# Visualising Kenyan Sociological Films through Camera Eye and Mise-en-scène

**Fredrick Ogutu Oiye**
University of Nairobi
oiyefred@uonbi.ac.ke

**Michael Kamau Mwangi**
University of Nairobi
mkamau@uonbi.ac.ke

**Elias Mokua**
University of Nairobi
emokua@uonbi.ac.ke

**Leah Muchemi Wangui**
University of Nairobi
leahwm@uonbi.ac.ke

**Abstract**

This article examines how the visual aesthetics of camera work and mise-en-scène in contemporary Kenyan cinema shape ideologies of sexual morality and position audiences. Focusing on the films *Nafsi* and *Disconnect: The Wedding Planner*, while employing film semiotics and cognitive-affective models, the study interrogates the encoding of moral narratives through cinematic techniques and the strategies used to elicit specific ethical positions from viewers. Utilising a qualitative design that combines textual film analysis with semi-structured interviews of filmmakers, this study interprets the visual mediation of Kenya's evolving sexual moral landscapes. Analysis centres on four pillars: the moral encoding language of shot components, Audience positioning through subjective/proximal strategies, Embodied spectatorship in moral interpretation, and the ethical implications of visual strategies. Findings reveal that directors strategically employ proximal visual tactics (camera proximity, framing, mise-en-scène) to immerse audiences in characters' vulnerabilities, promote empathy while implicating them in moral reckonings. The study concludes that Kenyan filmmakers utilise embodied spectatorship to navigate the tensions between tradition and modernity, rendering sexual morality as a lived, visual experience rather than an abstract dogma. However, immersive, ethical ambiguities persist, while subjective strategies can open up moral interpretation; the power of visuals also carries significant ideological weight. This research demonstrates how visual aesthetics mediate ideological power, underscoring Kenyan cinema's dual role as both mirror and catalyst in sociocultural discourse on sexuality.

**Keywords**:
Visual Aesthetics, Audience Positioning, Sexual Morality, Shots, Narratives

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## Introduction

Film is universally recognised as a medium of communication and entertainment. An audience's knowledge of film analysis increases their enjoyment, appreciation, and understanding of how a film utilises shot elements to tell a compelling story (Oluwadamilola & Nwazue 2024). Filmmakers, therefore, employ various techniques, such as camera perspectives, angles, and narrative structure, to guide the audience's emotions and thoughts on diverse film themes.

Several studies have examined the role of cinematography in film messaging globally (Clinton 2017; Elen 2017; Weaving 2018; Bridgett 2023). These studies have principally explored the nature, assumptions, and effects of visual aesthetics in film texts. Clinton (2017) illustrates that variations in camera angles, such as low-angle and high-angle shots, distinctly influence viewers' emotional interpretations. The exploration of how these angles affect emotional perception is a primary focus of this study, aiming further to define the interplay between film technique and audience positioning. Differences in production techniques across visual narratives result in variations in how these interactions are presented. For instance, some visual narratives overtly delve into characters' internal states, such as their goals, affective states, and knowledge. Bridgett (2023), in a study on how audiences develop relationships with film, concludes that comprehending and interpreting film focuses directly on the interaction between a text and its reader, as this ultimately shapes what the film means for a viewer. Visual aesthetic dynamics, therefore, define the final form and shape of film texts long before audience interaction.

Although scholars consistently underscore the centrality of visual aesthetics in shaping effective cinematic messaging (Weaving 2018; Elen 2017), tensions arise between the production's aesthetic intentionality and audience interpretation. Weaving (2018) suggests, in a study examining the interplay of cinematic moments, such as camera movements, and audience

response, that brief, visually enabled sequences — often fundamental to narrative or emotional shifts — would allow filmmakers to encode emotional states through specific shot aesthetic choices. These moments, he argues, are decoded by audiences through the lens of their own experiences, resulting in either alignment or conflict with the intended affect. The study highlights the potential for conflict or contradiction between viewers' lived experiences and the visual aesthetics across diverse filmic texts and thematic frameworks. This article builds on this knowledge by examining how visual aesthetics mediate audience positioning in films that explore narratives of sexual morality. Through an analysis of *Nafsi* (2021) and *Disconnect: The Wedding Planner* (2023), this study examines how visual aesthetics, as a filmic language, shape audience engagement and ideological alignment.

