

THE THEME OF ALIENATION IN SELECTED KENYAN FILMS

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Declaration and Approval

I declare that this project report is my original work and has not been presented for examination or award of a degree at any other University

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This project report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University supervisor.

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Dedication

To Henry and Grace

The idea of love is a difficult subject but you two make it too simple in the way you love me.

Acknowledgement

I honour God in His wholesome Trinity for guidance and favour throughout my life and especially for this particular course. I also want to thank my supervisor Prof. Helen Mwanzi for being patient with me and for her valuable input that has eventually paid off.

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Abstract

This study is an analysis of the theme of alienation in selected Kenyan films; Nathan Collets *Kibera Kid* (2006), Bob Nyanja's *The Rugged Priest* (2011) and Tosh Gitonga's *Nairobi Half Life* (2012). Alienation is a state of the mind in which one feels overwhelmed by circumstances; one can either be alienated from their work, from other people or from themselves. The theme of alienation is an important area for study because it is a relational and humanistic problem that faces the urbanized society, and it is in the effort to understand what it is, its causes and its symptoms that solutions to end it can be formulated. I argue that alienation is one of the major problems that face Kenyans. As a result of this, Kenyan films have often depicted it in their works. In Kenya the rate of film production is high; however there is a disparity between the rate of production and the rate of scholarship of the works produced, yet it is through criticism and analysis of an artistic piece that the weakness can be improved and the strengths stepped up. In addition crucial themes that affect the society can be analyzed. This disparity between production and scholarship leaves a gap that needs to be filled. Therefore this study delves into an analysis of the theme of alienation in the selected films. The study has two objectives; to analyze the different forms of alienation and to discuss the varied cinematic techniques that have been used to develop alienation. These two objectives were based on the hypotheses that the three selected films have represented forms of alienation and that the directors of these films use cinematic techniques to develop the theme.

Two theories have been used in this study. The Marxist film theory was advocated by Russian film makers who found fault with Hollywood filmmakers because they expressed their capitalist ideas through film. The Marxist theorists especially in the

culturalist school of thought argued that films are used to serve the interests of the ruling class but they can also be used as a flat form for ideological struggle. The second theory used in this study is psychoanalysis theory. The theory was advocated by Sigmund Freud. The psychoanalysts argue that a person's behaviour and attitudes are influenced by desires held in the unconscious part of the mind. This theory is important to this study that examines alienation for through psychoanalysis the behaviour of the alienated characters can be analyzed.

The methodology used was qualitative-descriptive design which entailed watching and analyzing the film texts, in order to represent alienation. The films were the main source of data while journals, books and internet sources provided the secondary data.

There are three chapters, with the first chapter dealing with the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives, hypotheses, justification, the theoretical framework and the methodology. The second chapter is the representation of alienation in each of the three films. The characters reaction to all form of alienation is given and eventually the directors subtle solutions to alienation. The third chapter, techniques in the development of alienation reveals how different cinematic techniques are used to develop the theme of alienation. I argue that through the filmic elements discussed the directors have been able to develop the theme of alienation. Among the techniques discussed are, the set, camera movements, costuming, characterization and sound.

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Definition of Terms

Film: A modern form of art that uses visual images and sound to tell a story

Kenyan Film: A film that tells a Kenyan story from a Kenyan perspective expressing the Kenyan way of life which includes the Kenyan people's fears and aspirations.

Alienation: A state in which a person or a community is faced by overwhelming circumstances which cause individuals to think they are alone. In this study the circumstances maybe economic, social, political or psychological.

Oppression: The state in which people feel they are being treated unfairly by a force that is in power over them.

Mis en Scene: This refers to all things that appear before a camera such as the actors, props, lighting, décor and the setting.

Diegetic sound: Sound whose source is visible within the film, such as the characters voices and music with a source within the film

Non –diegetic sound: sound whose source is not visible with the film, such as background music and soundtracks.

Political Normlessness: A type of political alienation whereby individuals believe that government officials violate legal procedures.

Political powerlessness: a type of political alienation where individuals are unable to distinguish any meaningful political choices because the outcomes cannot be predicted.

Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Art has been used over the ages to comment on the state of the society, to instruct society and ridicule bad behavior. Film has not lagged behind in this. In the short period it has existed, that is since 1980 when the motion picture cameras were invented, it has made its own contribution to society by highlighting crucial themes. Taylor and Christie (Eds) in support of the important role played by cinema argue that,

There is no doubt that cinema art is a first class and perhaps even an incomparable instrument for the dissemination of all sorts of ideas. Cinema's strength lies in the fact that, like any other art, it imbues an idea with feeling and with captivating form but, unlike other arts, cinema is actually cheap, portable and unusually graphic. Its effects reach where even the book cannot reach and it is of course, more powerful than any kind of propaganda (Taylor and Christie 1993:109).

Film is a powerful medium as a scene that is watched remains more graphic on ones' mind than words in a book. According to Montgomery et al, in *Ways of Reading Advanced Skills for student of English Literature* 'as mediums of representation, film is made of icons while prose is made of signs; the images in film have more direct and immediate relationship with what they describe while words seldom do' (193). The way words communicate with a book is less graphic compared to a motion picture. The visual image makes the idea represented in the film more real than words that have no immediate relationship with what they describe. Films power lies in the fact that it uses visual images sound and even exaggeration to pass information. For instance, if one

needed to pass a message on methods of HIV/AIDS prevention it is more effective to use a film than to give a book for the audience to read. The film will use the visual images; make use of the sound and even exaggeration to achieve the desired effect. Furthermore, a film is less voluminous as compared to a book in print form therefore films making them easier to carry. Therefore, I concur with Christie and Montgomery that film is indeed a powerful art form that is used to pass ideas of all kinds to the society.

Alienation is a major problem in post-colonial African countries. The African leaders and the elite play the role of alienating the masses from the factors of production and the proceeds of their labour, and dominating over Africans politically and economically. Nelson Fashina lists a number of ways that African leaders dominate the people,

Cultural, political, and economic domination can take the form of illegal seizure of governmental power, either through the barrel of the gun or election rigging, especially in unsophisticated democracies of the Third World. It can also include the expropriation of the national economy by a few aristocrats (who constitute the “State”), resulting in poverty and social frustration. (2009: 5).

Kenyan films, especially those that have been shot recently (in the 21st century), have depicted this theme of alienation. This study, concentrates on three recent Kenyan films, *Kibera Kid* (2006) *The Rugged Priest* (2011) and *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) and how these films have highlighted the theme of alienation. The argument on what is an authentic Kenyan film still rages on in Kenya, with some scholars arguing that a Kenyan film is that which is directed by a Kenyan, while others argue that a Kenyan film must have Kenyan actors, others yet argue that a Kenyan film must be shot in Kenya. For instance,

M'erimba Simon argues that a Kenyan film 'is produced, directed and acted by people who live and work in Kenya and in one way or the other have been influenced by the Kenyan way of life and so narrate stories relevant to the Kenyan audience (2013: 7). M'erimbis makes a remark that I agree with, that a Kenyan film must have a story that is influenced by the Kenyan way of life, one that expresses the Kenyan Problems, fears and aspirations. The films under this study can raise argument on whether they are authentically Kenyan. *Kibera Kid* for instance has a German director Nathan Collet who is based in Kenya, while *Nairobi Half Life* was largely funded by a German organization. Therefore a Kenyan film in this research will be taken to mean a film with a Kenyan story that reflects the Kenyan way of life, acted by a Kenyan cast despite its funding or director. Before doing an analysis of these films it is important to give a background to the history of film in Kenya.

The history of Kenyan film has been captured by Simiyu Barasa in his documentary a History of Film in Kenya: 1909-2009. Barasa notes that during the colonial period, "films were mainly hunting, travelogue and fictional films like *Mogambo* (1953), *The snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952), *Trader Horn* (1931) and others which showcased the conflict of Europeans battling with dangerous elements of nature and a new culture in Africa while at the same time loving the breathtaking scenery and warm people. No Africans were involved in shooting the films, except perhaps as extras and porters."

From the above paragraph, Barasa is explicitly saying that early films in Kenya were basically not for Kenyan actors and audiences. Kenyans were more of handymen than actors. After independence, the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication was formed to train Africans on how to make films. Later films like *Mlevi* by Ragbir Singh in 1968

inspired film making in Kenya. Then, films like *Out Of Africa* (1985), *The Rise and Fall of Id Amin* (1981), *Kolormask* (1986) and *Saikati* (1993) put Kenya on the international film landscape.

