Aliens, Monsters, and Beasts in the Cultural Mapping of Nollywood Cinematography

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Abstract:

The emerging field of monster studies has witnessed significant contributions in the functions of monsters in the representations of human stories. In spite of the different creative discourses in this new field, the cultural aesthetics and the strategic polemics of monsters in African stories have largely remained unengaged. Drawing from recent development in monster theories and the cinematic presence of monsters in Nollywood movies, the paper interrogates the cultural aesthetics, ethno-polemics, and the moral constructs of monsters in Nollywood movies. Specifically, monsters in Nollywood movies are not only the cultural equivalents of the aliens and extraterrestrial creatures of Hollywood movies, but they occupied strategic importance in the mapping of deviant characters, ethics, theodicy and the constructs of the "ethnic other." Through explorative method, the paper engages common cinematic motifs, social characterizations, and cultural polemics of monsters in Nollywood cinematography, thus providing new insights to the new field of monster studies.

Keywords: Monster, Aliens, Nollywood movies, African stories, monster theories, African ethics, cinematography, African aesthetics

Introduction

Creatures of extraordinary size and shape have always preoccupied human fascinations and creative imaginations.[1] From the primordial times, monsters have featured in the stories, literatures, music and religious constructs of the human race.[2] In short, there are monsters everywhere one turns to—on the cinematic landscape of the modern story world whether in the stories of zombies, cyborgs, werewolves, or in the increasing obsession with the UFOs, aliens, scary ghosts and paranormal talkshows.[3] In these different literary and visual depictions of monsters and oversized beasts, there are apparent cultural functions in the positioning and presence of these monstrous creatures in human storytelling traditions.[4]

For example, modern Sci-fi movies have featured monsters in the cinematic mapping of their story world either with the hope of a realized utopia or the crude subversion of these expectations in the catastrophic materialization of a dystopian world. Placed in these discourses

of sci-fi movies, Cyborgs and monsters describe human technological victory over death in robotic bodies, artificial intelligence, corporeal immortality, boundless consciousness, and the demise of the biological bodies where the apocalypse death of the "imperfect human" beings will lead to the "technological resurrection" of a new breed of human race.[5] According to Jeremy Biles, "[t]he 'salvation' promised by this vision of technology simultaneously elevates and erases the human" causing "immortality and death" to converge.[6] "From this point of view, the very technology that promises perfection and immortality is a sacred monster that kills its master."[7]

Considering these different engagements of monsters in novels and movies, the present study engages specific representations of monsters and beasts in Nollywood movies—and the ethno-cultural significance of these cinematic representations of "otherness" in contemporary Africa.[8] Positioned on this trajectory, the paper interrogates modern theories of monsters in direct dialogues to the dominant cinematic representations of monsters in Nollywood movies. Lastly, it probes further the problematic character of these cinematic representations, the ethno-cinematography of African monsters, and the cultural polemics of these cinematic creations.

Modern Theories & Perspectives on Monsters

There are several theories and perspectives in the emerging field of monster studies.[9] Four of these popular theoretical perspectives will occupy our immediate attention here.[10] First, modern theory of monsters described monsters as the creatures of crisis. They are largely situated in stories, novels, legends and myths at the point of crisis. In the history of literary composition, monsters are often strategically situated and introduced at the point of crisis. The crisis necessitating the emergence of the monster could be the crises of survival, the conflicts and tensions of a quest narrative, the fights of an adventure, the wars in a conquest story or the confrontations in a military campaign. The monster is also deployed in the narrative of invasions, colonization of another space, political propaganda, or in the natural heightened tensions of race, sexuality and social classes. The crisis environments are the thriving spaces for monster's presence and operations in the plotting of a story.[11]

This construction of monsters at the point of crisis could be seen in the plotting of recent stories and other stories in antiquity. For example, the story of the *Transformers* (Bay and Knight, 2007) build on the well-seated conflicts between two alien groups—one fighting on the side of the villain Megatron known as the Decepticons—and the others—Autobots on the side of the humans under the leadership of Optimus Prime; the story of extraterrestrials in the movie *ET* (Spielberg, 1982) formed its plotline around conflict—and the many other scientific fictions whether *Jurassic Park* or the movie—the *Predator* (McTiernan, 1987) espoused the motif of conflict. The same degree of conflict is seen in the story of *Beowulf*, the presence of the Cyclopes in *Odysseus*, Medusa in *Jason and the Argonaut*, or the presence of the *Nephilim* or the "sons of God" in the biblical story of Genesis—or even in the story of the giants (Anakim) in the conquests of the Canaanites in the Biblical book of Numbers.

But this motif of conflict could be expressed in the confrontations of racism where oppressed individuals or subjected communities are projected as monsters in attacks and polemics against them. In the conflict of land grabs of the 18th century, the native Indians were deemed monsters by the forces of the colonizers—and in the same way, Africans and the land of Africa were projected as the land of monsters in the creative and imaginative stories of earlier explorers and colonizers. Of course, modern racism, conflicts and the negative impacts of racial segregations—have often led to the description of the supremacist white community and ideologies with the label of monsters. Similarly, the patriarchal denigration of the female gender has also be classified in the dimensions of a monster since it continually seeks to undermine the worth and dignity of the female gender. In all these descriptions, creation and placement of monsters in movies, novels, modern political discourses, social activism and the paintings of graffiti—the powerful depiction of monsters are driven by seated conflicts within the social and political fabrics of the human society.

Secondly, monsters are positioned in stories of movies, novels or popular discourse to police the borders of accepted norms, culture or beliefs. Monsters are policing agents of human morality—fears or anxiety.[12] They are often deployed to guard the borders of the permissible—against the trespassing temptation to cross over—or transcend cultural and religious borders. Monsters are often the creations of boundary spaces—the beacon—or social landmarks on human accepted behaviours and practices.[13] They roamed the borderlines and cultural margins of the human society to protect the human society from itself—and to underscore the perpetuation of normalcy and borders of the acceptable. They may be described as bad witches deployed in the story to protect human morality—through her punishment, death or defeat—or they could be evil spirits protecting the land of the dead, a graveyard—or even vampires guarding a particular space from human intrusions. They are police agents of human morality or beliefs—by guarding the prohibitions of the human community. Monsters of prohibitions clearly serve the self-interests of the human society since they protect the forbidden spaces from human intrusions or presence. The stories of giant monsters at the sea by medieval sailors and merchants are possibly deployed by them to dissuade others from exploring the seas and thereby protecting their wealth and self-interests.[14]

In addition, monsters are positioned as signboards or creatures of warning against the intrusion, the entrance or the exploration of a particular forbidden dimension.[15] For example, the giants of Patagonia, the dragons in Chinese folklores, the giant angelic cherub guarding the tree of life with a huge sword in the biblical account of Genesis, the giant status of gods, divinities and deities guarding ancient cities or huge monsters guarding ancient caves and sacred spaces—or even the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park who violently punished the scientists and humanity in general for crossing the acceptable borders via experimentations of genetic coding and cloning of the dinosaurs.[16] Similarly, Lycaon—king of Arcadia, breached the acceptable laws and borders of hospitability by offering to Zeus—his guest—the flesh of his servants for meal—

and in anger—Zeus turned him into the first werewolves of western literature.[17] This punishment by Zeus was primarily to protect the borders of acceptable human behaviours—by turning the culprits into a monster—in order to show his monstrous breaking of a cherished hospitable taboo.[18] The protection of race, skin colour, religious belief, sexuality, custom and political ideologies have often brought about the creation of imaginary monsters to police and check the crossing of these acceptable cultural spaces. The modern stories of alien, Unidentified Flying Objects and creatures of other planets are often told with the intrigues of protective plots which primarily speak of these aliens as coming to earth in order to protect the human race from self-destruction. In the modern news on terror and the attending war on terror—the description of the West as a monster by fanatic Muslims—and the revised treatment of all Arabs as monsters in populist western media comes from this particular plot which generally seeks to protect the self-interests of a group through border-marking. Ironically, while monsters are scary—they often function as protectors of a given ideal, custom, sex, and beliefs of a particular humanity community in time and space.[19]

Thirdly, the creation of monster and its deployment in fictional spaces of novels and stories also projects the embodiment of others—and the crystallization of difference whether in terms of ethnic identities, racial construction, gender description, political class or social class.[20] It could also be a difference or otherness constructed along the lines of specie—for example—humanoid and alien—or beast and human-like entity.[21] The monster could be a concoction of different species, a mismatched of various life forms, a hybrid of different entities, and the mingling of fluid identities, but even these constructions of difference are often staged and positioned against the description of normalcy or other specie variations in relationship to the monsters.[22] For example, the mermaid is a body of a lady merged with the lower part of a fish, the sphinx—the construction of a lion and a human body—the satyr—a creature with a human body—merged with animal features of goat's ears, tails, legs and horns as in Roman representation—or in Greek—a creature with human body with horse's ears and tails. Similarly, the construct of difference could be seen in the representation of a centaur—a creature with head, arms and torso of a man and the body and four legs of a horse; it could an alien being or a foreign life in human body such as the movie—the *Specie* (Donaldson, 1995) or as in the movie—*Host* (Niccol, 2013) when a human body was taken over by an alien being. The difference could be constructed on the merger of dead and life form in complex blending of the essential personality of a vampire—or the contentious matrix of good and evil in the personality of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis and Stevenson—and its many modern variations. On the other hand, the hybrid could accentuate clear difference in terms of superhuman strength in a likable hybrid such as the hybrid in the story of the *Batman* (Burton, 1989) where the DNA of a bat got infused in body of a human being—or in the movie of *Spiderman* (Raimi, 2002) where the DNA of a spider impacted the genetic coding of a human DNA. Some of the monsters, villains and supervillains of these movies are also constructed from these mergers of monstrous creatures in one person.

