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PUBLIER SANS ÊTRE LU : POUR UNE THÉORIE DE LA COMMUNAUTÉ DE RÉCEPTION DU LIVRE SCIENTIFIQUE EN AFRIQUE

(Coordination)
Faty-Myriam MANDOU AYIWOUO
Aristide BITOUGA



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Publier sans être lu : pour une théorie de la communauté de réception du livre scientifique en Afrique

Pratiques, enjeux épistémiques et perspectives institutionnelles

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Publishing without being read: Toward a theory of the reception community of the academic book in Africa

Practices, epistemic stakes, and institutional perspectives

Coordination | Editors

Faty-Myriam MANDOU AYIWOUO

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Sous la direction de | Edited by

Faty-Myriam Mandou Ayiwouo et Aristide Bitouga

Université de Douala, Cameroun

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Recalibrating dark skin in cinema: A visual analysis of *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman* by Biyi Bandele (2022)

Recalibrer la représentation visuelle des peaux foncées au cinéma : analyse visuelle du film Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman *de Biyi Bandele (2022)*

NGANG Romanus Ntseh, Tafor Paul ATEH & Paul ANIMBOM NGONG[1]

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Abstract

The cinematic presentation of dark skin remains a significant concern in film studies, shaped by historical imaging practices, aesthetic conventions, and racialised standards of visibility. Although scholarship has extensively examined racial representation, less attention has been given to the cinematographic techniques through which dark skin is visually rendered. This study employs qualitative visual analysis of Biyi Bandele's Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman (2022), drawing on formalist film theory and critical perspectives on racial visibility. It examines how lighting, exposure, colour grading, framing, costume, makeup, and mise-en-scène influence the visual presentation of dark-skinned characters. Findings reveal that diffuse lighting preserves facial contours and tonal detail, while low key illumination creates dramatic depth through controlled highlights and shadows. Earth-toned colour palettes, costume contrasts, and close-up framing enhance facial definition and visual prominence e. Practical lighting and chromatic relationships further support tonal differentiation across complexions. The study concludes that effective dark skin presentation depends on coordinated cinematographic choices that balance aesthetic intention, technical considerations, and racial visibility. It contributes to discussions on inclusive visual practices by distinguishing cinematic presentation from narrative representation.

Keywords: Cinema; Dark skin tones; Cinematic presentation; Lighting; Racial visibility; Visual analysis.

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Résumé

La présentation cinématographique des peaux foncées demeure une préoccupation majeure dans les études cinématographiques, en raison des pratiques historiques de l'imagerie, des conventions esthétiques et des normes racialisées de visibilité. Bien que les recherches aient largement abordé la représentation raciale, les techniques cinématographiques permettant de restituer visuellement les peaux foncées restent moins étudiées. Cette étude propose une analyse visuelle qualitative du film Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman (2022) de Biyi Bandele, fondée sur la théorie formaliste du cinéma et les approches critiques de la visibilité raciale. Elle examine l'influence de l'éclairage, de l'exposition, de l'étalonnage des couleurs, du cadrage, des costumes, du maquillage et de la mise en scène sur la présentation des personnages à la peau foncée. Les résultats montrent qu'un éclairage diffus préserve les contours du visage et les détails tonals, tandis qu'un éclairage en clair-obscur renforce la profondeur dramatique. Les palettes chromatiques, les contrastes vestimentaires et les gros plans favorisent également la définition des visages et leur visibilité. L'étude conclut qu'une présentation adéquate des peaux foncées repose sur une coordination des choix cinématographiques conciliant intentions esthétiques, exigences techniques et visibilité raciale.

Mots-clés : Cinéma ; Peaux foncées ; Présentation cinématographique ; Éclairage ; Visibilité raciale ; Analyse visuelle.

Introduction

Cinema is fundamentally an art of light. Every image projected onto the screen emerges from the interaction between light and surface, skin, as one of the most prominent surfaces in film becomes a central site where light produces meaning. Yet not all skin interacts with light under equal conditions. Dark skin tone, historically and technologically, has been treated as a deviation from normative calibration standards designed around light skin (Roth, 2009).

The problem is not merely one of representation in terms of narrative presence; Dark skinned characters have appeared in cinema for over a century. The more pressing concern is how their skin is presented, how it is lit, graded, framed, and spatially positioned. A character may be narratively central yet visually marginalised through improper use of some technical elements of film like

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lighting, tonal flattening, or chromatic distortion etc. Thus, a critical distinction must be made between cinematic representation (what is told), and cinematic presentation (how it is seen).

This article explores the latter. It interrogates how formal cinematic mechanisms construct racial visibility and how aesthetic practice can either reinforce or disrupt inherited hierarchies of visual privilege.

1. Historical Development of Skin Tone in Cinema

The cinematic presentation of skin tones has evolved alongside developments in imaging technologies, lighting practices, and colour reproduction standards, reflecting changing approaches to the visibility and aesthetic treatment of diverse complexions.

The historical presentation of dark skin in cinema has been influenced by photographic technologies, exposure standards, and colour reproduction practices. Early photographic calibration frequently relied on lighter skin tones as reference points, particularly through Kodak's Shirley cards, which were used to assess colour balance and printing consistency (Roth, 2009). Such practices contributed to imaging conventions that did not adequately account for the tonal diversity of darker complexions.