**Theoretical Orientation**

This study is grounded in a theoretical framework that integrates insights from film semiotics, reception theory, and cognitive-affective models of audience engagement to examine the interplay between visual aesthetics and the ideological positioning of audiences within narratives that address sexual morality. Grounded in the idea that film operates as a cultural text (Staiger 1992), the analysis employs a sociocultural lens to examine how visual strategies encode moral discourses while simultaneously evoking viewers' subjective, culturally embedded interpretations. The theoretical framework is operationalised through the analysis of *Nafsi* (2021) and *Disconnect: The Wedding Planner* (2023), two films that grapple with sexual morality in diverse cultural settings. By examining how visual aesthetics align with or subvert audience expectations, the study reveals the mechanisms through which visual aesthetics position viewers as either complicit participants or critical observers of on-screen moral ideologies.

This study, therefore, employed a qualitative research design, centred on textual film analysis, to decode how visual aesthetics construct moral ideologies and audience positioning. It also employed semi-structured interviews to investigate how visual aesthetics encode sexual morality ideologies and position audiences within narratives that address morality.

The methodology prioritises depth, context, and interpretive objectivity, aligning with the study's theoretical grounding in film semiotics and cultural studies.

**Film Grammar in Moral Encoding**

Film semiotics helps us grasp cinema as a structured language, where every visual element acts as a sign. The intentional use of close-ups (CUs) and extreme close-ups (ECUs) in *Nafsi* and *Disconnect 2* films serves as visual cues. Film creatives strategically employ these techniques to guide how audiences perceive and interpret the film, influencing their ethical alignment (Staiger 2000). An example is the extreme close-up depicting the stranger's hand violating Aisha's personal space in *Nafsi* while at a nightclub on the coast. Semitonically, this magnified tactile intrusion signals a transgression. The cinematic mediation complicates the audience's position, transforming them from passive observers into emotionally charged, implicated participants. This breaking of conventional viewing distance creates a tangible ethical tension, mirroring the characters' dilemmas and highlighting the active role of the audience in the film's moral economy.

Similarly, the close-up shot of Shiko rejecting Milton's kiss after their prolonged flirtation highlights the subtle interplay between these frameworks. The shot's intimacy amplifies the cognitive dissonance caused by the contradiction between her preceding actions and her sudden refusal. This forces the audience to actively reconcile these conflicting signals. Equally, this intimate access to Shiko's subtle facial expressions invites a complex interpretative process. The audience might alternate between empathetic understanding and, therefore, seeing her rejection as self-preservation due to past trauma and socio-cultural judgment, as such, interpreting her actions through societal views on female agency and manipulation. Thus, the close-up transforms abstract moral ambiguity into a tangible sensory experience. The viewer's embodied response to visible emotion becomes central to their ethical interpretation, reflecting broader

Kenyan societal dialogues about the evolution of sexual norms, caught between tradition and modernity.

These close framings represent proximal semiotics employed by Kenyan filmmakers. The close-up and extreme close-up transcend mere technical tools, serving three key functions: they act as cultural signs that point to specific moral codes, as a reception technology that strategically positions audiences emotionally and ethically, and as a cognitive catalyst that sparks an embodied moral reflection within the viewer.

Figure 1*(Left)* A close-up shot of the beach boy's hand reaching for Aisha's thigh *(Right)*. A close-up shot of Shiko blocking an attempt by Milton to kiss her.
*Source: Nafsi film*

Furthermore, in Nafsi, the sequence showing Aisha and Sebastian's reconciliation effectively employs graduated close-ups as a cinematic technique, subtly controlling what the audience knows and how they feel. Following Metz's ideas on cinematic meaning, these increasingly tighter shots act as deliberate signs that both expose and hide emotional truths. As the filmmakers themselves noted, "I get only to show what I want them to see" (R. Odanga, Nafsi, 2023). This technique aligns with Eisenstein's concept of montage of attractions, skilfully guiding the audience's attention to specific emotional cues, such as Aisha's hesitant smiles, while keeping other information out of frame. This visual restriction enables magnified nonverbal gestures, thereby bypassing cultural interpretation and directly triggering the audience's mirror neurons (Gallese & Guerra 2012). So, Sebastian's tentative touch and Aisha's subtle micro-expressions convey the raw, instinctive truth of how fragile their reconciliation truly is, all through the audience's embodied experience.

