Gothic Topoi and the Postmodern Imagination in Nnedi Okorafor's Akata Witch

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Abstract: This paper explores Okorafor's *Akata Witch* as an exemplification of Gothic nuances inhabiting the postmodernist world. Okorafor's dexterous deployment of Gothicism as *topoi* that uncovers salient postmodern issues contemporaneous with society. The study is anchored on the emerging theory propagated by Maria Beville, Gothic-postmodernist theory. Through a close reading of selected text, this study analyses Gothic *topoi* that serve to elucidate sublime terrors in the form of fear of self, immortality and transcendence to the ethereal realm. Okorafor's *Akata Witch* was sampled out purposely because it is flavored with Gothic *topoi* that amplify postmodern concerns. The paper argues that Gothic *topoi* deployed by the writer evince society's sensibilities and contradictions in the twenty first century. It established that the Gothic *topoi* of placeness and Gothic characters revitalize restoration of Gothic as a distinct genre. A conclusion is made that Gothic *topoi* buttress postmodern notions of hegemonic commodification. The study adds to the polemics surrounding the continuous evolvement and centrality of Gothicism in literature. The study also contributes to the field of Gothic-postmodernism as ever-changing and evolving genre. It entrenches it as a distinct genre that requires more academic attention and recognition.

Keywords: ethereal, Gothicism, postmodernism, realm, sublime, terror, transcendence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gothic-Postmodernism, A Literary Theory.

Gothic genre has a long winding literary and historical evolvement that is traced to the Germanic tribe, Goth that defeated the Romans around third to fifth Centuries. The tribe, raging with anger and irrationality, was associated with the dark side of human nature. They represented primitive roots and excesses in emotions. They were associated with barbarity, savagery and ferocity. Goth, then, signified "a trend towards an aesthetics based on feeling and emotion and associated primarily with the sublime" (Botting, 2005, p. 2) because of the nature of the Goths who were then viewed as uncouth, unrefined, crude and wild. Regarded as expressive and connoting baser instincts of humanity, Goth has remained representative of medieval art that was revived in the enlightenment era. It transcends art into architectural, cultural and histo-religious spheres as a style that was revived to represent neo-classical culture. This paper avers that humanity has shown keen fascination with the excess sentimentalism, feelings and emotions demonstrated by Gothicism. The aspects over time have evolved to manifest fear, awe, astounding compassion and horror.

In the sixteenth century, Gothic culture was attributed to crudeness, wildness and extravagant fancies, emotional outburst, superstition and barbarism which became defining Gothic *topoi* that entrenched Gothic traditions. These attributes, according to Botting (2005) are associated "with a more expensive and imaginative potential for aesthetic production" (15) and more recently postmodernist genre. In the eighteenth century, the Gothic genre evolved to become more distinct when it was incorporated with other genres; "Romantic genre, Victorian genre, and modernist Gothic" (Beville, 2009, p. 17). An interest in reviving both the classical and medieval art occurred in eighteenth century. The genre's aesthetics and thematic concerns are traced to Horace Walpole's text *The Castle of Otranto (1764): A Gothic Text* which set the tone and pulse of Gothic *topoi*. Other writers like Ann Radcliff and Mary Shelley penned their works following Gothic traditions that had been established with time.

With the postmodern thinking of fantasy and reality being synonymous with Gothic novel serves what Virginia Woolf (1995) identifies as the strange human need for feeling afraid which is not only ennobling but also cathartic. The Gothic genre discombobulates many readers in its use of Gothic *topoi* to unmask societal issues. It uncovers and addresses truth and reality through ascension to the numinous realm of the fantastical. In assessing socio-cultural and political issues that mirror postmodern society, the Gothic genre is primarily concerned with terror, horror and fragmentation. Gothic aesthetics and mechanics that inhabit postmodern literary space allow a new genre, Gothic-postmodern genre to assault the literary space. Gothic *topoi* are best suited to become the avenue with which society's sensibilities and contradictions are exposed. The infusion of Gothic *topoi* inhabiting postmodern space become an avenue in which Okorafor explores contemporary issues.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method that was most appropriate for this type of study was qualitative in approach. Qualitative approach often uses various sets of practices to collect, interrogate, analyze and interpret data from texts to gain better insight and understanding of subject matter at hand. Aspects

