Artistic Appearance and Make-Believe through Computer-Generated Make-Up Designs in Coheren Hardy's *The Nun* (2018)

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Abstract: *Artistic appearance in the field of performing arts has to do with the effective use of make-up to create desired believability in the mind of the viewers and audience members, thus making them believe with little or no doubt what they are seeing on stage or watching on the screen. It is expected that make-up should be made to be convincing enough in terms of the products, tools, colours, textures and shapes. However, make-up designs have over the years employed traditional and manual methods/approaches in achieving the desired make-believe in artistic productions. This paper, away from the conventional means of make-up design, attempts to explore the application of technology through the use of computer to evaluate the effectiveness of creating believability through make-up design, adopting Coheren Hardy's The Nun as a case study. Based on a qualitative research approach, this study appropriates a 2-dimensional analysis technique to discuss the generating of make-up designs with effect for make-believe. The paper submits that, though practical make-up effects are still common in film productions, contemporary digital approaches for make-up designs present as an innovation that helps design achieve believability with ease.*

Keywords: *Colour, Computer-generated, Film, Make-up, Technology*

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Introduction

Make-up serves as a great field of magic in any artistic appearance and production, and it is designed to express characterization. However, one of the aspects in film production that is less theorized is make-up design. The visual effects of make-up are only created to attract attention to symbolic characters but also made to heighten aesthetics in order to create spectacles for the viewing pleasure of the audience with intention of ensuring believability. The perception of make-up colours is one of the most interesting psychological experiences. It can be easily imagined that the same experience with make-up colours would contribute to missing some of the very essential perceptual qualities.

Seeing that make-up been in existence right from the inception of theatre, it is pertinent to understand that make-up is a vital area when it comes to artistic appearance in any performing arts including film. Make-up can be used to create believable illusion in the minds of the audience and viewers, making them believe what they are watching on the screen and seeing on stage, this seems to have informed Bassey Ekpe's assertion that "theatre should represent the actuality of everyday life,

and should therefore affect the audience as much as possible" (3). In the early Greek and Roman theatre, actors were masked to disguise themselves while acting (Brockett and Ball 383). Most of the actors then used masks to portray a different gender while acting. As theatre evolves, make-up also evolves. Women were allowed to act, and so mask was not necessary as both genres were allowed to play roles. In a view shared by Okon Jacob and affirmed by Ekeke & Ekeke, advancements in stage lighting technology require stage make-up evolve beyond one over-all face colour to a multidimensional craft. According to Brockett and Ball, "originally, theatres used candles and oil-lamps; these two sources of light were dim and allowed for crude, unrealistic make-up application, one gas lighting, limelight and electric light was introduced to theatre, a need emerged for new make-up materials and more skillful application technique" (385)

Make-up, therefore, becomes a unique aspect in creating make-believe impressions on actors during performances that cannot be ignored or underestimated in any artistic appearance. It is with the help of make-up that certain elements of characters are amplified. Without make-up, most characters in film would be considered flat and vague. With the introduction of technology to aid make-up, the artistic appearance and creation of make-believe is further explored in terms of colours and thus corroborating the

position of Ekpe that, "media products have proven valuable tools for engaging and analyzing human concern" (130). To better analyse the concept of modern technology in creating believability through make-up, this paper seeks to use the experience of the film production titled *The Nun* by Coheren Hardy.

Concept of Make-Believe

It is well recognised that visual art has the power to change the viewer's perspective. One of the most forceful and successful visual arts, film has the capacity to persuade and have an impact. When it came to visual effects, cinema initially relied on conventional and straightforward techniques that were appropriate for the audience's culture at the time. However, technological advancements were swiftly and clearly followed, which allowed for the application of various optical illusions, which significantly altered the structure and content of the film. One of the most significant subfields of optical illusions is the art of makeup. In reality, makeup is the art of altering an actor's real face in a way that suits the character they are portraying by using powders, colours, etc. to create specific facial features needed to express the character or be reincarnated. This is contrary to popular belief, which holds that makeup is only related to beautifying artists and concealing facial flaws to show them brilliantly. In addition to the fact

that many people use it to attend various cultural and masquerade events, we frequently observe that many people—many of whom are teenagers—use it on a regular basis.