This progression of close-ups effectively creates an interpretive funnel, dynamically shifting how the audience engages with the scene across three levels of reception (Staiger 2000). Initially, looser shots allow for an objective observation of their marital interaction, as it plays out according to Kenyan cultural norms. Medium close-ups then prompt us to recognise familiar reconciliation rituals, drawing on our existing knowledge of such cinematic portrayals. Finally, extreme close-ups compel a haptic visuality, dissolving the distance between audience and screen to create a sense of physical entanglement. This deep sensory immersion transforms the audience from detached observers into physically engaged participants. In the scene, the audience experiences Sebastian's tentative touch and Aisha's subtle breathing as if they were their bodily sensations.

This visual strategy creates a dual-processing consciousness (Grodal 2009), where different interpretations emerge simultaneously. On the one hand, the audience's top-down thinking processes the scene through established cultural codes of marriage, leading them to interpret the gestures as signs of harmony. However, simultaneously, bottom-up emotional processing picks up on subtle physical cues that hint at underlying tensions related to the impending revelation of the surrogacy.

Critically, the framing mediates the audience's ethical engagement through what Csordas (1993) refers to as somatic attention. By carefully controlling what the audience sees while simultaneously activating their embodied understanding, filmmakers open up interpretation through the audience's senses, even as they subtly guide their moral stance. This cinematic mediation through close-up shots presents the marital compromise not as a straightforward narrative conclusion, but as a complex, lived paradox, where touch simultaneously conveys forgiveness and apprehension, intimacy and ongoing negotiation.

Figure 2: A close-up shot of Sebastian and Aisha in bed
*Source: Nafsi film*

*Disconnect: The Wedding Planner* uses close-ups and extreme close-ups as practical tools to reshape how viewers engage with scenes of sexual transgression, specifically by impacting their emotions. Following Christian Metz's ideas on film's language, these tight shots transform mere body parts into hyper-signs that activate cultural taboos, while also making the audience physically feel what's happening through embodied simulation (Gallese & Guerra 2012). The coastal encounter between Judy and Richard, a moment of unexpected romance and intimacy between friends, intensely illustrates this. Extreme close-up shots of their interlocked hands and flexed toes as they get intimate in her room become haptic signs (Marks 2017). This immediate sensory impact creates what Vivian Sobchack calls carnal spectatorship —a viewing experience in which the audience physically mirrors the sensations of the encounter. Crucially, by focusing intensely on body parts rather than faces, the film creates semiotic dissonance. The visible signs of pleasure, like body movements, conflict with the lack of emotional expression, revealing the encounter's underlying emptiness. This specific framing creates what Plantinga (2009) identifies as affective irony, placing audiences in a position where they simultaneously experience

intuitive immersion in the scene and feel ethical condemnation stemming from this sensory-triggered cognitive conflict.

Furthermore, both *Nafsi* and *Disconnect: The Wedding Planner* skilfully used camera angles as spatial signs that visually map out power dynamics, influencing audience perception through embodied cognition. The interaction between Shiko and Clarence when she returned from the coast after a prolonged time apart in *Nafsi* illustrates Eisenstein's concept of vertical montage. The high-angle shot looking down on Clarence as he kneels, begging her to reconsider her relational position, clearly signals submission in a cultural context. In contrast, the eye-level shot of Shiko as she responds engages with Kenyan cultural norms of female authority. This interplay of angles creates affective dissonance for the audience (Grodal 2009). The top-down thinking recognises Shiko's moral authority through cultural cues, while the bottom-up mirror responses to Clarence's vulnerable posture automatically trigger pity. As the filmmaker's intentional choices confirm, this creates an interpretive gap that requires audiences to reconcile competing bodily sensations and cultural expectations.