The construct of difference in monster placed them naturally outside the human experience—and denied them a clear footing on human space. Consequently, monsters are the hybridization of elements which must definitely contain things unknown to us. Concerning this hybridization of monsters, Jacques Derrida said,

> A monster is also that which appears for the first time and, consequently, is not yet recognized. A monster is a species for which we do not yet have a name, which does not mean that the species is abnormal, namely, the composition or hybridization of already known species. Simply, it shows itself [*elle se montre*]—that is what the word monster means—it shows itself in something that is not yet shown and that therefore looks like a hallucination, it strikes the eye, it frightens precisely because no anticipation had prepared one to identify this figure. ... But as soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it, one begins, because of the "as such"—it is a monster as monster—to compare it to the norms, to analyze it, consequently to master whatever could be terrifying in this figure of the monster.[23]

In addition, the construct of difference in the otherness of a monster could be deployed in a given story as part of the rhetoric of dispossession and conquest. For example, the exaggeration of the non-human-like heights of the intimidating giants of Canaan preceded the story of their extermination and conquest in the Bible (Num 14).[24] Similarly, the extermination of the world in the deluge was preceded by the story of miscegenation between the alien—giant creatures—the Nephilims (or "sons of God") and their human partners. In this same way, the Jews in the West were also described in the category of evil monsters who in the Medieval period were accused of using Christian children for their Passover meals. The "final solution" undertaken by Adolf Hitler, a person who was also described as a "monster" himself, to put an end to the Jewish problem was based on the indoctrination of the Germany society of the "monstrous" character of an expanding Jewish population in Europe.[25] Ironically, Hitler, a monster rose to exterminate the Jews—who were traditionally perceived as "monsters" because of their different religious customs, strange beliefs—and their prosperity in the midst of an overwhelming Christian majority. Most minorities in human history have often suffered the stigmas of ill-treatment—and their caricatures as monsters and entities—outside of the human family. The genocide in Rwanda placed the tall—Tutsi in the sphere of the "alien" or strangers in Rwanda land by an overwhelming Hutu majority. This rhetoric of exclusion—and difference further reconstructed the images of the Tutsi in the rhetoric of "non-human" person. The Hutu referred to the tall—Tutsi as "cockroaches" thus justifying their extermination—and genocide. The image of a "human-cockroach" in the minds of the majority Hutu projects a monster of race among them which is non-human—and thereby justifying its elimination.[26] The exclusive rhetoric of difference in Rwanda genocide is largely responsible for the sudden and brutal killings of husbands by their wives—and wives by their husbands—and children murdered by their parents—neighbours exterminating neighbours because they understood one another from subtext ideology of difference which was largely

informed by the misconception of the other in the language and rhetoric of non-human—and even monster.[27] On the other hand, the local accounts of the many sightings of the monster "Mokele-mbebe," a "Loch Ness" type of monster in Congo Brazzaville in the midst of Congo's ongoing crisis may well reflects the dynamics of this construct of "otherness" which have largely characterized the ethnic relationships of this region.[28] More than 50 expeditions have been sent to document and verify the evidence for this monster—but none has provided a scientific evidence of its existence. But for the local community—this monster exists in their midst—and the stories of its sightings have continually defined the activities and beliefs of the local inhabitants of this region. Even though the field of cryptozoology has waded into this search—but I think whether the monster Mokele-mbebe exists in reality or in the imagination of the Congo people—the different constructs of otherness in ethnic wars and violence have literally conjured for this people—a lingering image of a monster in their midst. Similarly, the political exploitations of resources and conquests in the construct of monsters could be seen in the extermination of the Native Americans who were considered "unredeemable savage" and the "racial other" which subsequently justified their subjugation and even extermination.[29]

To be sure, the war on terror in recent times with its narratives of the terror-driven religious monsters of the Middle East—and the counter-narratives by the terrorists of the West in their propaganda as a monster too already suggests the dynamics of monster's rhetoric of the modern world.[30] In the rhetoric of the terrorists, the West is considered the land of the "infidels," "pig eaters, the place of other abominable foods, and immoral entertainments, but they are also "monsters" in the eyes of these terrorists because they have invaded and attacked Muslim countries causing pains and sufferings to untold numbers of Muslim communities in the Middle East.[31] The political propaganda on both sides—in the representations of the other in the category of a monster—or an evil vampire describes the increasing mapping of global politics in the description of a monster's ideology. This propaganda is not a mere campaign of calumny, name-calling or bickering by the two opposing parties—but an entrenched understanding of the other in the perfect construct of difference.[32]

On the other hand, this construct of otherness in the definition of a monster—is not only in reference to human misunderstandings, exploitations and propagandas, but it also employed in the description of the activities of microbes and infections.[33] For example, the pictorial and visual representations of AIDS pandemic in the past—and the present scourge of COVID 19 are often constructed in the category of a monster because of the exterminating agenda in the spread, killing and death of the victims of these infectious diseases across the globe.[34] Doctors and nurses in adverts and video clips are represented as the human protective shields against the menacing of these dangerous monsters. In addition, the debates over the synthetic origin of the COVID-19 developed China in Wuhan virological labs already looks like a modern restaging of the Frankenstein monsters—the reanimation of this movie—or in the classical representation of this monster motif in Shelley's novel of this same name.[35] Seen from this perspective of an

artificially created entity—or a laboratory modified virus from China—the present discourse on COVID-19 describes the scourges of the pandemic in the rhetoric of a modern Frankenstein. Like the wrecking of havocs—and death to its creators, Frankenstein—classical story imbued the present discourse on COVID-19 with intersecting cultural significance.

But this portrait of the microbes of virus—as monsters in modern stories draws from the mainstream perception of monsters to describe modern epidemics and pandemics. The invisibility of the virus and its seeming possession or use of its host to perpetuate itself in the multiplication and taking over the body of the host appeared similar to the motif of alien invasion of human bodies—or the taking over of a host body by either a zombie or the attacks of a living dead. The shared similarities between the activities of this virus and those of the monsters in traditional tales possibly brought about this association of monster to the global havoc perpetuated by this virus. On the other hand, even the present blame games by United States and China over who created this supposedly synthetic virus could be deemed the perfect example of the scapegoat tradition. In the midst of dare conflict and misfortunes, people have always looked for a monster—or scapegoat to take the blame.[36] This scapegoat could be an usual animal that is expected to take away the sins of the community—like the provisions of the book of Leviticus—or scapegoated monsters that should be blamed for a terrible misfortunes such as the blames of German woes on the Jews during their defeats of World War I—or the blames by the Hutu of their woes on the Tutsi—or the modern blame games by superpowers over the origin and the synthetic creator of COVID-19.[37]

Beyond this microbial world of viruses, the patriarchal arrangement of modern society has often constructed otherness in terms of the exaggerations of gender difference—and the association of subversive female characters with monster.[38] According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "[t]he woman who oversteps the boundaries of her gender role risks becoming a Syclla, Weird Sister, Lilith...Bertha Mason, or Gorgon. 'Deviant' sexual identity is similarly susceptible to monsterization."[39] The gender ambiguity of hermaphrodites, transgender and subjective movements of human sexuality, and the transgressing of gender markings and boundaries have often translated into the labelling of sexual deviances in the class of the abnormal—and the dislocation of these individuals from the human space to the outcast-domains of monstrous entities.[40] In recent times, the downgrading and oppressive subjugation of the female gender by the modern patriarchal institutions are treated by civil rights women groups in terms of their confrontations of patriarchal monsters. Similarly, the atrocities of serial killers, paedophiles, rapes and other forms of sexual crimes are represented in terms of the confrontations of the human society against the contending monsters among its ranks. In this sense, the monsters are human—and the wars against these "monsters" are also undertaken through social activism and political campaigns against deviant behaviours and crimes in human society.

But the construct of difference in the depiction of monster could also take racial undertones. Race—in human history—is a defining criterion of difference—and dominant entity

in the construction of monsters. The differences of skin colours, shapes of nose, colour of eyes, structure of the facial skull, or particular racial practices, differences in cultural orientation or mental/psychological dispositions of some races have often occasioned their labelling as monsters—and subsequent placements in the non-human category and space given to monsters. For example, the black skin colour of the African people has often caused its association with monsters. The Greek myth of Phaethon attributed the black colouration of the African skin to the misadventure of Phaethon riding his father's chariots of fire—who unable to control the dazzling fires of these chariots—came close to the earth and burning the skins of Africans in the process. It is not surprising that the role of an alien monster in 1979 now classical movie—*Alien* (Ridley Scott) was given to an African—a Nigerian visual artist Bolaji Badejo who was accidently picked from the bar—to act the role of an alien by Scott's crews. The otherness of an African person is clearly underscored by the placement of Badejo in an artificially created alien body. Interestingly, Badejo was an "alien" or "foreigner" in London at the times to study—when they crew of the movie realized that his heights and slim feature fit perfectly the height and the movement of an alien. In this role, Badejo performed a double role of an alien within and outside the worlds of the movie. First, the image of Badejo as a foreigner to London presents him as an alien—in the social negotiations of racial identities outside of the world of the movie. Ironically, Badejo becomes an alien within an alien costume—thus alienating him in both the narrative of the movie and his own social history. Secondly, the otherness of Badejo is further enhanced by the perfect fitting of the xenomorphic costume of the alien body to his human body which was made possible by his sickle-cell and anaemic-thin body that naturally fits into the alien body. The sick condition of Badejo placed him—as an alien among healthy people, thus accounting for his alien-like looks. In both of these different dimensions, Badejo's representation in the movie—*Alien* presents the perfect descriptions of an otherness created by his foreignness, his sick alienating body—and his stigmatized race—as an African. Badejo died at the age of 39—bringing to an end—the story of both the constructs of otherness precipitated in real life by his black African skin—and also the inward sufferings of the degenerating impact of sickle cell anaemia in his body. But it also brought to an end the tragic mimesis of a different otherness in the story of Badejo which is clearly seen in the masking of his Africanness inside the xenomorphic suits of an alien cinematic representation.

