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Visual subtexts and sexuality narratives in the Kenyan *Disconnect 2* and *Nafsi* Films

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Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between visual subtexts and sexuality narratives in Kenyan films. Visual texts play a crucial role in the hierarchy of film messaging, and understanding how these subtexts frame sensitive topics such as sexuality is essential. Through key informant interviews and examination of specific scenes and subtext elements like décor, space, and costumes, the study concludes that the three subtexts were significantly utilized to complement the explicit sexual narratives, particularly in socially and ethically sensitive portrayals of sexuality acts and moments. The study recommends a more strategic approach to the utilization of the cinematic and mise-en-scene visual subtexts in communicating sexuality in films.

Keywords: Film, Sexuality, Subtexts, narratives, visual storytelling

Public Interest Statement

The exploration of visual subtexts and sexuality narratives in Kenyan films like “Disconnect 2” and “Nafsi” is critical for understanding societal perceptions of sexuality and identity. Analyzing the narratives in “Disconnect 2” and “Nafsi” contributes to public discourse on sexuality in Kenya, advocating for a more inclusive environment for all individuals. This research aims to inspire ongoing dialogue and understanding of sexual identity within Kenyan culture.

INTRODUCTION

Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in his reflections on empire observed that the development of cinema in Africa was shaped or mis-shaped by the historical moment in which the art was born (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2014). To him, cinema found its way to Africa during colonial times, therefore effectively relegated Africa to a mere consumer of the emerging visual texts.

The audience consumer status is further reinforced by Smyth (1979), through the narrative that from 1932, film supply in Kenya was done through a contractual arrangement by the colonial government through suppliers from South Africa and they mostly supplied US films. The government thereafter focused on developing an effective film industry to take care of its growing population of middle-class citizens who frequented the cinema halls. This prompted the development of a policy that established the indigenous Kenyan film industry thus diffusing the European dominance (Nyoike, 1979).

The shot on the arm, acted as an industry trigger and as a result, the first Swahili film, *Mlevi*, was released in 1968 (Okioma & Mugubi, 2015). More were to follow to address important social issues, such as governance, health, and socioeconomics. The government sponsored film *Kolormask* (Sao Gamba), a pioneer film that was produced in 1985, provided an opportunity for filmmakers to explore and communicate about the people and cultures of Kenya, challenging imperial power positions (Diang’a, 2017).

The thematic exploration continued in the early 2000s, shifting from governance only to include more social narratives with films like Ingolo’s *The Married Bachelor* and Ann Mungai’s *Tough Choices* taking center stage with culture, love and relational narratives. This era represented a more dynamic period in the Kenyan film industry, triggering the rise of fresh and vibrant filmmakers who expanded thematic options and addressed contemporary subjects (Kenya Film Commission, 2008). The emerging dynamic industry provided ground for the mainstreaming of the marginalized social themes in films (Diang’a, 2017). For example, in 2002, Kibinge’s *The Dangerous Affair* redefined the role of women in society, portraying them as active members with material and ideological contributions, rather than passive recipients of men’s resources. In this new dispensation, filmmakers approached sensitive topics cautiously.

The thematic evolution led to an exploration of socially sensitive narratives such as sexuality, a dynamic film thematic frontier that is both embraced and shunned in equal measures. Sexuality was embraced by the creatives in the industry because of its narrative centrality to storytelling but shunned because of the possible ethical and regulatory violations. This catalyzed the emergence of policy and guidance frameworks that recognized the significance of sexuality narratives in cinema, while simultaneously emphasizing the provision of technical guidance on the sexuality portrayal approaches. In Section 5(ii) of the Kenya Film Classification Board’s classification guidelines, thematic areas and elements involving sex, obscenity, and nudity are acknowledged as legitimate film narratives. However, no specific conditions and references are provided on how these narratives should be approached. The guidelines also discuss the techniques of constructing such narratives and determine which sexuality themes are permissible for classification or should be restricted or banned based on their textual construction techniques (Kenya Film Classification Board Guidelines, 2012).

