

neous riches to those who control its technologies, and simultaneously, to threaten the very livelihood of those who do not” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002:782). It is a space of initiation, where an ordinary person is transformed into a cult member and given access to the mysteries of capitalism (wealth without work or production.) Birgit Meyer has described the camera’s look into this secret space as a divine vision that sees into what is usually hidden, “offering first hand views deep into hell” (2004:104). Producers exploit special effects to enhance the representation of the magical and mysterious. Viewers see men turn into vultures and ghostly figures appear from nowhere.

The movies recycle iconographies of evil common to many horror films and incorporate narrative conventions common to the demonic variant of the genre. Shrines are draped in black and red, and rituals involving blood, eerie chanting, and violence take place in remote, secret locations. Musical cues heighten suspense and terror, and shock cuts provoke bodily jolts in spectators. Most notably, occult movies place before the spectator images of violence and abjection, which are at once fascinating and repulsive. The bodies of victims are cut open and cut into pieces. Bloody body parts are pulled from bags, heads are severed from bodies, babies cut from wombs, and human blood poured into bowls. Victims develop open and oozing sores and writhe in pain. These images, as Barbara Creed explains, address “a desire not only for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images, being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated) but also a desire, having taken pleasure in perversity, to throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator’s seat)” (1996:40). The films stage an encounter with the horrors that threaten the symbolic order, casting them out to affirm the stability of the symbolic.

Creed’s well-known psychoanalytical analysis of horror, which borrows from Julia Kristeva’s writing on the abject, understands the genre as a manifestation of psychic processes, and as such, it eclipses history and culture, collapsing specificity and materiality into the psychological. Blood money movies from Ghana and Nigeria resist such a reading. They address viewers as social subjects, and violence, rather than functioning as a projection of individual psychology, works as a public demonstration of power acting on bodies. Images of pain and suffering inflicted on victims and villains project fantasies of privately administered and controlled violence. Unattached from character



Screenshot Sika Mu Sakava

point-of-view, the camera displays scenes of abjection, pulling the spectator into this theatre of pain. Spectacles of violence in occult movies work like the scenes of violence Mbembe (2001) describes as features of the African post-colony. Citing Foucault's analysis of the torture of Damians, Mbembe analyzes a small, intimate public punishment carried out against a misbehaving teacher in front of a church congregation. Mbembe calls this display of punishment "a social transaction" (115) that incorporates actors and observers as it "opens up a space for enjoyment at the very moment it makes room for death" (115). When occult movies end with the torture and death of the greedy capitalist, the point is that he gets what he deserves, and the audiences' own desires for wealth or their own envy of the rich are contained by this public, moral resolution.

African occult movies investigate what Wendy Brown has referred to in another context as "the mystified nature of the production of value" (2010:102) under capitalism. In a provocative reading of Marx, Brown suggests that, for Marx, capitalism profanes the world "insofar as it destroys ineffable goods and quantities such as love, intelligence, beauty, bravery, and honesty by making them purchasable" (99). African occult movies act out this horrific transformation of human life into surplus value. They call attention to the human costs of prosperity, which is never achieved without the exploitation of another.

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Videos

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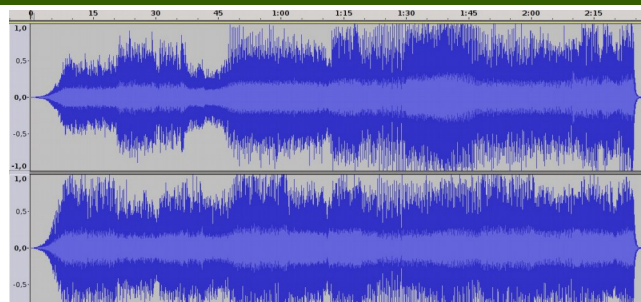
Notes:

- ¹ The movie ends when a born-again woman, a former prostitute who remembered Andy, sees him eating garbage on the street and takes him to her church, where his soul and sanity are saved by a group of Christian prayer warriors.
- ² Based on the West African model, commercial movies industries have appeared in Kenya, Uganda, Cameroon, and Tanzania.
- ³ The study of Nollywood now supports a large body of scholarship. Important work has been done by Moradewun Adejunmobi (2002, 2007, 2010); Akin Adesokan (2004); Jonathan Haynes (1995, 2000, 2003, 2007, 2010); Brain Larkin (2008); and Onookome Okome (2000, 2007a, 2007b). Birgit Meyer (1998, 2004) has published significant research on Ghanaian videos.
- ⁴ The scholarship on witchcraft, the occult, and other modern magics in Africa is vast. Examples that I have found illuminating include Bastian (1993, 2001); Bayart (2009); Comaroff and Comaroff (2002); Geschiere (1997); Smith (2007); and Parish (1999, 2000).
- ⁵ See Daniel Jordan Smith (2007) for an analysis of the Owerri incident. I also want to thank Jon Haynes for calling my attention to the Nollywood movies linked to this incident.
- ⁶ The word sakawa derives from Hausa and translates into English as “to penetrate,” or “to get into.” It generally refers to a type of magic or juju used by internet scammers to penetrate the Internet through the computer and enable the success of their fraud schemes. Movies on sakawa include *Café Guys* (2002), the five part *Sakawa Boys* (2009), *Sakawa Girls* (2009), and *Agya Koo Sakawa, I and II* (2009). Venus Film produced *The Dons in Sakawa*, parts 1-4 (2009), and Big Joe Production’s made *Sakawa* (2010). Other Ghanaian titles include: *Sika Mu Sakawa* (2009) and *Sakawa 419* (2009).
- ⁷ I have written in greater detail about sakawa movies from Ghana in my forthcoming book.

Hauntology Beyond the Cinema:

The Technological Uncanny

by Carrie Clanton



Visualized Sound: Battle of the Ghost (Deine Lakaien)

Summary:

Cinema is an intrinsically ghostly medium, its narratives conjuring other times and places. But all media may be said to be “hauntological” in nature, entailing chronological and spatial disruptions that technologically produce a sense of the uncanny. Beyond the séance-room of the cinema, other hauntological representations such as dub and electronic music constitute politically and culturally deconstructive media projects.

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