Similarly, this construct of an African otherness is also seen in 1987 movie—the *Predator* where the role of the alien predator is also given to black American actor—Kevin Peter Hall. Like Badejo before him—his Africanness and the one of the alien creature on the cinematic screen are merged together. In the racial discourses of the American society, Hall like most black Americans are often treated as cultural predators—or monsters who are bent on destroying the whiteness of the American society. In both Badejo and Hall deployment to act as aliens in Hollywood movies—their construct of otherness comes from their physical attributes of alien-ness which the crews and movie producers thought fit perfectly their ideas of an alien being. Similar sentiment is also

expressed in the alien movie *District 9* produced by the South African director Neill Blomkamp where Nigerians are featured in the movie as gun dealers, sex-traffickers, voodoo-practitioners—and the friends of "prawns," the movie's name for the alien race.[41] Nigerians in *District* 9 supply the aliens with foods and weapons.[42] While the movie has sparked debate and uproar on the representations of Nigerians in it—this association of Nigerians or Africans with aliens is a long Hollywood tradition.[43] The continuous treatment of Africans generally in the category of the "weird other" or "alien" is classically seen in other modern movies such as the *Tears of the Sun* (directed by Antoine Fuqua, 2003), *Hotel Rwanda* (directed by Terry George, 2004), *Constant Gardener* (directed by Fernando Meirelles in 2005), *Shooting Dogs* (directed by Michael Caton-Jones, 2005), *Blood Diamond* (directed by Edward Zwick in 2006), and *the Last King of Scotland* (directed by Kevin MacDonald, 2006).[44] Significantly, the social projections of otherness—and the particular associations of Africans to these alien monsters draw greatly from the prevailing cultural sentiments in the construct of otherness in the worlds which created these classics. The ongoing protest by the black community in America over the extrajudicial killings of blacks in the hands of white cops reiterated and directly continued this tradition that associates blacks with monsters which needed to be exterminated.

In addition, modern discourses on monsters also present the blurring of moral and ethical boundaries. The discourse on monsters rejects any simplistic categorization as evil—and the human world as good. There is the blurring of the moral boundary with monsters placed in the spheres of moral goodness—and in direct opposition to humans placed in the moral sphere of evil. There is a moral ambiguity that surrounds stories of monsters and aliens because modern storytelling traditions have often given monsters favourable representations. While there are monsters that are evil and bad—many monsters cannot be easily placed in this simplistic moral description. In most modern movies and novels, there is no longer the traditional dualism of ethics—or the past entrenched moral binary between a good human community against an evil monster. The common plot around the general evilness of monsters and the goodness of human beings are now abandoned for a more subtle deconstruction of human morality. For example, in *Shrek*, the ogre himself was good in better moral standing than the fairy godmother herself and her human prince charming in the story. Similarly, there are good vampires in the movie premium, the *Twilight* who fought against the evil ones—and in the movie—*Transformer*—the machines were divided into two camps of good and evil—those loyal to the human race are good and those favouring the destruction of the human race are evil.[45]

This blurring of moral line is also seen in the modern celebration of the Halloween where everyone becomes "a demon for a night" and a monster for a moment—before returning the next day back to their usual life.[46] The celebration reiterated the fluidity of moral boundaries in the clothing and dressings of people in costumes of monsters, alien, Frankenstein, blood thirsting Draculas, and other characters of vampires from movies and stories. The blurring of the moral boundaries in modern movies comes largely from a postmodern agenda where the moral

ambiguity of this cultural environment is directly imposed on the characters and plotting of stories.[47] Yet in spite of these blurring of ethical borders, some stories have also maintained the traditional placement of monsters in the moral sphere of evil—with monsters taking the path of villains and supervillians thereby bringing about their defeat, and death by the heroes and heroines of these modern stories. These defeats and even death of monsters have often led to the human celebration and victory over these perceived evil monsters.[48]

This moral geography of the monster's landscape in contemporary times needs particular consideration at least in three interesting areas. First, it describes a landscape basically in moral fluidity and conflicting ethical norms where the traditional sacrosanct status and moral absolutism of Judeo-Christian ethics is held in suspect. Of course, the ethnical mapping of modern stories of monsters and aliens underscores the extreme expressions of religious pluralism. The moral imagination of contemporary stories of monsters presents a discentralized ethical rallying point where various ethical persuasions are welcomed—and projected with aggressive competitive agenda among these ethical systems. Even though the traditional theme of a retributive theology exists in the core of these contemporary modern stories—but the subversions of the retributive theology in these stories have become increasing common. Similarly, the favourable representations of monsters in good light in many movies and novels suggests the contemporary quest to engage the moral ambiguities, complexities, and difficulties of morality where reality is not in the simplistic ethics of 'white and black' but also the problematic shades of gray.[49] For example, in her study of vampires in *Twilight*, Grandena described Edward Cullen and the good vampires with him thus, "the Cullens embody a different species of vampires, the good and virtuous vampires with a conscience (as opposed to sexualized vampires as well as to ethnic, shirtless shapeshifters."[50] For Edward Cullen—and the other "good" vampires of *Twilight*, "Sexual intercourse seems to represent the ultimate test to the vampire's self-restraint" because "sexuality before marriage is aligned with potential danger and death; it is thus 'natural' that chastity becomes the *sine qua non*..."of these vampires.[51]

In addition, these favourable portrayals of vampires, monsters and aliens in modern stories seek to embrace the dark side of morality and ethics with the increasing popularity of bad humans—good monsters and benevolent aliens. For example, Kyle W. Bishop speaks of the subversion of the vampire genre with increasing cases of "human monstrosity" in vampire stories that are far worrisome than the activities of the vampire themselves.[52] In this regards, there is a "devolution" of human morality in vampire stories which suggests that the human race itself is in the same moral horizon as the mindless zombies or even worse than them because human characters in zombie movies often go "beyond the necessity of survival and self-preservation and wallowing in atavistic violence."[53] Consequently, the acceptance of monsters as heroes and heroines in recent modern movies provides the platform for the deconstruction of morality—and the possibility of grounding a new moral vision in the favourable representations of monsters in contemporary stories.

Lastly, this acceptance of monsters appears to be a tacit acceptance of ourselves since most monsters in stories are the psychological projections of the human society on screen or texts.[54] Like the contemporary campaign of unity and solidarity for the minority, the disadvantaged, the demonized and the stigmatized communities on the fringe of human society, our identification and cinematic solidarity with monsters draws from the psychological mechanics of this cultural consciousness. Yet, this psychological solidarity with monster goes deeper than just a mere cultural solidarity but it involves the creative projections of human morality on these monsters who themselves must stand in solidarity with human morality or against them. Through this creative process, monsters in spite of their crisscrossing of moral boundary became voices of the larger human society—or the subtle mimesis of its ethical construct. Consequently, it seems the monsters in cinematic space are the ethical mimesis of the human world with all its moral complexities. In this sense, the ethics of the demonized creatures and monsters in horror movies expressed in killing and violence—are often the cinematic reflections of the killings and massacres in the larger human society. Significantly, the ethical otherness of the human society has mimetically converged with the cultural norms and cinematic morality represented by the monsters, thereby blurring the moral lines between the humans and the otherness of monsters.[55] However, monsters in the construct of this ethics enjoy interestingly far more degree of freedom than humans in the ethical mapping of these modern stories. According to Weinstock, this ethical "freedom of the monster" allowed them moral leverage "from the necessity of conforming to social expectations."[56] He added, "[i]ncreasingly, it seems that modern readers and audiences envy the freedom and power of the monster, without feeling the burden of shame associated with transgressing societal mores and expectations."[57] From this perspective, these cinematic monsters and their counterparts in novels are—in this particular sense—creations of subversive contestations and ethical negotiations which are in direct dialogue with the ethos and morality of the larger society.

Monsters, Beasts and Aliens in Nollywood Movies

To talk about monsters in Nollywood movies, we must make reference in passing to the story of Badejo here.[58] As already suggested in passing, it is quite ironical that the first role played by a Nigerian in Hollywood movie was the role of an Alien. Badejo in 1979 science fiction, *Alien* linked cinematically Nigerians to Alien or monsters in movies. Since this initial relationship with alien or monster in movie, monsters, vampires and alien life form have featured greatly in Nigerian home movies—and now significantly in Nollywood.[59] In recent times, many Nollywood have continually explored the monster's motif in the scripting of its stories and plots.[60] For example, in recent times Nollywood has deployed the centrality of the monster character in the mapping of its stories. There are specific contextualized ways monsters have been deployed in Nollywood storytelling traditions in contemporary times. Five specific ways that Nollywood had used the monster's motif in the crafting of its stories are