of postmodernist and Gothic-postmodernist criticisms guided this study throughout the different stages; sampling, data collection, analysis and interpretation stages. To attain the set objective, analytical research design was used. Primary data was chiseled out for coding and there-after underwent content analysis.The text, Nnedi Okorafor's *Akata Witch* was purposely sampled out since it consummates both Gothicism and postmodernism to an appreciable degree. The theoretical framework used locates itself within Gothic-postmodernism as indicated earlier.

III. GOTHIC TOPOI AND POSTMODERN IMAGINATION

Gothic *topoi* elucidates gothic-ness of Okorafor's *Akata Witch.* These are Gothic markers or tropes which are employed to amplify the gloom and liminality in postmodern society. Okorafor, in her text, *Akata Witch*, employs the use of Gothic *topoi* to criticize the negative potential of postmodern aspects of greed, materialism, self-centredness and perfidy. These Gothic markers or *topoi* in Okorafor's text attest to a narrative that that reveals hypperreality, indeterminacy, liminality and crossing the boundary of human conceptualization. These aspects peppers the postmodern landscape elucidating terror, fear and anxiety. Sublime terror is manifested through kidnap and murder of young children, vampirism, and immortalizing spirits.

Characters in the novel, though characterized by fear and anxiety, come out in what is regarded as Derrida's binary; good versus wicked, Leopard versus Lambs, innocent versus villains. Leopard are individuals who are gifted with sorcery in the text while those who are not are referred to as Lambs. A clear set boundary between the two sets of characters points to an overriding unification of the Gothic and the postmodern. Sunny is seen in relation to Black Hat Otokoto, while Chichi comes out as antithesis of the two trouble makers, Jibaku and Chelu, sadistic postmodern villains. Sunny is also likewise contrasted with her arrogant elder brother, Chukwu. The binarity helps to indicate contrastive forces that inhabit individuals. Okorafor's brand of Gothic mechanics rest on the infusion of hybrid characters who are imbued with magicality and the setting of events which locates them in a planet, underneath earth. The underground setting portrays a hidden Gothic seclusion only meant for those initiated to magical powers. This is a clear indication of a setting *topos* allegorizing individual characters to stand in the liminal space between earthling and luminous spheres. As Chichi puts it, human beings are formed within conundrum of binary objects as they contain both spiritual and physical forms; all of which conjunct to formulate a hybrid character. Sunny, like Chichi, Orlu and Sasha has the two identities defining them.

The protagonist Sunny Nwazue in Okorafor's *Akata Witch,* is a Gothic character who undergoes individuation and transformation. She is introduced through her invisibility as an albino which estranges her from her school mates. Her invisibility, through her skin pigmentation is a culturalized mode of absenting her from socio-cultural activities in the society. This 'others' her as abnormal and fragments her identity. As one of Gothic characters, albinism recreates her as a ghost, an apparition and a spectre of her real self. She is regarded as unbelonging to the world of humanity. That is why she is animalized as a monkey, an *'Akata witch'* (bush animal) which alienates her and thrusts her to a liminal space, being and not being there. Her ghostly look is analogous to a Gothic apparition that lingers in space; being present and absent at the same time; near and far, visible and invisible. Her acknowledgement "I knew I looked like a ghost. All pale skinned. And was good at being ghost-quiet" (Okorafor, 2011, p. 3) is a clear indication of her doubleness as a Gothic character and a postmodern emblem of dissolution of expected reality. It identifies her as a unique Gothic character firmed by the actions around and within her. She is terrorized by her albinism skin condition. The absence of colour recreates her as a Gothic ghost, thereby, drowning and burying her physical identity within her making her an infusion of a ghost and a human being. Her albinism which is an archetypal *topoi* that personifies denigration and fragmentation of her identity, helps her to reconstruct her essence as a 'Leopard' member. She is clothed in her doubleness as one who belongs and unbelongs to the world of normativity. She derives symbolization and significance when she transcends the reality, crossing the boundary of known realm to gain a double identity.