Barasa also argues that later the digital era inspired Kenyans to use digital technology for filming and this led to the rise of the River wood filming industry that deals with films that carry in them contemporary urban themes. From 2009, the Kenyan Film industry has produced films like *The Constant Gardener* (2005), *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), *Nangos* (2009), *Our Strength* (2012), and *The Rugged Priest* (2011) which mostly talk about emerging issues in society. Moreover, the Kenyan film industry has undergone numerous changes with the trends ranging from films that carried colonial ideals and concerns (1910-1968), to NGO-funded films that have didactic themes (1968- 1990s), to films with independent story ideas and to the humorous River-wood films (2000 to date).

River-wood films are low-budget films made with camcorders that are sold on River Road in Nairobi, Kenya. Wanjiru Kinyanjui a filmmaker in Kenya, reports that River-wood operates at a furious pace with about 20 to 30 films being made every week, the films are made with a combination of low-cost cameras with film editing software on personal computers. She continues to say that the characteristic of a River-wood film is that they are shot in about three days and edited within a week. (“River wood: Kenyan Super-Fast, Super- Cheap Filmmaking”) Examples of such films include *Machang'i* and *Kihenjo* which started to run from 2004 to date. These two are hilarious comedies in the Kikuyu language that have been produced repeatedly and are now series’. The fact that they are still being produced and watched by Kenyans suggests that these two comedies have committed fans. In 2012, the Kenyan film industry received a bonus expansion in

the form of the introduction of the film genre in the yearly Kenya Schools and Colleges Drama Festival Competition. This situation demands that film be taken seriously in this nation.

Statement of the Problem

Alienation is one of the major problems that face post-colonial African nations. The end of colonization ushered in a new form of colonization: neo-colonization. Due to Neo-colonization Kenya faces unique social-cultural, economic and political problems such as youth joblessness, poverty and politically instigated violence. Such problems provide raw material for artists. Artists, be they filmmakers, novelists, playwrights, poets or painters living in such turbulent times are compelled to retell the stories of the societies they live in. These stories depict the problems, fears and aspirations of the people. In Kenya films are an avenue through which different problems in the society are expressed and disseminated. The rate of film production in Kenya is high, especially with the introduction of films in schools in the yearly Kenyan nation drama and film festival and the now thriving River Road film industry. Unfortunately this growth has not been matched with scholarly criticism of the films produced. This leaves a gap that needs to be filled since criticism of art and in particular film improves the art as it examines the way dominant themes that touch on society are portrayed. In addition critical studies such as the present one should lead to improvement in film production. According to Rachael Diang'a in *African Recreation of Western Impressions* (2007), very few studies have been conducted on the film industry in Kenya; this provides need for more research to be conducted on films. In the already conducted film studies in Kenya, none has focused on alienation on Kenya films. This research therefore analyzes the theme of alienation as

represented in the selected films and how the elements of cinema have been used to develop the theme.

Objectives

The objectives of this project are to

- (i) Analyze the different forms of alienation in three selected Kenyan films: *Kibera Kid* (2009), *The Rugged Priest* (2011) and *Nairobi Half Life* (2012)

- (ii) Discuss the different cinematic techniques that have been used to develop the theme of alienation in the three selected Kenyan films

Hypotheses

The study intends to investigate the hypotheses that:

- (i) The three selected films have cinematically presented various forms of alienation

- (ii) There are varied cinematic techniques that these films have used to develop alienation

Justification for the Study

Alienation is a social problem that affects society due to industrialization and urbanization. In an industrialized society the worker finds no connection between the tasks he performs and the final product on the other hand urbanization fosters isolation and individualism that leads to loneliness. This social malaise is important for in studying because it is after it has been understood that concepts for solutions can be later formulated. Devorah Fishman in the article “Studying alienation: towards a better society?” argues that processes covered by the terms such as “urbanization”,

“industrialization”, “formation of nation states” marked human experience in Europe (and by extension all over the world) as an upheaval. Fishman concludes that for researchers studying alienation is one way of doing social science so as to contribute to a better society (2006:3). African nations have many social problems one such problem is that of alienation. Post-colonial African literature has for a long time addressed this malaise. Writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o in his book, *Decolonizing the Mind* (1968), works by Ousmane Sembene such as *Xala* (1974), *God’s Bits of Wood* (1976), Ole Kulet’s *Blossoms of the Savvna* (2008), Chris Wanjala’s *A Season of Harvest: Notes on East African Literature* (1978) have depicted this theme.

Film, just like literature has the ability to mirror its society and also act as a platform for the struggle for ideological change. According to Linton James, ‘the beliefs, attitude and values implicit in any film tend to resonate with those beliefs, attitudes and values which are dominant in the society from which the film originates’ (Linton, 1979). Linton posits that filmmakers are artists that tell the stories of their nations. It can therefore be argued that the directors in the selected films tell the story of their society (Kenya). Therefore, it is important to note that the three films exhibit alienation as one of the major problems facing Kenyans. In the already conducted film studies in Kenya none has focused on alienation in Kenya films. Therefore this research project is one of the contributors of film research in Kenya.

The justification for the three titles studied in this research project is informed by the fact that all the three films are very recent Kenyan films that have depicted alienation of the different Kenyan masses: the electorate, the youth and slum dwellers. *Kibera Kid* (2006) focuses on life in the slums, *The Rugged Priest* (2011) depicts the alienation of the

Kenyan electorate while *Nairobi Half Life* produced in 2012, focuses on the alienation of the Kenyan youth; these selected films have broken the barrier of viewership within Kenya and beyond. The films have scooped many international awards. *Nairobi Half Life* managed to get nominated for the Oscar Awards in the category for the best foreign language film, a level that no other Kenyan film has got into. *Kibera Kid* received international recognition by winning the student Emmy at Berlin Film Festival. *The Rugged Priest* won the Golden Dhow Award of the Zanzibar International Film Festival. Such achievements suggest that there is something unique about them.

The three films have also been ranked among the best shot films in Kenya owing to the fact that they have received many international awards. Other films made in the country such as *Kihenjo* and *Machang'i* have been lacking especially in the cinematographic aspects of the film. For instance, *Machang'i* is shot sometimes with shaky cameras and many jump shots. Amongst other reasons the films were badly done is lack of funds to produce the films. Rachael Diang'a discusses other problems faced by Kenyan film makers such as unfair market conditions where Kenyan made material has to compete with international material on the Kenyan ground, foreign monopoly, the challenge of film distribution and piracy (2011: 21).

Literature Review

This literature review highlights some of the research works that have significance to this project, mainly works on alienation. The concept of alienation came into prominence through Karl Marx in his writings in 1844. Marx defined alienation as the separation of the worker from ownership. He broke alienation into 'dissociation of the worker from their work, from the working, from himself and from other workers'. In expounding this,

Marx argues, the worker is estranged from his work when the product he makes is determined by the capitalist. In the workers alienation from the process working, Marx argues that the worker is alienated when the labor power is reduced to wages, and work is seen as a means for survival. In the alienation of the worker from himself Marx posits that human beings are social beings that have the desire to engage in activities that promote mutual survival, capitalism does not allow the worker to control his activities therefore alienating him from himself. The last form of economic alienation according to Marx is the alienation of the worker from other workers because the capitalist promotes social conflict among the workers as they compete for higher wages (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844). Marx's arguments constitute what has come to be known as economic alienation of the worker.

Under capitalism, industrialization and urbanization, Karl Marx's argument still apply since capitalism separates the product from the worker, pays the worker too little in order to maximize profits for the capitalist and this eventually it leads to the estrangement of the worker from his/her work, from himself and eventually from the society. This is depicted in *Nairobi Half Life* where the characters such as Mwas have an employer who pays too little for work therefore leading to alienation of the worker.

Over the ages several other definitions of alienation have been formulated. For instance, Rabindra Kanungo describes alienation as 'the generalized cognitive (or belief) state of psychological separation from work insofar as work is perceived to lack the potentiality for satisfying one's salient needs and expectations.' (1979: 131). Kanungo posits that as long as work does not satisfy the needs of the worker then that worker is alienated while Hirschfeld & Felid, represent alienation as the extent to which a person is disengaged

from the world of work(Hirschfeld & Felid 2000:790). From the definitions given by Marx, Kanungo and Hirschfeld work alienation is caused by factors at work.

The dimensions of alienation have expounded to include not just economic alienation but social, political and psychological alienation. Fromm gives a definition of psychological alienation when he states that alienation is a mode of experience in which a person experiences himself as alien or estranged from himself (1955:120). Frank Johnson (1963:371) then goes forward to give symptoms of psychologically alienated people in his paper “Psychological Alienation; Isolation and Self Estrangement”;

- i. A tendency to experience exorbitant anxiety in relatively ordinary interactions with other people.
- ii. A tendency towards absorption with ideas and fantasy
- iii. A gnawing conscious of a lack of ‘fit’ with other individuals or groups
- iv. An alternating vacillation towards and away from social contact.