worth noting here. First, monsters are used in Nollywood scripts to describe the horrible activities of evil men and women particularly in their powerful use of magic, sorceries and witchcrafts to carry out wicked acts. The monsters in the plot of these stories are always villains whose activities challenged the hero or heroine of the story.[61] Through the powerful aids of diabolic powers, the human—considered "monster" have sold his/her souls to the Devil and witchcraft—and used the powerful resources of these associations with sorceries to perpetuate unethical activities that destroyed the lives of persons and communities who challenged them. They worked against the wellbeing and prosperity of individuals and the communities. The monsters in this common storyline of Nollywood are involved in shapeshifting activities such as changing into domestic animals, wild animals, birds or take different forms to perpetuate their works of wickedness. Concerning the involvement of human monsters in forbidden activities, Michel Foucault observed, "[w]hat makes a human monster a monster is not just its exceptionality relative to the species form; it is the disturbance it brings to juridical regularities. ... The human monster combines the impossible and the forbidden."[62] In this sense, the construct of monsters is "an abjecting epistemological device basic to the mechanics of deviance construction and identity formation."[63] Significantly, this description of monster in Nollywood largely considered the ethical and moral perspectives in the representation of monster in Nollywood's scripts. The scripting of Nollywood movies along these moral lines come from the dominance of a retributive theology by most of African people. This retributive theology expresses itself in the ethical thought that doers of good will reap good—and doers of evil will reap the evil results of their deeds.[64] Monsters are staged in this retributive universe of ethics—in the intriguing mapping of African ethical discourse because through this communal construct of a monster—the African society denied the wicked person—a space in its social landscape by the associating of the individual with the realm of non-human entities—the monster. This construct of monster becomes an act of the community's self-criticism of itself—and the excommunication of the deviant characters in its midst. Through this communal construct, the African society created for itself an ethical quarantining of morally deviant individuals who by the discourse of disassociation, ostracizing and positive stigmatizing of the evil actions are temporally or even permanently suspended of their humanity. The communal sanctions are verbally deployed in community's rejection of the wicked individual—thus suggesting their exclusion from human race and the attending relocation to a non-human sphere. While the "monster" could exist, move and work within the community—but the community itself has passed a verdict on his humanness. This construct of monster in Nollywood could be seen in movies such as *The Monster* released in 2019 by Divine Touch Production where Patience Ozokwor acted the part of Okwudili—the monster.[65] In this movie, Okwudili—a widow uses her witchcraft powers to cause havoc in the life of her community—she was later confronted and killed through the intervention of a Christian prayer team.[66] The dead body of Okwudili in the last scene of the movie was

covered with boils and disfigured face—suggesting that she became a monster figure—at the end of a life which was also characterised by wickedness expressed in a monster-like existence against the members of her community. While there is no place she was called a "monster" in the entire movie—her wicked and inhumane activities, her disfigured dead body in addition to the paratext given in the title of the movie suggest clearly she was deemed a monster by the maker of this movie. The same motif of human monsters is seen in Nollywood classics—*Evil Men* directed by Tchidi Chikere released in 2002 which was characterized by evil and monstrous acts against the human community by a league of evil men—and similarly, earlier in *Chain Reaction* directed by Ndubuisi Okoh in 1999—where power-drunk Eucharia (acted by Liz Benson) performed many acts of wickedness—poisoning of others and used the charms from a spiritualist to keep her husband—Ugochukwu into a perpetual obedient slave, thus representing the acts of a human monster.

This motif is also found in the storyline of *Suicide Mission* directed by Fred Amata in 1998 where Austin played by Richard Mofe-Damijo, his wife Winne and his concubine Monique who used witchcraft to put Mofe-Damijo in a bottle—so that she could have full control over him. The major thrust of these different movies—is that the villains placed in the category of a monster work in partnership/consultations with certain spiritual powers in perpetuating their wicked acts. [67] The interactions with the spiritual powers are often perfected through incantations and conjuring of evil spirits in the mother tongue by the perceived human monsters or their proxies. There is often a code switching from English language to the local language in consultations with these spirits which suggest that the spirits only function in their optimal capacity when incantations are directed to them via the instrumentality of the local dialects.[68] Interestingly, the sociolinguistics dynamism of these interactive scenes with supernatural beings, gods or diabolic powers of Nollywood movies provides an interesting use of the mother tongue as the language of the spiritual world. Significantly, the use of local language in incantations to the spirits by the perceived human monsters themselves or their designated proxies such as a prophet, priest or a priestess of traditional African religions already indicates the cultural naturalization of the monsters—as human—and a *member* of the human community who speaks its languages, understands its cultural protocols and well-adapted to the use of its spiritual coordinates.

The second representations of monsters in Nollywood scripts are primarily the deployments of "spirit entities," some horrible looking creatures or monsters to protect a particular object or to guard a perceived sacred space. These monsters are often ugly-looking creatures brought cinematically alive on the movie screens through special effects. Interestingly, these creatures are the cultural equivalents of the aliens and extraterrestrial creatures of Hollywood movies in African stories. These Nollywood monsters are usually deployed in the protection of certain spaces, objects or to stop the hero or heroes from reaching his destination—or actualizing his/her destinies. The evil monsters are often positioned to scare off intruders in a

particular sacred space (e.g. evil forest) or on a given path to the streams, another village or—as part of the spiritual arsenal and guards of a witchdoctor, diviner and spiritualists.[69] These different functions of these monsters often placed them in the world of invisibility where the monsters appear and disappear at will. The protective power of the monsters over a particular space or object is mostly the product of the community invitation or the extension of the community ownership over a given space or object. In the last category is the evil forest, or some objects closely associated with the shrines, the protective power of the monsters move around the regions of its ownership. These monsters are mostly found in epic and adventure genres of Nollywood—especially epics with journey motifs where the lead hero (or heroes) undertakes a journey to a forbidden space—whether an evil forest, haunted space or an enchanted jungle. These monsters in the words of Grandena—are "surveillance monsters" because they have surveillance abilities like the modern CCTV technology to watch over a particular object and territory.[70] They function in Nollywood scripts as security guards over territorial spaces, persons and objects. They are policing monsters—and mostly exercise territorial control over a person, object or space.

On the other hand, in Nollywood movies these monsters of surveillance are also deployed in the plot of the stories especially in stories where a disfigured spirit being, the spirit of a deceased person, or even an evil spirit haunts a particular village, community or even an entire kingdom punishing them for an act of injustice done to a person or a given family. Similarly, these monsters could be a vengeful spirit or a terrifying creature invoked in order to settle scores with a particular family, clan, village or kingdom for the crime of murder, rape, betrayal or other forms of atrocities by a family member in the past. The crime itself is often a secret conspiracy against the victims of the story that directly involves a cover-up by the key leaders of the haunted community.

The classical expression of these groups of monster is in the Nollywood movie, *Igodo: Land of the Living Dead* directed by Andy Amenechi and released in 1999.[71] The script describes the maltreatment meted the "son of Amadioha" whose parents was killed and later he himself was falsely accused by seven elders, and put to death. The haunting spirit of the man now inhabits a tree in the village—killing the seven elders and their families and terrorizing the members of the village. In response to this presence of the haunting tree, the villagers initially tried to cut it down, but they soon realized that every blow of their machetes on the tree is magically transferred on the body of their king. According to a diviner, the only way to cut down the tree is to travel to the "cave of Amadioha" and collect the magic sword to cut down the haunting tree. But the cave of Amadioha was preceded by the evil forest guarded by evil spirits and monsters. Of course, the monsters in the movie, *Igodo* were primarily a surveillance type—because they protected their turf against the seven men sent by the villagers to go and retrieve the amazing sword of *Amadioha*. The same motif of surveillance is also seen in Nollywood movie, *Diamond Ring* directed by Tade Ogidan which was released in 1998.

The movie tells the story of a vengeful ghost whose diamond ring was stolen by some cult members as part of cult initiation on campus—but the vengeful ghost—played by Liz Benson wanted her diamond ring back. The motif of watching over a personal property or object by this vengeful ghost reiterates the vigilante-like function of monster in this classification.

Similarly, the motif of surveillance by a monster is also seen in the Nollywood movie, *Oracle*. This African horror thriller was directed by Andy Amenechi and released in 1998—the same year as the release of *Diamond Ring*. The script of *Oracle* tells the story of a vengeful spirit of a shrine whose sacred object (idol) was stolen by three friends in connivance with two greedy village elders. The vengeful spirit followed the artefact into the city—and wreaking havoc in the bid to get the artefact back. The vengeful spirit in this movie—like the ghost in *Diamond Ring*—as surveillance entity—guards and watches over sacred objects and the artefact of a particular community.

The territorial nature of this surveillance is seen in a more recent movie *The Young Boy and the Monster* directed by Ifeanyi Ogbonna (DGN) released in 2018. The script tells the ordeals of a group of passengers on their way to the village for a ceremony who were attacked by some armed robbers. In fear of the armed robbers, they ran to hide in an enchanted forest guarded by a vengeful monster. The monster in the story was protective of its territorial space and fought against the intrusion of its space by these stranded humans. However, the scourge of these territorial monsters could be in the family space; they operate in enforcing the spiritual decisions or agreement over a family. Here, monsters become emissaries of deities and directly shouldered with the task of enforcing the will of a deity or deities over a family space. The movie, *The Feast of Honour* directed by Ernest Obi and released in 2017 reiterated this particular motif. The movie had the presence of human-like zombies in the form of children, dwarfs and adults. The monsters in this movie had fires and smokes emanating from their eyes; they were particularly sent to enforce the will of poverty over the life of Kanayo (played by the Nigerian actor, Ernest Obi). As messengers of deity in his life, they were there as "police" of the deity to enforce the pact entered with a woman cult group by Kanayo's mother—when she went to them looking for a child. She accepted the condition of the women cult that Kanayo—her son will only have his life—but will never be rich.

On the other hand, the territorial activities of these monsters could be over an entire village and kingdom. This particular motif of territorial space in the construct of monster could be seen in Nollywood movie, *Royal Monster* released in 2019 and directed by Magnate Ngerem (ANMD). In this movie, a vengeful monster went on rampage against an entire village because of the murder of a woman and her two children some years back. With her last breath—the dying woman prayed to the deity for vengeance, she cried,

> Avenge our death if we are innocent. Avenge our death...Avenge my blood and the blood of my children. I beg of you—fight for us! Avenge our death if we are innocent. Avenge us anyhow, anywhere ... Fight for us. Avenge our blood great goddess of our land.

This particular summon of vengeance by the dying woman—metamorphosed into a monster, which afflicted the entire village for the crime perpetuated against this woman and her children. The invoked goddess as a guard of communal morality sent a monster to punish the sacrilege in the shedding of the innocent blood of this woman and her children. The appeal of this dying woman is sustained in this court of justice of the goddess—a monster is dispensed to bring about justice for the woman. Considering the legal undertones in the woman's appeals for justice, the monster itself becomes a police of the deity sent to enforce the moral order which was breeched by the acts of injustice done to the woman and her children. From this perspective, the presence of a monster in this movie underscores the policing of morality via the instrumentality of a monster summoned to correct the imbalance in the scale of justice.