At school, however, much as she endeavors to escape her friends' distorted view of herself, she still has to contend with her fractured image. Her postmodern friends; Jibaku, Chelu and Buchi regard her as inferior and ugly which disparages her self-worth. In any case, it confirms the ambivalence of Gothic characters whose "good depends on evil, light on dark, reason on irrationality" (Botting, 2005, p. 6) and recreates her with a marker for segregation, alienation and denigration. Ugliness is used to define her physical 'whiteness' making her deform-ability intersect her character. She copes with her situation by allowing her fantastic character, her doppelganger, to merge with her physical being.

Though it initially creates fear and destabilizes her identity, she comes to accept herself allowing her to become a hybrid character. Her white skin as a Gothic trope reinforces her duality as both a Gothic and a postmodern character. Her friends taunt her as "Stupid *Oyibo Akata Witch"* (Okorafor, 2011, p. 6) adds an ironic twist to her character as she is termed wild, untamed and stupid. Being held in contempt makes her attempt to re-discover who she is. This animalization inferiorizes her to an extent that she initially feels empty and uncertain at the beginning of the novel. Her Gothic character is formulated in the furnace of alienation and contempt when she sees a vision of the end of the world in a flickering candle. The apocalyptic ending of the world resonates in her mind. This happens at the beginning of the novel and sets her as a Gothic construction of hybrid identity. Struggling to become visible and, thus, fit into the socio-cultural perspective of her Igbo Community, Sunny finds strength in her doppelganger which ensues she is recognized

as a human being. This dual identity prepares her to take a Gothic archetypal role of a Gothic redeemer.

Her magical powers allow her to create a new identity and personality for herself where she becomes a hybridized Gothic character "half-ghost half-human" (p. 10) to situate within an inter-species world. She is poised to bridge the animal-human, ghostly-physical and animistic-spiritual balance of cosmotic relations in Nigeria's mythological universe since she is regarded by her classmates as half-human. This brings her identity into question, more so because the writer is an "American and Igbo" (p. 2): born in New York, America, but raised in Aba, Nigeria. Okorafor regards herself as an African-American since she was born in Cincinnati, USA. It is Nigeria that she immigrates from.

Since her albino skin invisibilizes her she makes an effort to redeem her image, identity and essence. This comes in form of a Gothic *ekpiri* ritual where she is symbolically buried and unburied in the bowels of the earth. The momentary deadness re-awakens her Gothic ability and allow her to bond and connect with the magical. This ensures that Anatov, the lead instructor in sorcery, takes her and her three friends through sorcery (juju) lessons as part of *Ekpiri* ritual. In the end, her metonymic albinism gains her a Gothic-postmodern personality that is not only enigmatic but also powerful and robust.

Her lingering between accepting her multiple identities is erased when, during the Gothic *Ekpiri* ritual, she is pulled into sweet-smelling belly of the earth in a test that she passes. She is humanly constructed when her doppelganger is stimulated which makes her accept herself wholly and fully as a child of multiple identities half-ghost, half-human, bridging the relationship between humanity and the spirit world. The initiation morphs her to become a Gothic character interested in curtailing unbridled ambition for material wealth evidenced in the postmodern villain - Black Hat Otokoto. Her magical endowment makes her a member of Leopard race. A race that in Okorafor's *Akata Witch*, is known for witchcraft (juju) powers. These are individuals regarded to possess mystical true ability. They are versed with phantasmagoria.

This paper establishes that Sunny is forced to contend with her spiritual face immediately after her Gothic initiation as she becomes a full active member of Leopard race. Her invisible spiritual face visibilizes her, allowing her to cross the porous boundary of identitylessness, valuelessness to develop a strong personality with which the elders of 'Leopard knocks,' a Gothic City, choose to lead other girls to hunt down a postmodern villain and a serial killer of children, Black Hat Otokoto.