Additionally, cinematic makeup can convey any type of information to viewers without the need for words or wasting time. Cinematic makeup is different from regular makeup in that it must be compatible with bright lighting, decorative angles, and accessories. This kind of art has grown to be so important that it has led to the establishment of specialised institutes where young artists who find inspiration in movies and other forms of art can paint them on their faces and bodies using a variety of colours and accessories. This allows them to express their creativity and ideas, no matter how bizarre or absurd they may seem.

Stanilavsky's system is a systematic approach to training actors that the Russian theatre practitioner, Konstantin Stanilavski developed in the first half of the twentieth century. His system dwells on what he calls, "art of experiencing" (which he contrasts the "art of representation). It mobilizes the actor's conscious thought and will in order to activate other, less-controllable psychological processes such as emotional experience and subconscious behavior sympathetically and indirectly. In rehearsal, "the actor searches for inner motives to justify action and definition of what the character seeks to achieve at any given moment" (Jean 49). What Stanislavski implies is that actors should be able to make the audience members believe what they are doing on stage is nothing but real and the truth. That the actor on stage should be able to convince the audience through his emotions, he does not need to act the role but live and become the character, feel his pain, emotions, be happy when the character is. All in order to be able to make the audience members believe. (Jean 50). Throughout his career, Stanislavski subjected his acting and directing to rigorous process of artistic self-analysis and reflection. His system of acting developed out of his persistent efforts to remove blocks that he encountered in his performances.

In a television interview, the prestigious Christopher Nolan says, "the magician takes the ordinary something and makes it to do something extraordinary. Now you are looking for the secret… but you won't find it because of course you are not really looking. You don't want to know. You want to be fooled" (Waltz Television). Suspension of disbelief, sometimes called willing suspense of disbelief, is the intentional avoidance of critical thinking or logic in examining something surreal, such as a work of speculative fiction, in order to believe it for the sake of enjoyment (Jean 50). Aristotle first explored the idea of the concept in its relation to the principles of theatre: the audience

ignores the unreality of fiction in order to experience catharsis.

Willing suspension of disbelief was coined in an autobiographical literary discourse, published in 1817 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an English poet, literary critic and philosopher, under the title: *Biographia Literaria.* In its 14th chapter, Coleridge mentions the conversations he had had with William Woedsworth an English poet, which inspired the cooperation of the two in writing the anthology 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798). Those conversations often revolve around "the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination" (Coleridge 265). To understand Coleridge's meaning, we can refer to records of a lecture he delivered in 1818 on *The Tempest,* where he compares dream and play (or novel):

In sleep we pass at once by a sudden collapse into this suspension of Will and Comparative power: whereas in an interesting Play, real or presented, we are brought up to this point, as far as it is requisite or desirable, by the Art of the Poet and the Actor, and with the consent and positive abidance of our own Will. We choose to be deceived. (Ferri 10)

In both occurrences, the conscious efforts performed by the receivers of the art works are prominent. Much evidence exists for the notion of a deliberate suspension of reality judgment or ignoring existent beliefs for the benefit of experiencing art works prior to Coleridge's formulations (Ferri 9). This seems to be a consideration of Kant's notion of the unique kind of pleasure from (and judgment of) art as a distance in what could be described as disinterestedness.

Make-Up and Technology in Film Production

Film is a literary work that combines aural and visual elements to present something interesting to see. Audiences can always expect something new from films. As a result, viewers are enthusiastic and always happy. Outside of other media, film is impacted because its format is engaging and its aural and visual components work effectively together to keep viewers from becoming bored. On the other hand, films primarily use audio and visual elements of communication, make-up inclusive. In filmmaking, make-up have a major role. In other words, a movie is an example of a set of pictures that are shown on video and create amusement. All facets of society are impacted by the intricate and distinctive art form of film. Intense emotions and direct human interaction with the outside world and one's own life can

also be evoked by film. Moral teachings can have both beneficial and detrimental effects. The film's messages are easily captured by viewers when the visuals complement the audio.

