

-Research Article-

A Ghost is Disturbing Africa: The Evolution of Black Consciousness from Masks to Ghosts in Contemporary African Cinema

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Abstract

From 1960s to the present, colonial, postcolonial, social problems and migration have been among the dominant themes of Sub-Saharan African cinema. Today, among the sub-Saharan African filmmakers who grew up in the diaspora and shot their first films in their continent, there are those who use the sixty-year-old theme of African cinema by associating the place and characters with the ghost theme in their films. Mati Diop who was born in Senegal, living in France and Mario Bastos who was born in Angola but professionally trained in USA transform their cities into a dystopian universe through the ghost phenomenon and establish national allegories through their films *Atlantique* (2019) and *Air Conditioner* (2020). Although the relationship between time and space in these films is arranged in accordance with realistic codes, the extraordinariness of the narratives makes the current political and social inequality visible. It is also seen that African filmmakers who grew up in the diaspora did not put political inequality into a single cinematic genre, they try to hybridize it. The study aims to reveal the logic of the phenomena of genre transformation and dystopian universe construction in contemporary African cinema. In the study, the descriptive analysis method was used within the notion of Jacques Derrida's hauntology concept to analyse whether there is a parallelism between the political discourse of films and film type, which are hybridization strategies directors apply. It has been seen that the films show situations such as income injustice and inequality in the post-colonial period based on basic principles borrowed from science fiction and horror cinema.

Keywords: Postcolonial Africa, Hauntology, Science Fiction, Cinema of Senegal, Cinema of Angola

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-Araştırma Makalesi-

Bir Hayalet Afrika'yı Rahatsız Ediyor: Çağdaş Afrika Sinemasında Siyah Bilincin Maskelerden Hayaletlere Evrimi

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Özet

1960'lı yıllardan günümüze kolonyal, postkolonyal, toplumsal problemler ve göç, Sahra-altı Afrika sinemasının başat konuları arasında yer almıştır. Günümüzde ise diasporada yetişen ve ilk filmlerini anavatanlarında çeken Sahra-altı Afrikalı sinemacılar arasında, kıta sinemasının altmış yıllık meselelerini filmlerinde mekân ve karakterleri hayalet temasıyla ilişkilendirerek kullananlar da bulunmaktadır. Senegal'de doğup Fransa'da yaşayan Mati Diop ve Angola'da doğup profesyonel eğitimini ABD'de alan Mario Bastos, *Atlantique* (2019) ve *Air Conditioner* (2020) filmleriyle şehirlerini hayalet olgusu üzerinden distopik bir evrene dönüştürmekte ve alegorik anlatılar kurmaktadır. Filmlerde her ne kadar zaman ve mekân ilişkisi gerçekçi kodlar uyarınca düzenlense de anlatıların olağanüstülüğü ile güncele ilişkin politik ve sosyal eşitsizlik görünür kılınmaktadır. Diasporada yetişen Afrikalı sinemacıların politik eşitsizliği tek bir sinemasal türe sığdırmadığı ve onu melezleştirmeye çalıştığı görülmektedir. Çalışmada, günümüz Afrika sinemasında görülen türsel dönüşüm ve distopik evren inşası olgularının temel mantığını ortaya çıkarmak amaçlanmıştır. Filmlerde üretilen politik söylem ile başvurulan türsel arayış ve melezleştirme stratejileri arasında bir koşutluğun olup olmadığı, Jacques Derrida'nın hauntology (hayalet bilim) kavramı ekseninde, betimsel analiz yöntemi ile analiz edilmektedir. Filmlerin, sömürgecilik sonrası dönemde gelir adaletsizliği, eşitsizlik gibi durumları alegorik bir biçimde, bilim kurgu ve korku sinemasından ödünç alınan temel ilkeler üzerinden işlediği görülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postkolonyal Afrika, Hauntoloji, Bilim Kurgu, Senegal Sineması, Angola Sineması

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Introduction

In Sub-Saharan African cinema, protagonists are often depicted as miserable people on the brink of death. They are fictionalised in movies as indifferent people about their surroundings, helplessly accepting the situation when they get into troubles, wandering with tired eyes. African movies repeat the story of helpless characters awaiting death. For example, in Ousmane Sembene's *Borom Sarret* (1963), the struggle of a horse carriage driver to make a living in Dakar is shown through the income inequality between the city centre and the suburbs and the economic and class division of the characters. In *L'Afrance* (2001), Alain Gomis tells the story of people who find the solution in emigrating to Europe through the experiences of a student named El Hadj after his residence permit in France expires. The character struggles not only physically but also psychologically.