The two definitions above argue that a psychologically alienated person is one who is estranged from himself and as a result withdraws into himself, or what Johnson calls the lack of fit amongst that individuals or groups of people. Such Kinds of people will feel lonely even in a crowd of people. Estrangement from oneself occurs when a person is dehumanized to the point they feel less human. These kinds of behaviour have been exhibited by characters within the selected films for instance; Amina of *Nairobi Half Life* is a psychological alienated person for she is an anxious character whose dream of being a beautician has become a fantasy leading her to prostitution.

Political alienation, on the other hand, is a concept which Ada W. Finifter discusses in her dissertation ‘Dimensions of Political Alienation’ in four phases. Political

powerlessness where individuals feel that they cannot affect the actions of the government and that political decisions just happen to them. The second one is political meaninglessness where individuals are unable to distinguish any meaningful political choices because the outcomes cannot be predicted. The third phase Finifter discusses is political normlessness that individuals believe that the government officials violate legal procedures; the final phase is political isolation which is the people's rejection of political norms and goals because of perceived political normlessness. Political powerlessness that includes situations where people cannot affect the decisions of the government is the kind of political alienation prevalent in slums and is of great use in the analysis of *Kibera Kid*, where the slum dwellers cannot affect the decisions that the government makes over them; they feel that they reduced to mere spectators as decisions are made over their lives, that is why the slum dwellers do not have basic facilities such as water as the residents are rendered voiceless. Political normlessness entails situations where the government officials violate rules like the politician in *The Rugged Priest*. This politician denies the people the right to live by killing a number of the residents. These members of the community are thrown out of their land, and their houses are torched and so they experience political meaninglessness as they are unable to distinguish any meaningful choices made by the MP Ole shompole.

Social alienation happens in situations where specific persons in the society are secluded as a result of being different from the others possibly because of different opinions, different social status or looks. A good example is given by Mugubi and Wesonga who make a study of a Kenyan Television Drama 'Tahidi High' where they discover Mule is socially alienated by the other members of school because he is poor. In their article

“Localized Nuances of Linguistic Choices in Film: A Case Study of ‘Tahidi High’- A Kenyan Television Drama” they argue;

On his first reporting to Tahidi High School, Mule is given advice which largely contributes to the mindset that he later assumes in the new school: “Don’t get mixed up with these rich undisciplined children in this school”. This caveat might not only have contributed to his attitude towards both the school and fellow students, but to his language use as well, being a child from a very humble background, this statement from the school principal may be interpreted as an admonition to Mule that he had a class battle to fight (842).

In Mugubi and Wesonga’s argument the young man Mule is separated from the rest of the members of the school because he comes from a poor background. He does not fit in the school full of rich students from the suburban parts of Nairobi while he comes from Kibera. They also argue that ‘the well-to-do are forever suspicious and distrustful of the poor, viewing the latter as predisposed to criminal tendencies owing to their neediness. Class pride and feelings of superiority always come in the way of harmonious relations’ (842). Social alienation is depicted in the films under this study; in *The Rugged Priest* a part community is socially alienated for holding different opinions with the other members of the society.

The concept of alienation has been used in theatre by Bertolt Brecht, who used it relation to acting. In an essay “Alienation Effect on Chinese Acting” of (1936), Brecht describes alienation as ‘playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from identifying itself with the characters in the play’. Commonly known as the distancing effect, it included using several techniques to hinder the audience from identifying with the actor. One was

the removal of the fourth wall, such that the audience did not see the play as an event that was happening and they as just spectators to the event without responsibility to help the characters. The actors were supposed to directly address the audience. The actor was also supposed to appear strange to himself and to the audience as the actor 'looks at himself'. The actor confines himself at the onset to merely quoting the character (Brecht & Bentley 1961). The distancing effect was supposed to help the spectators form critical judgments on what happened on the stage rather than bathe themselves with emphatic emotions. The distancing effect has been used in theatre and even in film. Brecht intended that through alienating the spectators and then they are forced to think about the film or play and be pushed into action. The Kenyan films under this study do not necessarily use the distancing effect as an acting technique, what is laid bare is that the directors concentrate on telling stories with alienation as a theme.

Gakuo Kariuki defines alienation as a state in which man is confronted by hostile and oppressive forces that overwhelm him and reduce him to a victim of circumstances rather than a master of his environment (1994:29). This definition by Gakuo is inclusive of all causes of alienation, be they political, economic or social as long as the person is overwhelmed by circumstances around him that do not let him master his environment. The films selected exhibit a number of characters that seem overwhelmed by circumstances and chapter two of this project will look at the reasons they are alienated and how they react to the problem.

Kenyan scholars have done a number of studies on film and they include writers like Rachael Diang'a who has written a book on Kenyan film under the title African Recreation of Western Impressions (2011). Diang's book concentrates on how Kenyan

films try to correct the image of Africans that has been misrepresented by Western filmmakers. Diang'a bases her argument on the fact that, Kenyan filmmakers are obsessed with re-presenting the image of the African from the human side (Diang'a 2011: 2). Diang'a's study concentrates on representing the Kenyan in film while this study deals with a thematic element in the selected films. Dianga's study was important to this study though as she lays down the problems that the Kenyan film industry faces. The problems she discusses are unfair market conditions since the Kenyan film has to compete with Hollywood made films, the challenge of film distribution in Kenya and film piracy (Diang'a 2011:21).

Mugubi and Wesonga have also made a contribution to film studies by writing about the use of language in a Kenyan television show 'Tahidi High'. Mugubi and Wesonga argue that language in the Kenyan television show has been used by characters as a means to survival in the economically stratified school. Their article under the title "Localized Nuances of Linguistic Choices in Film: A case study of 'Tahidi High'; makes the argument that language can be use to fight a class battle. This article is of importance to this study, where I argue that indeed language can be used to fight a class battle and can also be used as way for a group of people to identify themselves.

Mutunga Simon of Kenyatta University whose MA thesis entitled "An Investigation of Aesthetics of Selected Films" argues that Kenyan filmmakers make use of the film aesthetics to tell their story; he studies the setting, props, costume, cinematography and color. Mutunga argues,

Kenyan filmmakers are greatly influenced by the Kenyan way of telling stories.

This is manifest in the way they use languages, sentence structure, figurative use

of language and use of indigenous sayings. It is also important to note that in so doing, they are able to communicate using cinematic language thus making films highly eclectic.(68)

His views that cinematic language is used to communicate has been adopted by this research. I argue that filmic elements in the selected films communicate and develop the theme of alienation. None of the above mentioned studies have focused on alienation as a theme in recent Kenyan films. This study is a contribution to the Kenyan film scholarly material.

Theoretical Framework

This study has been guided by the Marxist film theory and psychoanalytical theory. The Marxist film theory was advocated by Russian film makers who wanted to express Karl Marx's ideas through film. There are several schools of thought within Marxist theory. Michael Gurevitch et al lists three schools of thought; structuralist, political economists and culturalists (Gurevitch et al, 1982:2). The Marxist perspective draws attention to the political and economic issues in the films and highlights the inequalities in media presentations. According to Marx Dobie Ann, 'Marxists believe that means of production controls a society's institutions and beliefs, for people's lives are determined by their economic circumstances.' (80). The Marxists found fault in the Hollywood film for expressing capitalist ideas. Sergei Eisenstein notes that ' art and literature reflect the capitalist breath and construction of the United States of America [sic] and American capitalism finds its sharpest and most expressive reflection in the American cinema' (Sergei 196).

Marxist philosophers argue that society history is based on class struggles and materialism. They believe that everyone is equal, and governments should not oppress its people. Sergei advocates for a story told through a group as opposed to a single protagonist. He advocates for the use of montages. Montage is a film editing technique whereby shots are juxtaposed in a fast –paced fashion. For instance, one of Sergei Eisentein’s films *Stachka (strike)* 1924 uses a crowd to move the action and montages. Scholars in Marxist film theorists include Loius Althusser *Ideology and Ideological state Apparatus*, (1971), Antonio Gramsci *Selection from the Prison Notebooks*, (1971), Graham Murdock *Capitalism, Communication and Class Relations*, (1977) and Stuart Hall *Policing the Crisis*, (1978). The selected three selected films have made their stories told through groups of alienated people. The directors expose the class struggles within these groups.

The Structuralist school of thought focuses on the internal articulation of the signifying systems of the media. Structural Marxism analyses the deep structuring logic of cultural products and practices from kinship structures to clothing fashions and advertising (Barthes, 1972: 1983). Instead of trying to discover the intrinsic meanings of surface appearances, the Structuralists were committed to unraveling the hidden relations beneath surface appearances which, so they argued, provided a more substantial and more scientific understanding of the ways in which cultural products and practices engender meaning. Political economists emphasize on locating the power of media in the economic processes and the structure of media production. The ownership and economic control of the media is seen as the key factor in determining control of media services. Culturalist

Marxists on the other hand use the lens of class alongside other factors such as race, gender and sexuality to understand how culture works to perpetuate social inequality.