Thirdly, monsters in Nollywood movies also occurred in storyline which presents the magical transformation of a given human being into a fearful monster or a non-human being. The metamorphosis of the individual into a monster generally takes the routes of witchcraft, magic or other diabolic powers.[72] The transformed monsters operate in this "monstrous state" to perpetuate wicked deeds and to assert his/her dominance over their victims. The monsters returned back to its human forms after the executions of these evil acts. These monsters in Nollywood scripts are usually shapeshifters. Like the werewolves and vampires of western movies—the transformation of the human being into monsters gives the monster unusual strength and power to subject its victims. In Nollywood movies, the human character moves between the two worlds of humans and the non-human. In the body of the monster lives a remnant and concealed humanity—and in the body of the human being lives an unleashed monster. The division between humanness and monster resides in one person provides an intriguing perspective of human behaviours since the monster is innately positioned between the animal and human worlds. The paradox of this representation in Nollywood movies echoes the complexity of humanness in its concealment of a hidden monster—and the paradox of perceived monsters harbouring in themselves a subterranean core of humanity. This motif of transformative change and switching between two horizons of humanness and monster-ness echoes the classical dialectics of the *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* body in its ability to shift from the core of humanness into a terrible monster. Consequently, in this representation of monster in Nollywood lies the tragedy of the human nature in its ability and use as vehicle to further the humanness in our humanity—or to perpetuate evil in the dimension of a monster still within the spectrum of our humanity. Through magical transformation, the monster emerges from the shells of a human body to perpetuate his/her evil. Unlike the first category of Nollywood monsters, the transformation into a non-human being in this classification is necessary in order to perform or carry out a desired evil task—but the first category of monsters are mere human beings who with the help of powerful witchcrafts or magic dabbled and tapped into this dark arts in order to execute an evil desire. The shapeshifting powers

of these human beings placed them in fluid and flexible space—like the changing of forms in werewolves and vampires of Hollywood.[73]

On the other hand, the complete transformation into a non-human being by the villains in this present category—is different from the use of demonic powers to perpetuate evil or even the sending of a non-human object such as cat or owl to execute a particular evil wish. The dark side of the monsters in this category of Nollywood movie concretely moves the different contours of the magical landscape to work and carry out its desired agenda through the animated transformation from a human being into a beast or monster. Like the alien character with the human body and form in *Specie*, the monster often shed away its human mask in order to carry out a particular desired action. However, in Nollywood movies, the humanity of the monster is not a mere shell to be shed away. In fact, the human person cannot stay very long in this monstrous state without consequence. They must quickly revert back into their human forms immediately in order to avert these dire consequences. Interestingly, the temporal transformation into a monster suggests that humanity is the core of their humanness—and the transformation into a non-human monster is merely a momentary endeavour. This switching from humans to animals or other non-human beings are culturally attributed to the activities of witches and sorcerers; thus by this default cultural thinking—witches and sorcerers in this shapeshifting roles into non-human beings are considered as monsters. On the other hand, the transformation into a monster could be carried out through the casting of a spell over another person by a witch or an agent of evil as attested in the classical story of *The Beauty and the Beast*, hence the monster itself may not necessarily be in control of its self-transformation into a monster. This motif is seen in the Nollywood remaking of the classics—*The Beauty and the Beast* retitled, *The Beauty and the Monster* released in 2017 directed by Nadia Buari. The motif of turning another person into a monster is also seen in the Nollywood movie, *The Beautiful Little Girl and the Monster* released in 2019 where Mazi Amaechi played by Zulu Adigwe killed his brother—and cast a monster's spell on his brother's daughter—Amaka played by Rachael Okonkwor. Amaka's face will suddenly turned into a monster—whenever anyone wanted to assist her or provide her help. She was largely ignorant of the spell until two Christian brothers from the church staged a deliverance for her—breaking the powers of this particular spell. However, unlike the first volitional and complete transformation into a monster—this transformation into a monster is non-volitional and incomplete in the story of *The Beautiful Little Girl and the Monster*. In the story, Amaka is largely unaware about the sudden transformation of her head into a monster whenever someone wanted to help her. Interestingly, Amaka has a head of a monster—and the body of a woman, thus mimicking the hybrid component in the creation of mermaid, centaur or any other monsters of half-human status in Hollywood movies.

Finally, there is also group of monsters in Nollywood's movies which could be described as predatory monsters. These are monsters primarily on rampage and on killing sprees. They are not

necessarily territorial—like the ones of the second classification. They are often sent by Lucifer against the human race—or placed in some cosmic battle of good versus evil. The attacks and presence of these monsters in the story are not for any wrongs directly meted to them, but they are primarily on a mission to destroy the human race. They are like the alien of Hollywood movies who are invaders from another planet seeking the destruction of the human species—in order to perpetuate their own kind. In Nollywood movies, they are often apocalyptic in their disposition, attacks and operations. Like the Hollywood movie, *Specie* their presence on earth is to take over the planet in the conquest of its human inhabitants. In Nollywood movie, the monster often comes from the underworld—and takes a human form in order to possess, control and destroy humanity. Like the Hollywood movie, *Predator*, the monsters are demonic hunters sent to hunt for human souls. This motif of predatory monsters could be seen in the story of *Karishika* produced and directed by Ifeanyi Ikpoenyi and Christian Onu respectively. It was released in 1996—and narrated the story of a "queen of demons" sent by Lucifer himself to hunt for souls. In the movie, Karishika (acted by Becky Ngozi Okorie) used several shapeshifting forms to lure her victims to their death—using money, wealth and sex as baits. The plot of the story was placed on cosmic stage with Satan and God locked in battle over the souls of the human race. There is a strong dualism in the ethical conflict between good and evil in this movie. However, the dualism is clearly twigged with a Christian sentiment because the ethical mapping of the storyline is contoured in a narrative space where human goodness does not shield one from the onslaught of Lucifer and his agents, but becoming a prayerful Christian is the only route of human salvation. The same Christian sentiments in the construct of predatory monsters are seen in the movie, *The End of the Wicked* released in 1999 directed by Helen Ukpabio and the movie, *Family of Witches* directed by Ugezu J. Ugezu released in 2017 In these two movies, the activities of witches operate in predatory manner against humanity in hunting for human souls by demons and their human accomplices.

However, there are movies that show this motif of predatory monsters but devoid of the overarching Christian overtones of the preceding movies. This construct of Nollywood movie is seen in the storyline of *The Snake Girl & Evil Priestess in Battle* directed by Nonso Emekaekwue in 2019. In this movie, the conflict of good and evil is not pegged in the familiar cosmic battle between the Christian God and Satan, but rather the conflict was between two local deities—*Ogajelo*, the Great mother goddess and *Ogidi*, the male, snake god. The evil deity—*Ogidi* is represented as a snake with an alien-shaped head and four-pear-like eyes. Through his incarnated presence in Ojuka ("his love child")—played by the actress Queen Nwokoye, he took over the priesthood—perpetuating his evil rule in killing and promotion of immorality over the kingdom. The predatory quest of the monster deity *Ogidi* in taking over the priesthood, and seeking to bring the entire kingdom over his rule has similarity with the motif of the Christian God battle against Satan as seen in *Karishika*. Devoid of the centrality of Karishika's eschatology or its template of an imminent apocalypse, the movie, *The Snake Girl & Evil Priestess in Battle*

explores the theme of an imminent danger—the death of many people because of the rule of evil *Ogidi*-deity over the kingdom. In fact, the first scene of the movie shows the dead bodies of people as seen in a vision by the priestess of the good deity *Ogajelo*.

In the Nollywood movie, *The Alien Girl* (2017) directed by Onuma Chukwuebuka, an invisible alien evil power possessed the body of an ostracised girl that manifests itself in terrible incidents of deaths and misfortunes anytime—she is under the controlling spell of the abandoned deity, *Ijele*. The girl with the predatory alien force, *Otito* (played by the Nigerian actress Regina Daniels) comes actively alive whenever she is writing under the spell of this alien presence. The story describes the imminent demise of the entire kingdom if the writing of this girl is not stopped, and the spirit exorcised. Consequently, it seems Nollywood movies are beginning to experiment along apocalyptic dimension with deities of African pantheon either staged against themselves in the dualistic battle of good and evil or positioned in creative resistance against the otherness of the existing status quo. However, the cosmic dimension of the conflict among African gods, the apocalyptic discourses on the end of the world, the radical intervention of the supreme God to change the entire course of human history, and the welcoming of a new world with the establishments of a heavenly utopia on a world scale—are clearly absent in Nollywood movies.