This phenomenon seen in Sub-Saharan African cinema is reproduced in a transformed way in the films *Atlantique* and *Air Conditioner*. What is meant by transformation is the repetition of a similar sense of deprivation. This study examines this transformation in Sub-Saharan African cinema through these two films of Mati Diop (*Atlantique*, 2019) and Mario Bastos (*Ar Condicionado*, 2020). Born in 1982 in Paris, Mati Diop comes from a family interested in art. Having studied modern art in Paris, Diop works as an actor as well as a director (Sheldon, 2016, p. 105). Mario Bastos was born in 1986 in Luanda, the capital of Angola. He studied at the New York Film Academy and has been working as a director and screenwriter since 2007 (Rumley, 2020). In *Atlantique* and *Air Conditioner*, the dead above and below the ground paradoxically share the notion of reality. The reality shows a tendency towards the extraordinary. Mati Diop makes the dead pay for being dead, while Mario Bastos gives the living dead a passive role which it allows people to experience life as the price of being dead. Life and death gain a unity and permanence.

In *Atlantique*, the dead become warriors of justice as zombies, and the price of un-lived experiences is revenged. In *Air Conditioner*, on the other hand, there is a vengeance for the incurable wound between the expectation of the future created by the weary, frustrated faces caused by the bloody atmosphere brought on by the civil war and the current reality. Capitalism continues to take its revenge by creating precarious workplaces. Income inequality and insecure business field established by colonial capitalism creates a shady area for the people sheltered with experiences of the past. This does not allow people to imagine creating a future. The dream is not in the future, but in the archive of the past.

In this study, *Atlantique* and *Air Conditioner* are examined through Jacques Derrida's concept of *hauntology*, by using descriptive analysis method, and are interpreted in the context of the historical journey of Sub-Saharan African cinema, willing to understand its current state. The paper provides a framework of the structure of contemporary African cinema in the context of genre transformation. The aim was to draw a descriptive framework for a section of this cinema. The method of descriptive analysis allowed for a detailed examination of different dimensions (Berg, 2001, p.230-231) by focusing on these films in the context of current changes in African cinema. Based on the results of the research, a trend in contemporary African cinema was tried to be revealed in this context. The concept of hauntology was first used by the French thinker Jacques Derrida in his book *Ghosts of Marx*, first published in 1993. With this concept, the author refers to the ambiguity of the boundaries between the past, present and future, unlike ontology whose boundaries are clearly defined. Derrida exemplifies and argues that if the events that occurred in the past are not resolved, they can spread to the future and return as ghosts, recalling the example of the father's return as a ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1994, pp. 5-6). Derrida says this in his work to confront the notion that Marxist ideology succumbed to capitalist thought after 1990. Although Marxism seems to have succumbed, Derrida states that there is always the potential for it to re-emerge in current circumstances. According to Derrida, Marx's thoughts are too important and inclusive to be tied to a specific thought or

political structure (1994, p. 38). Derrida focuses on the past, which is carried as a burden in the present, not on what is already in the current situation, but on what has the potential to be. "Any dead who are not properly buried can/will haunt us, either as a spirit, as a ghost, or as a ghoul" (Çalış, 2015, p. 145). Hauntology is a pun. It is pronounced as *ontology* in French, which has the same pronunciation of the word "ontology" (Derrida, 1994, p. 63). It refers to the past, whose existence is felt even though it is not visible, and which is carried as a burden even if its existence cannot be proven and is currently experienced. The ghost is in the past and in the present, and it has the ability to reach into the future. In movies, time and characters expand on two levels. As both a factual time and a time where ghosts can live, movies can include both real characters and realistic ghosts.