I employ Stuart Hall's arguments; one of the major proponents of the culturalist school of thought argues, 'the mass media tends to reproduce interpretations which serve the interests of the ruling class, but they are also a field of ideological struggle.' (1980: 135). According to Jill Nelmes (Ed), Stuart Hall believed that cultural studies were more concerned with asking how cultural systems produce meaning and how ideology is replicated through cultural institutions. He also argued that films are apparatus of transmitting cultural values but also are sites for struggle over meaning (Jill Nelmes 2007:234). In one of his papers 'Encoding/ Decoding' Hall came up with three ways in through which texts can be received: Dominant reading/ preferred reading, here the text is read as intended by the producer and these texts are usually produced by those whose social situation favours the preferred reading; negotiated reading is when the text is generally accepted but is challenged in some areas while oppositional reading is when the reader challenges the reading of the text; oppositional readings are produced by those whose social positions put them into direct conflict with the preferred reading. Hall insists that there remain limits to interpretation: meaning cannot be private and individual (135).

In this respect, the films studied in this research project have been critically examined and analyzed to reveal the struggles within the different social classes. The Marxist film theory is important to this research project because it is focused on the class struggle. This class struggle is the reason some members of the society remain jobless and poor while others have more money than they need. This division of the society into the haves

and the have-nots eventually leads to groups of people being alienated. The use of this theory will allow me to look at the internal structure of the film especially in the third chapter of this project which concentrates on filmic techniques that develop the theme of alienation. It also allows me to look at the characters and the struggles that they go through in the different classes. I lean towards Stuart Hall's Culturalist school of thought because the Kenyan films selected are a means through which the directors challenge the class divisions. The film *The Rugged Priest* seems to challenge the impunity of politicians who oppress the masses in Kenya. In *Kibera Kid* the director highlights the struggle of the people in the slum. These films are a medium for ideological struggle. The society in *Nairobi Half Life* depicts a society divided into the haves and the have nots. The class struggle with this film leads some characters like Mwas to become thieves as they try to move to the class of the haves.

The second theory used under this study is the psychoanalysis theory. The inaugurator was Sigmund Freud (1856-1939); other proponents' include Jacques Lacan, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz. The psychoanalysis theory according to Alex Blazer in "Psychoanalytic Film Theory" analyzes the psyche which is a site for irrational and unconscious conflict between primal desires and traumatic realities (2009).

Sigmund believed that a person's everyday behaviour was affected by what was in the unconscious mind. Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* posits all of 'Freud's works depend upon the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our actions' (Barry 2009:92). In addition to the concept of the conscious

and the unconscious part of the mind Freud also came up with the concept of the Id, Super-ego and Ego. Mary Synder in *Analyzing Literature to Film Adaptations*, expounds on these three models of the psyche,

The superego is considered the part of us that adheres to all the rules, and is our moral compass inside our minds, and thus is the conscience. The id represents our desires, and holds the libido, or the energy drive associated with sexual desire. Freud believed we are not consciously aware of these desires. The ego is the aspect of the mind, according to Freud, that balances the superego and the id. If one of the two begins to become too stringent in its control of the mind, the ego is the part that is supposed to bring the mind back into equilibrium. (2011: 56)

The conscious and the unconscious can once in a while come into conflict. This study being an analysis of alienation in selected films relies heavily on psychoanalysis theory because it is through this theory that a lens is put on the behaviour of the characters to find out their unconscious desires. Through psychoanalysis I understand why the gangs in *Nairobi Half Life* are determined to steal and what pushes them to the point of being murderers. Through this theory I also seek to understand what makes the kids in *Kibera Kid* steal. Alienation has effects on the mental states of different characters in these film and they react to it in different ways. Through analyzing these films through the psychoanalysis lens I recognize that the symptoms exhibited by the characters stem from elements in the unconscious part of their minds.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was qualitative. The research design was descriptive and it entailed watching and listening to the selected films: *Kibera Kid*, *The Rugged*

Priest and *Nairobi Half Life* in order to represent alienation as a theme and to also identify the cinematic elements that have been used to develop this theme. The cinematic elements studied include; scenic design, characterization and costuming, film soundtrack and camera and its movements. I also examined books on film and alienation that provided the secondary data for this research project. I have utilized the Marxist film theory in order to understand the imbalances that exist between the rich who possess the means of production in the society and the proletariat who hardly own anything. Through this theory the theme of alienation has been identified and analyzed. I also examined books and other literatures that deal with film analysis and film techniques. There are three chapters in this research paper, the first chapter deals with the background to the study, the objectives and hypotheses, the justification to the study, theoretical framework and the methodology. The second chapter is an analysis of the different forms of alienation depicted by in the three films while the final chapter deals with the cinematic technique that the director of these film have use to develop the theme.

Scope and Limitation

This research project is limited to analysis of alienation in three selected Kenyan films: *Kibera Kid*, *The Rugged Priest* and *Nairobi Half Life*. The study also analyses on the cinematic techniques used to develop the theme, among them the mise-en-scene: costuming, characterization, sound and camera movements. Other films outside the above mentioned three have been mentioned where necessary to assist in the analysis.

Chapter Two

2.0 THE REPRESENTATION OF ALIENATION IN *NAIROBI HALF LIFE*, *THE RUGGED PRIEST* AND *KIBERA KID*

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I analyze the different shades of alienation. Alienation in the three films has been classified into forms, economic alienation, social alienation, political alienation and psychological alienation. A synopsis of each film is given to help in analyzing the different shades of alienation in the films. Other themes closely related such as exclusion and oppression are mentioned in the discussion.

2.2. Synopses of the Films

Kibera Kid is a short film directed by Nathan Collet. It is the story of a young orphan boy named Otieno. Otieno lives in Kibera slums and is a member of the Razors gang. One day, JI the gang leader orders him to go out and steal three phones. As Otieno tries to steal a phone the lady he attempts to snatch it from, raises an alarm and Otieno is almost lynched. Luckily the community leader Mr. Wamatope rescues him from the mob. When JI hears about Wamatope he sends the gang after him. Otieno is among the gang members who beat up Wamatope but when he is ordered to stab Wamatope he refuses and quits the gang. Later Wamatope advises Otieno to leave the slum so that he can join school and continue with his music.

The film *The Rugged Priest* by Bob Nyanja is a biopic based on the story of Father Antony Kaiser a USA born catholic priest who did missionary work in Kenya. In the film

he takes the name John Kaisler. Father John Kaisler is a catholic priest who at the beginning of the film is working at a parish in Rift Valley. At this parish the MP elect Ole Shompole, played by Ainea Odhiambo incites the community to drive out the 'Makwekwe' from amongst them. The evicted people turn to the priest for help and shelter. The priest shelters the refugees but Ole Shompole ensures that the camp is closed down and Father John is transferred to a remote parish in. When a commission is set up to investigate the killings at the Rift Valley, Father Kaisler decides to testify against Ole Shompole who has by now become a minister in the government. For his testimony, Ole Shompole hunts down the old priest. The priest who is an excellent hunter manages to escape for a while until Shompole catches up with him and gets him killed in a staged accident. Ole Shompole on the other hand has raped Alice the nun trainee and other two school girls from Maasai land. At the end of the film the two school girls are dead and so is Father Kaisler but there is hope that more people like John will rise up as represented by the young men who are named after Father Kaisler. There is hope that these young men will be the voice of reason in society just like Father John.

Nairobi Half Life is a one hour and thirty six minutes' long film that carries the theme of alienation in its many shades: social, political, physical and psychological. Directed by Tosh Gitonga, the film tells the story of Mwas, a young man, played by Joseph Wairimu who has the dream of being an actor. Unfortunately he lives in the village where there are no theatres. Therefore, he spends his days selling pirated movies to the villagers and acting parts and bits of the movies to his enchanted audiences. When the Vultures Acting Group comes to the village for a show, Mwas decides to go to the city in pursuit of his

dream. One of the actors promises to be his agent. Mwas gathers some money from his cousin and mother: he leaves for the city carrying a stereo radio given to him by his gangster cousin Daddy M. When he arrives in the city, he is robbed of everything, including money and the stereo. Later as he is walking on the streets, he is picked up by the city council askaris and locked up at Central Police Station. At the station he meets Oti, played by Olwenya Maina who later introduces him to the gangster life in Nairobi. Mwas and Oti's gang start by stealing car parts and selling them to Waya and later they graduate to stealing cars. In order to keep themselves out of prison, they have to pay off some corrupt police officers. Eventually Mwas and the rest of Otis gang get into an argument with Dingo's gang over money. Dingo is killed in a fight. The police round up Oti's gang, they kill them and use them as evidence for crimes they did not commit. Mwas survives and eventually makes it by becoming the actor that he had always wanted to be.

