EVALUATING CONTINUITY IN DISCONTINUITY WITHIN CONTEMPORARY NOLLYWOOD FILM AESTHETICS USING *LIONHEART* AND *THE WEDDING PARTY*

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Abstract

This study examines the aesthetic and narrative significance of discontinuity within continuity in colour grading practices in contemporary Nollywood cinema, using *The Wedding Party* (2016) and *Lionheart* (2018) as case studies. Against the backdrop of Nollywood's transition from a low-budget home-video industry to a globally competitive cinematic culture, the paper situates colour grading as a crucial visual storytelling device rather than a purely technical post-production process. Drawing on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and close textual analysis, the research investigates how deliberate and accidental colour discontinuities function as signs that shape emotional perception, character psychology, and narrative meaning. The study adopts a qualitative film analysis methodology, focusing on selected scenes where shifts in colour palette, saturation, lighting, and tonal balance either reinforce or disrupt narrative continuity. Findings reveal that while *The Wedding Party* employs frequent and sometimes unstable colour shifts that produce expressive but visually fragmented experiences, *Lionheart* demonstrates a more controlled and consistent colour grading strategy that reinforces themes of stability, cultural continuity, and familial legacy. These contrasting approaches illustrate Nollywood's evolving engagement with global cinematic standards and its ongoing struggle to balance spectacle, symbolism, and technical precision. The paper argues that discontinuity in continuity colour grading, when intentionally deployed, enhances narrative depth and emotional resonance; however, when uncontrolled, it risks weakening visual coherence and audience immersion. By foregrounding colour grading as an aesthetic language in Nigerian cinema, this study contributes to emerging scholarship on Nollywood's visual style, post-production practices, and its negotiation of local cultural identity within global film aesthetics.

Introduction

The Nigerian film industry, widely referred to as Nollywood, is experiencing enormous growth and making significant contributions towards positioning Nigeria as a global film exporter. Nollywood films can be divided into feature films and documentary films (Ekwuazi, The Television/Film Documentary 13). According to Jammy Seigha, Nollywood, the film industry of Nigeria, has created a niche for itself in the entertainment world. Apart from being one of the biggest film industries worldwide, it launders the nation`s image, creates massive employment opportunities for citizens, and enhances their mental wellbeing, especially through her comedic renditions. No wonder then that Nigeria is ranked the eighth happiest country in Africa (108).

Cathrine Ofuramsi asserts that:

> Beyond its entertainment value, Nollywood plays a significant role in shaping perceptions of Nigeria and its cultural heritage, domestically and internationally. The portrayal of Nigerian settings, traditions, languages, and lifestyles in Nollywood films offers a glimpse into the country's diverse and vibrant cultural tapestry, fostering a sense of pride and identity among Nigerians and piquing the curiosity of global audiences eager to explore Nigerian culture firsthand (137).

Akpor, Omoruyi, and Uyeri states that after the success of Living in Bondage, Kenneth Nnebue proceeded to create other films such as Glamour Girls, demonstrating that an entire industry could be established around the distribution of Nollywood videos using the VHS format. The triumph of Living in Bondage also prompted numerous serious television drama producers in Nigeria to swiftly follow Nnebue's example, producing feature films marketed in the VHS format, thus, giving birth to a new industry. Consequently, while some argue that the success of Living in Bondage was facilitated by the widespread availability of VCRs as household appliances in Nigeria, others suggest that Living in Bondage might have played a significant role in the surge in VCR sales in Nigeria, as audiences sought the necessary equipment to watch the film (Akpor, Omoruyi, and Uyeri 403).

