates cited in Plato, "the poet (filmmakers inclusive) with his words and phrases may be said to lay on the colours of several arts, himself understanding their nature only enough to imitate them.... The imitator or maker of images knows nothing of true existence; he knows appearance only (Plato 24)". The knowledge of appearance Socrates ascribes to poet is quite symbolic in representing an idea in a film. This is more direct in making a cast up. Makeup is a special craft in the making of films. It "communicates information with regards to sex, position and occupation which are usually magnified" (Wilson and Goldfarb 356).

"Creativity denotes bringing new ideas to reality through imagination. It suggest innovativeness through thought" (Umoh 5).

The creation of illusions that can make the audience gasp in admiration for a character may not be ordinary painting of the character's face or trimming of the beard. Such illusion is envisaged to be created from the recesses of a long borne inclination to "make-to-be", which Sigmund Freud attributes to pent-up circumstance fine-tuned to an aspect of the creative mindset in sublimation (844-845). Makeup design in a film may be a long time dream, imagination or inclination to make brought alive on a character. Umoh observes that "makeup enhance cultural aesthetic, artistic style and tradition" (204). To make a beautiful makeup, intellect and humility immersed in undaunted patience and endurance come alive as attitude. In the words of Inegbe, (2020), making oneself up for occasion needs carefulness; making another up for exhibition

should take a double dose of care - a level of care borne out of patience and patience guided by reasoning. Creating illusions out of imagination and creating them out of what Udofia (2023) referred to as "the nature of man in relation to his society" (647). However, this research interrogates the creation of illusions of realism through makeup in Mo Abudu's *The Blood Sisters*.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws its theoretical thrust from realism, which is an attempt to present the original outlook of spectacle as a slice of life from the rationale of pure science as confirmed in the laboratory. The theory in late 19 century in support of delimiting human activities to that which can be verified through the five sense organs; and it evolved to its present stance from Emile Zola's speculation for naturalism, which suggests the attempt to present creativity as a slice of life.

Realism is a theory that spreads across virtually all the disciplines and practices of the world. According to Emile Zola, "realism is a necessary evolution,... the 1830 movement announced as the triumphal entry into human truth" (354) and Umoh (2024). To Milly Barranger, realism is the use of a theatrical component that "expresses the truth of the human condition as we perceive it most of the time" (109). That means, the theory situates the tenets of rationalism in theatre practice and the major speculation is that life should be presented in its exactness away from contrivance that turns drama/film to a celebrated caricature of human emotions expressed bereft of reasoning. Makeups are paintings subjugated to cultural symbols that create meanings. "The signifier points to a concepts; the signified confirms the concept which is the referent. The three perspectives are denotation, connotation and contextuality" (270). Thus, "event should be produced with sufficient exactness to demonstrate relationship between cause and effect... approximating scientific truth"

(Brockett and Hildy 393). As Umoh (2021) further reiterates, makeup design that attract entrepreneurship appeals from a scientific point within which illusions are deployed from the logic of natural science (110).

The relevance of this theory to this paper is that realism suggests the scientific depiction of objects even out of imagination; yet makeup is a creative work, an endeavour borne purely out of imaginative. However discrepant the science and arts appear, it should be proximal to the nature of the circumstance under portraiture.

Summary of *Blood Sisters*

The film, *Blood Sisters*, is one of the contemporary Nollywood productions that treat the socio-cultural problem of marriage, attitude and the consequences of untamed human emotions in the society. The movie was written by Temidayo Makanjuola, directed by Biyi Bamidele and Kenneth Gyand, and was produced by Mo Abudu. It belongs to the crime thriller series. It was certified and released by the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) in 2022 for public viewership.

Set in the contemporary Nigerian city, the preparation for the marriage between Kola and Sarah sets the tone when the rich Ademola as realize that their prized son, Kola, is missing on his marriage day. He and Sarah have agreed to get married and all preparation is set. On the marriage day, Kemi, the bridesmaid, who is equally Sarah's bosom friend, is on her best. All knots are tightened to get the marriage sealed.