2.3. Economic Alienation: Joblessness and Alienating Work

The societies that are depicted by the studied films reveal societies that are stratified into two social classes; the haves and the have-nots. The haves dominate over the proletariats and they alienate them from the factors of production. The characters in the lower class in these films suffer exploitation and dehumanization from the members of the upper class. The lives of those in the proletariat class are characterized by joblessness, frustration and dissolution. Economic alienation according to Luttrell in "Gender, Alienation and Dignity in Global Slums" is

Lack of control over one's assets, but it also occurs when loss of economic control leads to loss of control over one's ability for self determination.

Alienation occurs when economic relations, or lack thereof, gain such power that they over-determine other sorts of relation such as the personal, political, material and spiritual relations of a person (2013:104).

This definition is an argument that economic alienation occurs due to separation from ones assets but it can occur when one lacks autonomy over their economic status and this leads to strained relations. For instance, when a person loses their job they become economically alienated, since they can no longer exercise economic autonomy. In *Kibera Kid* the whole slum depicts the poverty of the people that live in it. These characters lack meaningful jobs; therefore, they cannot afford clothing, good shelter or food. Their houses are made of tin and have gaping holes all around. These holes in their houses suggest insecurity and lack of privacy. The slum dwellers are idle are shown to be sited around the slum doing nothing. This is shown when Otieno is almost lynched by a big mob after attempting to steal a phone. The crowd is formed all of a sudden by the idle people around the slum. The film also emphasizes through camera pans the difference between the mainstream Nairobi society with that of the slum. The city is clean while the slum is dirty.

The way the slum is depicted by the director suggests the economic alienation of the people in the slum. According to Johanna Lutrell, 'economic alienation occurs when loss of economic control leads to loss of control over one's ability to self determination (105). The characters in *Kibera Kid* especially those in the razors gang lack economic autonomy. They do not have meaningful jobs that assure their economic freedom instead they are forced into the underworld. They mug people as a means of survival. For instance, the Razors gang sends out Otieno to steal phones which could later be sold and

the money used to buy food. They do not have money that they can spend at will. This situation is the reason why their house is bare; they have neither furniture nor utensils. Not once are the characters shown eating. The director seems to decry the suffering of the people in the slum, through the eye of the camera Nathan Collet, the director, points out the economic alienation of the people living in the slums. These people are forced to eat from the garbage and to steal because they are alienated economically. This struggle for daily survival by the people in the slum leaves very little room for their personal development as legitimate members of the society.

The Rugged Priest directed by Bob Nyanja also exhibits the economic alienation of a people under a capitalist society. The rich and powerful especially the rich politician Ole Shompole undermine the people on the underside of capitalism. Represented by the MP as the beginning of the film, he incites the community to drive out a small group of people who he believed could not vote for him. He calls these people the 'Makwekwe' Swahili word for weed, used to denote that these group of people were different from the rest. Ole Shompole and other evil members of the community torch the houses of these people and drag them out of their lands, killing many of them and maiming others. The economic status of these 'Makwekwe' change overnight, from people who used to live on their own plots of land to an oppressive reality where they now had nothing of their own. The economic alienation in this film causes the 'Makwekwe' to seek assistance from the old Catholic priest John Kaisler. These people who were previously able to provide for themselves, and take care of their daily needs are reduced to 'beggars' who have no control of the economic status. The priest has to provide food and shelter for them and their children. They become a burden for father Kaisler who neither has the means nor

the manpower to take care of them. Ole Shompole is not satisfied with displacing them from their land, he goes ahead to threaten the priest and even rape Alice one of the priest's assistant. Eventually through a corrupt deal the Priest is transferred to a remote parish as punishment for helping the displaced people. The Makwekwe from the Rift Valley are left squatters, helpless and defenseless from the attacks of the capitalist Ole Shompole.

Ole Shompole acting like the capitalist that he is, follows Father Kaisler to the remote parish to oppress the Maasai residents. Through the character of Ole Shompole Bob Nyanja captures the exploitation and oppression that the ruling class put on the poor members of the society. The people here are poor to the point they cannot afford school fees for their children; one such parent sent the daughter to Ole Shompole's office to ask for assistance. Instead of assisting the girl, Ole Shompole rapes her. Bob Nyanja represents the common man as a rag that can be trampled on and their daughters used as sex objects for the lusty desires of Ole Shompole. The Maasai residents lack basic facilities, they lack water, no electricity, no proper schools and this emphasizes to their poverty. Their houses are bare and the clothes they use are light lessos while the minister dresses in expensive suits. The conflict between the two social classes is laid bare when the priest takes Ole Shompole to court for rape of the school girls, Ole shompole tries to bribe the lawyers and when this does not work he kills the two Maasai girls. The future for these residents is very grim. Ole Shompole gets rid of everyone who is opposed to his leadership.

At one scene a commission is set up to investigate the killings and displacement of the people at the Rift valley. Father Kaisler volunteers to testify and for this Ole Shompole

hunts him down and has him killed in a staged road accident. The director portrays the disparity that exists between the rich, (people in leadership) and the poor in regards to economic alienation. The bourgeoisie have all they need economically while the proletariat has almost nothing. Wanjala in his book *A Season of Harvest* (1978:5) makes an observation that 'ideological neo-colonialism, political corruption and the very economic planning have more possibilities of alienating than liberating man.' The state depicted in this film practices corruption and the economic planning seems not to favour the residents in the Rift Valley. The state in this society has managed to alienate its people economically, such that they seem not to have control of what happens to them and their children. Fashina Nelson represents economic alienation in "Alienation and Revolutionary Vision in East African Post-Colonial Dramatic Literature" as 'he domination of the state political and economic power by African Capitalists- the contractors, merchants, entrepreneurs and the elite'(15). In Fashina's argument Ole Shompole who is a politician and elite manages to rule over the people has control of almost all the sectors in the land.

Nairobi Half Life showcases different cases of economic alienation, youth joblessness being one of the major economic problems. The film has depicted scores of young men in the film who are educated but have not secured any jobs. The likes of Mwas, Oti, Dingo, Mose and Amina, have no jobs they end up in the underworld. In his article 'Education and Frustration' Musa Mashanga (1970:43) quotes Rene Dumounts who posits that 'the plight of rural dwellers that migrate to the city, is that they end up in shanty towns of the capital and become social parasites. Their days are spent job hunting.' The main character Mwas migrates to the city from a village in search of his dream job, acting.

When he is in the city he cannot secure a meaningful job that can cater for his needs and he eventually becomes a member of Oti's gang.

The youth are economically alienated because of the manual jobs that they take-up. When Mwas meets Oti at Central Police Station he directs him to Dingo who sends him to mama Akinyi to work as errand boy in her hotel. Mama Akinyi expects Mwas to clean the never ending pile of utensils, wait on the tables and prepare the food. Mwas does not rest yet Mama Akinyi does not pay him. In place of the pay, mama Akinyi gives him a place to sleep which is one of the wooden tables in the hotel. Since the hotel is made of tin, Mwas is often rained on and exposed to the other harsh weather conditions. With his education level Mwas feels dissatisfied with his job, it is not challenging and it is routine. According to Rosner and Putterman (1991) in the article 'Factors behind the Supply and Demand for Less Alienating Work' education increases the individuals ability to derive satisfaction from work and raises him/her level of dissatisfaction if forced to do routine and unchanging work. It is this dissatisfaction that makes Mwas to leave the job without reporting to his employer.

The youngsters in Oti's gang are also a group of economically alienated people. After lacking jobs in the vast city they join the underworld. They become car part thieves. They supply the well feed bourgeoisie Waya with these parts. Waya belongs to the upper class of people in the society; he is well feed and has a thriving business that is supplied by these petty thieves. The work that the members of Otis gang do alienates them since Waya does not pay them well for their labor. Their labor power is reduced to wages, since it is the only way they can survive in the city. Waya uses them to get whatever he needs and when they need their pay they have to beg for it. Waya pays too little; he does

not respect them either. On several occasions he is heard calling them names that are degrading and dehumanizing. He calls them idiots, faggots and asses. Waya has a sense of his class therefore he looks down on the gang members. It is important to also note that the product supply is dictated by Waya and his customers. This conversation shows the dehumanization of the members of Oti's gang by Waya,

(At Waya's place as Waya looks at the merchandise)

WAYA: *Hizi za China nini? - are these from China?*

MOSE: *China mamako, unadhani sisi ni mang'oi nini? - China my ass, do you think we are stupid?*

WAYA: *Hapa labda mkule thao nne- maybe 4000*

OTI: *Aaah, maze Waya joh, usikazie ngaji yangu, do hivi nidunge tho kumi atleast kila mmoja aende home na thao mbili- Waya do not mess with me, give us 10,000, so each of us can go home with 2000.*

WAYA: *Kwenda kwani mi ndio nawalea, okay thao tano- what am I your provider now? Okay 5000*

According to Karl Marx in his essay "Economic and Philosophical Manuscript" 1844 the worker is alienated from the work process because the labor power is reduced to wages and capitalism removes from the worker the right to exercise control over his/her labour. The gang works to survive, they plead for their wages from Waya every time they work because they have to survive. The gang is forced to live in a filthy and cramped house. Because of the illegal activities they engage in, the police in this society harass the gang day in day out. The gang has to share the little they get from Waya with the officers. The police use the money for their personal consumption therefore we can

conclude that the police are corrupt. The police threaten the gang that if they do not pay up then they would kill them.