This gives rise to what Kaunga (2021), describes as the intersection of power, art, and identity when it gets to understanding the visual subtexts and sexuality narratives in the films. The visual subtexts define the form and texture of the sexuality narratives and therefore critical in determining the film classification spectrum. Accordingly, the study sought to answer the question; what is the significance of visual subtexts in portraying sexuality narratives in *Nafsi* and *Disconnect 2* films?

LITERATURE REVIEW

‘Cinema can say everything, but not show everything’. This principle articulated by Bazin (2004), serves as a guiding philosophy influencing the cinematographic and mise-en-scène considerations in the portrayal of sexuality narratives in film. Bazin posits that through visual approaches, cinema facilitates a range of narrative interpretations that may either enrich or restrict the significance of themes like sexuality. He affirms that there is something in the act of filming sexuality, that negatively affects sex itself, in a ‘moral’ way.

Various scholars have highlighted the significance of visuality in shaping compelling narratives,

a technique essential for centralizing themes and messages within the narrative structure. Bruzzi (2012) scholarly examines the role of costumes, including clothing as film subtext, in shaping character portrayal. She suggests that character attire in film has the capacity to 'impose meaning rather than merely convey it.' From her viewpoint, clothing functions as a discourse that operates independently of the usual frameworks of narrative and character to convey significance. By affirming that character attire in film has the power to actively impose meaning rather than simply transmit it. Pierson (2010) also describes costumes as 'the most easily noticeable aspect of mise-en scene' but Moura (2014) affirms that costumes can also be employed to emphasize a particular theme. Through the careful selection and design of costumes, filmmakers can subtly or explicitly underscore key themes such as sexuality within the narrative, enriching the storytelling experience for viewers.

Beyond the costumes as viable film narrative subtext, the set design is also considered an effective mise-en-scene to give the audience a sense of place, mood and the character's mindset (Pierson, 2010). The set and the props used have a specific theme to convey and can make the audience indulge in deep thoughts to develop interpretations. For instance, the use of certain colors is often adopted to display an emotional or symbolic meaning, or even to draw out a character (Redmond, 2014). Botton, (2006) also observes that objects are sensorial and emotional instruments of construction, preservation, and differentiation of identities. "Any object of design will give off an impression of the psychological and moral attitudes it supports" (pg.72). To this then, in films, objects symbolize ideas and emotions, providing a window into characters' inner worlds. They play a dual role of revealing and concealing, conveying implicit messages within the narrative framework. These object-signs on screen transcend mere physicality, carrying deeper layers of meaning that enrich the cinematic experience.

The adoption of visual techniques in film storytelling can best be illustrated in Kenya by a study by Diang'a (2015), on cinematographic techniques in three Kenyan films. She looked through three Kenyan films that span three decades, *Kolormask* (Gamba, 1986), *Saikati* (Mungai, 1992) and *Unseen, Unsung, Unforgotten* (Ombogo-Scott and Mbuthia, 2008).

In the film *Kolormask*, Diang'a discusses the use of different visual techniques like camera movements and variations in shot types to deepen the narrative. However, it became apparent that certain scenes were deemed technically inadequate, due to a lack of comprehensive shot exploration. For instance, a particular scene where one of the children, Susan, receives a phone call from her mother is captured in a long take medium shot, which engages the viewer less than stating the obvious narrative content. Diang'a asserts that in this film, at no point do we see an extreme close-up or POV shot to give detail of any of the actions even though all three theorists Bazin (1967), Kracauer (1960) and Cavell (2005) recognize the significance of long take and deep focus shots as essential elements of film style that bring out a film's distinctive characteristics. Deep focus cinematography, as noted by Warren (2008), enables multiple actions to be encompassed within a single shot.

Diang'a raises a concern about the excessive reliance on narrative approaches to the detriment of construction techniques, which have the potential to enhance storytelling. In *Kolormask*, this reliance is evident in the shaving scene where, as part of a moaning ritual, John's extended family lines up for their heads to be shaved. Instead of solely relying on long takes to drive the narrative forward, incorporating construction techniques such as multiple camera setups, including extreme close-ups, could have added richness to the scene.