Down the corner, Sarah's boyfriend shows up pleading that Sarah shows not marry but hold on for him. This sight infuriates Kola and he walks up to them and practically edges Sarah to a room for interrogation. In his brutal nature, he butts her below her stomach which sparks off a very strong hurt, disgust and outright condemnation in Sarah's feeling instantly. In mentioning the incidence to Kemi, she suggests to her to boycott the marriage;

that she would regret the marriage if she marries Kola.

The crowd is gathering; Sarah's parents and relatives are around to witness their daughter's marriage. The Ademola as on their part and the various bourgeoisie class invited have crowded the venue and the hall in the hotel meant for the occasion is filled up. Kola goes to see why Sarah is still delaying in coming out only for Sarah to tell him that he is not interested in the marriage anymore. Kola again squeezes her neck in a strangling act if not for Kemi who intervenes by hitting his skull with a log of wood. Kola reacts with a neat masculine kick which offsets Kemi, but Kemi revitalizes her resolve and shoots him with a gun in the skull which results to Kola's death. This sets these friends on the run. The tide is turned. The ladies have to dismember Kola and haul the chunks into a dish by disguising as the hotel servants. In dumping the butchered pieces in the car, a man spots them and takes a photograph. Nonetheless, Kola is still assumed to have disappeared and the search is intensified.

The disappearance of Kola is now uncomfortable until he is declared to be dead as his body is found in a shallow grave. Kemi and Sarah are reminded of a scene by a photographer and they kill the man. Presently, they are wanted for the death of Kola Ademola. However, as everyone tries to identify the killer of Kola, many hidden nefarious activities about the family get exposed. Nonetheless, one of the major harbingers of the video is the ability to create illusion that is convincing through the manipulation of make up to enhance emotions and action.

Believable Illusion in Performance

An illusion is the appearance of a thing. It is the acceptance of "the outlook of a situation as the reality of life" (Bernard 16), and as Richard Ross conceives, "there is no society that does not conceive an unknown idea in mind which is fantasized or made public as a way, a truth or a reality yet to attain. Illusion

is a believe (*sic*)... (it is) the acceptance of the unreal as the real... lived and made others to live in as truth" (123-124).

Illusion made believable follows a universal order of truth or appearance of truth. In performance, there is a strong linkage between action and logic. This is a way of According to Eddiefloy Igbo:

"..without carefully formulated concepts whose meanings are precise, communication and exchange of ideas will be impossible within a discipline. Scientific logic requires that all scientific disciplines develop precise concepts and exact definitions in order to enhance scientific communication. But (performance) ideas which abstract phenomena has always attempt to place man in the realm he is believed to be within the truth and objectivity as possible as science can ascertain. (47)"

A believable illusion in a performance may need to be deepened to align with the reality and thought factor of a people that what is beheld is the truth. Believable illusion comes alive with the mindset. It is the same situation with the circumstance of faith or beliefs. In that of a film or stage production, a world apart from the audience seated is usually conceivable but making the audience to also conceive of the event and actors in the process as them being there or existing in the

making human actions dramatized to follow the universal an acceptable order of truth. In this sense a concept can exist but lacks the basis to make people believe it is; whereas there are things that do not actually exist but are made to appear natural especially in a production.

universe of the performer is a step towards a believable illusion. Illusion in a performance then elicit that "we live what we believe..." (Brown 437).

However, Theatre and Film Arts thrive predominantly on the audience's suspension of the reality in their mind on the persona of the performer and the reality of his home by believing he is in another realm, world or level.

According to Barranger:

"...theatre creates the illusion, as we watch, that we are sharing an experience with others for the first time. As members of the audience, we tacitly agree with the actors that, for the time of the performance, the play is a living reality. We know that theatre is not life, but we suspend this knowledge for the few hours we watch the play. We share with the actors the illusion that life is being lived on stage as we observe their actions, which can be repeated night after night. As we watch and listen, we share their experiences – both spontaneous and rehearsed. Moreover, actors contribute further to the illusion, for they are both actors and characters. (14).

Believable illusion is a personal thing. Anyone who follows a story with the aid of illustration can feel the story, so do people who watch a film or stage performance orchestrated with the accurate visual and audio aid can feel and, may be, see them in the life of the performer.