The Nigerian movie industry serves as a potent communication platform rooted in Nigeria's rich cultural heritage, with deep roots in traditional street theatres, storytelling traditions, and early indigenous television programming, all of which contributed significantly to its evolution (Ogbe, Ayodele, Onyeka and William 120-122). The advent of video films brought about a cinematic revolution in Nigerian popular culture, contributing significantly to Nollywood's economic success (Ibe, Femi, and Uwah 100). Over the years, Nigerian films have been enthusiastically embraced across the African continent and among African diasporas in Europe, North America, and the Caribbean; and by the year 2013, the industry had grown into a commercial giant, generating an estimated 590–600 million dollars and becoming the second-largest employer in Nigeria (Endong 78). This rapid growth has sparked debates and speculations, with Nollywood progressively enhancing the quality of its productions to align with cinematic standards (Endong 78). However, the demand for Nollywood films, particularly among the African Diaspora, has led to a significant increase in the export of Nigerian films, resulting in the coexistence of legal and illegal markets, with Nigerian film marketers adapting their storylines to appeal to wider audiences by incorporating more diverse plot formulas (Endong 78).

The transformation of Nollywood from a purely home-video industry into a globally competitive cinema has been gradual yet remarkable. Early Nollywood productions thrived on quantity rather than quality, churning out hundreds of films yearly with limited budgets and rudimentary equipment. Yet, as the industry matured, a cultural and economic need for higher standards emerged. According to the Financial Times, this period ushered in what is widely referred to as the "New Nollywood," a wave marked by improved technical expertise, increased

production budgets, and narratives designed not just for local but also for international consumption.

One notable marker of this shift has been the rise in budgets and cinematic polish. While earlier films often cost less than ₦5 million to produce, recent projects have crossed the ₦100 million threshold, showing a willingness to invest heavily in both craft and technology. This is not merely about spending more but about investing in better cameras, sound, editing suites, makeup, and increasingly, visual effects. According to Wired Magazine, films like The Black Book have shown how Nigerian filmmakers can now compete on global streaming platforms with stories that meet the technical demands of the international audience, achieving tens of millions of views in mere weeks. (Accessed online 19th August ,2025)

At the same time, the global film circuit has become more open to Nigerian narratives. According to the Guardian, Nigerian films are no longer confined to local video clubs or street DVD vendors; they now appear in festivals from Toronto to Cannes, sparking collaborations, panel discussions, and funding opportunities. Each of these avenues reinforces Nollywood's cultural legitimacy while pushing it to adopt international best practices and technological impact especially during the post production process involving several phase of editing take for instance discontinuity and continuity in Nollywood movie.

Discontinuity is referred to a break or interruption in continuity in various aspects of life, discontinuity can be perceived as a disruption or an anomaly. However, when harnessed effectively, discontinuity can become a powerful catalyst for innovation, growth, and transformation. Discontinuity has the power to disrupt the status quo, challenging existing norms and conventions. By interrupting the usual flow of events, discontinuity creates an opportunity for new ideas and perspectives to emerge. This disruption can be seen in various fields, such as technology, art, and science.

Continuity in discontinuity colour grading, is a creative and stylistic choice of technique within color grading where a film maintains an overall visual consistency but introduces deliberate colour or tonal shifts at specific moments, and these shifts are not arbitrary; rather, they serve as visual signposts that indicate a significant change in narrative, mood, or character psychology. Now, colour grading plays a vital role in the visual storytelling process of filmmaking. It usually involvves the manipulation of colors and tones during the post-production stage (editing stage) to create a consistent look, establish the mood, and convey emotions, as well as guide audience perception. Discontinuity in Continuity colour grading refers to a purposeful and intentional break or interruption in the dominant colour scheme of a film, to draw attention to a particular scene or to highlight significant moments or changes in the storyline. According to Filmustage, "colour grading techniques are employed to create emotionally impactful colour schemes and innovations in this field, and it has evolved film aesthetics significantly" (np).

While some film may generally adhere to a particular colour palette egg, a warm and saturated look to represent joy or celebration. Certain scenes may break the visual pattern by employing colder tones, reduced saturation, increased contrast or entirely different

colour schemes. Color grading is a crucial aspect of filmmaking, as it can elevate the visual narrative and evoke emotions in the audience. continuity color grading aims to create a cohesive look throughout a film. However, it's the deliberate use of discontinuity in continuity color grading that can add depth, complexity, and visual interest to a story.