Likewise, in *Saikati*, the initial village scenes demonstrate a similar narrative approach with limited intercuts of different shot types. This is in contrast to the city scenes, where a variety of shot types are used to showcase Saikati's physical transformation as she undresses, dresses up, and applies or removes makeup. Diang'a acknowledges that, in contrast, the third and most recent film *Unseen* minimally utilizes long takes, opting instead to emphasize a closer viewer-character relationship through intercutting shorter takes. Compared to *Kolormask* and *Saikati*, *Unseen* showcases the most innovative cinematography in conveying the messages it aims to communicate to its target audience.

Diang'a discusses the use of various construction techniques to highlight and reinforce different messages, the first being Point of View (POV) shots. In comparison, these shots, along with other types such as aerial shots, are more extensively employed in the film *Unseen* than in *Kolormask* and *Saikati*. In *Unseen*, a POV shot guides the viewer through Baraka's cluttered living room. While it is already established that Baraka's house is messy, when Mike enters, the camera follows his gaze in a pan, revealing to the viewer what catches Mike's attention and prompts him to whistle in amazement. This POV shot presents a direr situation than the initial objective view of the room, emphasizing details of the environment. Falsetto (2001) and Wilson and Shpall (2012) note that POV shots are commonly used to indicate a subjective viewpoint, as they are strategically positioned to represent the character's perspective.

Secondly, in terms of camera movements, Diang'a observes that the three films experimented with camera movement in distinct ways, based on the directors' choices. She notes that *Kolormask* made relatively

modest use of camera movements to temper viewer interest, if not necessarily deepen meaning. In this film, characters moved in and out of the frame akin to a theatrical performance (Rist, 2010).

In *Saikati*, panning shots are predominantly utilized in long shots rather than close-ups. However, a notable panning shot occurs in the washrooms where Saikati hesitantly interacts with a hand dryer. While both *Saikati* and *Kolormask* feature several shots of high-rise buildings in Nairobi, Saikati's tilting shot of the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC) effectively conveys the intimidating sensation that Saikati experiences when looking at the building. On the third film, Diang'a adds that *Unseen* extensively employs plane mobility, sustaining viewer engagement through diverse movements that propel the narrative. The dynamic movement of the camera frame in *Unseen* creates a sense of realism, breaking down boundaries to simulate the unrestricted perspective of moving eyes. This deliberate dismantling of the frame in *Unseen* serves both authenticity and aesthetic purposes.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, content analysis is used to analyze the visual elements in sexuality themes in the two films *Nafsi* and *Disconnect 2*. Specific scenes are identified and subtext elements like décor, space and costumes are analyzed in detail. These help to explain the extent to which these elements combine to provide mood, meaning and value to the visuals. Additional primary data is collected from the key informants who include the respective film professionals in the film credits under the scriptwriters, directors, production designers and cinematographer category.

Findings and Discussions

Décor

Décor plays a major role in bringing out certain key aspects in the films *Nafsi* and *Disconnect 2*. In the film *Nafsi*, the spacious layout, luxurious furnishings, and detailed interior design of Aisha and Sebastian's home serve as a visual representation of wealth and prosperity. The magnificence of their residence projects an image of a couple living in affluence. In their bedroom, décor components of color and objects stand out in communicating their sexuality as a married couple struggling to get a baby. Their bedroom is predominantly blue; the production designer attributes this to the desire to create a place that "feels like a cold desert". Through the color decoration subtext, the couple's cold approach to sexuality as they are trying to have a baby and they are not even talking to each other is communicated.

Further in Aisha and Sebastian's bedroom, their attitudes and personality towards sexuality is communicated through the objects of lampstands and wall hanging. The two lampstands in their bedroom serve as prominent symbols in defining their sexual identities. The lampstand on Sebastian's side of the bed, has a cylindrical shape that is curved at both ends. This is symbolic of his conflicted sexuality as he is in pursuit of a heterosexual with his wife Aisha while at the same time in pursuit of gayism with Biko. This contrasts with the seamless and continuous cylinder on Aisha's side of the bed, an object that is symbolic of her focus and devotion to their relationship as they maneuver to get a baby. These variance in symbolic subtexts as decor in design, symbolize the dynamics of the couple's relationship and their sexual life.