Cultural Significance of Monsters and Beasts in Nollywood Movies

The construct of monsters in Nollywood movies performs certain cultural purposes.[74] There are five cultural functions of monsters in Nollywood movies which need closer scrutiny here. First, the construct of monsters in Nollywood fulfils an ethnical function. According to Haynes, "[t]he universal premise of African aesthetics is that stories should teach something, have a moral, a purposes. This is bedrock, and much of Nollywood is built on it."[75] Consequently, the deployments of monsters in contemporary stories of Nollywood have significant ethical commitments. The persuasive strategies in these movies are basically simple—people become monsters by pursuing ethical norms outside of the accepted values and virtues of the community. In rebelling against these accepted norms and ethical practices, deviant characters and villains in Nollywood stories worked against the human society, thus operate in the self-alienating sphere of a non-human zone.[76] The situation of these deviant individuals in a non-human space underscored that these humans are invariably ostracized—and in this sense disowned by the human society because of their involvements in unethical practices that jeopardize the collective wellbeing of the entire human community. The ethical protocol of Nollywood movies are centered on this cultural code which automatically changed the status of a deviant human person from the locus of human community to the one of a monster through the active involvement of the deviant person in things that threaten the wellbeing, progress and prosperity of the human community. The actions of the witch, sorcerers, magicians, and spiritualists in their diabolic works against the individuals or the entire humanity naturally placed them in direct collusion against *Ubuntu* and the expected

brotherly pursuit for the wellbeing of all members of the human community. From this perspective, Nollywood is an ethical cinematic representation of African cultural philosophy that projects—and places individuals of deviant characters within the sphere of non-humanness and monsters. This ethical protocol is retributive in its theology. As rightly observed by Bishop in his study of the vampires of the *Living Dead*, monsters "are less important than the stories told around them, and such tales do important cultural work by providing audiences with ethical guideposts and a sober warning against atavistic barbarism."[77] In Nollywood scripting, these ethical guideposts often reward good deeds that promote the wellbeing of the human community—and punish deviance among its ranks. In short, monsters are ethical construct in the cultural worldviews of the African people which are cinematically presented to enforce the dualistic arrangements of African ethical worldviews.[78]

Secondly, the construct of monsters in Nollywood movie represents the cinematic crystallizations and the cultural embodiments of the African fears of the "other" on the movie screens. As already observed by Cohen, monsters are the direct "embodiment of certain cultural moment" in a place or time.[79] Similarly, *monstrum*, the Latin roots of the word, "monster" describes an object/being that "reveals," "warns" and points to other things, thereby suggesting that monsters in themselves are cultural signposts and contextual signifiers.[80] Seen from this perspective, Bishop added, "[t]he value of the monster thus lies in its role as a cultural *monstrum*, a metaphorical figure that 'reveals' and 'warns' of something else, something larger than itself."[81] Based on this cultural semantics, Zakiya Hanafi has said, "monsters have always been ... highly charged with meaning."[82] In particular, Rosalind Sibielski observed, "[t]ales of monstrosity have frequently been deployed to give expression to cultural fears..."[83] Consequently, monster becomes a perfect masquerade of the human society because it is a cultural disguise and wears a communal costume and social masks to hide the fears of a people. Interestingly, the apparent fears of the African people of the spiritual realms as characterized in the monster-looking masquerades of its traditional religions, the fear-evoking demeanour of her works of arts, the dreaded cult of the ancestors—as the haunting living dead, the intentionally cultic adornment of its sacred spaces with the remains, the totems and skulls of fearful animals, the cultural designation of these cultic spaces as territories of the spirits, and the ultra otherness of the African deities are the collective re-enactment of these scripted images of African monsters on cinematic screens. Monsters in African movies are the customized versions of these cultural dreads and representations. In this sense, monsters whether in their role of policing of African morality, or in their basic depictions in connection to the diabolic works of witches and sorcerers—represents the cinematic staging of the fears of the African people for entities metaphysically situated in its spiritual cosmology.[84] Of course, monsters are the theatrical performance of African fears on the cinematic stages of modern movies. Considered this way, monsters are cultural mirrors and the cinematic depictions of the otherness of the spiritual world that is religiously grounded in the framing of its

cultural cosmologies and worldviews. To this end, the operations of monsters in the narrative space of Nollywood movies enforce the dualism in African ethical creative imaginations. Significantly, like the policing function of the masquerades in traditional African religions, monsters enforce the dualism of African spiritual realms, the activities of the wicked forces and their human accomplices—and directly positioned the human world to engage the otherness of a spiritual domain concretized on cinematic screens through the presence of monsters. Consequently, monsters are deep-sated cultural psychosis of the African people in their anxieties and neurosis over the realms of the spirits which they deeply feared—but also revered.

Thirdly, the construct of monsters in Nollywood scripts presents a cultural hermeneutics of the African problems especially in providing cultural answers to its probing of theodicy. Monsters are projected on cinematic screens to explain the deaths, misfortunes, failures, and the unpleasant events which occurred in the lives of the African people. Monsters in these different cinematic representations engage the existential conditions of the African people giving culturally legitimate answers and explanations to African plights in times of sufferings, pains, and misfortunes. For example, the symbolic association of witch to monster—already suggests the use of monster as a tool of cultural hermeneutics. They are monsters because they are often blamed for misfortunes and bad lucks in family, clan, village or community.

Consequently, the cinematic presence of monsters in Nollywood movies hermeneutically seeks to answers and gives culturally accepted responses to the general problems of theodicy generated by the unpleasant experiences and existential struggles of the African people. It explains the workings of the karmaic mechanics of African ethics in its specific and general operations in the lives of the African people in providing explanations of the deaths and misfortunes of African people. Through the constructs of monsters—we do not merely engage African fears—but we come face to face with African interpretative grids that seek to explain bad events and happenings in African experiences and realities through the cultural representations of monsters. Like the abnormal intrusions of problems into the cultural expectations of prosperity and success in the life of African people, monsters in their "ab-normal" features, shapes, sizes and presence seek to interrogate and explain the occurrences of these bad happenings or unexpected intrusions of sickness, misfortunes, and death in African community. Pragmatically, monsters are the cultural scapegoats blamed for the many misfortunes of the African cultural experiences of unpleasant realities.[85] While many African monsters are now cinematically visibly on movie screens—however in the real-life experiences of the African people—they are often invisible—and operate silently behind the scenes of misfortunes and disasters. The cultural mimesis of these unseen spirits and monsters from the invisible ambiance of their real life context to the concrete and animated presence in movies through special effects underscores the interpretative—and explanatory agenda of monsters in Nollywood movies. They are situated in the cinematic space to explain, interrogate and engage with salient problems of theodicy particularly unexplainable misfortunes and events

which are now given cultural valid interpretations through these representations.[86]

In addition, the constructs of monsters in Nollywood movies are deployed as tools of social control. Since monsters are culturally situated in the region of extreme otherness—and the transfer of individuals to this non-human region of otherness directly impose the moral and cultural obligations to work within the ethical precepts—and values of the African people. In the image of the monsters, there is lingering threat of cultural exclusion of certain individuals to the sphere of non-humanness and cultural locus of the dark side. The threat of non-human existence in the excommunication of an individual from the life and wellbeing of the community is clearly seen in the association of monster with the representations and discourses on witchcraft. In most part of Africa, witches are believed to possess non-human powers and lived at the social margin of human family; they are accused of shapeshifting activities—and often ostracized from the human community.

In the construct of monsters, the African society punishes witches and other deviant characters by disassociation, excommunications, and relocation into the sphere of communal sanctions.[87] Like masquerades, the construct of monster polices community morality and controls social behaviours. The fear of monsters itself promotes deterrence since it is largely situated in the feared region of communal exclusion—and the ambiguous space of non-humanness. There is an irony or even paradox here that while monsters are feared in their location and alienation to the space of non-humanness, they are invariably owned by the community since they help to protect the community morality and ethics. In this sense, they are disowned by the human society in their alienation to the space of extreme communal disapproval —yet they are also owned by them because they are significantly important in the monitoring and the enforcement of communal morality and values. Consequently, there is a subversiveness in the roles of the monster in popular Nollywood movies because their existence is directly negated by their being in the alienated spaces of communal sanctions yet their monstrous presence is culturally appropriated to guard moral enclosure of African communal morality.

Conclusion

Monsters are constructs of culture—because the cultural orientations and worldviews of a people provide the direct incentives in creating them. In Nollywood movies, monsters are given central importance because of their important roles in the cultural mapping of African spiritualities and beliefs.[88] Monsters are not merely entities of entertainment—or fictional objects of horrors—but they are situated in the cultural landscape of Nollywood movies to underscore important cultural functions. From the preceding study, monsters are strategically stationed in the cultural geography of Nollywood scripts because they are ethical medium in the communication of African cultural worldviews, the policing of African morality, the embodiment of African fears, its use as instruments of social control, and the existential significance of monsters in African cultural hermeneutics and theodicy. Considering several

functions of monsters in Nollywood movies, it is clearly apparent that monsters are important sources of African metaphysics, discourses on African ethics, and cultural hermeneutics. Through our encounters, with monsters in Nollywood—we invariably come face to face with ourselves—since these monsters are the direct representations of African psychosis and the increasing demands to live within the border of African community. Consequently, the cinematic construct of monsters in Nollywood movies are not entirely about monsters—but ourselves in the mapping of our collective cultural psychosis, the intrigues of our creative impulses, our cultural policing of social otherness, and our innate hermeneutical conversations with our general human problems in gape of monsters.[89]

Endnotes:

1. See Craig Detweiler, "Holy Terror: Confronting our Fears and Loving our Movie Monsters," *Interpretation* 74, no. 2 (2020): 171-182; David R. Castillo, "Monsters for the Age of the Post-Human," *Hispanic Issues* 15 (2014): 161-178; Jeffrey A. Weinstock, "Introduction: Monsters are the Most Interesting People," *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. Jeffrey A. Weinstock (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-5; Dominique Lestel, "Why Are We So Fond of Monsters," *Comparative Critical Studies* 9, no. 3 (2012): 259-269; Karmen Šterk, "The Sublimity of Monsters: Kant, Lacan and the Society of Connoisseurs," *Horror Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 167-180; Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler, "Dracula and Carmilla: Monsters and the Mind," *Philosophy and Literature* 29, no. 1 (2005): 218-227.
2. There are interesting studies surrounding these mentioned monsters. For example, Humbaba—nicknamed the *terrible* is also known as Huwawa. Humbaba was the guardian monster of the cedar forest fought by Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. They cut off the head of the monster and placed it in a bag. Like the story of Medusa—the head of Humbaba is used in apotropaic manner [See Miriam Robbins Dexter, "The Ferocious and the Erotic: 'Beautiful' Medusa and the Neolithic Bird and Snake," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, no. 1 (2010): 25-41]. While the story of humbaba as the villain was popularly in the ancient world, there is new evidence that challenged this dominant narrative—and suggests that Gilgamesh and Enkidu were the villains and Humbaba—the monster was the benevolent guardian of the forest. Concerning this myth see Stephanie Dalley, trans. "The Epic of Gilgamesh," *Myths from Mesopotamia, the Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Tallay Ornan, "Picture and Legend: The Case of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven," *Eretz-Israel* (2003): 18-32. Concerning other recent studies on ancient monsters such as Leviathan see Kelly J. Murphy, "Leviathan to *Lucifer*: What Biblical Monsters (Still) Reveal," *Interpretation* 74, no. 2 (2020):146-158.
3. Jeremy Biles, "Monster Technologies and the Telepathology of Everyday Life," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui, 147-161 (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 149.
4. Different definitions of monsters are given in various studies. According Zakiya Hanafi, there are several definitions of monsters because "[m]onstrosity ranges freely from physical to moral qualities and back again, seemingly unconcerned by the different orders of reality implied in this conflation." Concerning these different perspectives see Zakiya Hanafi, *Monsters in Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of Scientific Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 13.
5. Biles, "Monster Technologies and the Telepathology of Everyday Life," 149.