Summary of *The Wedding Party* and Lion Heart

The Wedding Party is a colorful, energetic, and emotionally charged romantic comedy produced 2016, directed by Kemi Adetiba. The film captures the beauty and madness of a Nigerian high-society wedding. It's a story about love, pride, chaos, and the delicate dance between family expectations and personal happiness all set within a single, unforgettable day. The Cokers a respectable, middle-class Yoruba family are bustling around in excitement and anxiety. Their only daughter, Dunni Coker (Adesua Etomi), is about to marry the love of her life, Dozie Onwuka (Banky W), the charming son of the wealthy and flamboyant Onwuka family. Dunni is a sweet, soft-spoken art gallery owner graceful but grounded. Dozie, though raised with privilege, is gentle and genuinely in love with her. Together, they seem perfect. But as their big day dawns, we quickly see that perfection is impossible when two large Nigerian families and their egos collide.

The Cokers and the Onwukas come from very different worlds. The Onwukas, proud and affluent Igbo elites, look down slightly on the Cokers' modest middle-class background. Dozie's mother, Obianuju Onwuka (Ireti Doyle), hides her disapproval behind polite smiles and icy remarks, while Dunni's mother, Tinuade Coker (Sola Sobowale), is determined to prove that her family is no less worthy. Mrs. Coker is particularly unforgettable, loud, dramatic, and fiercely protective of her daughter. She micromanages every detail of the wedding, from the flowers to the seating chart, her energy constantly at war with the calm yet judgmental air of Mrs. Onwuka. Their rivalry brings both comedy and tension, as they try to outshine each other in the display of cultural elegance. The chaos begins quietly when the best man forgets the rings, the wedding planner is on the verge of a nervous breakdown, and a group of uninvited guests sneak in to feast on the buffet. Then, the problems snowball the sound system crash, a drunken driver causes a scene, and the ex-girlfriend, Rosie (Beverly Naya), makes a dramatic entrance in a gown that turns heads. Rosie's presence ignites old insecurities in Dunni. She starts doubting Dozie's faithfulness and questions if he's truly ready for marriage. The emotional temperature of the wedding rises as small misunderstandings grow into full-blown drama, and the wedding meant to be the happiest day of their life's teeters on the brink of disaster. Amid the confusion, Dunni retreats in tears, her perfect wedding now tainted by jealousy and family embarrassment. Dozie follows her, desperate to explain that Rosie means nothing to him. It's in this quieter moment that the film pauses to breathe the softening music, the camera closes in on their faces, and we see two people who love each other trying to stay afloat in a storm of expectation. Dozie's sincerity shines through, and Dunni's vulnerability makes the audience feel her pain. The film doesn't just show a wedding; it shows the emotional weight behind one, the pressure to be flawless, the clash between love and appearances, and the raw human emotions hiding behind the laughter.

The Manifestation of Discontinuity in Continuity in *the Wedding Party*

Colour grading in film is more than just a technical polish it is a storytelling tool. In Nigerian cinema, particularly in landmark productions like Kemi Adetiba's *The Wedding Party* (2016), colour grading does not only make the films look good but helps shape how we read emotions, cultural identity, and narrative conflicts. Roland Barthe's semiotic theory states that all cultural texts (including films, fashion, advertisements, and literature) can be read as systems of signs that communicate meaning. He built on Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model of the signifier (the form a sign takes like a word, sound, or image) and the signified (the concept or meaning it represents).



Plate 1: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective



Plate 2: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective

Discontinuity in Continuity in *the wedding party* (2016) reflects in the bridal prep room, the scene is filmed in a soft, pastel gold tone warm and romantic. But as soon as the movie transitions to the church ceremony, the whites become overexposed, and skin tones shift slightly toward cool magenta mode. However, there is no clear narrative reason for this visual jump, it breaks the continuity of space and time. This inconsistency suggests discontinuity and a lack of smooth color blending between consecutive wedding moments.