The transition from photochemical film to digital cinematography introduced new possibilities for exposure control, dynamic range, and colour reproduction. Modern digital cinema cameras, including ARRI ALEXA and RED systems, employ image sensors and sophisticated colour processing pipelines designed to capture and encode extensive luminance and chromatic information. However, accurate dark skin tone rendition depends not only on sensor capabilities but also on exposure, lighting, colour encoding, monitoring, and post-production decisions (ARRI, n.d.-a; RED Digital Cinema, 2026).

Digital cinematography commonly employs logarithmic encoding curves to accommodate a broad range of captured tonal information for subsequent processing. ARRI's LogC3 and LogC4 and RED's Log3G10 provide examples of camera-specific logarithmic encodings. These are

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combined with wide gamut colour spaces, including ARRI Wide Gamut and REDWideGamutRGB, to support colour manipulation during post-production (ARRI, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; RED Digital Cinema, 2026). Although such workflows provide substantial grading flexibility, they do not independently guarantee accurate reproduction of dark skin tones. Look Up Tables (LUTs) further influence the appearance of digitally captured images by transforming colour and tonal values for monitoring, creative grading, or display. Inappropriate LUT selection or colour space conversion may alter skin tone hue, saturation, contrast, and shadow detail. Consequently, the visual presentation of dark skin may be affected by the interaction between camera encoding, colour transforms, and creative grading decisions rather than sensor performance alone (ARRI, n.d.-a; RED Digital Cinema, 2026).

The Academy Color Encoding System (ACES) provides a standardised framework for managing colour across cameras, post-production applications, and display environments. Through input and output transforms, ACES supports consistent colour processing and delivery across different imaging systems (Academy Color Encoding System, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). However, colour management consistency does not necessarily establish equitable skin tone reproduction, particularly where exposure decisions, creative looks, or processing choices affect the visibility and tonal variation of darker complexions. Technical bias in contemporary digital cinematography should therefore be understood as a potential outcome of imaging practices and processing decisions rather than an inherent limitation of digital sensors. Exposure placement, highlight and shadow retention, white balance, colour space transformations, and grading practices may influence how different complexions appear on screen. Establishing systematic disparities requires controlled evaluation across skin tones and imaging conditions.

Roth's (2009) historical analysis provides a useful context for examining how imaging standards may privilege particular tonal references, although historical photographic practices and contemporary digital workflows involve different technologies. From a formalist perspective, these developments demonstrate that the cinematic presentation of dark skin is shaped by both technological capabilities and deliberate aesthetic choices. In Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman (2022), the interaction of lighting, contrast, colour, and mise-en-scène provides a basis for

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examining these relationships, although the film's specific camera encoding and colour-management workflow are not established in this study.

2. Theoretical considerations: the formalist film theory

This section examines the theoretical perspectives underpinning the study, with particular emphasis on formalist film theory and its relevance to understanding how cinematographic techniques shape the visual presentation and racial visibility of dark skin tones.

Formalist film theory provides a framework for examining how cinematographic techniques construct visual meaning. Early theorists, including Hugo Münsterberg, Rudolf Arnheim, Sergei Eisenstein, and Béla Balázs, emphasised framing, lighting, composition, editing, and camera movement as expressive elements. Formalism therefore considers cinema an artistic construction shaped by deliberate technical and aesthetic choices rather than a direct reproduction of reality (Arnheim, 1957).

Although classical formalism remains relevant to digital filmmaking, it does not adequately address racialised conventions of visibility. Understanding dark skin tone presentation consequently requires integrating formalist principles with contemporary theories of race, visual culture, and imaging technologies. Dyer (1997), in *White*, examines whiteness as an often-unmarked norm in Western visual culture, demonstrating how photographic and cinematic conventions reflect racialised assumptions. His perspective suggests that lighting, exposure, and tonal reproduction are not culturally neutral, as these choices influence the visibility and visual prominence of different complexions.

Keeling (2007) examines how cinema constructs racialised ways of seeing and shapes the visibility of Black subjects. Her perspective distinguishes cinematic representation, concerned with the presence and narrative roles of Black characters, from cinematic presentation, which examines how their bodies, faces, and complexions are visually rendered. Roth (2009) extends this discussion through her examination of Shirley cards and historical photographic colour calibration. Her concept

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of cognitive equity highlights the importance of accommodating diverse skin tones in imaging technologies, providing a basis for evaluating exposure, colour balance, and tonal reproduction.

Together, these perspectives connect cinematic form with racial legibility, understood as the ways visual techniques make racialised subjects visible and meaningful. Lighting shapes facial highlights and shadows, exposure determines tonal detail, colour grading influences chromatic relationships, and framing directs visual attention. These choices can enhance or diminish the visibility of dark-skinned characters. However, reduced visual visibility does not necessarily indicate discriminatory intention. Cinematographic decisions operate within historical and cultural contexts, where inadequate illumination, compressed shadows, or limited background separation may obscure facial detail. Conversely, controlled contrast, appropriate exposure, and deliberate colour relationships can enhance skin definition without artificially lightening darker complexions. This study therefore integrates classical formalism with Dyer's (1997) critique of whiteness, Keeling's (2007) analysis of Black visuality, and Roth's (2009) examination of colour calibration. This approach connects cinematographic techniques with the cultural and technological conditions shaping racial visibility.