In Aisha and Sebastian's bedroom, there hangs a portrait above their bed that serves as a collage of symbols rich with meanings related to the couple's sexuality. The portrait depicts a scene of a lifeless figure in the ocean surrounded by vultures perched on branches. The film director elaborated on the significance of this object subtext, revealing that "the imagery symbolizes the couple's challenges with fertility, past experiences such as Aisha's abortion, struggles with conception, the need for a surrogate, and Sebastian's hidden exploration of his sexuality." The portrayal of the vast ocean in the artwork represents the expansiveness of life between the couple, while the dead tree symbolizes the stagnant state of their marriage, lacking vitality. The vultures in the scene signify the various issues that are plaguing their relationship, including past traumas like Aisha's past abortion, hidden desires such as Sebastian's pursuit of gayism, and external influences such as Aisha's friendship with Shiko, which introduces diverse perspectives into the couple's ongoing struggles.



Figure 1: Aisha and Sebastian's bedroom - blue color themed with varied lampstands and a wall hanging

Symbolism is also prominently featured as Sebastian enters the sample room to collect his semen sample. Upon entering the room, he encounters sex magazines and pamphlets scattered on the seat and table. Sebastian has to move some of these materials aside before proceeding to settle into the room. The sexual materials, featuring as sexuality subtexts, feature provocative images of voluptuous women in lingerie, are intentionally provided to stimulate Sebastian's process of masturbation. The act of clearing away the materials symbolizes his navigation through complex and conflicting emotions as he grapples with the expectations and demands of the surrogacy process, as well as the intricacies of his own dual sexual identity. Finally, in Nafsi, in Clarence bedroom, there is vast décor with subtexts of symbolism in communicating sexuality. Through the color and objects, Clarence is presented in "a space that symbolically describes him as a hunter" according to the scriptwriter. His house décor is thematically grey with an old school touch. Additional colors of orange walls and the navy-blue curtains are added 'to solidify him as a strong male character'.

And the reason why we put Clarence in grey is because grey is a strong bold color. Not too dull and not too bright like white. It is in between purity and darkness. So, for Clarence being a character that is very cunning, he has to be a sweet guy, but he also has to be a dark guy because he's a bad boy and therefore the shades of gray – (*Nafsi production designer*)

The character's depiction of dual personality in his sexuality, symbolized by the subtext color grey, captures the complexities of his personality. Despite his charm towards his girlfriend Shiko, he keeps his marital status a secret until she stumbles upon the truth through a phone call from his mother. In Shiko's absence after their breakup, he aggressively engages in intimate encounters with the cleaning lady and a call girl within their home without making a follow up attempt on her. When Shiko returns and reveals her pregnancy as a surrogate, his demeanor shifts drastically. His charming demeanor gives way to a dark and violent outburst, resulting in physical abuse towards Shiko in a moment of rage as he rolls her down through the stairs.

The other décor object that acts like a sexuality subject is the wall hanging of the wild animal, cheetah. This symbolizes his wild sexual life, a journey through which we witness him preying on women of various categories including the cleaning lady, the prostitute and then Shiko even though he is secretly married. The cheater Clarence as depicted by the sexuality subtext of the wall hanging is a summary of his life from way back when he got married and the secrecy that ensues as he ravages through the various women he gets involved with.

In the sequel *Disconnect 2*, the characters exist in a state of transition, lacking fixed addresses. Otis, TK, Judy, Erasmus, Richard, and Seline, who embody various aspects of sexuality within the film, frequently interact in hotel lobbies, hotel rooms, and building corridors. This setting choice restricts the scope of decorative design elements within the scenes, emphasizing the characters' transient and often unsettled circumstances.

Otis meeting with Dee at a restaurant, a communal setting accessible to all, where the decorative elements such as colors and objects hold universal appeal. Erasmus engages in a romantic pursuit of the secretary in the public corridors, a shared space. Richard and Judy, Celine and Richard, and Otis and Rita all partake in romantic encounters and expressions of sexuality at the coast hotel, a universally familiar environment with standard accommodations. Consequently, in this film, the decorative subtexts do not serve as a means of communication with the audience.