The milieu is a Gothic *topoi* of placeness crafted in the underground space with a visible thin slippery-looking bridge connecting it to the physical earth. It is an abstract space named *Ngbe Abum Obbaw* (*Leopard Knocks His Foot*) (Okorafor, 2011, p. 27) that has a mythological significance. The entrance to the Gothic City is invisible and is hidden

beyond the mist after the floating slippery bridge. This is a clear manifestation that characters who profess magic socialize with other normal people but they only hide their true identity from them. Their fictional Gothicized dwelling allows a segregation to emerge between Lamb and Leopards. The Gothic locus becomes a nation of *Leopards*, conveniently referred to as *Leopard Nation*. The setting dissolves known reality and reconstructs a Gothic-pedestal detached from the world. It becomes a traditional *topos* of a secluded house haunted by magicality. The underground dwelling nation represents the traditional Gothic house, though expansive but unfathomable.

Once the Gothic Characters step onto the bridge, their spiritual identity emerges and they gain entry to the underworld. They become invisible as they cross the boundary "flying without leaving the ground!" (p. 93). Sunny manages to use her spirit face '*Anyanwu*' in order to be allowed to gain entry to Leopard Knocks. The bridge becomes the only "path of the spirit world that exists in the physical word" (p. 40). Only those initiated into full membership of magicality are allowed into the City. Initiation as a ritual, according to Chichi, is Sunny's "beginning of your (her) self" (p. 40). This revelation clearly indicates gaining knowledge of herself that comes in bits. It is observed that "Every Leopard person has two faces, a human and spirit face" (p. 40) depicting Gothic-postmodern characters as possessing both Gothic and postmodern aspects that are integrated into their selves. The characters morph to Gothicism in both their nature and their temporality. Viewed from a Gothic lens, they transform to a liminal space, an in-between space of reality and unreality contributing to the weird Gothic atmosphere and tone of the novel. Okorafor, succinctly mingles the monsters older than time with animals and humanity. The conglomeration helps to elucidate a world of impossible real; creating a new sense of reality that hovers between knowability and unknowability. A thin line between regeneration and degeneration is crafted since the events in the Gothic world are twisted and distorted. It cements the notion that the Gothic-postmodernist novel "endeavours to present impossible realities" (Beville, p. 90) that mirror society.

Sunny's spirit face accommodates her physical self and makes her transcend her normal real. It becomes her means of accepting herself and her own 'ab-normality.' In bringing out the centrality of the spirit face, Chichi, another Gothic character, informs Sunny that "…the spirit face is more than your physical face, it stays with you, it doesn't age, you can control it as it controls you" (p. 40). "Chichi's face melted, shifted and morphed into something inhuman… her spirit face looked like a perfectly carved ceremonial mask'' (p. 40). It is in the binarity of ugliness contained in her spirit face that Sunny gains her strength and a new magical standing. Chichi's spiritual face when she shows it to Sunny makes her stifle a scream epitomizing the dark side of inner fears. The spirit face, like 'Leopard knocks,' is hidden from apparent view. It requires a fantastical eye or mind to unravel the Gothic milieu since it is hidden underneath earth. Both

become labyrinth metaphors that create fear of anticipation enmeshed in the puzzling doubling identity. This creates anxiety as a result of the paranoid condition of Black Hat Otokoto. Parents are in dreadful anxiety since they fear their children will be murdered by the ritual murderer, Black Hat, who is described in the text as "a murderous psychopath" (p. 106).

The Gothic *topoi* of the traditional house is exemplified by the postmodern society trapped and haunted by postmodern greed, selfish ambition and betrayal. The Gothic setting on the other hand is set apart from normativity. It stands aloof, detached and mysterious. It is allows weird happenings to take place. The place, Leopard knocks, subscribes to the Gothic tradition of isolation and detachment. It is a Gothic place "… on an island conjured by ancestors" (Okorafor, 2011, p. 40). Through-out Sunny and her friends' visit to the spirit world, a weird and grotesque feeling always engulf them. This is mainly attributed to conquering a new realm and occupying an in-between space. At one time, Sunny feels she stands in the in-between space created when the spirit world blends with the physical realm. This strange and eldritch feeling comes about because of her attempt to cross the physical boundary. It requires her personal 'chi,' her spirit which guides her through the entry and egress. If unguided, the water monsters are ready to consume her. Lingering emotions of fear fill Sunny, Sasha, Orlu and Chichi as they lose their physical identity, reality and selves to gain new hybrid characters that stand at the precipice of liminality. They create a liminal space where they are in-between. The new space allows "… the self and other (to) become a part of each other implying a sort of shared existence" (Beville, 2009, p. 133) making them endure themselves and morph to enigmatic characters whose transgression to Gothic figures allow them to defeat Black Hat.