Applied to Biyi Bandele's Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman (2022), the framework examines how lighting, exposure, colour grading, framing, costume, makeup, and mise-en-scène influence the tonal definition and aesthetic prominence of dark-skinned characters. It positions dark skin presentation as both a cinematographic and cultural concern.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in formalist film theory to examine the cinematic presentation of dark skin tones in Biyi Bandele's *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022). Although the findings are limited to a single film and cannot be generalised to all cinematic productions, the analysis provides a focused examination of how coordinated visual elements contribute to the presentation of dark skin. The methodology therefore offers a framework for

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discussing the relationship between cinematographic aesthetics, technical image characteristics, and racial visibility within contemporary African cinema.

3.1. A qualitative and interpretive approach

The methodology focuses on the relationship between cinematographic techniques and the visual appearance of dark-skinned characters, particularly how lighting, exposure, colour palettes, framing, set design, practical light sources, makeup, and colour grading influence facial visibility, tonal differentiation, and aesthetic composition.

The film was purposively selected as a case study because its predominantly Black cast, culturally specific visual environment, and varied lighting conditions provide opportunities to examine the presentation of dark skin across different cinematic settings. The study is limited to the film's observable visual characteristics rather than its production processes or audience reception. Accordingly, the analysis considers the finished film as the primary research material and interprets its visual composition within the framework of formalist film theory (Arnheim, 1957).

The study is interpretive rather than experimental. It does not involve calibrated image measurements, access to original camera files, production lighting records, or post-production grading documentation. Consequently, observations concerning exposure, colour grading, and lighting are based on the visible characteristics of the finished film and do not establish the precise technical settings or production decisions responsible for those characteristics.

3.2. Visual analysis

The research employs visual analysis to investigate selected scenes representing different lighting environments, spatial arrangements, and character compositions. Particular attention is given to the relationship between skin luminance and surrounding surfaces, the preservation of facial details in illuminated and shadowed areas, and the interaction between costume, makeup, and environmental colours. These features provide the basis for assessing how cinematographic decisions contribute to the visibility and aesthetic presentation of dark-skinned characters.

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Visual analysis is a qualitative research method concerned with the systematic examination and interpretation of visual materials. Rose (2016) emphasises the importance of examining visual composition and the cultural contexts through which images communicate meaning. Within film studies, this approach enables researchers to investigate how cinematic elements interact to construct visual meaning and aesthetic expression.

In this study, selected scenes from Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman (2022) constitute the units of analysis. The examination focuses on seven interconnected visual categories: lighting and exposure; colour palette and costume harmony; framing and camera work; set design and location; props and practical light sources; makeup design; and colour grading and post-production aesthetics. These categories provide a consistent analytical framework for examining the film's visual treatment of dark-skinned characters.

The analysis involves close observation of selected frames and sequences, with attention to lighting direction, intensity, contrast, facial highlights, shadow detail, colour relationships, and spatial composition. Scene timestamps and screenshots are used to identify and illustrate relevant visual characteristics. The observations are interpreted through formalist film theory, which considers the expressive significance of visual organisation and cinematic technique (Arnheim, 1957).

The analysis also considers how the relationship between characters and their surroundings affects tonal separation and facial visibility. In scenes involving low-key illumination, particular attention is given to whether facial contours remain distinguishable from darker backgrounds. In brighter compositions, the examination considers the preservation of tonal variation and highlight detail. These observations are interpreted alongside the film's broader visual style rather than treated as isolated technical characteristics.

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4. Synopsis of *Elesin-Oba:The King's Horseman*

This section provides a brief synopsis of Biyi Bandele's *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022), outlining its central narrative, cultural setting, and principal characters to contextualise the subsequent analysis of the film's cinematographic presentation of dark skin tones.

Elesin Oba-The King's Horseman directed by Biyi Bandele is a 2022 Yoruba Language Nigerian historical drama. It is an adaption of Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman stage play. Based on a true story and set in the 1943/1944 Oyo town, Southwestern Nigeria. The king has just died, and as tradition demands, Elesin Oba must perform a ritual suicide in order to join his dead king in the afterlife so that the king may gain free passage into the land of the gods, thus blocking disaster from befalling the community. Elesin Oba's sexual appetites cause him to malinger, which leads to a mortal confrontation with the British and with devastating consequences. When the horseman is unable to fulfill his final responsibility, it is believed that the king's ghost wanders the earth, spelling calamity for the land and its people. Also, due to his inability to fulfill his duty, his son, Olunde, takes his place in the ritual.

5. Cinematic Presentation of Dark Skin in *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022) by Biyi Bandele

This section presents a formalist visual analysis of selected scenes from *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022), examining how lighting, exposure, colour palettes, framing, set design, props, makeup, and colour grading contribute to the visibility, tonal differentiation, and aesthetic presentation of dark-skinned characters.

5.1. Lighting and Exposure

Lighting refers to the controlled arrangement of light to illuminate subjects, establish visual contrast, and enhance the expressive qualities of cinematic images (Arnheim, 1957). Exposure, on the other hand, refers to the amount of light recorded by the camera, influencing image brightness and the retention of tonal detail.