The washroom scene between Otis and Dele further demonstrates how camera angles engineer a sense of hierarchical spectatorship. The low-angle shot of Dele creates what Mulvey (1975) referred to as "to-be-looked-at-ness," making his towering presence activate fixed power models through the audience's physical perception of space. Thus, the high-angle shot on Otis kneeling before Dele triggers a physical sense of his diminished status, mirroring his marginalised business position. This interplay of angles acts as affective idealisation, visually mapping social hierarchies onto the viewer's own body through what Csordas (1993) identifies as somatic attention.

When Dee rejects Otis' proposition of intimacy at the restaurant, opting to walk away from him unusually, the sudden shift in angles (from a low angle on Dee to a high angle on Otis) creates a kinaesthetic empathy with her newfound power, while simultaneously making the audience feel Otis' humiliation physically. This manipulation of how we receive the images

transforms mere spatial relationships into a moral discussion, positioning audiences as physically engaged participants in these power negotiations.

**Audience positioning through subjective and Proximal strategies**

In both *Nafsi* and *Disconnect* films, Point of View (PoV) shots serve as emotional channels that bridge the distance between the audience and the characters. This transforms abstract ethical judgments into something the audience feels physically. For example, the confrontation between Shiko and Clarence in *Nafsi* reconfigures Metz's (1974) concept of primary identification, where the audience views the world through a character's eyes through a Kenyan cultural lens. The alternating low- and high-angle PoV shots cause the audience to occupy both the aggressor's and the victim's viewpoints physically. This interplay of angles generates a cognitive-perceptual dissonance (Grodal 2009), a kind of mental friction where viewers simultaneously experience: Clarence's perceived dominance, seen from Shiko's low-angle PoV, triggers their physical responses to a looming threat as Clarence charges on to attack the helpless Shiko. Second is Shiko's physical vulnerability, seen from Clarence's high-angle POV, prompting automatic fear responses. This technique renders Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, also referred to as non-physical dominance, a tangible physical reality, transforming abstract moral conflict into an ethical situation where ethical considerations are felt in the body.

The deliberate delay before the audience fully immerses itself in Aisha's POV in *Nafsi* demonstrates sophisticated control over how the audience interprets the scene. Initially, objective shots establish her perceived strength and independence, a common cultural image. This creates an interpretive horizon (Jauss 1982), a background against which her later vulnerability gains significant emotional depth. This careful timing leverages the conflict between top-down (conceptual) and bottom-up (sensory) processing (Anderson 1996).

The 'zipper' scene between Otis and Dele in *Disconnect* employs POV shots as spatial semiotics, serving as visual cues that map out the power dynamics of postcolonial capitalism. The alternating high- and low-angle perspectives create what Barker (2009) refers to as tactile images. Otis' high-angle PoV

signifies his professional decline through a physical sense of being looked down upon.

Dele's low-angle PoV makes the audience physically feel his neoliberal dominance, as if they are looking up at him. This interplay of angles transforms Appadurai's scapes of globalisation, which encompass the global flows of capital and media, into a physical experience, positioning the audience as embodied participants in Kenya's ongoing redefinition of male entrepreneurship.

Judy's over-the-shoulder (OTS) shots during Erastus' betrayal in *Disconnect* are potent examples of haptic visuality (Marks 2000) acting as a moral tool. The composition creates a physical connection through its proximity to Judy's shoulder, making the audience feel almost physically present. It establishes an interpretive complicity by aligning the audience with Judy's Christian expectations. This then triggers emotional discomfort when cultural marriage codes are violated, as Judy eventually gets sexually involved with Richard, her best friend's fiancée. This transforms the film frame into what Silverman (1996) terms a site of ethical audition, where viewers become physical witnesses to transgressions against social kinship structures, specifically those in Kenya.

Collectively, whether through alternating PoV, delayed PoV, reciprocal angles, or over-the-shoulder framing, these approaches leverage embodied simulation and physical sensation. They illustrate symbolic violence, disrupt audience expectations, spatialise power dynamics, and create a tactile ethical interface. The filmmakers are not just telling stories; they are

making viewers physically feel and morally engage with the narratives, transforming abstract concepts into intuitive, lived experiences.