This brings to the lime light the crossing-over between postmodernism and Gothic that manifests reshaping of realities, physical and fantastical. The existences overlap making Sunny and her friends to possess dual existences; the inner and the outer. The re-construction makes them gain hybridity and consequently, to be in a position to exterminate Black Hat Otokoto, a postmodern villain, who has caused fear and horror in the whole country. Newspapers within the country screams fear with Black hat's kidnap and killings of young children. Having been blessed by the elders, Sunny and her friends makes the epochal journey to subdue the villain. The space created confirms that a: "…generic cross-breeding is part of the gothic's subverting of stable norms collapsing of 'binary oppositions,' which makes it appropriate for a postmodern sensibility…" (Kilgour, 1998, p. 40) to undergo erasure.

The Gothic *topoi* envisioned from the candle depicts an epochal end, a transition pathway stoked with fire of brimstone and coal echoing the Biblical fire in Hell. It shows a painful rebirth in the cauldron of raging fire: "I'd seen the end of the world in its flame. Raging fires, boiling oceans, toppled skyscrapers, ruptured land, dead and dying people…"

(Okorafor 2011: 2). The metamorphosis to deadness epitomizes postmodern transmogrification to a degenerated, destructive and wicked character who turns to a vampire in a cultish frenzy. Black Hat Otokoto symbolizes the fears of postmodern world. He serves to bring out the interests of self superseding the larger interest and good of community. He undergoes an appropriation of postmodern capitalistic aspects confined to bourgeoisie class, and its amoral nuances, exploitation, murders, sacrifices and evil scheming. His life undergoes an ironic twist for his insatiable lust for power and wealth becomes unstoppable. It leads to postmodern pain, disenchantment and fragmentation.

Black Hat Otokoto is paraded as a ritual killer whose selfish gain is to feed and foster his personal ambition of enriching himself albeit fraudulently through action of vampirism. He is described as an Oil dealer having business deals with multi-national companies. As an oil dealer, he is revealed as an exploitative capitalist whose only urge is get a grip on political power. It is his avaricious nature that pushes him to amass more power and riches. His act of sacrificing children equates him to a Gothic vampire intent on feeding human blood to spirits for more potent power and virility. His vampire and demonic act generates him as a postmodern villain interested in postmodern consumerism of material goods. Affirming Baudrillard's (1994) theory of consumerism, this paper argues that Black Hat Otokoto's wild and untamed consumerism, reflects on his psychological and mental state drawing him to a void with unfulfilled expectations. His becoming a vampire and a postmodern monster elevates his hopes temporarily in gaining hegemonic powers. This estranges and alienates him from society and humanity. And as he drifts away, he connects with the underworld of spirits, through Ekwensu, a spirit of a renowned sorceress who mortalized to death. He, therefore, becomes a Gothic *topos* of an archetypal vampire projecting rapacity and greed. He sucks the country's vitality and resources. He becomes the haunting spectre that stalks the country-side.

Otokoto is initially described as a businessman whose interest reste on gaining and controlling hegemonic power. That remains his greatest hunger which has "… opened him up to terrible powers of the earth…" (Okorafor 2011, 188). His killing of Ozoemena, a great sorcerer and Sunny's grandmother before stealing her magical abilities makes him to gain the essence of a monster. He remains devilish, creating an ominous and gloomy atmosphere. His insatiable thirst for materialism and political power is anchored on the resurrection of Ekwensu, a wicked and villainous spirit of a famous dead sorceress. Ekwensu is equated to a devil, Satan in the text which makes him personify a vampire. The evil spirit, as indicated earlier, is said to be that of a dead sorceress. This clearly depicts the magnitude of his vile, despicable and contemptible character. Described as a demented super-monster, Black Hat Otokoto comes out as Gothic-postmodern *topoi* epitomizing transgression; where he attempts to cross over human