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Lighting and exposure are fundamental cinematographic elements that influence the visibility, tonal accuracy, and facial definition of dark-skinned characters. Appropriate exposure preserves tonal gradations and facial details, while underexposure may obscure shadow information and overexposure may reduce highlight detail. These technical considerations are particularly significant in relation to historical photographic conventions that have influenced the visual reproduction of different skin tones (Dyer, 1997; Roth, 2009). From a cinematographic perspective, these qualities depend on the direction, intensity, diffusion, and contrast of illumination.

In the bedroom sequence (00:02:49), relatively soft illumination produces gradual transitions between highlighted and shadowed facial regions. The diffuse lighting reduces pronounced shadow boundaries, allowing facial contours and skin texture to remain visually distinguishable. This suggests a relatively controlled contrast relationship between illuminated and unilluminated areas, although the exact key-to-fill ratio cannot be determined from the finished image.

Figure 1: Medium shot of Elesin Oba and numerous sexual partners.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (00:02:49) .

The prison sequence (01:27:58) presents a contrasting low key lighting approach. Subdued illumination and deeper shadows create dramatic tension while directing attention towards selected facial features. The relationship between localised highlights and surrounding darkness contributes to facial modelling and perceived depth. These sequences demonstrate that the presentation of dark

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skin depends not simply on increasing exposure but on controlling luminance distribution, specular highlights, and shadow detail. Within the film's visual language, lighting operates as both a technical and expressive element, shaping facial visibility and narrative atmosphere.

Figure 2: Medium shot. A night scene of Simon, Jane and Elesin Oba in prison.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (01:27:58)

Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman suggests that, with intentional planning, dark skin can be lit not just accurately but beautifully. The film's lighting design and exposure choices appear to counter the visual hierarchies that have historically neglected dark skin in cinema. Rather than adjusting dark skin to fit the camera, the film adapts the camera to fit dark skin, an essential distinction in constructing a truly inclusive cinematic vocabulary.

5.2. Colour Palette and Costume Harmony

Colour palette refers to the selection and coordination of colours within a cinematic composition, while costume harmony concerns the relationship between characters' clothing, skin tones, and surrounding visual elements. These elements contribute to visual balance, character distinction, and the construction of meaning within the frame (Arnheim, 1957; Rose, 2016). In the presentation of dark skin, carefully coordinated colour palettes and costume contrasts can enhance tonal differentiation, facial visibility, and the aesthetic prominence of dark-skinned characters. Colour palette and costume design influence skin tone presentation through chromatic contrast, luminance separation, and relationships between foreground subjects and surrounding

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environments. These elements contribute to the visual distinction of dark-skinned characters within the cinematic frame.

In the bedroom sequence (00:02:03), patterned Ankara fabrics, burgundy, green, orange, and other warm colours create a layered chromatic environment. The interaction between costume saturation, background colour, and facial luminance contributes to the separation of actors' complexions from surrounding visual elements.

Rather than functioning solely as cultural decoration, costume colours contribute to compositional balance and visual hierarchy. Their relationship with lighting and skin tone helps maintain facial prominence within visually complex scenes. From a formalist perspective, these chromatic relationships demonstrate how costume and production design participate in constructing the aesthetic visibility of dark skin.

Figure 3: open shot of Elesin Oba having fun with women.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (00:02:03)

5.3. Framing, Camera Work, and Close-ups

Framing refers to the arrangement of visual elements within the camera's field of view, while camera work encompasses shot composition, camera angles, and movement. Close-ups emphasise

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facial expressions and details, directing viewers' attention towards characters and their emotional experiences. These techniques contribute to cinematic meaning and visual expression (Arnheim, 1957)

Framing and camera movement influence the cinematic presentation of dark skin through shot scale, subject positioning, visual emphasis, and figure ground contrast. These techniques determine how facial features and bodily expressions are presented within the composition.

The close up of Elesin Oba (01:03:13) foregrounds facial expression and tonal variation, directing attention towards the character's emotional state. The restricted framing increases the visual prominence of facial contours, skin texture, and the distribution of illumination across the face.

Figure 4: Close up of Elesin Oba.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (01:03:13).

Similarly, the tracking sequence (00:03:41) places Elesin Oba within a predominantly green landscape. The contrast between costume colour, surrounding vegetation, and subject movement contributes to figure ground separation, helping maintain the character's visual prominence

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Figure 5: Tracking shot that follows Elesin Oba through the forest on horseback.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (00:03:41).

These compositional choices suggest that the visibility of dark skin is influenced not only by exposure and colour reproduction but also by the spatial organisation of the cinematic image. Framing therefore contributes to both visual clarity and narrative emphasis. In this respect, the practice departs from historical norms in western cinema where dark skinned characters were often neglected both literally and metaphorically within the frame (Dyer, 1997).

5.4. Set Design and Location

The relationship between characters and their physical surroundings plays a significant role in shaping cinematic meaning and visual identity. As Bordwell and Thompson (2013) observe, the arrangement of settings and other elements of mise-en-scène contributes to the overall composition of a film. Set design and location contribute to skin tone presentation through background luminance, surface reflectance, colour relationships, and environmental contrast. The visual characteristics of a setting can influence how clearly an actor's complexion is distinguished from surrounding objects and surfaces.