Sub-Saharan African Cinema as a Postcolonial Phenomenon

Cinema emerged as a postcolonial phenomenon in Sub-Saharan Africa. Until the 1960s, when the African countries were under European colonialism, Africans could not take part in cinematic productions, except for a few small examples. For example, Paulin Soumanou Vieyra from Benin applied to the colonial administration to shoot a film in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, while he was a student in Paris, but this request was turned down. Vieyra then shot the movie *Afrique Sur Seine* (Africa on the Seine, 1955) in Paris (Thackway, 2003, p. 121). Another example of African initiatives' demands for independent film was seen in the Belgian colony of Congo. In the capital city of Kinshasa, a group of young people set up a cinema association and shoot two short films (Reynolds, 2015, p. 4). Furthermore, the Colonial Film Unit, established by Britain on the continent, became an institution where the inhabitants of the continent could experience cinema more closely. The colonial administration brought directors from Britain and made films for the consumption of Africans. Africans also served as set workers and assistant directors in these productions, which were also educational and shot to strengthen Britain's presence in the continent (Shaka, 1994, pp. 230-231).

After gaining independence, it was possible for Africans to produce films freely. Senegalese Ousmane Sembene and Djibril Diop Mambéty, Mauritanian Med Hondo, Ethiopian Haile Gerima, Tunisian Ridha Behi, among others, have produced films that question colonialism and discuss identity crises caused by the clash between tradition and modernity. In these years, efforts to create a unity among African filmmakers were also seen. The fact that no country had the power to build a fully-fledged cinema has pushed African filmmakers to join forces by establishing various unions such as Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI, 1969) and Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO, 1969) (Hepkon, 2006, p. 179).

But such efforts to sustain cinematic production with local resources on the continent could not be realized due to economic and political reasons in the continent. A significant part of the films that have shot in Africa have become productions that can be shot with the support of global funds and were presented to the global audience due to the scarcity of movie theaters in the continent. Being a part of the international cinema network has brought with it the differences in the stylistic context, including the global, as well as expressing the local. Much of African cinema has become a festival cinema. This was influenced by the fact that a significant number of African directors were educated and lived their lives in Europe (Jorholt, 2007, p. 198; Orlando, 2017, pp.82-85).

Dealing with the problems in Africa through cinema is the most basic feature of post-independence cinema. Postcolonial issues are discussed through cinema. Focusing on social and economic issues enabled African cinema to start in a socialist-realist way. Such issues have been handled not only by African filmmakers living in Africa, but also by African filmmakers living outside their continent for various reasons. Because of the relationship between African filmmakers and their continent is not independent of the problems of the continent, these films mostly centre on the problems that African people experience every day. The two films

discussed within the scope of our study are productions that focus on continental problems as well.

In most cases, the ghost appears as a cinematic distinction in African cinema. For example, in the last scene of Ousmane Sembene's *La Noire de...* (1966), a little boy wearing the African mask was following the French man who delivered the belongings of the maid who committed suicide in their home in France. The mask was exposing the man's abuse. The common African identity was being formed behind the mask. Diop's *Atlantique* and Mario Bastos' *Air Conditioner* use the ghost element as well, direct the criticism of the exploitation of social reality through the theme of ghosts. The ghost is a harbinger of formal change, and thematically, it forces society to face with itself. Contemporary African cinema transforms the "restless" and "uncanny" atmosphere, which they borrowed from dystopian film, into a memory-centered political narrative with elements of science fiction and fantasy film genres.

The Dead Without a Grave: *Atlantique* as a Graveyard

Mati Diop's *Atlantique* explores social inequality and migration in Senegal through the love between Ada and Suleiman. Suleiman is a construction worker and cannot get his salary, decides to migrate to Europe by sea with his friends. Swallowed by the sea on the way, the young construction workers will return to Dakar in a different form, as zombies.

The dead without a grave turn into ghosts. A zombie is a ghost with a body. In this respect, the ghost is a spiritual being, and the zombie is the corporeality. The phenomenon of zombie comes from a belief of the voodoo culture that is common in Haiti, includes resurrection. Zombie is a partially decomposed creature with a simple speech ability, repeating the same short sentences often, devoid of mind and consciousness, and whose sole purpose is to eat the flesh of the living. According to the voodoo belief, the person who is resurrected after death is also under the control of a witch (Boluk & Lenz, 2011, pp. 3-4). This belief has shifted as 'living dead' in popular culture, especially in B-class horror movies. The first zombie movie was the sixty-seven-minute *White Zombie*, shot in the USA in 1932, with Bela Lugosi as the protagonist (Kay, 2008, p. 5).