Oti: *Wanadai showbiz fifty fifty- they want to split 50-50 on what we make*

Mwas: *Natukiwakausha? - And if we don't?*

Oti: *Pap! (Oti makes a gunshot gesture to show that the new cops will kill them)*

The police are unfeeling when they ask for their money, they order the youth around and dominate over them with threats. When a fight breaks out between Oti's and Dingo's gang and Dingo is killed; the police arrest the gang members, put them in a secluded house and kill almost all of them under the guise that they were dangerous wanted criminals in the city. The depicted society is structured in such a way that everybody is trying hard to survive. The director decries the pain of the have-nots. They do not seem to have a sympathizer. They are tossed around by their employer and the police who are ironically supposed to be guarding them. In the characters of Dingo and the members of Otis gang the director creates a society where everyone is worried about themselves as each character is caught up in their individual struggles. Bob Nyanja the director exposes the kind of society that a nation becomes when some members are denied their right to opportunity.

The women exhibited in NHL are economically alienated as a result of the kind of work that they do. Amina, who is Oti's girlfriend, is a prostitute who uses her body to earn money. In line with Karl Marx's definition of alienation, it encompasses alienation of the worker from the labor process. This type of alienation occurs when the labour is provided to the satisfaction of the consumer. The prostitutes in this film including Amina work to

satisfy their customers. For instance, in one of the scenes, Amina is whipped by an elderly man with a leather whip. She screams out in pain forcing Mwas to rush in thinking she is being killed. Clearly she does not enjoy the work. The sexual act is violent according to the needs of her customer. The prostitutes' sale of their bodies to make a living can lead one to argue that their bodies become commodities for sale. They are alienated from the commodity they sell, it is custom made to the customers' needs. Amina is alienated from her true humanity. In fact she seems quite proud of her work, as a means of survival for her. She confides in Mwas that the only reason she is a prostitute is to survive,

AMINA: *Umeangusha watu wangapi ndio udunge venye umedunga? (How many people have you robbed to afford those clothes?)*

MWAS: *Si kaa wasee wenye wamekupitia (not as many as you have fucked)*
(Amina smiles)

AMINA: *Najua chenye unafikiria (I know what you are thinking)*

MWAS: *Nini (what?)*

AMINA: *Kwanini mimi hufanya kazi mi hufanya (why I do what I do)*
Sababu inalipa poa (because the pay is good)

MWAS: *Mangapi hivi (how much)*

AMINA: *Kwa siku mimi uingisha kitu kaa punch (500 a day)*

MWAS: *Nilikuwa namaanisha, mteja kwa siku ni mangapi? (I didn't mean that. How much do you charge?)*

AMINA: *Inadepend, between fifty na five k (that depends. Between Ksh 50 and Ksh 5000.)*

The sale of her body as a commodity has dehumanized Amina and all the girls in her group. They all desire money and they do everything the customers desires in order to get it. One of the prostitutes goes to an extent of harrasing Mwas to have sex with her.

PROSTITUTE: *Mwas, leo niaje (Mwas how about today)*
(She starts to touch mwas'genitals)

MWAS: *Hapana, sina pesa. (No I have no money)*

PROSTITUTE: *Kugusa ni bure, coming is not*

MWAS: *Hapana sina pesa-no I have no money*

PROSTITUTE: *Mbao (twenty shillings)*

MWAS: *Sina (I do not have it)*
(The girl walks away dissappointed)

This dehumanisation of the prostitutes in their work is discussed by Kariuki Gakuo in his unpublished M.A thesis "A Study of Alienation in Selected Songs by Joseph Kamaru."

Where he says,

The rise in materialism is seen as the major factor leading to the increase in prostitution. The women selling themselves for a fee are turned into objects for the gratification of sexual lust. By putting themselves up for sale they lose their dignity and humanity and become like commodities on market shelves. Materialism is therefore seen to dehumanize its victims and they become alienated from their true humanity (1994: 68).

The director uses the character of Amina and other prostitutes in the film to expose the self-destructive ways that some women engage in while in the city. He seems to warn the audience that prostitution lowers the value of a woman to herself therefore making her dehumanized. That is why one of the prostitutes is willing to trade off her body for only 20 Kenya shillings. This is a woman who seems to have lost value for her life.

2.4. Social Alienation: Seclusion and Exclusion of the Poor

Kibera Kid lays bare the social alienation of the slum dwellers. The people in the slum have been pushed to unwanted privacy and seclusion. Their poverty, neediness and the general economic alienation is what pushes people to live in slums. They are secluded from the mainstream Nairobi society to the point that they have chosen their own leader (Wamatope) who helps them with community policing. Otieno and the young men in Razors crew feel the social alienation, the economic powerlessness that is why they are forced into stealing in order to survive. According to Mohammad Ashraf Malik in his article “An Overview of Alienation among Unemployed Adults: A literature Survey” a person who is poor and feels economically powerless feels detached from himself and from the society, they may feel weak worthless and lose their self identity.’ (2014: 2). Malik posits that a person who feels their economic powerlessness is likely to lose their self identity; this eventually leads to self-destructing behaviour such as stealing and drugs. The members of the Razors gang end up taking drugs and they become petty thieves.

Socially, the whole group of people living in Kibera is alienated from the mainstream Nairobi community (those not living in the slums). The mainstream society has social

amenities absent in the slum, the abject poverty in the slum, is also not found in the mainstream society. The slum lacks water, toilets, electricity and schools. The surrounding is characterized by filthy gullies that have dirty water and dumpsites. In the film for instance, the children are playing around open gullies of dirty foul water exposing them to diseases. The camera shows a child eating out of a dumpster because there is nowhere else they can get cleaner food. The larger community, even in real life seems to be wary when around people from the slums; the feeling is that these people are prone to theft. Slums are the last developed places because of this social alienation.

This film highlights life as it is in Kibera. In fact the whole short film was shot in the slum itself. The garbage showed in the film is in reality part of Kibera slums. Most people in Kibera survive under a dollar a day and not much has been done to alleviate their suffering. The main character desires to go to a school. In his dream, the school is clean and organized; such a school cannot exist in the depicted slum. The director of this film Nathan Collet seems to tell the audience that Kibera has been neglected and that its people need to be thought about as citizens of the country. Nathan Collet is a German and it can be said that he is biased on his look of the slum and that he may have exaggerated the situation, by not giving a single good thing about the slum, it is also safe to conclude that the slum is socially alienated as depicted.

In *The Rugged Priest*, a group of people commonly known as the 'Makwekwe' in the film, face social isolation and alienation as a result of their displacement from their land in Rift valley. Overnight they are turned to social misfits; they are harassed by Ole Shompole even when they are at the mission seeking shelter. They change from people who used to own their own land to people without land and a place to call home; from

belonging to unbelonging. Germaine Greer describes this situation best in her foreword in the text *The Pain of Unbelonging*,

The true pain of unbelonging is felt by those who have no homeland and no diaspora, who do not belong where they are and do not belong anywhere else either (2007: 12).

These people go through pain and frustration, their children are killed and their homes torched. They believed the Rift Valley village was their home and suddenly it is taken away from them. They have no home and since they have nowhere to go they do not have a diaspora either. Their sudden economic powerlessness does not help them to fit in their new condition, one old man is affected to the point that he wanders around like a mad man after all his family members are killed.

Nairobi Half Life carries in it the social alienation of the youth who are educated but are jobless in the vast city. Such a character is Mwas who is fairly educated but cannot get a meaningful job. The whole of Otis gang consists of young people in their early 30s. Their lives are characterized by anxiety, frustration, disappointment and suffering. For instance they cannot afford a decent meal; they have to eat in a 'kibanda' a Kenyan word that denotes an outdoor eating place. The food cooked here is exposed to the dust and dirt of the slum. Mohammad Malik posits that, unemployment is a key factor increasing the risk of alienation from the society, and it affects individual's financial, social and psychological well-being (2014:3). This assertion by Malik is experienced in the film as the youth feel worthless, they are always unhappy and they become social misfits.