Costumes

In the film Nafsi, characters Aisha, Sebastian, Shiko, and Biko are portrayed through the costume choices that reflect the underlying themes of their individual sexuality story arcs. The protagonist, Aisha, is consistently dressed in shades of blue, a color traditionally associated with masculinity. This choice of attire symbolizes Aisha's adoption of socially ascribed male roles within the narrative, such as being the primary provider for her husband, Sebastian. Sebastian, on the other hand, is depicted as relying on Aisha's resources, driving her

car and using her credit card. Aisha's assertiveness is further highlighted when she unilaterally decides to take a vacation to the coast without consulting Sebastian, leading to his protestations as he asked "when did we decide this?". During their stay at the coast, Aisha makes the decision to pursue surrogacy with Shiko as their surrogate, a choice that Sebastian initially opposes but ultimately reluctantly supports.

She has control in the household. So even with their relationship as a couple, you find it's almost like you're watching an alpha female who is in her masculine energy – (*Nafsi scriptwriter*)

The symbolism conveyed through the color of her costume undergoes a transformation as her character progresses from a hopeful wife looking for a baby to an antagonist who betrays her surrogate, climaxing in becoming a fugitive wanted for child abduction. Throughout these transitions, her attire shifts from a lighter shade of blue to progressively darker hues of green.

Sebastian, the husband of Aisha, is portrayed as a character grappling with sexual conflict. He is entangled in a separate homosexual relationship with Biko. The subtext of his sexuality is reflected in his attire, which varies depending on whether he is with his wife or meeting Biko. In the presence of his wife, Sebastian maintains a polished appearance, opting for well-fitted shirts and trousers in both formal and informal settings like when they are in hospital together and the many instances when he leaves home for work. However, when in the company of Biko, Sebastian adopts a more casual and relaxed dress-code, wearing untucked shirts and displaying a laid-back demeanor like when they are out in a night club. In contrast, Biko presents himself as more masculine, sporting fitted shirts that accentuate his muscular biceps. The scriptwriter conveys through costume subtext that "Sebastian was intentionally portrayed with a softer demeanor, reflecting his role as the head of the household, which influenced his character development." Sebastian's sexuality is depicted through the contrast in his attire, reflecting the different sides of his life as both a husband to Aisha and an ambiguous lover to Biko.

Within the narratives of *Nafsi* film, Shiko symbolizes themes of sexuality. She is portrayed as a bubbly individual who embraces life to its fullest and pursues her desires, including a romantic involvement with Clarence, a married man. Shiko indulges in coastal adventures with Milton, hotel attendant who received her, before ultimately assuming the significant role of serving as the surrogate mother for Aisha and Sebastian's child. The evolution of Shiko's sexuality is effectively conveyed through the costume subtext within the narrative. Initially, Shiko's attire and accessories are deliberately crafted to emphasize her sensuality. However, a pivotal shift occurs in her costume choices when she embarks on the journey of surrogacy. Transitioning into maternity wear and loose dresses that reflect her pregnancy and maternal role within society marks a significant turning point in her character portrayal. The film director noted, "We begin to perceive her more as a supportive friend rather than a sexual figure in the film. Her clothing style undergoes a noticeable transformation."

In the second film the *Disconnect 2*, themes of sexuality and costume subtext are prominently showcased through the contrast of Otis, the protagonist with the other male characters, as well as Judy with the other female characters. Otis, a womanizer, totally contrasts with the other male figures in the film like Khalid, Richard, and Dele in their sexuality narratives. His attire is curated to express his sexuality. Whether it's his choice of shirts, pants, shoes, or accessories, the playboy is consistently styled to captivate the attention of women. This is in sharp contrast to the rest of the team, whose clothing is geared towards functionality and task-specific requirements, resulting in varied outfits for office work, travel, and other activities.



Figure 2:

Otis is heavily invested in his outward look through the proper combination of his costume to craft the ideal gentleman towards Dee.

Judy stands out as the most conservative among the group of women due to her strong adherence to religious principles. She consistently opts for tailored suits in her attire, maintaining a reserved and modest appearance whether attending counseling sessions or evening birthday celebrations. Her conservative dress sense contrasts with that of her female companions, who contextualize their outfits according to the occasions, transitioning to formal attire for work and adopting a more casual style during leisure time. However, her dress-code undergoes a major change following an impulsive sexual encounter with Richard during their time at the coast. This experience provokes a shift in her perception of sexuality, leading her to embrace a more liberated and expressive sense of self, in contrast to her previous sexually limiting beliefs. The evolution of her sexual identity is visually represented through the changing subtext of her costumes in the film.