It is seen that certain themes are definitely included in the zombie-type horror movies (Marak, 2015, p. 149) that largely defined by *The Night of the Living Dead*, shot by George Romero in 1968. Zombies exist due to viruses, radioactivity, or space-borne causes. They are either corpses that resurrect when they are dead, or they exist due to being bitten while alive or due to viruses and radioactivity (Hayes, 2016, p. 57). A group of people does not undergo this transformation and tries to escape from the crowd of zombies. The zombie group is outnumbered by the escaped human group. The conflict between this crowded group of zombies and the untransformed human group creates the basis of the film. The brain functions of the resurrected zombies are only programmed to meet the need for meat (Kay, 2008, p. 290). A smash to the head is sufficient to kill zombies (Rushton & Moreman, 2011, p. 2).

Although a physiognomy is attributed in Hollywood films through the determination of the other, zombies appear to be "revengeful" in *Atlantique*. In the movie, a group of construction workers in Dakar decide to leave their country illegally across the ocean because they cannot get paid. But on the way, the young men are swallowed by the waves and come back to Dakar in the bodies of different people to take revenge. They emerge as something that reproduced by the postcolonial mechanism and inequality. Violence is not produced by zombies, but zombies are revealed by the violence inequality brings about. In this movie, the zombies are designed to be distinguishable only through the clarity of the eye, without making their faces look weird. The fact that the zombie is not located in a different place than the oppressed stems from the desire to establish a symbiotic relationship between oppressed and zombies. While zombies are avengers who have been deprived of their right to live and come to the world to take their revenge, those who are still alive establish relations with zombies as "living dead".

Why do the dead come back? Lacan's answer to this question is the same as in popular culture because they weren't buried properly, because something went wrong with their funeral rites. The return of the dead portends a disruption in the symbolic ritual, the symbolization process. The dead return to pay off unpaid symbolic debts. The return of zombies represents a certain symbolic debt that remains even after physical extinction (Zizek, 2014, p. 40). Underlying the return of the dead is the old belief that the deceased has become the enemy of the living ones and wants to take them with him to share his new life. Lacan explains the formation of this thought with the concept of Lamella. Lamella is the presence of a smooth surface, without the density of the essence; it is an endless, plastic object that can not only change shape but also transform itself into another tool (Zizek, 2012, p. 16). Lacan explains Lamella as immortality. Lamella is pure libido. However, it is not related to sexual differences. It is more associated with mortal beings. That's why in zombie movies, the dead usually take their revenge on those who enjoy life.

Mati Diop's film was the first film directed by an African female director to participate in the main competition and win an award during the seventy-year history of Cannes (Smith, 2021, p. 192). The film won an award at the Cannes Film Festival and shown on Netflix (Swanson, 2023, p. 174). Although the film is introduced as "supernatural" (Bradshaw, 2019; Magalhaes, 2019) or "ghost-story" (Ghost-story) (Qureshi, 2019; Lysogorova, 2019), it is essentially the director's discovery of her own homeland. The director, like many African filmmakers, is the child of a family that took refuge in ex-colonial France. She is the nephew of Djibril Diop Mambéty, who is one of the pioneers of Sub-Saharan African cinema (Dima, 2017, p. 199). In her first feature-length fiction film, *Atlantique*, Mati Diop focused on the decisive impact of the economic and political atmosphere after the struggle for independence in Africa.

The Unchanged Narrative for Sixty Years: Economic Problems and Migration

In *Atlantique*, Diop deals with a core topic in African cinema, the phenomenon of migration to the former colony or Europe for economic or political reasons. The roots of this phenomenon are deep. The reason for the phenomenon of migration was discussed in *Borom Sarret* (Ousmane Sembene, 1963), the first short fictional film of Sub-Saharan African cinema, and the actual realization of the phenomenon was shown in the first feature-length film, *La Noire de...* (Ousmane Sembene, 1966). In African cinema and literature, migration is not only considered on an economic basis, but also with the deep traces of colonialism (Thomas, 2007, p. 3). Immigration is the name of a process that results in all kinds of convictions, where the person is alienated from his/her country, commits suicide due to not being able to find what is hoped for in the country of destination, or repatriated for involvement in illegal business.