6. *Ibidem*.
7. *Ibidem*.
8. Paul Semonin has studied the cultural significance of monsters in the founding of the American society. He investigated the cultural significance in the digging of fossils of monsters by the American founding fathers—and the stories of the monsters—especially Mastodon in the founding of American society. Concerning this study see Paul Semonin, *American Monster: How the Nation's First Prehistoric Creature became a Symbol of National Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 341-361.
9. There are three main approaches in the discourse on monsters in contemporary times. These three approaches are namely the psychoanalytical, the representational, and the ontological methods. Working with Julia Kristeva's concept of "Abject" and Sigmund Freud's view on "repression" the psychoanalytical approach in the study of monsters see the monsters as the part of the repressed self which refuses the social and religious repressions that create caged feeling of "normalcy." Kristeva described "abjection" as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." It is the opposite of object—because an abjection is not "definable" [Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4]. Consequently, in the image of the "monster" we come face to face with our repressed self—which is unleashed without the caging of the "normalcy." The normalcy or the "symbolic" realm often does not allow the expression of these repressed—or abandoned selves. Consequently, the abjection (or the abandonment) of ourselves in our quest to fit into the normalcy of the human society creates the monster. In this regard, monsters are precisely our abject self—or abandoned self; they are uncanny but they are also familiar to us. Monsters are the products of the dialectics between the symbolic region of normalcy and the repressed place of abjection. Drawing from the insight of the first, the representational approach sees monsters as the expressions of these abjected and abandoned selves which operate with the anxieties of a particular historical period in order to product a monster. In this understanding, monsters are historical expressions and manifestations of specific repressed selves. Thus monsters are the cultural products of a particular epoch in history. It probes the representations of monsters in the category of good or bad within a historical space, the impact of technology in the representations of monsters, and the presence of social/political discourses on the construct of monsters in modern times. The ontological approach in the study of monster investigates the ontological origin of monsters especially the creations of life-forms in laboratory—and re-enactment of Frankenstein syndrome through the innovative and creative scientific research. It takes interests in the "being" or "becoming" of monster within this creation of new life forms. Concerning the detail and specific studies of these three approaches see Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui, eds. *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2-8
10. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen outlined seven different perspectives on the discourse of monsters. Concerning these different perspectives see Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 3-25.
11. Jeffrey W. Mantz has approached the protracted wars in Congo in the definition of global zombie consumerism which precipitated and continually fuelled the wars. See Jeffrey W. Mantz, "On the Frontlines of the Zombie War in the Congo: Digital Technology, the Trades in Conflict Minerals, and Zombification," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 177-192.
12. See Remi Joseph-Salisbury, "Wrangling with Black Monster: Young Black Mixed-race Men and Masculinities," *Journal of Sociology* 70, no. 5 (2019): 1754-1773; Theresa E. Jackson, "Policing a Menstrual Monster: How Working Class Girls Discuss their Menstrual Reactions and Experiences," *Journal of Youth Studies* 22, no. 2 (2019): 153-170.

13. For example see the novel—*Monster's Daughter* by Michelle Pretorious (Melville House, 2016) and John Archie, *The Monster Evil: Policing and Violence in Victorian Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).
14. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 13.
15. *Ibidem*, 12.
16. African juju priests have been compared to the representation of the "mad scientists" in horror genre such as the story of Frankenstein. Tobias Wendl observed, "[w]hat, from a structuralist point of view, makes the jujumen resemble the 'mad scientist' (like Victor Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll or Dr. Moreau) is that both attempt to transgress normality and manipulate the natural reproductive cycle. The jujuman operates in his shrine, the mad scientist in his laboratory. Generally they both overestimate their powers and their creations (or transformative acts) go out of control. In the end, both become tragic figures and are destroyed. This is usually due to fate, (or to "God") who restores the rules of reproduction. A significant difference between the two is that the mad scientist is largely inspired and motivated by his own mad dreams, whereas the jujuman does not act out his own dreams, but those of his clients." See Tobias Wendl, "Wicked Villagers and the Mysteries of Reproduction: An Exploration of Horror Movies from Ghana and Nigeria," *African Media Cultures.* Frank Witmann and Rosemarie Beck, eds , 263–285 (Cologne: Köppe, 2004), 275–276.
17. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 12.
18. *Ibidem*.
19. The identity, character, and type of monster have changed from one historical period to the other. It is the "society's basic fears" that often "clothe themselves in fashionable or immediately accessible garments" of a monster. See Robin Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 79.
20. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 7.
21. *Ibidem*, 7-12.
22. Daniel Punday, "Narrative Performance in the Contemporary Monster Story," *The Modern Language Review* 97, no. 4 (2002), 803-820.
23. Derrida extended this description of monster to the future—since the future has at its core—an unknown element in it. Derrida said, "...the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared, you see, is heralded by species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would already be a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow. All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous arrivant, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture." See Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Weber, *Points ...: Interviews, 1974–1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), as quoted in Levina & Bui, "Introduction: Towards a Comprehensive Monster Theory in the 21st Century," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 6.
24. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 15.
25. *Ibidem*, 8.
26. See Janet McKnight, "The Anatomy of Mass Accountability: Confronting Ideology and Legitimacy in Rwanda's Gacaca Courts," *Conflict Trends* 2014, no. 1 (2014): 35-42; Zach Dubinsky, "The Lessons of Genocide," *Essex Human Rights Review* 2, no. 1 (2005): 112-117; Casey Dorman, "Humanizing Monsters," *Civil American* 2, no. 5 (2017): //https://www.philosophersinamerica.com/2017/10/31/humanizing-monsters/.

27. See Janine Clark, "Learning from the Past: Three Lessons from the Rwandan Genocide," *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 1-28; Dubinsky, "The Lessons of Genocide," 112-117.
28. Cordelia Hebblethwaite, "The Hunt for Mokele-mbebe: Congo's Loch Ness Monster," *BBC Magazine* (28 December, 2011)—https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-16306902. Accessed: 9th May, 2020; Roy P. Mackal, *A Living Dinosaur? In Search of Mokele-mbembe* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987); Sue L. Hamilton, *Monsters of Mystery* (Minnesota: ABDO Publishing Company, 2007); Daniel Loxton and Donald R. Prothero, *Abominable Science: Origins of the Yeti, Nessie, and Other Famous Cryptids* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2013); Donald R. Prothero, *The Story of Life in 25 Fossils: Tales of Intrepid Fossil Hunters and the Wonders of Evolution* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2015); Also see Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: the Collapse of the Congo and the Great of Africa* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011).
29. Situated in this same cultural construct of difference, the contemporary story of the self-transformation of a hero into a monster-looking creature comes to mind. In the movie, *Avatar*—(Cameron and Landau, 2009) tells the story of Jake Sully (acted by Sam Worthington)—a white disabled male character—who is transformed—into a blue sleek *Na'vi* monster-like creature in order to infiltrate the *Na'vi* residents living in the iriscident jungle named Pandora. Concerning the underlying discourses of race, contamination, and conquest in the representation of monsters in this movie see Susana Loza, "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 53-72.
30. See Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, "Post-9/11 Narratives of Threat and the US Shifting Terrain of Terror," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 243-255.
31. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 8.
32. See Shokoofeh Rajabzadeh, "The Depoliticized Saracen and Muslim Erasure," *Literature Compass* 16, no. 9-10 (2019): 1-8.
33. Chris Bateman, "Taming the HIV/AIDS Monster in our Lifetime?" *South African Medical Journal* 100, no. 6 (2010): 346-348; Brendan Bain, "HIV/AIDS Challenging a Monster," *Journal of HIV/AIDS Prevention & Education for Adolescents & Children* 4, no. 2/3 (2001): 3-21.
34. Interesting there is a shift in recent times in zombie movies which traditionally are centered on the living dead to the ones that focused on the motif of infectious epidemic. See Sherryl Vint, "Abject Posthumanism: Neoliberalism, Biopolitics, and Zombies," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 136.
35. Sergey Sukhankin, "COVID-19 as a Tool of Information Confrontation: Russia's Approach," *The School of Public Policy Publications* 13, no. 3 (2020): 1-10; Y. T. Xiang *et al*, "Timely Research Papers about COVID-19 in China," *Lancet* 395 (2020): 684-685; Q Li. *et al*, "Trend and Forecasting of the COVID-19 Outbreak in China," *The Journal of Infection* 80, no. 4 (2020): 469-496.
36. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 11.
37. Alok Singh, "COVID 19: Are We Fighting with the Monster?" *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 9, no. 4 (2020): 21-34; Rami Zurayk, "Pandemic and Food Security," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems and Community Development* 9, no. 3 (2020): 1-5.
38. The construct of monster has sensitive towards gender. Concerning the construct of monsters along gender lines see Rosalind Sibielski, "Gendering the Monster within: Biological Essentialism, Sexual Difference, and Changing Symbolic Functions of Monster in Popular Werewolf Texts," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 115-129.
39. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 9.