Figure 3a

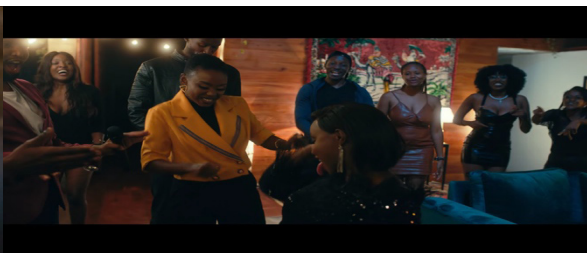


Figure 3b

The contrast of Judy's attire on two distinct occasions is evident in Figures 3a and 3b. In Figure 3a, Judy typifies her adherence to religious principles, portraying a modest and conservative style that reflects her commitment to preserving her sexuality for her future husband, Erasmus. In contrast, Figure 3b portrays Judy without the constraints of religious principles following a spontaneous encounter with Richard. Her outfit in this figure features a sleeveless top that is more revealing, signaling a departure from her previous modest clothing choices.

Space

In the film *Nafsi*, the opening scene features a medium shot of Aisha and Sebastian consulting with a doctor regarding their pregnancy. The composition of the scene creates a sense of depth, encouraging the audience to look beyond the couple in the foreground and examine the ultrasound screen in the background. This setup effectively lays the foundation for the storyline of the film.



Figure 4: The doctor undertaking a pregnancy scan on Aisha

As the film progresses, Clarence and his girlfriend Shiko find themselves in a heated confrontation concerning his undisclosed marital status. Shiko learns of his marriage accidentally during a conversation with Clarence's mother, as he had never revealed this information to her. The interaction and subsequent confrontation between them are depicted through frontality staging and deep spacing. As Shiko listens to Clarence's mother, her emotions intensify, and the evolving feelings of fear and confusion are portrayed through frontality staging, allowing the audience to witness her emotional journey in real-time. This

frontality staging technique persists throughout the confrontation, capturing Shiko's struggle to process the shocking revelation and Clarence's bewildered response as he grapples with how to navigate the unfolding situation. This framing is interrupted by a medium shot of Clarence and Shiko, extending beyond their immediate presence to reveal a portrait of a cheetah on the wall. Just before Shiko poses the question, "So you have a wife?", the deep space in this shot emphasizes Clarence's symbolic association with a cheetah to the audience. However, he is unable to respond to the question, leaving the portrait on the wall as the sole reference point to the question.

As Aisha and Shiko settle at the coast for a holiday, they are received by a male hotel attendant. A charmer by description who goes all out to attract the attention of the ladies. Shiko is instantly smitten and this is expressed to the audience as they interact through frontality staging. The facial expression by Milton the hotel attendant and Shiko that illustrate their instant interest to each other, is interactively presented through the various close up shots. The audience is invited to conclude as the two interact.

Another scene in *Nafsi* film where space is used is the outing scenes between Sebastian and Biko. Sebastian and Biko's outing is presented through the shallow space. At the bar counter, Sebastian is seated alone as Biko goes to the washroom. His drinks at the counter and his background where people are dancing is out of focus even as a lady singles him out and moves to his side. The shallow space signifies lack of knowledge of the lady's intention to join him. Upon arrival at the counter, Sebastian scans the lady from down up as she feigns ignorance, pretending to be on phone yet aware. When Biko gets out of the washroom, his view of the room is out of focus, meaning that he cannot see Sebastian scanning the lady from a far. Sebastian's shallow space is symbolic of his limited world as he struggles with sexual identity. In his caged world, he is married to Aisha, cheating with his gay partner and still cannot resist a random stranger in his space.

As Aisha gets back from the coast holiday, she meets a remorseful Sebastian who is committed to salvaging their marriage. The romance and sexual intercourse scene is presented through the shallow space. The medium shots and the close-up shots all blur the background as the couple romances, kisses, fondles and eventually engage in intercourse. Through the shallow depth of field, the existing decorative objects such as the lampstands and the wall hanging that previously communicated the deviant characteristics of the couples, get blurred out as though to silence their voices. Focus fully shifts on the two of them as they give each other opportunity to reset and start the journey afresh. In this scene, the couple agrees to forget their past and focus on getting a baby.