Diop associates the economic gap and class difference in Senegal with the story of refugees, and thus new ghosts drowning in the sea with dreams of another country. Instead of the stories of successful refugees, the director focuses on those who failed, those who drowned in the Atlantic Ocean on their way from Senegal to the Canary Islands (Spain). She focuses on the risks of migration for those who want to go, and makes it a lesson for those who cannot. According to the data of the International Organization for Migration, the number of missing refugees in Africa, whose records could not be reached since 2014, is 11,138 (IOM, 2022). Asylum or displacement is one of the most important themes of Sub-Saharan African cinema (Iheka & Taylor, 2018, p. 9). Displacement occurs with the intervention of a colonial power in accordance with the new world order created on the basis of 1492 (Larsen, 2005, p. 27). By the 1500s, tens of millions of people who were forced to move to newly discovered continents as slaves constituted the first global mobilization of cheap labor exploitation. In African cinema, on the other hand, this theme is shown as displacement resulting from colonialism's efforts to dominate. Asylum is often the result of an external reason. In movies, asylum is seen as a sad, often hopeless acts like leaving the homeland. Although colonial relations are not fully addressed in *Atlantique*, it turns into an external power through an environment in which the

work ethic that emerged with capitalism following the newly gained independence does not occur, labour is cheap and difficult from top to bottom, and class oppression is visible. The colonial context becomes visible and strengthened in such a way as to gather human resources. With the theme of asylum, it is ensured that the problems of Africa cannot be solved in its own context. A circle of loss is formed, in which the survivors take the place of the departed.

The sounds, longings and enthusiasms of corpses lost in the Atlantic ocean are interrupted, incomplete. The zombies come to offer their condolences because they are not duly buried or remembered. The director does not show the full story of those who left. She does not show the journey and the disappearance process of asylum seekers. In the movie, there is the love story of Ada and Suleiman. However, the film does not progress by focusing on this love. Although the two love each other, Ada's family wants to marry their daughter to another man. The most important determinant of this decision is that this man is a wealthy businessman. Seeing wealth as the guarantor of the future turns into an opinion where vertical socio-mobility decreases and social stratification becomes crusted (Fanon, 2005, pp. 165-166). Enrichment and increasing welfare are achieved through illegally coded jobs or asylum, which is also seen as an illegal and illegitimate act.

In the movie, Ada's family does not allow their daughter to meet with Süleyman because the place where lovers meet is considered by the family as a dwelling where evil is active. Not only the family, but also the residents of the place have negative judgments about this place. Evil is associated here with a number of points of violation within a religious and cultural framework, which are morally coded as "haram" or "wrong". Although the meeting of Ada and Suleiman is considered an unacceptable violation in religious culture, it is not this violation that moves the characters. Violation is the emergence of fear due to the shadowing of the intention to join a new class. The reason of fear is poorness of Ada's family. Ada, on the other hand, thinks that her love for Suleiman is a superior virtue. However, the film declares that it does not care about coming together of lovers. Suleiman leaves his country by sea to earn money, and Ada can't receive any news from him after his leaving.

The director changes the melodrama universe in the film, which considers the classical order and the weak, and offers an opportunity for solidarity at the socio-economic level. She makes subaltern characters unsuccessful. Melodrama is the establishment of the reunion of those who cannot be reunited, and the story of lovers who do not care about insignificant means of exchange such as money. It can be said that the characters in the movie are created in accordance with Jung's archetype of love. They think that the love between them cannot be broken in any way. The only melodrama-like point of the movie is that the rich can even make death threats to get their arrogance noticed. However, the film prioritizes the feeling of fear instead of melodramatic emotion. Diop invites the audience to the ground of reality, but achieves this by scaring the inhabitants of the city with "ghosts", coming from under the sea. The ghost is a creature who cannot find comfort, wants to go to Spain to earn money, but returns dead. In the film, the ghost phenomenon exists in parallel with the burying of the corpses of people into the ocean who escaped from the social problems that emerged in the postcolonial period. The ghost, similar to what Derrida describes with the concept of hauntology, emerges when past problems and current sufferings are ignored and not resolved.