40. Queer characters have featured in contemporary discourse on monsters. Concerning the presence of queer characters in representations of monsters see Peter Odell Campbell, "Intersectionality Bites: Metaphors of Race and Sexuality in HBO's *True Blood*," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 99-113.
41. Concerning the issues of race, conquest and miscegenation in the representation of monsters in *District 9* see Loza, "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times," 54-61.
42. Loza, "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times," 58-61.
43. Reading the representations of Nigerians in *District 9*, Loza added, "[f]or the Nigerians, becoming alien means not just assuming the dehumanizing, distorting black mask imposed on Africans and colonized subjects, but flaunting it." See Loza, "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times," 60.
44. See Loza, "Playing Alien in Post-racial Times," 60.
45. *Twilight* was released in 2005 directed by Stephenie Meyer. Concerning the cultural significance of the monsters in this movie see Carolyn Hartford, "Domesticating the Monstrous in a Globalizing World," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 303-317; Florian Grandena, "Heading towards the Past: *The Twilight Vampire Figure as a Surveillance Metaphor*, "*Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 35-51.
46. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 17.
47. See Grandena, "Heading towards the Past," 45-47.
48. Kelly Connelly, "Defeating the Male Monster in *Halloween* and *Halloween H2O*," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 35, no. 1 (2007): 12-21.
49. The changing ethical landscape of Hollywood movies in recent times could clearly be seen in the "new spin" given to villains of past classics. For example, the Hollywood movie *Maleficent* (Robert Stromberg, 2014) reworked the classical story of the *Sleeping Beauty* (Clyde Geronimi, 1959) presented through the eyes of the witch herself, thus retelling this classical tale in favour of the evil witch.
50. Grandena, "Heading towards the Past," 40.
51. *Ibidem*, 41.
52. Kyle W. Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous: Human Devolution in the *Walking Dead*,"*Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 73-85.
53. Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous," 81.
54. See Weinstock, "Introduction: Monsters are the Most Interesting People," 3-4; Helena Bassil-Morozow, *Tim Burton: The Monster and the Crowd—A Post-Jungian Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2013); Michael Szollosy, "Freud, Frankenstein and Our Fear of Robots: Projection in our Cultural Perception of Technology," *AI & Society* 32, no. 3 (2017): 433-439; Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of our Worst Fears* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2011); Gordon D. Hirsch, "The Monster was a Lady: On the Psychology of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*," *Hartford Studies in Literature* 7 (1975): 116-153.
55. See Albrecht Classen, "The Monster Outside and Within: Medieval Literary Reflections on Ethical Epistemology—From *Beowulf* to Marie de France, the *Nibelungenlied*, and Thüring von Ringoltingen's *Melusine*," *Neohelicon* 40 (2013): 521-542; Luke Russell, "Evil, Monsters and Dualism," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 13, no. 1 (2010): 45-58.
56. Weinstock, "Introduction: Monsters are the Most Interesting People," 4.
57. *Ibidem*.
58. The Nigerian Nollywood movie industry is perhaps the third largest filmmaking industry in the world—following after Hollywood and Bollywood, and its influence is readily seen in the increasing patronage enjoyed by Nigerian movies across Africa—and even beyond. Concerning the

history of Nollywood see George Tasie, "African Traditional Religion in Nigerian Video Films: A Rethink," *American International Journal of Social Science* 2, no. 1 (2013), 23-29.

59. There is the common critique of Nollywood movies and scripts as cinematic works obsessed with witchcraft, voodoo, and cult. Recent Nollywood movies have tried to navigate around these dominant criticisms through creative plots and scripting. Concerning this critique see Shmerah Passchier, *Lessons from New Nollywood: A Theory from the Global South-Second Draft* (September, 2013), 13-14.
60. Traditional western movie genre do not particularly fits the description of the contents of Nollywood movies. For example, Jonathan Haynes has classified Nollywood movies in these following genres: money ritual films, senior girl films, family films, cultural epics, political films, and comedies. The monster motifs cut across these different genres. I think Nollywood horror films should be given a separate genre—because they are dominant and feature in the listed genres by Haynes. Concerning Haynes's mapping of Nollywood's movie genre along the preceding classification see Jonathan Haynes, *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3-311.
61. In human history, witches and sorcerers are often branded as monsters. Concerning this study see Michael E. Heyes, ed. *Holy Monsters, Sacred Grotesques: Monstrosity and Religion in Europe and the United States* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018).
62. See Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, eds. Valerio Marchetti, Antonella Salomoni, and Arnold I. Davidson. English Series trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2003). As quoted in Levina & Bui, "Introduction: Towards a Comprehensive Monster Theory in the 21st Century," *Monster Culture in the 21st Century: A Reader*, eds. Marina Levina & Diem-my T. Bui (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.
63. See Cohen, "Preface: In a Time of Monsters," *Monster Theory*, ed. Jeffery Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), ix.
64. On the other hands, this retributive is situated in a universe which flaunts immoral contents. Nollywood has an obsession with occultism, "prostitution, obscenity, murder and violence" and... [a]part from nudity everything else is allowed: murder, suicide, torture, rape, incest and infanticide,'" Sophie Samyn, "Nollywood in the Diaspora: An Exploration Study on Transnational Aesthetics,"*Master Dissertation* (University of Gent, 2010), 23.
65. Concerning the stories and representations of Nollywood stars see Noah A. Tsika, *Nollywood Stars: Media and Migration in West Africa and Diaspora*. New Directions in National Cinema, ed. Jacqueline Reich (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2015).
66. Like the use of the cross as an anti-vampire weapon in the early Hollywood movie, Christian prayer teams are always featured in Nollywood script as anti-witchcraft weapon. In modern Hollywood script, the use of the cross—as anti-vampire weapon has disappeared—replaced now by the use of the brightness of the sun as an anti-vampire weapon [see Grandena, "Heading towards the Past," 40]. The use of the Christian motif of prayers as anti-vampire or anti-witchcraft weapons comes from the sensitive of Nollywood script writers on the pervasive belief of this Christian truth by their teeming popular of Christian audience. Unfortunately, the failure to explore creative reappropriation of this Christian motif has turned Nollywood script writing dull—and uninteresting at this critical point. For the critical rejection of this mainstream Christian motif of Nollywood movies by Tanzanian movie industry—see Claudia Böhme, "Bloody Bricolages: Traces of Nollywood in Tanzanian Video Films," *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*, eds. Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 343.

67. See Bernadette Lynn Bosky, "Witches and Wizards in US Literature and Film," *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*, ed. Jeffrey A. Weinstock (New York: Routledge, 2014), 607-609.
68. Concerning the sociolinguistics of Nollywood movies see Emmanuel A. Adedun, "The Sociolinguistics of Nollywood Movie," *Journal of Global Analysis* 1, no. 2 (2010): 113-138.
69. See Matthias Krings, "Muslim Martyrs and Pagan Vampires: Popular Video Films and the Propagation
of Religion in Northern Nigeria," *Postscripts* 1, no. 2/3 (2005): 183-205; Jonathan Haynes, "A Literature Review: Nigerian and Ghanaian Videos," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 22, no. 1 (2010): 105-120; Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome, eds. *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013). For the use of special effects to depict this use of spiritual powers see Ikenna O. Aghany, "Computer Graphics, Animation and Special Effects: A Creative Way of Producing Igbo-themed Nollywood Movies for the Global Audience," *Journal of African Films & Diaspora Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018): 9-22.
70. See Grandena, "Heading towards the Past," 42.
71. On the critical analysis of this Nollywood movie in the category of a cultural epic see Haynes, *Nollywood*, 144-149.
72. Zoanthropy is the psychological term employed in the description of human transformation into animals. Similarly, lycanthropy is also used to describe the transformation of humans into werewolves and cyanthropy—for human into dogs. Concerning the study of the psychiatristic and psychological dimensions of these animal transformations see Richard Noll, *Vampires, Werewolves and Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatrist Literature* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1992), 83-99.
73. See Kimberly McMahon-Coleman and Roslyn Weaver, *Werewolves and Other Shapeshifters in Popular Culture: A Thematic Analysis of Recent Depictions* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2012).
74. There is increasing recognition of the influence of Nollywood's monster creation tradition across Africa. For example, Claudia Böhme described the central influence of Nollywood's monsters in the making of Tanzanian movie industry said, "[d]uring editing, the monsters' supernatural powers are made visible and audible using special effects from Nigerian and Hollywood movies. These effects allow the monsters to vanish, to walk through walls, or to use lightning weapons to destroy their opponents."See Böhme, "Bloody Bricolages," 332.
75. Haynes, *Nollywood*, 20.
76. Most villains in Nollywood movies are severely punished by supernatural means through a gradually degenerating sickness or dehumanizing event. See Moradewun Adejunmobi, "Charting Nollywood's Appeal Locally & Globally," *African Literature Today* 28 (2010): 106–21.
77. Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous," 74.
78. See African movies have moral contents and persuasions see Böhme, "Bloody Bricolages," 332.
79. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 4.
80. *Ibidem*.
81. Bishop, "Battling Monsters and Becoming Monstrous," 75.
82. See Hanafi, *Monsters in Machine*, 2.
83. Sibielski, "Gendering the Monster within," 117.
84. Gilmore, *Monsters*, ix, 2-3.
85. See Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, 23-46; Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 11.
86. Haynes, *Nollywood*, 3-17.
87. Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 13-16; Wood, *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, 79.

88. See Böhme, "Bloody Bricolages," 327-346; Abdalla U. Adamu, "Transgressing Boundaries: Reinterpretation of Nollywood Films in Muslim Northern Nigeria," *Global Nollywood: The Transnational Dimensions of an African Video Film Industry*, eds. Matthias Krings and Onookome Okome (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2013), 287-305.
89. See Asa S. Mittman, "Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies," *Research Companion to Monsters and Monstrous,* ed. Asa Simon Mittman with Peter Dendle (London: Ashgate, 2012), 1-14.

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