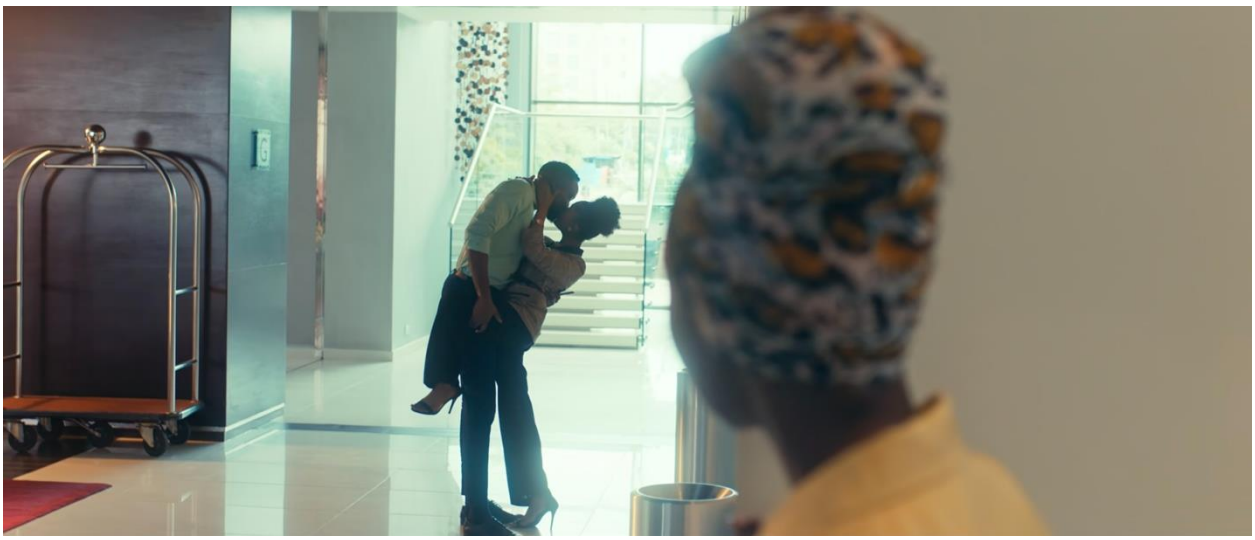

Figure 3: An over-the-shoulder long shot of Erasmus and the secretary fondling and kissing. *Source: Disconnect film*

The balcony infidelity sequence in *Disconnect, a film about a wedding planner,* employs over-the-shoulder (OTS) shots as a spatial technique that draws viewers into the scene, fostering ethical complicity. Following Christian Metz's theory of cinematic utterance, this framing acts as a crucial semiotic hinge. It simultaneously activates Kenyan cultural norms around infidelity and triggers our mirror ideologies and misgivings in response to the intimate, transgressive actions (Gallese & Guerra 2012). By placing viewers in the perspective of TK, who is covertly watching from a scopophilic vantage point (Mulvey 1975), the shot creates a swaying identification as TK struggles to comprehend the evidence right before her eyes. The audience, through TK's perspective, physically mirrors Richard and Judy's connection through haptic visuality (Ross 2015), almost feeling it while also mentally processing their betrayal of Erastus and Seline. This resulting emotional tension intensely embodies Kenya's moral contradictions. It creates what Slavoj Žižek calls framed absence, where the unseen, wronged

partners subtly haunt the viewer's physical experience of the scene, transforming mental ethical dilemmas into a deeply felt, personal negotiation.

The washroom confrontation scene further demonstrates how OTS shots expose social biases by disrupting our predictive coding, the way our brains anticipate what comes next. Khalid's homophobic misinterpretation, for instance, illustrates Stuart Hall's concept of encoding/decoding rupture within Kenya's cultural understanding. Here, fear of same-sex intimacy among men acts as a dominant interpretive framework. As Tosh Gitonga, the Director of *Disconnect*: *The wedding planner*, noted, "society is driven by fear," the OTS initially aligns us with Khalid's biased viewpoint. This triggers Bayesian cognition errors (Clark 2013), where our deep-seated cultural assumptions override the actual visual evidence and therefore the distancing effect.