2.5. Political Alienation

Kibera Kid is a film that imaginatively captures the political alienation of the people that live in slums. This political alienation makes people in the slums unable to make decisions as regards to the places that they live. The kind of alienation experienced in the slums is what Ada .W. Finifter describes in her thesis “Dimensions of Alienation” as political powerlessness, which she says is,

Where political decisions which determine to a great extent the conditions under which the individuals live, may appear to be happening to individuals who feel powerless independent of or in spite of their own judgment or wishes (390).

The residents in slum suffer from neglect by the local government, they have no say in the decisions that the government makes over their lives. Typical Nairobi slums lack water, toilets (most slum dwellers make use of what has come to be known as ‘flying toilet’) that is the use of paper bags to dispose of their defecation, trash is never picked up and so the slums usually have gullies of dirty stinking waters. Johhana Luttrell in her PhD dissertation “Gender Alienation and Dignity in Global Slums” discusses the neglected condition of the slum dwellers:

In most slums there is no plumbing; residents dig a hole for personal use. Without plumbing, there is no running water. To bathe, drink and cook, residents will either transport water from river or lakes, dig a shallow well, or pay local private companies to buy tubs of water off of travelling water trucks, it is rare that the local governments transport water to slum residents. The local governments often do not pick up trash; either so trash is burned, buried or discarded in unofficial trash dumps which can be located precariously close to human dwellings (9).

This description by Johhana is not far from how Kenyan slums are; the slums are neglected by governments such that the basic services that governments are supposed to provide are rare commodity in slums. *Kibera Kid* depicts this slum situation where the filth of long accumulated waste is seen throughout the film. The residents of Kibera live in unhealthy spaces; their children such as the main character 2pac are therefore exposed to filth and dirt. Politically the government has failed them; they are a people betrayed; parentless children like 2pac have no one to take care of them. The government should provide infrastructure to take care of such needy cases. The government as shown in the film has not come in to help such children to get into schools and give them shelter and protection. Therefore, 2pac is forced into a gang that becomes his family because at least they help him to fend for himself although it is in a dangerous way. JI demonstrates there is no way out for Otieno from the razors gang through this conversation.

JL: Niaje, what have you got to do today?

OTIENO: I know, I am going out tonight

JL: Sawa ishia-(okay get to it)

OTIENO: Usiku ni fine (I will do it at night)

JL: Our little hip hop star is afraid

(Laughter among the other gang members)

OTIENO: No I am not afraid

JL: Don't come back until you bring me three phones

(To another gang member) make sure our little hip hop star does his job.

OTIENO: Why don't you come?

JL: (Threateningly) you want to go back to eating garbage with the other mongrels?

The film *The Rugged Priest* opens up to the anguish of a community that is dispossessed and dragged away from their homes at a village in Rift valley. The Member of Parliament Ole Shompole incites the other members of the community to drive away the 'Makwekwe' living amongst them. He holds public rallies where he calls them weeds that need to be uprooted from the Rift Valley. He sows seeds of discord and hatred amongst members of the community and sets community against community in his attempt to get into a political office to enjoy all the benefits of the office. Shompole and other evil members of the community then descend on this section of the community in the night and kill many of them, torch their houses and drive most of them out. In one of his campaigns he incites the crowds who are very enthusiastic to take on his orders

SHOMPOLE: *If they do not want to vote with us lets us remove them!*

CROWD: *Yes!*

The 'makwekwe' community at this point experiences a kind of political normlessness in line with Emile Durkheim's anomie. Ada. W. Finifter describes political normlessness as the kind of political alienation whereby 'the individuals feel that the norm and rules intended to govern political relations have broken down and that departures from prescribed behavior are common.' The 'Makwekwe' at the rift valley hold different political ideals from the other members of the community and therefore they get physically and politically alienated for it, terror and brutality becomes a daily occurrence in their lives. The arsonists torch all their homes and crops and their only refuge is to turn to the kind Catholic father John Kaisler. Even at Kaisler's mission house the people are still tortured by Ole Shompole and his gang who come often to make threats. The 'Makwekwe' find no solace; their land is alienated from them as they are uprooted from

their homes. Politically their reality alienates them; the man supposed to protect them ensures that they are left homeless and defenseless. This cruel alienation of the 'Makwekwe' is depicted in *The Rugged Priest* to have happened in 1992 and nothing was done to alleviate their suffering.

In the character of Ole Shompole, Bob Nyanja the director has tried to capture the exploitation and oppression that the ruling class in Kenya put on the poor members of the society. The raped girls represent the oppressed in the society who cannot escape the claws of the richer and wicked ruling class. One of the girls had gone to ask the MP to assist her pay her school fees and he agrees then forces himself on her as a return. The two girls and Father John are representatives of the lowly in society who the rich use for their pleasures and get rid of them when the need arises. The rich, as depicted by Ole Shompole whose name is ironic because it suggests that he is kind and calm, can get away even with murder. He seems to be above the law; he tries to bribe everyone including lawyers. Father Kaisler makes a comment when testifying at the commission of inquiry that the evidence he had given was probably going to be put in files and that it could never be implemented.

2.6. The Oppressor's Alienation

In the person of Ole Shompole in *The Rugged Priest*, the director also gives us a man who is alienated in all his relationships with other people. He views himself as higher than other humans that he associates with. For instance his treatment of his three hit men is not only inhuman but also alienating. He often abuses them and sends them on risky missions. He dehumanizes those who are around him. He believes that everyone has got a price therefore he bribes everyone to get himself more power and status. Such a person

does not only dehumanize those around him but he also dehumanizes himself. Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* argues that ‘dehumanization which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen but also, (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of becoming fully human’ (Freire, 44). Therefore, Shompole is not only alienating others he also manages to alienate himself. In *Ole Shompole* we also encounter a man who is culturally alienated, the African culture does not advocate for rape and especially not the rape of little school girls who are fit to be his daughters. Ngugi wa Thiong’o in the text *Decolonizing the Mind* states that the African culture,

Embodies those moral ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their place in the universe. Values are the basis of a people’s identity, their sense of particularity as members of the human race (389).

Therefore, Ole Shompole exhibits the kind of a person whose morals have been eroded he is no longer human because no culture permits rape. He is a pervert who should be jailed not left to roam in the streets. He has lost respect for the famous age-groups that existed in Africa whereby every old man considered the young girls as his own daughters; it was unheard of to rape a girl in the African tradition because it was heavily punished. Ole Shompole is also socially alienated from his people. His education and acquired lifestyle alienates him from the common Maasai people. He does not wear the Maasai traditional Kikois instead he dresses in expensive suits in the hot Maasai environment. His office is filled with expensive leather seats while the Maasai people lack basic facilities such as water, this further alienates him. He is a separate entity from

other people. He is happy when other people are suffering and this lays bare his alienation because in dehumanizing other people he alienates himself.

2.7. Mental Prison: Psychological Alienation

Nairobi Half Life begins with the psychological alienation of the main character Mwas. Mwas happens to have a dream of becoming an accomplished actor. Unfortunately he is based in the village where no one seems to understand his dream. He has a quarrelsome drunk man for a father and relatives who do not believe in his talents. Daddy M, his cousin, calls him a time waster and his brother tells him to get a real job while other members of the community laugh really hard when he tells them what he would like to do. Mwas is in pain and he is disturbed while in the village. Frank Johnson gives one of the symptoms of psychological alienation as a gnawing consciousness of a lack of 'fit' with other individuals or a tendency toward absorption of ideas and fantasy (371). Mwas is obsessed with becoming an actor. This desire that he cannot fulfill due to poverty becomes a fantasy. To the psychoanalyst this obsession with the idea to become an actor is alienating. Due to this psychological lack of 'fit' in the village Mwas leaves the village the moment he gets an opportunity.

In this definition, Johnson emphasizes that a psychologically alienated person has the persistent feeling that they do not fit amongst others. Mwas, unlike his village mates, dreams of being an actor in a place where theatres do not exist. Mwas therefore lives his life in a dream-like state since he can only sell films to other villagers and spend all his days acting out the scenes in the movies he sells. In the scene where he has gone to sell a DVD to his cousin and his friends, Mwas receives all kind of jokes from Daddy M's friends as they try to humiliate him. Daddy M his cousin considers him a time waster

who has nothing to do. Mwas defends himself saying that at least he had a passion for acting. The fantasy and passion that Mwas holds in the village alienates him. He leaves the village in search of a job. His alienation continues even when he is in the city, he feels unfit with his fellow gangsters because he desires the limelight. Among the crowd of his friends later in the city Mwas remains lonely and disturbed because as a gangster he feels that he has not achieved his dream. This alienation leaves only when he gets a job as an actor at phoenix theatre. Mwas' fantasies make him unhappy and disturbed.