Diop's Refugee Odyssey

The film transforms Homer's Odyssey narrative in the context of refugees. Odysseus tries to return to his home in Ithaca because he is tired from the ten-year Trojan War. Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, is waiting for her husband. They have been separated for many years, and during this time she resists the tyrants who want to marry her. The film shapes its narrative based on the story of Odysseus (Wallis, 2019): Order, chaos, war, victory and reorder. Classical narrative begins and ends with order. The long, complex and intricate story of a man who lost

his possessions, fought to gain them and regained them, is indispensable in cinema. Odysseus is a man far from his family, unable to witness his children grow up, a husband who has not seen his wife for years, and a king who has been leading a war away from his country for years. There is no war won in Troy. Odysseus is a traveler and is waiting to reach his country. But director Diop turns immigration story into a pain. Neither Ada is Penelope nor Suleiman is Odysseus. There is no Trojan war and Ada is married to a man she does not want. Suleiman, who aims to go to Spain, dies before achieving it. Odysseus is crowned through classical narrative, reunited with his family and country. But Diop's Suleiman is at the bottom of the ocean. However, the director re-adds Suleiman to her canvas. Suleiman and his friends reappear in the personality of some people from the city. Unknown fires break out in the city. He raids Ada's wedding as a zombie and causes a fire in the wedding house. *Atlantique* evolves from a love story into a horror/zombie movie.

In the films of the colonial period, Dakar is depicted as a region by the ocean, where the colonialists used its shores as a summer resort. It is a white oasis surrounded by ghettos, and poor Africans. The Dakar of *Atlantique*, instead, is a construction site where high-rise buildings are built, promising ocean views and refreshment to those who buy apartments in these buildings. A significant part of those working at the construction sites are those who work for a small wage and are in charge of freeing the region from the poor Africans. Workers are exposed to dust when going to the construction site with pickup vehicles. The Atlantic is the place where dust is replaced by salt water, making workers lost and invisible. The construction site is a space of reality, and the Atlantic is a space of fantasy. The shootings make the viewer feel the dust, the soil, the drama, uneasiness and fatigue of the black man who is covered in sweat for daily wages. Close-ups are at the tired faces, and long-shots are at the ocean horizon. Although the eyes of the refugee candidate are on the ocean horizon, his body is at the bottom of the ocean. The corpses turn into ghosts whose hopes of asylum are taken by the ocean. *Borom Sarret's* Dakar, with its makeshift slums, hasn't changed much in *Atlantique*, which is shot half a century later. In *Borom Sarret*, residences for the French and a small number of accredited Senegalese elites produced contrasts with the slum. In *Atlantique*, although the slum has changed structurally, it continues to symbolize underdevelopment. The French Riviera, on the other hand, has left its place to vertical, ostentatious architecture. The new war in Dakar is not about the struggle against the arrogance and invisible despotism of the colonialist, but about the country's economic contradictions and tyranny. As in *Atlantique*, the problems of the past that are covered up but cannot be prevented from appearing paranormally become visible in Mario Bastos' *Air Conditioner*.

In the Hell of People Walking on the Edge of Death: Does Air Conditioner Make the Air Colder?

Mario Bastos' *Air Conditioner* tells a magical, surreal story in which all the air conditioners in the city break down and fell from the buildings. The film is about the events that take place in a two-day period in Luanda, the capital of Angola. All the air conditioners in the city are going down for some unknown reason. Many city dwellers are injured or even die because of this. Maid Zezinha and security guard Matededo are also tasked with fixing their boss's malfunctioning air conditioner. Matededo gives the air conditioner to Mino, who is grieving about the past of his country, but also worried about its future. The film does not progress in a linear flow as seen in popular narrative cinema, and the characters experience their chaotic cities and their existences, and face the pressures of their bosses. Likewise, Matededo speaks silently, telepathically, about everyday matters with other security guards like himself in the city.