In *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman,* interior environments feature earth toned walls, wooden furniture, textured fabrics, and subdued lighting. These elements establish chromatic and tonal

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relationships with the actors' complexions, influencing the visual separation between foreground subjects and backgrounds.

Figure 6: Open shot of Elesin Oba and Simon



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (01:08:52)

The contrast between skin luminance and environmental surfaces is particularly relevant in darker interiors, where limited tonal separation may reduce the visibility of facial features. (Malkiewicz & Mullen, 2005). The film's set compositions demonstrate how colour and spatial arrangement contribute to perceived depth and visual continuity. From a formalist perspective, set design functions as an active component of cinematographic presentation, shaping the relationship between skin, light, and the surrounding visual environment.

5.5. Props and Practical Light Sources

The interaction between props, practical light sources, and surrounding spaces contributes to the visual atmosphere and dramatic composition of cinematic scenes. According to Landau (2014), props and practical lighting contribute to the cinematic presentation of dark skin by influencing localised illumination, contrast, and the visual organisation of interior spaces. Practical light

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sources, including lamps and candles, can establish motivated lighting within a scene while contributing to its dramatic atmosphere. In the prison sequence (01:09:02), visible practical lights form part of a subdued lighting environment characterised by localised highlights and deeper surrounding shadows. These contrasts influence the visibility of facial contours and contribute to the scene's emotional intensity.

Specular highlights across facial surfaces are particularly relevant because they provide visual information about skin texture, surface reflectance, and facial structure (Brown, 2016). Their relationship with shadow detail contributes to the perception of dimensionality. Although the precise contribution of individual light sources cannot be established without production lighting records, the observable interaction between illumination, facial highlights, and surrounding darkness demonstrates the significance of practical lighting in dark skin tone presentation.

Figure 7: Open shot of Simon and Elesin Oba.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (01:09:02).

5.6. Makeup Design

The visual treatment of the skin of characters extends beyond lighting and camera techniques to include makeup choices that influence facial texture, surface reflectance, and tonal consistency. Corson and Glavan (2001) acknowledge the relationship between makeup application and the visual

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appearance of performers under theatrical lighting. Makeup design influences the visual presentation of dark skin through surface texture, reflectance, and its interaction with cinematographic lighting. The appearance of makeup under different lighting conditions may affect specular highlights, perceived skin texture, and tonal continuity.

In *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman*, selected close-up and interior sequences, facial highlights and variations in skin texture remain visible, contributing to the dimensionality of the characters' faces. The distribution of reflected light across the forehead, cheeks, and other facial surfaces influences the perception of facial definition. These characteristics illustrate the relationship between makeup, lighting, and skin tone presentation. However, the specific makeup products, foundation formulations, and application techniques cannot be established from the finished film alone.

Figure 8: A close up shot of Olunde.



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (01:01:55).

5.7. Colour Grading and Post Production Aesthetics

Colour grading and post-production processes play a significant role in shaping the visual coherence, tonal balance, and aesthetic identity of cinematic images. As Brown (2016) observes,

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colour adjustments contribute to visual continuity, atmospheric expression, and the overall stylistic treatment of a film.

Beyond its narrative scope, Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman stands out for its careful use of colour grading and postproduction aesthetics to visually honor dark skin tones. Bandele's grading choices seem to reflect a deliberate commitment to visual dignity, narrative clarity, and cultural resonance. Warm earth tones dominate the film's palette, providing skin tones with a luminous glow while maintaining depth and texture. Distinct from typical western productions that often "lift" shadows or apply cool tones that unintentionally desaturate and flatten dark skin, *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman* resists this aesthetic trap through intentional and culturally oriented post production colour grading.

A clear example happens in the scene where Iyajola with a lighter shade of dark skin shares the screen with Simon's police officers with notably darker complexion. The grading in this scene appears carefully calibrated retaining Iyajola's fair skin tone without allowing it to command the visual field, while also enhancing the glow and definition of the officer's darker skin. The lighting is natural but warm, and the postproduction team seemed to have used subtle contrast curve adjustments to make sure that both characters are seen clearly and emotionally expressive, not minding their relative positioning in the frame. This suggests an understanding of dynamic range in colour grading and an effort to centre visual equity across skin tones.

Through this well thought balancing act, the film transmits a visual ethic that transcends aesthetics and enters the realm of cultural politics. It implicitly maintains that dark skin in all its tonal diversity belongs at the centre of the cinematic image not obscured in shadow or flattened by poor exposure. Using colour grading and post production aesthetics in Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman may serve as a model for African and global filmmakers alike, showing how artistic vision and technical discipline can align to affirm visual dignity for all skin tones.

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Figure 9: Mid shot of Iyajola and police officers



Source: Screen captured from the movie Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman (00:11:08)

6. Conclusion

This section synthesises the principal findings of the visual analysis of *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022), highlighting the relationship between cinematographic choices, visual aesthetics, and the presentation of dark skin tones, while considering their broader implications for inclusive filmmaking practices. The study examined the cinematic presentation of dark skin in Biyi Bandele's *Elesin-Oba: The King's Horseman* (2022) through formalist visual analysis and critical perspectives on racial visibility. The findings suggest that lighting, exposure, colour, framing, costume, makeup, and mise-en-scène collectively shape the visibility and aesthetic presentation of dark-skinned characters.