boundary and transcends the zone of excesses and double himself as human-demon. This delineates him from the very society that has socialized him. He becomes an outcast, an ostracized character whose only recourse is to save him from himself. His narrative of murder, concealment and sacrifice entraps him to an extent that he does not seek redemption or is he remorseful. His moral depravity becomes a postmodern archetype; hollow and hyperreal, void and a shell; emptied of human essence. He represents an "…internalised world of guilt, anxiety, (and) despair" (Botting, 2005, p. 10). This destabilizes his existence as well as his identity. He becomes ripened for destruction to save mankind.

Sunny's conceptualization of Otokoto as a meta-character, initially exists only in her dreams as a haunting figure stalking young children. When she discovers he was his grandmother's mentor, and killer at the same time in order to usurp her powerful sorcery, Sunny acknowledges a life-death duel. Since Otokoto has regenerated to a monster, in the Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (2000) sense, and has become a living death, Sunny has no choice but redeem life and being. She has to delineate the line between the two polarities: life and death. Life ends in catastrophe as Otokoto morphs to a killer. This paper argues that Sunny's character provides a means of overcoming postmodern fears, horrors and anxieties. Black Hat's urgent desire to transcend the realm of immortality is observed when he resurrects Ekwensu; "You can kill me… I am but a vessel! You are too late" (Okorafor, 196). When Sunny slices his throat, he confesses that he requires only one death in order to metamorphose to immortal status. His death transitions him to an undead figure sprouting from the soft earth as a spirit, huge and monstrous: "For a minute the horrifying thing that was Ekwensu just stood there" (Okorafor, p. 197) and "was so happy to be back in the physical world" (p. 178). His death becomes a gateway that connects the physical world and the spiritual realm.

Sunny re-ignites her spiritual identity after gazing at herself in the mirror. "When her spirit face came forward, she got up and looked at herself in the mirror" (Okorafor, p. 57). The "spirit face" showed it had a separate identity it: was the sun, all shiny gold and glowing with pointy rays. It was hard to the touch, but she could feel her touch. She knocked on it and it made a hollow sound (Okorafor, p. 57).

The spirit face foregrounds her and cements her initiation to Gothic realm. It becomes her dual identity, her doppelganger which re-constructs her form and ideals. This is affirmed when she recounts in her dream outwitting the river dragon that guards the linking bridge that connects physical space and fantastical zone. Her happiness radiates on realizing that her Gothic trait allows her to triumph and become a member of Leopard knocks. She begins to realize and know herself, though it comes in bits. She first acknowledges her strength in her qualities exemplified by her spirit face. Then, she accepts and embraces her albinism which rebounds to her as formulating her epic and enigmatic character. On accepting herself, she ceases to have difficulties associated with albinism. The sun becomes her friend and she is ready to play

football showing how acceptance has humanized her. She is thus ripened to redeem the country from postmodern socio-political vices.

Sunny, the Gothic heroine allows her spirit face to take control of her, dispelling all fears and anxieties about Ekwensu:

> Sunny let her spirit face move forward. In that moment, her fear of everything left her fear of Ekwensu's evil, of being flayed alive by the monster's fronds, of her family learning of her death, of the world's end. It all evaporated. Sunny smiled. (Okorafor, p. 198)

Sunny manages to make Ekwensu to sink into the wet, soft red mud; back to deadness. This Gothic redemption allows the two kidnapped children to live. "Ekwensu wasn't melting, but she looked like she was, as she sank into the wet, red mud" (Okorafor, p. 199). In her Gothic battle with Black Hat Otokoto, Sunny transcends earthling impossibilities to create a Gothic dispensation that propels her to spiritual realm. Her spirit face, being her doppelganger, bridges the dichotomy between human and non-human, earthly and numinous; visible and invisible and assists her in her fight to redeem humanity. It is, thus, her invisible spiritual essence that visibilizes her humanness. This dismantles her unfathomable selfhood by allowing her inner powers to redeem humanity. It dispels her fear of herself and seals her as a Gothic protagonist, recreated in the furnace of Gothicism and postmodernism.