The film is about social problems in Angola. The director adds surreal elements to the film, which is actually realistic and includes documentary footage. In a country like Angola, which has experienced civil war and embargoes for many years, independence does not

seem to be good, because traumas are deepening. Like a nightmare that begins to disturb the characters, trauma creates a surreal universe that obscures reality and transforms the reality into something other than itself, alienating it. The characters seem to get used to the extraordinary situations they encounter in their daily lives, and they are unconcerned with seeing whether this is reasonable or not. It seems that Angolans, who somehow managed to overcome the great social crises experienced in the past, do not worry enough about the new problems. It seems that Angolans, who somehow managed to overcome the great social crises experienced in the past, do not worry enough about the new problems. New problems are no more important than the pain of the old and the bustle of today.

Archive images refer to the fact that the past problems that build today's problems couldn't be overcome. Archive images turn into an image that haunts today. The archive establishes a pattern between the past, present and future. The film establishes a strong bond with the past. Although it tells a story in the present, implies that today's problems are inherited from the past. The future is tried to be built on the problematic structure stems from the colonial period and afterwards. This is emphasised with the skyscrapers surrounding the ghetto-like neighborhood. In this context, the director states the following; "In Angola, when you point the camera at something, it's impossible not to be political. The street where we shot *Klima* is just above the famous Luanda's Bay, where our government likes to show off. The Dubai-like city made of concrete and glass, which we try to sell to foreign investors and even Angolans as the 'Angolan dream', is a mirror of abandonment, neglect and priorities on our leaders' agendas" (Ergenç, 2021). The director shows this structure, which deepens the problems of the city, closely. Bringing different solutions to the unsolvable problems of the past, often not beneficial to the residents of the city and the country, shaped by the wishes of a handful of rich people, often creates traumatic burdens on today's citizens.

Luanda, not Gotham City

Joker (Todd Phillips, 2019) was a movie that focused on the life and wounds of Batman's antagonist, Joker, who lives in the dark science fiction universe of Gotham City. Themes like social justice were also at the forefront in Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* (2019). We can say that social problems and their traces are visible in cinema, whether it is a popular or alternative and independent movie. In African cinema, it is seen that this theme is produced in the context of urban narrative among young and diaspora-trained directors. In *Air Conditioner*, Luanda is a city where its residents struggle for life under the shades of skyscrapers. Although individual stories and problems are prioritized in Western cinema, in African cinema, and especially in *Air Conditioner*, the story is far from personalization.

A mystical tension that occurs spontaneously and cannot be understood shows itself in the film. Inequalities at the social level are seen as the product of colonialism and postcolonialism. Bastos defines his own cinema in the context of Cinema of Urgency, as suggested by Angolan director Ruy Duarte de Carvalho (Ergenç, 2021). It is important that the director refers to Carvalho. In search of establishing a national cinema after the independence of the country, he was in search of a poetic cinema in which anthropology and cinema were intertwined (Rahim, 2021).

The director states that with the 1990s, after the civil war, many people took off their military uniforms and put on work aprons (Fradique, 2021). This transformation in Angola does not bring a big change in people's lives. People are now at war with poverty. The film basically tells the story of the low-paid, insecure, ill-treated people who cannot even meet their basic needs. The film can be regarded as an allegory of what happened after the civil war that lasted for a long time (1975-2002). The character of Matacedo embodies the uncertainty in the daily life of hundreds of thousands of people living in Luanda. Zezinha, on the other hand, represents domestic servants, a segment often forgotten in class-centered analyzes,

made invisible by capitalism. In this context, the character reminds the story of Juliette told by Theodore Zeldin in his book *Intimate History of Humanity* (Zeldin, 2010, pp. 11-12). In the story, Juliette does not worry about the little money she receives. Her only problem is reputation, but she doesn't care much about it either. Zezinha is a precarious worker who no one wonders how she stands up. Mr. Mino, on the other hand, is an Angolan who has been working for 46 years in an electronics store which had been transferred to him from a former colonial citizen who fled to Portugal when the civil war broke out in Angola in 1975, asking him to keep an eye on his shop. He opens his shop every day, takes a break at lunch time, and closes his shop in the evening like everyone else. People come to this electronics store which has no customers, to throw away their electronic garbage.