Creativity in Makeup Design

Creation actually suggests the beginning of something or "starting something for the first time from nothing..." (Gilligan and Wilson, 46). In makeup, Margaret Akpan, views it as "creating an appealing piece that has visual connotations or associations that signify the social, political and spiritual potency... that the most exciting and most deeply-felt

reactions are achieved..." (231). However, according to Umoh *et al*, "creativity in makeup, quite like the concept of aesthetics, appeals from a specific but agreeable point which links the circumstance of appeal to a general factor than a personal one" (98). To some extent, it "provides a visual reflection of the personality and nature of each character at a given time" (Gillette 385). This implies that a creative makeup" harnesses symbolic interaction" (Umoh 282; Umoh, 2021). Symbolic interactions are aspects of cultural identities "cultural heritage can only achieve social relevance when it consistently finds strong presence in human consciousness" (Umoh 28).

Specifically, in Umoh, Stephen, Uwemedimo Atakpo, Esekong Andrew-Essien, and Usoro Okono (2024), makeup situates the cast in the proper outlook he or she is idealized. According Nkanga, "make-up is an art that conveys feelings of excitement at creating theatre illusion ..., a mean of using cosmetics to enhance or correct man's psychical appearance... (and) there are basically two types of stage makeup, these are: (a) straight,

and (b) character makeup" (193). A creative aspect is usually the ability to make a cast to appear on stage or in film with a stunning resemblance with the character in mind. Thus, Gillette suggests that a more convincing approach is that "after, the neck has been cleansed, soft greasepaint from tubes or jars is applied to the face and neck in little dots, then blended with the finger tips to create a smooth translucent foundation" (439). Makeup then turns out to be an activity that requires precision. Therefore creativity in this area requires the knowledge of the time in mind, the age of the persona, the emotion meant to express, and the actions that need to be emphasized to heighten to elation of the illusion.

Makeup and Illusions of Reality in *Blood Sister*

Makeup is fundamental in theatre and film because of the role it plays. One of the roles is the creation of believable illusion in circumstance of time, age emotion and circumstance harnessed to project the action of the plot.

The Illusion of Time



Plate 1: Lashes/ painted nails /Illusion of time (Abudu 2022)



Plate 2: Coloured Lids/Illusion of time (Abudu 2022)

The use of eye lashes and eye contact is a contemporary fashion. Ladies of the contemporary time attach a longer brand of lashes to their eye-lashes and they emboss their eyes with multi-colours. This situates the illusion of time that the film is discussing a contemporary issue. Another factor

situating the illusion of the period in which the film is portraying is the makeup on the nails. Affixes on the nails are completely deployed to convey the illusion of time. The use of numerous colours and shapes as nails affixes is a contemporary fashion.



Plate 3: Fashionable Hair/Illusion of time (Abudu 2022)

Hairdo is usually a cultural issue in Nigeria but in *Blood Sister*, there is the use of attachment and other brands such as Brazilian-hair, Bone-straight, Peruvian-hair or so, which identify the ladies and help to create the illusion of time. In addition to the

use of affixes to embellish women, men have come to express their craze for fashion through haircut, and various styles are used to affirm that the marriage, men and their dispositions are of the contemporary period.

Illusion of Age

Some applications of cosmetics on the casts of *Blood Sister* confirm them to of certain range of age.

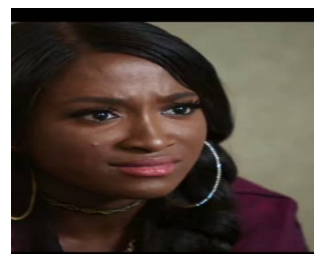


Plate 4: Illusion of Age: Old,Old/Young (Abudu 2022)

This makeup has made the illusion of ageing

believable on Uduak and Papa-Sarah. When

makeup delineates the aged from the youth or teen, it can be understandable. In the case in these two characters, playing the mother and the father to mature youths trying to get married, the illusion of their ageing is believable this way. On the other hand, Yinka is also made to convey youthfulness suitable for the mindset of the young people.