Together, these uses of OTS shots act as sociocultural prosthetics, mediating Kenya's evolving sexual modernity. The balcony scene transforms the audience into what Arjun Appadurai calls ethical navigators of cultural landscapes. Here, the audience's physical immersion in the transgression conflicts with our cognitive adherence to communal norms. Meanwhile, the washroom scene critiques Sekimoto and Brown's concept of a racialised sensorium (Sekimoto & Brown 2023) by prompting an awareness of bias through the cinematography itself. The close shoulder framing creates a shared physical feeling that positions audiences as carnal witnesses, physically present and involved rather than detached judges. This cinematic mediation cultivates Jacques Rancière's emancipated spectator, an audience driven toward ethical reflection through carefully managed cognitive and emotional conflicts. This makes Kenyan moral landscapes feel like lived, sensory experiences, rather than abstract doctrines.

Through the framework of embodied spectatorship (Sobchack 1992), the intimate reconciliation scene between Aisha and Sebastian in *Nafsi,* a moment when the two kiss and caress passionately in their bedroom, offers an illustration of how visual aesthetics, specifically long and counter close-ups, slow-motion pacing and tactile choreography, mediate viewers' moral interpretation of intimacy. Rather than simply conveying narrative

information that the couple is romantically involved, the camera techniques are used to engage the audience and invite them to join in as spectators. The prolonged close-ups and slow-motion movement in shots effectively collapse the distance between the audience, now invited as co-participants, and the characters (Sobchack 1992). The deliberate deceleration of movement as they kiss, achieved through slow-motion pacing, amplifies viewers' affective intentionality and engagement with the scene (Plantinga 2009). By foregrounding the tactile and durational qualities of the encounter, the sequence positions ethical evaluation not as an abstract deliberation but as a lived, sensory experience, blurring the boundaries between moral judgment and corporeal participation.

In a different scene, the portrayal of Otis's impulsive encounter with a stranger at a coastal bar in the *Disconnect* film, depicted through shaky handheld shots and blurred visual focus, exemplifies how cinematographic techniques mobilise embodied spectatorship to mediate moral interpretation. The unstable framing, mimicking the disorientation of intoxication or heightened arousal, immerses viewers in the characters' instinctual experience, collapsing the distinction between ethical observation and sensory participation. As the camera sways erratically during their rushed undressing and descent onto the bed, the audience is thrust into an intentional replication of the characters' urgency, destabilising traditional moral binaries of right or wrong. This aesthetic strategy employs haptic visuality, where the tangible quality of the imagery, such as the out-of-focus faces, elicits a bodily response, mirroring the characters' loss of physical and ethical control. By denying the audience the clarity of stable shots or composed framing, the sequence resists passive moral judgment, instead provoking an embodied conflict—a tension between visceral empathy for the characters' raw desire and mental discomfort with their ethical recklessness.

The blurred vision further alters the moral opacity of the encounter, reflecting the characters' and, by extension, the audience's inability to see the consequences of their actions. Such techniques position spectators not as detached arbiters of morality but as co-participants in the narrative's ethical ambiguity, aligning with Sobchack's (1992) assertion that film experience is lived through the body. This embodied engagement

complicates simplistic moral evaluations, instead inviting reflection on the interplay between impulse, agency, and sociocultural norms that govern sexual behaviour.

Furthermore, the analysis of Richard and Judy's illicit encounter in the *Disconnect* film reveals how embodied spectatorship, grounded in sensory, bodily engagement with visual aesthetics, shapes moral interpretation during moments of ethical transgression. The scene's visual grammar, including prolonged close-ups, shallow focus, slow-motion pacing, Dutch angles, and unstable handheld camerawork, instinctively implicates the audience in the characters' moral ambiguity. Prolonged close-ups of Judy's conflicted facial expressions and Richard's grasping hands amplify physical intimacy, forcing the audience into an uncomfortable proximity with their ethical dilemma. Slow-motion pacing elongates perception, simulating the character's distorted sense of consequence and inviting viewers to dwell in the transitional space between impulse and regret.

These techniques collectively promote perceptual empathy, where viewers' personified responses parallel the onscreen moral crisis. However, rather than condemning the infidelity, the visual aesthetic strategy complicates ethical judgment. By sensually aligning audiences with the characters' experiences, the film provokes a complicity that extends beyond simplistic moral binaries. This aligns with Sobchack's (1992) concept of the cinesthetic subject, where spectators' lived bodies unconsciously resonate with onscreen actions, blurring the line between ethical critique and corporeal participation. Such an approach challenges the audience to reconcile their physiological engagement with normative ethical frameworks, underscoring cinema's capacity to provoke moral introspection through instinctive, rather than purely cognitive, means.