Plate 3: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective



Plate 4: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective

Discontinuity in Continuity also appears in the reception scene when Dunni and Dozie make their grand entrance into the reception hall, the color grading is bright, golden, and saturated, evoking luxury. Moreso in one of the latter spectacles from the scene where the families argue, the image tone dips into greenish and bluish shadows likely from inconsistent LED lighting. The gold hue does not stay consistent; it flickers depending on camera angles and lighting direction. This visual instability creates a subtle sense of discontinuity in atmosphere, making some sequences appear totally detached from others, even though they're part of the same event.



Plate 5: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective

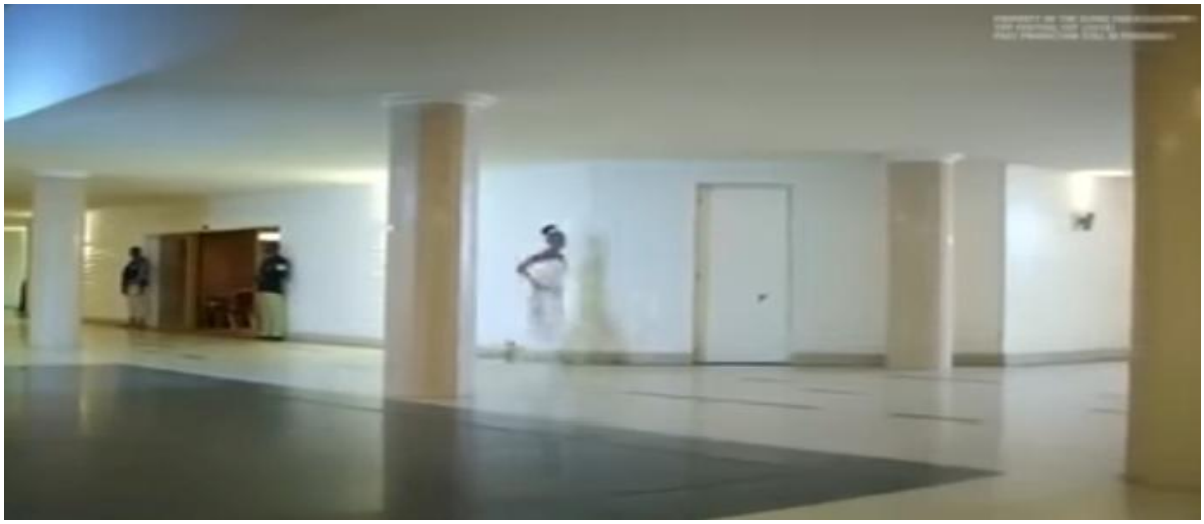


Plate 6: Discontinuity in Continuity Source: Kemi Adetiba and Elfike Film Collective

Finally, another Discontinuity in Continuity can be seen conspicuously when Dunni exists the reception in distress, the golden warmth color disappears entirely and the hallway scene while she was running is shot in flat, bluish-gray light, almost like projecting a different scene because from the excerpt, It visually isolates her emotion, but it also disrupts the film's visual consistency. These variations are expressive, but cumulatively, they dominate the film's look, making discontinuity the more prevalent experience.

Summary of *Lionheart*

The *Lionheart* is produced by Chinny Onwugbenu in 2018 and directed by Genevieve Nnaji the film is a corporate drama that is centered on Genevieve Nnaji, her name is Adeze Obiagwu and her father's name is Odogwu, Ernest Obiagu. Genevieve Nnaji is a determined young woman who steps up to manage her father's transportation company, that's Lion Heart itself, that's the name of the company. After his health crisis, Adeze Obiagwu was facing financial troubles and gender bias because it got to a point where she found out that her father was owing the bank 2.5 billion on loan. Adeze Obiagwu had to run around to see where she could get finances to support or to like, to support her, to pay back the loan and everything. Because of that, her co-worker felt like, because she's a woman, she cannot do it on her own. They should partner up with the father's business rival and then sell the father's company to his business rival, that's Igwe Pascal, sell his business and everything. But she did not agree. She's somebody that was very determined to bring, to solve that problem. So, yes, she was facing financial troubles and gender bias, but she proved her competence while navigating family dynamics, cultural expectations, and especially in the male-dominated business world, she was able to thrive.