The analysis identified diffuse lighting and gradual shadow transitions in bedroom scenes, low-key lighting and localised highlights in prison sequences, and chromatic contrast in market and interior compositions. Close-up framing emphasises facial expression and tonal variation, while mixed-skin-tone compositions demonstrate the importance of visual distinction.

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Drawing on Dyer (1997), Keeling (2007), and Roth (2009), the study extends classical formalism by demonstrating how cinematographic choices shape racial legibility. It argues that cinematic presentation involves not only the representation of dark-skinned characters but also the visual conditions through which they become visible and meaningful.

The study is limited to qualitative observations of the finished film and does not establish precise lighting ratios, colour temperatures, or grading workflows. Future research could employ calibrated image analysis, waveform monitoring, and vectorscope measurements to assess skin tone rendition more precisely. The study concludes that effective dark skin presentation requires an integrated approach to cinematographic technique, aesthetic intention, and racial visibility, contributing to more inclusive visual practices in contemporary cinema.

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Appel à contributions

Langage, intelligence artificielle et médiations numériques : discours, pratiques et enjeux de légitimité scientifique en Afrique

Numéro thématique, parution prévue en février 2027

Argumentaire

L'intelligence artificielle générative, les plateformes numériques et les agents conversationnels transforment, depuis peu mais de façon rapide et déjà sensible, la manière dont on produit, diffuse et reçoit le discours scientifique, médiatique et ordinaire en Afrique. Traduction automatique, génération et correction de texte assistées, modération algorithmique des réseaux sociaux, désinformation outillée par l'IA, automatisation de la rédaction académique : ces usages touchent de plein fouet les sciences du langage, les sciences de l'information et de la communication, et plus largement les pratiques de communication, sans que leurs effets sur les discours, les pratiques langagières et les rapports de légitimité scientifique aient encore été suffisamment théorisés depuis le continent et à partir de ses propres corpus (Andler, 2023).

Ce numéro thématique de *Cinétismes* se propose d'interroger ces transformations à l'articulation de trois champs : les sciences du langage (analyse du discours, plurilinguisme, traduction, pragmatique), les sciences de l'information et de la communication, et la communication au sens large (médiatique, organisationnelle, publique). Il s'adresse en priorité aux doctorant·e·s de ces disciplines, dont les pratiques de recherche (écriture, traduction, revue de littérature, diffusion) sont elles-mêmes directement concernées par ces outils, et pour qui ce numéro entend offrir un

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espace de publication et de légitimation scientifique exigeant mais accompagné, dans un contexte où la culture numérique reconfigure déjà les pratiques de lecture, d'écriture et de validation des savoirs (Cardon, 2019).

Ce numéro organise ces questionnements en deux axes majeurs, dont la distinction répond à une double exigence analytique. (1) Le premier axe, Discours et enjeux de légitimité, regroupe les contributions portant sur ce qui est dit, par qui, et selon quelle autorité reconnue : les biais et normes linguistiques inscrits dans les modèles de langue, la désinformation et la confiance accordée aux sources, l'auctorialité et l'intégrité de l'écriture scientifique à l'ère de l'IA, et les politiques linguistiques comme discours institutionnels de légitimation. (2) Le second axe, Pratiques, regroupe les contributions portant sur ce que les acteurs font effectivement de ces outils et de ces savoirs : la médiatisation et la vulgarisation scientifique, les pratiques doctorales assistées par l'IA, l'éducation aux médias et à l'information, et les pratiques culturelles articulées aux objectifs de développement durable. Cette distinction entre l'ordre du discours et l'ordre de l'action, classique en sciences du langage et en sciences de l'information et de la communication, permet de ne pas confondre l'analyse des représentations avec celle des usages, tout en admettant des contributions qui travaillent les deux de façon articulée.

Cette articulation fait suite aux travaux engagés par la rédactrice en chef et son équipe dans deux ouvrages collectifs consacrés à l'influence : *Influenceur ou influenceuse, une position socio-numérique qui fait débat* (2024, en deux tomes), qui interrogeait déjà, à travers la mesure de l'influence, ses dérives et l'épreuve du droit, la légitimité des discours produits par les figures de l'influence numérique ; et *Influences et gouvernance* (à paraître, également en deux tomes), dont le second tome, consacré aux dynamiques sociales, au discours et à la communication, élargit cette réflexion aux rapports entre influence, pouvoir et légitimité en Afrique contemporaine. Ce numéro entend prolonger et spécifier ces travaux dans le champ de l'intelligence artificielle et des médiations numériques (Mandou Ayiwouo, Ondoua Biwole, Tonyè & Ngodji Tcheutou, 2024 ; à paraître).

Ce questionnement intègre également deux dimensions connexes mais essentielles : l'éducation aux médias et à l'information (EMI), comme réponse pédagogique directe à ces

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transformations (Frau-Meigs & Corbu, 2024) ; et les pratiques culturelles, dans la mesure où leur médiatisation croise de plus en plus les objectifs de développement durable (ODD), qu'il s'agisse de la valorisation des savoirs locaux, de la communication environnementale ou de la diffusion des pratiques culturelles comme vecteur de développement.