Further, in a scene where Sebastian goes to get his semen for the IVF process, he moves into the designated room, a room with sex magazines placed all over the seats and table. The magazines and the face of Sebastian are presented in shallow space through close upshots. Isolating the sex magazines in sharp focus while blurring out the background is symbolizing Sebastian's complex inner world and struggles as he balances with surrogacy ideology and his dual sexual identity.

In the scene where Aisha and Sebastian confront Shiko regarding the decision for an abortion due to the Down syndrome diagnosis of the child, a combination of frontal staging and shallow space is employed to effectively convey the sentiments, emotions, and attitudes at play as the dynamics between friends evolve into a conflict. The use of these cinematic techniques serves to immerse the audience in the intense deliberations unfolding between the characters. Aisha's detached demeanor towards her best friend Shiko, Sebastian's vengeful emotions, and Shiko's sense of betrayal are visually depicted through close-up frontal staging of their facial expressions. This strategic framing invites viewers to empathize with Shiko, who finds herself in a risky position after sacrificing her relationship with Clarence to act as a surrogate. Simultaneously, the audience is prompted to experience the intense emotions of Aisha and Sebastian, who are the aggressors in this emotional confrontation.

The deliberate choice of presenting all shots in shallow space further enhances the underlying themes of the scene. This limited depth of field symbolizes an insincere and narrow-minded approach adopted by Aisha and Sebastian, who appear solely focused on their own self-preservation desires and needs without fully considering the implications of their actions to Shiko.

The film *Disconnect 2* also engages a combination of frontal staging and shallow space as seen in the portrayal of the awkward breakup between the protagonist Otis and his casual partner Dee. These dual visual techniques are utilized to depict a complex interplay of characters and emotions characterized by themes of hope, expectations, and selfishness. Otis, a womanizer known for engaging in transitory sexual encounters, is depicted through the use of shallow space, symbolizing his feigning recollection of the issues raised by her. Dee, on the other hand, harbors fantasies of a meaningful relationship with Otis, leading to a clash of expectations and realities. The frontal staging and shallow space technique effectively convey the contrasting perspectives and emotional dynamics between the characters. Otis' detached approach to relationships and his preference for shallow interactions are contrasted with Dee's desire for a deeper connection and emotional investment.

In another scene, during a moment of betrayal, Judy walks into her fiancé Erasmus kissing the secretary in the hallway. This scene raises various issues related to sexuality, but it is depicted solely from Judy's point of view as Erasmus remains unaware that he was being observed. The shallow space is used to blur Judy in the foreground as she watches Erasmus and the secretary fondle and kiss. Close-up shots of Judy from a side angle are also captured in shallow depth of field, highlighting her state of denial and emotional turmoil, while also immersing the audience in the unfolding events. This approach is mirrored in a kissing scene between Judy and Richard at a coast hotel. The moment TK arrives at the hotel and sees the two of them kissing on the balcony of the first floor.

Further is the scene on the beach that captures the kissing and subsequent sexual intimacy between Richard and Judy. Close-up and extreme close-up shots shallow space focus on their bodies, highlighting details such as their feet, gripping fingers, and facial expressions. These shallow depth of field shots convey more about their inner emotional and mental states rather than just their physical pleasure and excitement. This visual subtext is replicated in two other sexuality scenes between Richard and Seline and Otis and Rita.

Conclusion:

This study emphasizes the role of film visual subtexts of décor, costumes and space in portraying sexuality narratives in the Kenyan *Disconnect 2* and *Nafsi* Films. The study concludes that these three subtexts were significantly utilized to augment the film sexual narratives, especially in the depiction of sexuality acts and moments that require social and ethical sensitivity. These finding indicates that visual subtexts within the films were systematically integrated in complementary roles, thereby facilitating the communication of sexuality narratives. The study therefore recommends a more assertive and strategic approach to the utilization of visual subtexts in sexuality narratives, aiming to enhance their function beyond mere facilitation in the dissemination of sexual narratives.

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