Make-up in performing arts – motion pictures or television, are any of the materials used by actors for cosmetic purposes and as an aid in taking on the appearance appropriate to the characters they play. To understand the development of make-up, we need to establish that, make-up has a long theatrical history; notably, early film industry typically looked to traditional stage techniques, and comparatively, it proved inadequate as one of the problems of make-up then was with celluloid (Iyorza & Iseyen). Ronald Boutwell explains that make-up has been one of the major contributing factors to the growth and development of theatre as well as film. He further explains that with the evolution of lighting technology, most of the flaws and mistakes that were made during make-up, had to be corrected because light will reveal them hence his statement:

Early-stage lighting provided first by candles and later by oil-lamps, was dim and ineffectual, consequently, crudity in make-up, passed unnoticed. With the introduction of gas, lime-lights and finally electric lights into the theatre, came the need for new make-up materials and more skillful techniques of application. Crude,

inartistic effects could not be hidden under the revealing light of electricity. A solution was found with the use of stick greasepaint, invented in the 1860s in Germany by Ludwig Leichner, Wagnerian opera singer. By 1890, the demand for stage make-up had warranted its manufacture on a commercial scale. Half a century later, greasepaint in stick form had given way to more easily handled creams, though greasepaint's superior qualities in colour blending were still prized. (Boutwell 36)

It is as a result of the above statement that the modern stage has decided to improve. As noted by Bassey Bassey "the interface of theatre and technology has not invalidated earlier practices, rather the existing practices are made to interact with digital technology" (112). On the stage make-up is a necessity because powerful stage-lighting system may remove all colours from the actor's complexion and will eliminate shadows and lines. Make-up restores this colour and defines the facial features to ensure a natural appearance. It also helps the player to look and feel part, a consideration especially helpful in character interpretation. A theatrical make-up kit typically includes make-up base colours, rouges, coloured liners for shadow and highlighting effects, make-up and false eyelashes, various cleansers, powder and powder puffs, putties for making prosthetic features, adhesive, wigs, etc. Latex may be

worked into the skin to create the illusion of aging or deformity. The art of stage make-up has become so complex that most theatrical companies employ a professional make-up artist who creates and applies make-up to the actor's various roles.

Make-up effects have been a commonly used tool in films for long, but the industry was just beginning in the early 1990s, it was rare for productions to spend time or budget on these kinds of effects. Even with that, film offered glamour and lots of possibilities, this possibly informed Bassey and Ekeke description of film as the most magical form of storytelling, the genre most similar to our dreams and a place where a lot of possibilities abound. Most filmmakers took their make-up cue from techniques used in the theatre but film quality improved and there came the need for more realistic cosmetic effects. Little wonder Persky has made us to understand that in the mid-1920s, actor Lon Chaney pioneered special effects make-p by creating his own looks for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Phantom of the Opera* and many other films. And as emphasized by Ekeke, performance is "a tasking and painstaking exercise that requires commitment, dedication, devotion, resilience, doggedness, open-mindedness, firmness and good observation in order to achieve the desired goal of believability" (90).

The art of make-up in films actually began with the popularity of monster movies in the early 1930s. Jack Pierce was one of the leading make-up innovators of this time and collaborated with Central Casting and Boris Karloff in films like *Frankenstein* and *Mummy*. According to *New York Post,* "to create the monster's look for Frankenstein". Pierce used cotton and spirit gum to make prosthetics and green make-up that would appear ghostly white on camera. As film industry advanced with the introduction of full colour pictures, several make-up tricks had to be adopted to maintain the realism of the effects. Practical make-up effects are still common in film productions but with the advancement of performance much is expected from technology for artistic appearances as some film productions go for full Computer-Generated Images (CGI) or use a mixture of both.

Discussion and Conclusion

Technically speaking, The Nun combines digital and physical methods. The gothic architecture of the abbey provides a rich visual backdrop for the magnificent production design. *The Nun* is a modern movie produced with various technological inputs – comprising not less than 60% of CGI (Computer Generated Effects/Images). *The Nun* looks so real and believable in artistic appearance as enhanced by make-up technology. From the beginning of the

movie, about 1:10:10 or thereabout, it can be observed that one of the Nuns is on her knees praying, with a torn gown exposing her left shoulder from the back and Valak, the Demon is seen scratching her back and drawing a pentagram.

Pentagram on the Nun's back

Source**:** *The Nun* **(2018)**

Pentagram on the Nun's back

Source**:** *The Nun* **(2018)**

It is quite observable in *The Nun* that make-up can be incorporated during the post-production process where the computer-generated effects could be created and inserted. Watching the movie revealed the pentagram mark does not just appear but follows a gradual and continuing process to the completion stage. This, however, could not be achieved during the filming process because the hand drawing it would have been captured and thus the accuracy of the drawing was and can be possible through computer technology.

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