Les contributions pourront être théoriques, empiriques ou méthodologiques, et s'appuyer sur des corpus africains ou comparatistes.

Axe majeur 1 : Discours et enjeux de légitimité

1.1. IA générative et sciences du langage : biais et normes linguistiques inscrits dans les modèles de langue, traduction automatique, outillage des langues africaines par le numérique.

1.2. Communication, désinformation et plateformes numériques : modération, viralité, fact-checking, rapport du public africain à l'information automatisée et confiance accordée aux sources.

1.3. Écriture scientifique à l'ère de l'IA : auctorialité, intégrité académique, plagiat algorithmique, et dérives prédatrices de l'édition scientifique.

1.4. Politiques linguistiques et numérique : fracture, inclusion, souveraineté technologique et diversité des langues africaines dans les outils d'IA, comme discours institutionnels de légitimation.

Axe majeur 2 : Pratiques

2.1. Médiatisation du savoir et vulgarisation scientifique en contexte numérique africain : chaînes, réseaux sociaux, podcasts.

2.2. Jeunes chercheur·e·s et IA : pratiques doctorales assistées, méthodologies, questions éthiques et de formation à la recherche.

2.3. Éducation aux médias et à l'information (EMI) : développement de l'esprit critique face aux contenus générés ou relayés par l'IA, dispositifs pédagogiques, formation des publics scolaires et universitaires.

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2.4. Pratiques culturelles, communication et objectifs de développement durable (ODD) : médiatisation des savoirs et pratiques culturelles locales, communication environnementale, le numérique et l'IA comme leviers ou obstacles à ces objectifs.

Public visé

Ce numéro est destiné en priorité aux doctorant·e·s en sciences du langage, en sciences de l'information et de la communication, et en communication. Il reste ouvert aux jeunes chercheur·e·s et aux enseignant·e·s-chercheur·e·s confirmé·e·s dont la contribution s'inscrit dans l'un des axes.

Il est également ouvert aux praticien·ne·s des médias (journalistes, communicant·e·s, community managers, modérateur·rice·s de plateformes), dont les contributions sont bienvenues dans chacun des deux axes majeurs. Ce numéro se veut en effet résolument transversal : les questions de droit (droit d'auteur et plagiat algorithmique, responsabilité éditoriale, régulation des plateformes et protection des données) traversent aussi bien l'axe des discours que celui des pratiques, et appellent donc des contributions qui dépassent le seul clivage disciplinaire entre sciences du langage, SIC et communication.

Les propositions en binôme associant un·e chercheur·e sénior ou expert·e confirmé·e à un·e doctorant·e ou jeune chercheur·e sont vivement encouragées : cette formule permet d'adosser l'exigence scientifique attendue à un accompagnement direct des jeunes chercheur·e·s dans l'écriture et la soumission de leur premier article.

Modalités de soumission

Conformément au protocole de la revue, les auteur·e·s soumettent directement l'article complet, et non un résumé : une version anonymisée de l'article (12 à 15 pages), avec page de titre portant le titre, le résumé et 5 mots-clés dans la langue de l'article, ainsi qu'une bibliographie de 30 références maximum au style APA 7 ; et une page d'accompagnement séparée comportant nom, fonction, affiliation, adresse et courriel des auteur·e·s, résumé et mots-clés en français ET en anglais

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(5 mots-clés maximum par langue), et une courte notice biographique (voir le détail complet dans le document « Guidelines to authors » joint à cet appel).

L'ensemble est à adresser à revuecinetismes@gmail.com et sera soumis à une évaluation en double aveugle par deux pairs.

Calendrier

Étape	Date
Diffusion de l'appel à contribution (avec la parution du hors-série n° 4)	15 octobre 2026
Date limite de soumission des articles complets	15 janvier 2027
Évaluation en double aveugle	15 janvier, 10 février 2027
Retour des versions révisées	20 février 2027
Parution du numéro	28 février 2027

Références indicatives

1. Andler, D. (2023). *Intelligence artificielle, intelligence humaine : la double énigme*. Gallimard.
2. Cardon, D. (2019). *Culture numérique*. Presses de Sciences Po.
3. Frau-Meigs, D., & Corbu, N. (dir.). (2024). *Disinformation debunked: Building resilience through media and information literacy*. Routledge.
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Call for papers

Language, Artificial Intelligence and Digital Mediation: Discourse, Practices and the Stakes of Scientific Legitimacy in Africa

Thematic issue, publication scheduled for February 2027

Rationale

Generative artificial intelligence, digital platforms and conversational agents are transforming, rapidly and already perceptibly, how scientific, media and everyday discourse is produced, circulated and received in Africa. Machine translation, AI-assisted text generation and editing, algorithmic moderation of social media, AI-enabled disinformation, and the automation of academic writing all bear directly on language sciences, information and communication sciences, and communication practices more broadly, yet their effects on discourse, language practices and the conditions of scientific legitimacy have not yet been sufficiently theorised from the continent and from its own corpora (Andler, 2023).