**Visual strategies and ethical implications**

Film aesthetics constitute a semiotic regime wherein every visual choice functions as an ethical expression (Metz 1974). Camera angles enact affective positioning (Plantinga 2009), lighting schemas materialise moral dichotomies, and framing practices construct Barthesian mythologies of normalisation. This technological mediation positions filmmakers as

Foucaultian author-functionaries who embed societal contradictions within narrative style. Through their interrogation of surrogacy, infidelity, and queer identity in the *Nafsi* and *Disconnect* films, the directors engage in Hall's (1980) encoding process, embedding postcolonial sexual politics within intimate character studies while inviting spectatorial decoding of power dynamics. The uniform visual obscuration of intimacy across relational contexts constitutes a strategic semiotic operation that exceeds mere discretion. The systematic deployment of oblique framing, shallow focus, and blind shots creates Eco's (1979) closed texts that perform triple ideological labour: First, they resist Mulveyan scopophilic objectification through 'strategic absence', transforming physicality into haptic suggestion. Second, they generate Iserian gaps that demand spectatorial projection; the audience cognitively reconstructs obscured intimacy through embodied simulation (Gallese, 2005).

Third, they inadvertently expose Žižek's (1991) obscene underside of Kenyan sexual morality. By framing sanctioned marital intimacy with the same visual reserve as transgression, the films reveal society's extreme discomfort with embodied desire regardless of context. This technical uniformity flattens ethical distinctions, potentially naturalising patriarchal norms that equate all sexuality with transgression (Mulvey, 2006). Narrative ellipses during sexual anticipation operate as Genette's (1972) paralipsis, strategic omissions that reconfigure spectatorial cognition. The fade from Aisha/Sebastian's undressing and the pan away from Richard/Seline's encounter trigger Clark's (2013) predictive processing: the audience becomes co-authors who deduce narrative possibilities from absence. This technique amplifies affective investment through what Plantinga terms mimetic desire; audiences somatically mirror restrained longing through autonomic responses. However, the identical application to marital and casual encounters creates what Clover (1992) identified as the anxious void of sexual representation, inviting culturally-conditioned projections that may reinforce regulatory regimes rather than subvert them. These techniques allow Kenyan filmmakers to employ what Appadurai (1996) terms as the ethical navigation of postcolonial modernity. The persistent visual omissions function not as prudish evasion, but as Mbembe's (2001) convivial signifiers, inviting us to decode societal contradictions through embodied spectatorship.

## Conclusion

This article analyses the relationship between visual aesthetics and audiences in the films *Nafsi* and *Disconnect 2*. It has been found that close-up and extreme close-ups were used for contrasting reasons in selected scenes, and this significantly influences the audience's emotional engagement with the narrative and their moral evaluation of the characters' actions. It has been found that in the *Nafsi* film, the shots are guided by key emotional shifts and moral choices; in contrast, in the Disconnect film, these techniques amplify the emotional rawness and often the discomfort associated with the characters' flawed relationships and transactional sexual encounters. The article also reveals that the strategic deployment of visual aesthetics, such as point of view in the films, effectively blurs the lines between spectator and character, fostering an embodied spectatorship that significantly impacts moral interpretation. Therefore, the power of visual aesthetics to shape how we see and also how we feel and judge, and thus the crucial role of embodied spectatorship in the construction of moral meaning in film. Furthermore, the article concludes that the strategic deployment of techniques that activate embodied spectatorship significantly shapes viewers' moral interpretations of the narratives, collapsing the distance between the spectator and the character, immersing the audience in moments of vulnerability and moral reckoning, and fostering empathy while simultaneously implicating them in the characters' dilemmas. Ultimately, the use of techniques in *Nafsi* and *Disconnect* films demonstrates the power of visual aesthetics to reflect moral dilemmas and actively construct them, positioning the audience as embodied participants in the narrative's ethical landscape.

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