The relationship between the living and the spiritual is further witnessed when, during her incantation Sunny's dead grandmother brings a powerful juju referred to as "Bring Back" (Okorafor, p. 202) to Chichi's mother to be used in neutralizing Black Hat Otokoto's powerful sorcery. This paper argues that Black Hat Otokoto's postmodern character and identity is shown as indeterminate, fluid, and fragmented. He is an archetype of postmodern political barons who remain unstable and confine themselves to Machiavellianism; only defined by lust for power and wealth. His dalliance with immortality is a Gothic-postmodern encounter of unrepresentable. Borrowing from Beville's (2009) definition of Gothic-postmodernism, as "… a route to the unknown, unrepresentable aspects of self and reality" (p. 18) this paper avers that Otokoto's temporary transience to immortality before degenerating to a demonic mortal vampire blurs his essence as a human. It degenerates him to a vampire intent on feeding on children's blood. This, it is noted, brings him closer to his death and cessation of his desires. It recreates him as a monster haunting children's world in the postmodern world; ready to gulp their blood. It blurs the boundary between human and non-human creating Gothic fear that spreads across the country. Recreated as insatiable monster brings to light his double position; that of a spirit and a human at the same time. His unbridled desires and insatiability whets his comprador bourgeoisie's appetite for absolute power that makes his degeneration is inevitable.

Events in the text elicits emotions of fear and the undulating actions contribute to the Gothic tone. Black Hat becomes the traditional monster Gothic *topoi*. As a monster, he kills young children making fear, horror and disorientation reverberate across the country. The monster gouges the eyes and scoops the noses out of young kidnapped children. He identifies his evilish acts with symbol drawn in the arm. This, alone, conveys a sense of fright, consternation and horror. Death of children dissolves "reality and self" (Beville, 2009, p. 10). Gothic genre interrogates "Our own unconscious fears, terrors and anxieties" while postmodernism reveal "anxiety, fear and death" (Beville, p. 11). All this have an implication of edifying terror and "culture of death" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 127). The children's death contribute to anxiety among the readers and Nigerians at large. A Gothic mood of eerie stillness, anticipation of more deaths and ghostly silence pervades the society. This is clearly noted when Black Hat kills more children. This echoes traditional Gothic vampires haunt the Castles or confined spaces. And to save him from himself, Sunny destroys him by deadening his spiritual resurrection as noted earlier. His postmodern greed is not allowed to sprout and flower but is erased from earth. Being a ghostly and unstable being, he is hunted as a vampire whose intentions and machinations is erasing normativity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Gothic *topoi* inhabiting postmodernism as analyzed above have recharged the postmodern notion of hegemonic commodification, double and multiple identities and boundaries of human actions. Okorafor has successfully addressed not only the fluidity and instability of identity but also the Gothic tropes of fragmentation and fear. From the fore going, she foregrounds the pervasive African cosmos where the animate and inanimate intertwine complementarily in the understanding of Africa's universe. The spirits, the living and the dead all unite in a complementary axis thereby concretizing Africa's sensibilities. All in all, Gothic aspects have become a fascination within postmodern sphere since it uncovers truth and unravels. While Gothic genre limits its boundaries as bound by excesses and transgressions; postmodernism opens itself to limitless and infinite space that puncture and recreate exegesis of realities. This paper concludes that the confluence of postmodernism and Gothicism is embedded in the in-between space that allows referential, transgressions, superficial transcendence and excesses to take place. The space becomes an arena of contestation where the evil machinations villains are thwarted. Okorafor paints this picture candidly in her text *Akata Witch*. Gothic fiction serves to elucidate socio-political issues that are embedded in a society but from a numinous and phantasmagorical mode. The fantastic world that is proliferated by the unimaginable revitalize and regenerate human values and allow characters to encounter themselves. Punter (1991) avers that magic realism allows "the tendency to depict magical boundary-breaking events as part of the texture of everyday experience" (142) making Gothicism central in understanding human experiences.

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