Illusion of Emotion

Through makeup, one can establish feelings or the prevailing thought factor on a circumstance at hand. This is the disposition of the inner feelings. In *Blood Sisters*, there are many occasions such illusions are brought to bear through the help of makeup.



Plate 5: Illusion of Emotion (Abudu 2022)

Mrs. Ademola is suffering an inner tormented which lacks cogent words to utter. Through the help of makeup, the mood is convincing brought to the limelight. Yinka who is confined to psychiatry is mentally deranged; but at a point, her mind really gains consciousness. She hears Kola's, name mentioned with sad

information that he is dead. Through the aid of makeup, her mood is swung from a mentally deranged lady to a heartbroken one. On the other hand, Kola's friend just realizes that Kola's case has gone worse than expected. He is lost in thought and this is made more pungent in the makeup design.

Illusion of Action/Circumstance

There are human attitudes, manners and dimension of responses to an action or speech

that require some insight for believability. In *Blood Sister*, such actions are aided by makeup to emphasize on the action.

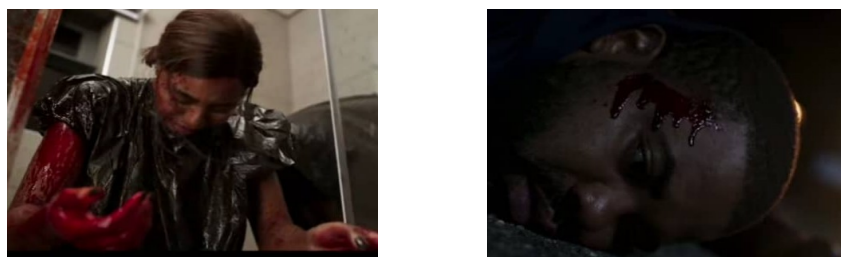


Plate 6: Illusion of Blood Stain (Abudu 2022)

Kemi shoots Kola and has cut off his head which blood squirts and smears on her body. With this kind of cosmetics application, the action is much more believable. The

photographer who tries to dupe Kemi and Sarah is hit by Sarah's car. To make the action more impacting and believable, makeup is applied and the effect has situated the illusion

of a broken skull.

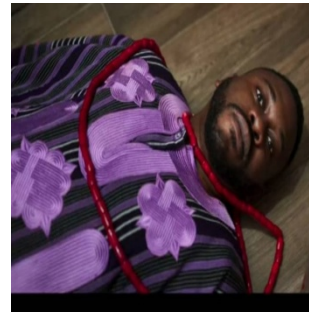


Plate 7: Illusion of Dizziness from Drugging (Abudu 2022)

Yinka Ademola is a drug addict; the makeup for her sniffing cocaine has actually revealed what she is into. Such application allows the message sent across through makeup to depict a slice of life. Sarah and Kemi have decided to disguise themselves in order to have free exit to evacuate Kola's remains. The

application of cosmetics aids to drive home the illusion as they appear unruffled and calm in straight make-up. The face of Kola, after being killed, does not need to look like someone who is still alive. The reality of a dead man is successfully made on the character in the film.



Plate 8: Illusion of the Deformed (Abudu 2022)

One of the many wicked acts of Kola which orchestrates his doom is revealed in the deformed eye of one of his lovers. It is made to reveal a slice of life presented on stage.

Conclusion

The use of makeup to present a slice of life in filmmaking has revealed the interplay of arts and science in creativity. In *Blood Sisters*, the illusion of time, proximity of age, emotional state, and the reinforcing gesture to the expected dramatic actions are made to

replicate the fixity of science through makeup application. Believable illusion is an act of rethinking on the part of the artist; hence it can be achieved through the use of makeup when the artist upgrades to align arts with science. *Blood Sisters* is a film that is touching, thrilling and above all, successful for its

conveyance of believable illusions to the audience. This is the magic of the rightful application of cosmetic and the proper shaping of the outlook of the actors. Illusions are only truthful when they appear real, and a real appearance in a film is a reflection of the insight in the theory of human nature spread across disciplines where the study of man and society is prominent.

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