Mr. Mino's electronics store turns into a place where confronted with Angola's past. Carrying the struggle for independence and the civil war as a burden, Mino tries to resist the atmosphere of destruction in the country with a room full of plants and archive footage of everything that happened in the country until that day. He is trying to ensure that the country's memory is not lost.

Air conditioners falling for no reason throughout the city are the elements that make the chaotic, creepy, unreliable environment visible. Precarious workers, porters fighting each other for twenty cents, bosses at the top of the hierarchy, urbanization and architecture that do not develop in parallel with the natural structure of the country show an uncanny city atmosphere. In this environment, air conditioners turn into ghosts that prey on people and take revenge on them. The painful history and the unplanned today have brought about an environment that does not give peace to the inhabitants of the city. As an expert who spoke on television said, air conditioners are not one of the traditional methods of combating hot air in the country. The seams of this eclectic structure are eroded, resulting in the inability of air conditioners to be articulated to this structure. A ghost haunts the city, and this ghost randomly takes revenge on the past and the future, which is tried to be built without a plan. Parallel to the concept of hauntology, air conditioners become a symbol in which the unbalanced relationship between the past, present and future, the suppressed, the shadowed are revealed.

Conclusion

Film production in Sub-Saharan Africa began in the 1960s. Since then, African cinema has focused on social issues. Although genre transformations have occurred over time, the basic foundation of the narrative has not undergone a major change. This is also true for *Atlantique* and *Air Conditioner*. However, these films differ from other films because they have a generic fluidity and make the narrative almost tumble. They set up a dystopian universe that can be seen in science fiction movies, they also contain the nuances of the horror genre. They do not describe the problems of the continent and its people in a linear line, in accordance with realistic cinema conventions, like the African filmmakers before them.

We can argue that in this attitude of the directors lies a belief that the state of the Africans' relationship with the life in the twenty-first century cannot be conveyed in accordance with the formal rules produced in the previous century. However, the directors spent many years outside their continents and received education at important cinema schools. This enabled them to closely follow the global cinema language and actively apply it in their films. The ghost is an element that should not be seen in films that are considered realistic. However, the directors add these paranormal phenomena such as ghosts and ambivalence to reality. Ghost is a metaphor chosen to understand chaos and make sense of the relationship that individuals have with it. Experiences, symbolic and physical violence encountered in accordance with the old and new forms of colonialism bring about the emergence of a structure in which ghosts replace the current reality. The directors use the motif of ambiguity as the reflections created by the problems that cannot be solved in the ordinary course of life. As Derrida wanted to indicate with the concept of hauntology, what is wanted to be hidden actually preserves its existence

strongly and awaits the day it will be revealed. Matters that have remained unresolved and veiled in the past emerge in a paranormal way. This burden reveals itself on an individual and social level. This creates an inextricable and incomprehensible crisis environment. Although the traces of the past are evident, an environment has been created in which its existence is denied, and this has led to the past emerging in some form.

The films can be described as colonial-supernatural in terms of genre. Inequality as the remnant of colonialism has been multiplied by the ruling and business elite. While colonialism builds its operation on captive labor and exploitation, new colonialisms send corpses to the bottom of the ocean. In this way, the hidden problems of the past are revealed in traumatic forms. In *Atlantique* fires break out in the city for an unknown reason, while in *Air Conditioner*, the air conditioners fall for an unknown reason. Those who die in *Atlantique* can only disturb those who create and maintain inequality with their ghosts. In the classical narrative, mourning is held for a particular person. In the film, however, there is not a single person to mourn, there are thousands of refugees like Suleiman. In *Air Conditioner*, the colonial heritage and the postcolonial situation resulted that the city is being stuck in a chaotic cycle. The seams of this state of insolubility are eroded by the fall of air conditioners. However, in both films, symbols such as dust, noise, construction site, endless repair sounds convey the state of unrest. Sounds that make difficult to hear, dust that prevents seeing, and zombies that try to disrupt the flow of life in favor of subalterns are the new cinematographic patterns of African cinema.

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