

ABSTRACT

Given the inseparability of Africa's cinematic history from issues of misrepresentation and its profound impacts, African filmmaking remains intrinsically tied to the continent's ongoing struggle for control over its image, a struggle that continues into the 21st century. Research on African cinema has explored its practices within the wider frameworks. The detailed micro-level analysis of the structural components in individual films is frequently overlooked. This research examines the structural elements of post-colonial African cinema by focusing on narrative, character development, cinematography, editing, and *mise en scène* to determine how post-colonial African filmmakers from Anglophone and Francophone West Africa constructed their narratives. It explores the stylistic choices that differentiate these two linguistic regions and how filmmakers either continued or departed from Eurocentric perspectives in their visual storytelling. Through textual analysis, this research deconstructs selected West African films from the period following independence up to 1990 to provide detailed descriptions and interpretations of narrative inclinations in post-colonial West African cinema. Guided by postcolonial theory, this research interrogates cinematic aesthetics, using Edward Said's concept of orientalism to analyse the reversal of colonial narratives in early African cinema. Homi Bhabha's notions of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity offered a lens to view the cultural subjectivities and identity interconnections within these films. Additionally, Franz Fanon's advocacy for the rejection of colonial forms in filmmaking serves as a critical framework for understanding the push towards cinematic independence and the decolonisation of minds.

The research demonstrates that postcolonial West African filmmakers emphasised the resurgence of culture, agency, and identity in order to construct a counter-narrative to the post-colonial portrayal of Africa as weak and primitive. The characters in the films embody agency, reflecting the spirit of Sankofa despite the persistence of new, constrictive social, cultural, political, and economic structures anchored in colonialism. The filmmakers critique neo-colonial leaders and their policies, as well as explicitly address the legacies of colonialism. They transcend conventional dramatic elements by employing metaphors, symbols, and analogies as critical commentary on Africa's experiences, as evidenced by their stylistic choices. There is also the tendency to emphasise non-plot elements such as props and names as tools to advance the narrative and the incorporation of culturally particular codes that necessitate a comprehension of cultural contexts in order to appreciate them fully. The research highlights the importance of cinematic language as a tool for reflecting on identity, culture, and institutional structures that require preservation and development. More than just storytelling, these films are acts of resistance, serving as tools for social change, raising awareness, mobilising communities, and inspiring action against oppression and injustice. They represent a reclamation and reaffirmation of cultural identity, promoting indigenous perspectives and challenging Western-centric narratives.