This thematic issue of *Cinétismes* sets out to examine these transformations at the intersection of three fields: language sciences (discourse analysis, multilingualism, translation, pragmatics), information and communication sciences, and communication in the broad sense (media, organisational, public). It is addressed primarily to doctoral students in these disciplines, whose own research practices (writing, translation, literature review, dissemination) are directly affected by these tools, and for whom this issue aims to offer a rigorous but supportive space for publication and scientific legitimation, in a context where digital culture is already reconfiguring the practices of reading, writing and validating knowledge (Cardon, 2019).

This issue organises these questions into two major strands, a distinction that answers a twofold analytical need. (1) The first strand, Discourse and the Stakes of Legitimacy, brings together

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contributions on what is said, by whom, and on what recognised authority: the biases and linguistic norms embedded in language models, disinformation and the trust placed in sources, authorship and the integrity of academic writing in the age of AI, and language policies as institutional discourses of legitimation. (2) The second strand, Practices, brings together contributions on what actors actually do with these tools and this knowledge: the mediatisation and popularisation of science, AI-assisted doctoral practices, media and information literacy, and cultural practices articulated with the Sustainable Development Goals. This distinction between the order of discourse and the order of action, standard in language sciences and in information and communication sciences, keeps the analysis of representations from being conflated with that of uses, while still admitting contributions that work through both in an articulated way.

This framing follows on from work undertaken by the Editor-in-Chief and her team in two collective volumes devoted to influence: *Influenceur ou influenceuse, une position socio-numérique qui fait débat* (2024, in two tomes), which already examined, through the measurement of influence, its excesses and its confrontation with the law, the legitimacy of discourses produced by figures of digital influence; and *Influences et gouvernance* (forthcoming, also in two tomes), whose second tome, devoted to social dynamics, discourse and communication, extends this reflection to the relationships between influence, power and legitimacy in contemporary Africa. This issue intends to extend and specify this work within the field of artificial intelligence and digital mediation (Mandou Ayiwouo, Ondoua Biwole, Tonyè & Ngodji Tcheutou, 2024; forthcoming).

This questioning also integrates two related but essential dimensions: media and information literacy (MIL), as a direct pedagogical response to these transformations (Frau-Meigs & Corbu, 2024); and cultural practices, insofar as their mediatisation increasingly intersects with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whether through the valorisation of local knowledge, environmental communication, or the dissemination of cultural practices as a vector for development.

Contributions may be theoretical, empirical or methodological, and may draw on African or comparative corpora.

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Major Strand 1: Discourse and the Stakes of Legitimacy

1.1. Generative AI and language sciences: biases and linguistic norms embedded in language models, machine translation, the digital instrumentation of African languages.

1.2. Communication, disinformation and digital platforms: moderation, virality, fact-checking, African audiences' relationship to automated information, and trust placed in sources.

1.3. Academic writing in the age of AI: authorship, academic integrity, algorithmic plagiarism, and the predatory drift of scientific publishing.

1.4. Language policy and digital technology: divides, inclusion, technological sovereignty and the place of African languages in AI tools, as institutional discourses of legitimation.

Major Strand 2: Practices

2.1. Mediatisation of knowledge and science popularisation in the African digital context: channels, social media, podcasts.

2.2. Early-career researchers and AI: AI-assisted doctoral practices, methodologies, and ethical and training questions.

2.3. Media and information literacy (MIL): fostering critical thinking toward AI-generated or AI-relayed content, pedagogical approaches, and training for school and university audiences.

2.4. Cultural practices, communication and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): mediatisation of local knowledge and cultural practices, environmental communication, digital technology and AI as levers or obstacles to these goals.

Intended audience

This issue is addressed primarily to doctoral students in language sciences, information and communication sciences, and communication. It remains open to early-career researchers and established scholars whose contribution fits one of the strands above.

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It is also open to media practitioners (journalists, communication professionals, community managers, platform moderators), whose contributions are welcome in either major strand. This issue is intended to be resolutely transversal: legal questions (copyright and algorithmic plagiarism, editorial liability, platform regulation and data protection) run through both the discourse strand and the practices strand, and therefore call for contributions that go beyond the disciplinary divide between language sciences, information and communication sciences, and communication.

Joint submissions pairing a senior researcher or established expert with a doctoral or early-career researcher are strongly encouraged: this format allows the expected scientific rigour to be paired with direct mentorship of early-career researchers in writing and submitting their first article.

Submission guidelines

In keeping with the journal's protocol, authors submit the full article directly, not an abstract: an anonymised version of the article (12 to 15 pages), with a title page giving the title, the abstract and 5 keywords in the language of the article, and a bibliography of 30 references at most in APA 7th-edition style; and a separate accompanying page giving the authors' name, position, affiliation, address and email, an abstract and keywords in both French AND English (5 keywords at most per language), and a short biographical note (see the full detail in the attached "Guidelines to authors").

The complete submission is to be sent to revuecinetismes@gmail.com and will undergo double-blind peer review by two reviewers.

Timeline

Step	Date
Call for papers released (alongside the publication of the special issue Hors-série n° 4)	15 October 2026
Deadline for full article submissions	15 January 2027
Double-blind peer review	15 January, 10 February 2027
Return of revised versions	20 February 2027
Publication of the issue	28 February 2027

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Scientific coordination

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