The Manifestation of Continuity in the *Lionheart*

The concept of continuity plays a vital role in the narrative structure and thematic depth of Genevieve Nnaji's *Lionheart*. The film elaborately weaves together elements of family legacy, cultural heritage, and gender dynamics to showcase how traditions and values are preserved and adapted across generations within the Nigerian context. Continuity in Lionheart is not only about

maintaining the family business but also about the transmission of cultural identity, values, and social roles amidst the evolving landscape of contemporary society. This introduction explores how the film manifests continuity through its portrayal of intergenerational support, cultural loyalty, and the challenging of traditional gender norms, ultimately highlighting the balance between preserving heritage and embracing progress in family and societal spheres.



Plate 7: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu



Plate 8: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu

Genevieve Nnaji's Lionheart demonstrates a deliberate commitment to color grading continuity, using consistent hues and tonal balance to support its narrative of unity and identity. The film's color palette is dominated by warm, earthy tones golds, browns, and muted greens which serve as a visual metaphor for family, cultural rootedness, and continuity. For example, in the opening sequence where Adaeze (Genevieve Nnaji) walks into the Lionheart Transport headquarters, the color grading maintains a soft golden hue, matching the wooden interiors and beige corporate outfits. This warm tone extends throughout the office scenes, establishing a professional yet familial atmosphere. The color continuity between different office scenes allows viewers to perceive stability within the company, even amid crises.



Plate 9: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu



Plate 10: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu

Similarly, in the family home scenes, the same warm color palette continues reflected in the brown furniture, yellow drapes, and amber lighting. The grading smooths transitions between interior and exterior shots, ensuring that the emotional tone remains cohesive. The audience subconsciously feels the connectedness between the domestic space and the corporate world, reinforcing the film's central message that tradition and modernity can coexist without conflict. Lighting also remains balanced throughout the film. Unlike The Wedding Party, which uses high-contrast lighting to emphasize spectacle, Lionheart favors soft and natural light. In the dinner scene with the Obiagu family, for instance, the lighting is diffused and warm, evoking intimacy and emotional continuity. Even during nighttime scenes like when Adaeze discusses business concerns with her uncle (Kanayo O. Kanayo) the lighting preserves that golden undertone, symbolizing warmth and togetherness rather than tension or visual rupture.



Plate 11: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu



Plate 12: Manifestation of Continuity in *Lionheart* Source: Genevieve Nnaji and Chinny Onwugbenu

The recurring golden tones signify stability, legacy, and cultural identity, while cooler moments signal conflict or negotiation. Likewise, the mise-en-scène costumes in coordinated palettes, traditional attire in gold and red, and the use of natural landscapes reinforces this color continuity. When Adaeze and her uncle drive the Lionheart-branded bus through the village roads, the warm hues of the vehicle blend with the sunlit background, symbolizing harmony between heritage and progress.

Conclusion

The research reveals that Nollywood's use of color grading has significantly advanced in the past decade, marking a departure from earlier periods when films were distributed with minimal post-production refinements. Both *The Wedding Party* and *Lionheart* illustrate the creative potential of color grading in shaping audience perception and emotional response. However, the discontinuities observed indicate an ongoing struggle to balance artistry with technical precision. Color grading, when inconsistent, can disrupt narrative immersion and

weaken symbolic meaning. Yet, its effective application, as partially seen in both case studies, demonstrates Nollywood's growing embrace of global cinematic standards. The Wedding Party and Lionheart, colour grading emerges as an aesthetic language that supports narrative intent, visual atmosphere, and cultural identity.

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