The character of Moses one of the gangsters in Oti's gang is another case of a psychologically alienated person. As they go through the dangerous lifestyle of stealing car parts and hijacking people at gun point, Moses has the dream of becoming a singer. On several occasions the camera shows poor Moses desperately trying to compose lyrics. The other gang members have resigned to their fate but Moses keeps his hopes high. At the scene where they wait to be killed by the corrupt police officers, Moses still affords to sing. He has the desire to become a singer. The director of this film, Tosh Gitonga seems to decry the pain of youngsters that have talent that no one seems to notice. In the character of Mwas' parents he creates a father who does not care about his sons dream. Mwas laments to Cedric at the club in Westlands that he would love to have a father who was in touch with his life enough to know what he would like him (Mwas) to be. While in the character of Mwas his father is a drunk and he is not in touch with Mwas' dream it is ironic to note that Cedric' father knows his son's dreams and talent but disapproves of it because he wants for his son what he wants for himself and does not care what Cedric wants. The director exposes to the audience that when parents ignore the wants of their

children or are too insistent in what they want their children to become then they end up alienated like Mwas and Cedric. Mwas is a thief and Cedric is a rebellious gay man.

The group of the youth in Oti's gang is psychologically alienated. They are jobless and therefore economically alienated. This situation makes this gang feel useless and helpless. This affects their psychology negatively. Their desire to live good lives is not repressed in the subconscious part of their mind. Instead they develop the need to acquire money whatever the means. They end up being hardcore criminal capable of killing in order to get the money. This desire is expressed by Oti in several slips of the tongue. At one instance when he is told that the police had killed some criminals in Ngara the same place they were planning to rob, he says,

OTI: That is stupid. Do you want to die poor?

This assertion reveals his unconscious mind to the audience; he is determined to do anything to survive and to get rich. Later he makes another statement that makes me conclude that his desire to get money is insatiable. He assures Mwas that he and his gang were going to try until they got rich.

OTI: We have to live large; we have to live it up.

According to Sigmund Freud repressed thoughts can manifest themselves in dreams, nightmares, slips of the tongue and forms of artistic activity. These assertions show the psychological state of the mind. He desires wealth and therefore ends up a thug in a bid to achieve it.

Amina and the other prostitutes in the film exhibit psychologically alienated behaviour. These women sleep with men for money. They have reduced their bodies to commodities something that is looked down upon by the African culture. The commodification of their

bodies makes them devalue themselves; the sale of their bodies for money dehumanizes them, since are willing to do anything to make money. Amina for instance, lets a man whip her with a leather whip for money. Amina confesses to Mwas that she was doing it to get money to take herself to college. These girls exhibit psychological alienated behaviour. First, they are ashamed of what they do; Amina is scared of letting her father know what she did for a living. She confesses to Mwas that her father would kill her. This reveals to the audience that Amina is worried that her father would judge her if she told him of her prostitution. Secondly these prostitutes are prone to a dirty language. One of the prostitutes for instance, uses wanting language with a customer during an argument. She calls him a useless git and tells him to go fuck himself. Such kind of language is irritating and can only be found among people who are disturbed in the mind. The directors in the three studied films do not only reveal the people's alienation without bringing up suggestions to how this malaise can be eradicated. In the next phase of this chapter I concentrate on the suggestion given by directors that can end alienation.

Kibera Kid is a story of the political and social alienation of people who live in the slums. Nathan Collet, suggests that slum dwellers like Otieno are left with little option but to engage themselves in gang activities and theft. The main character Otieno, aka 2Pac joins the Razors gang in order to survive the harsh slum life. The Razor crew specializes in stealing small things like phones which they sell and in turn buy food. To escape the social and political alienation 2pac has to leave the slum to a place where he will access education and achieve his dreams. The director resolves the malaise of social and political alienation by suggesting through this film that people in the slums,

especially children should be educated so as to improve their lives. This desire is put in the main character Otieno who eventually leaves the slum in search of education.

In the film *The Rugged Priest* the people who are politically alienated do not at first react to the alienation due to what Paulo Freire calls the 'fear of freedom'. Paulo Freire argues that,

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines are fearful of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy (Freire: 47).

The people would rather let the MP, Ole Shompole, oppress them than stand against him, the masses fear the MP. It is only Father Anthony Kaisler who stands up and decides to start a revolution. He engages female lawyers and a commission to investigate Shompole's activities both in the Rift Valley. In contrast to Ole Shompole, the Old Catholic priest Father John Kaisler, is the voice of reason in this film. Although he dies at the end the director has used him as a mouthpiece for the downtrodden, a man who will not keep quiet as social and political alienation happens to the majority of the people. He is the revolutionist who seeks justice against the perpetrators of injustice and oppression. He volunteers to testify against Ole Shompole in the commission and tries to get justice for the two raped girls through a court case against their rapist. He shuns the fear that the ruling class has put upon the masses and stands as a firm voice against oppression and dehumanization.

In the character of Father John Kaisler, the director of the film speaks to Kenya and all the African nations where the proletariat are oppressed by the ruling class that they need to rise up and speak against the evil of neo-colonialism such as alienation,

dehumanization, class stratification and poverty. The character of Kaisler seems to go against the belief advocated by Karl Marx that 'religion is the opium of the masses'. John Kaisler in spite of being warned by the other church leaders stands alone and defends the poor. Repeatedly the bishop warns him against the MP Ole Shompole. The director makes a strong point here that anyone including those in the church should oppose oppression and not try to stamp it on the people through religion.

Kaisler is the only hope that the people have in the entire film. He dies because of his outspoken nature and for fighting for social justice of the masses. The director however brings in a scene where the new father played by (John Mwakazi) is baptizing about a dozen little boys who have been named after father John Kaisler. This suggests that despite John's death his legacy lived on, in the hearts of the parishioners.

Nairobi Half Life showcases social and economic alienation of youths that have gone through the Kenyan educational system, yet they have remained jobless in our cities. The characters in this film have reacted in unique ways, for instance most of the young men in the film have ended up in criminal activities. Both Otis and Dingo's gangs are youths at the age of around 20 to 30 years who have resorted to theft. Oti's gang starts by stealing car parts and eventually graduates to stealing the cars at gun point. This reaction temporarily helps the gang members to solve the malaise of economic alienation in their lives. The females in this film as presented by Amina who is Oti's girlfriend end up as prostitutes selling off their bodies for as low as fifty shillings. The other prostitutes working with Amina sell their bodies for as low as twenty shillings.



A prostitute with Mwas in Nairobi Half Life (2012)

As a suggestion to how the malaise of alienation can be solved, the director of this film Mr. Tosh Gitonga has used an imbedded play which is within the film as a demonstration to alert people about the social and economic alienation. Mwas gets an acting part at phoenix theatre and he is supposed to co-act with Cedric the gay man in the film. The two of them are acting the part of two thieves who are angry that '10% of this country's population owns 90% of this country's wealth' and want to punish the rich for this. These two thieves go around rich people's houses and stack all the rich people's valuables at a corner then they write a placard saying 'YOUR TIME IS UP' and then they lay it on the valuables. This play is a demonstration that the ruling and richer class composed mainly of wealthy individuals, should not ignore the poor in the society. When these two fake thieves are finally caught by Ronney (a rich man), they say that their idea was meant to remind people of the existence of poor people in the society, of people who are jobless

and hopeless. Mwas and Cedric tell the rich couple that, rich people in the city have decided to ignore the misery of the poor people: the likes of Mwas.

CEDRIC: We have come to remind you of our existence

RONNEY: What?

MRS RONNEY: What the hell are you talking about?

CEDRIC: You live lives that are so ignorant of other truths, ignorant of other realities, ignorant of other people, so we came to give you a message

MRS RONNEY: What?

MWAS: There is just one life that we can live that hopefully is truthful and right and that we will live being aware of what is around us, so the question is, have we chosen this our life, or have we taken it for granted? Have we decided to be the way we are or have we looked away from everything that is around us in order to protect the island that we live upon? It is a choice, to look or to look away.

The rich people in the play are being given a social awakening which their status has alienated them from. They are not to look away from the mess that joblessness and hopelessness have caused in the city, instead the two 'good' thieves give them the alternative of being aware of other people's realities. This is the wholesome message that *Nairobi Half Life* carries that the audience needs to see the realities of other people in the society who are alienated because they are poor and jobless.

Summary

In my discussion of alienation in the three films I have looked at all the forms of alienation that the films exhibit. First there is the prominent economic alienation of the masses, of people who are poor and do not have resources to live the kind of lives that richer members of the society live. The people are dehumanized and many crimes committed against them because they are helpless and defenseless against their oppressors. In *Nairobi Half Life* the youth remain jobless despite being educated. Their joblessness causes their economic alienation because they have no economic autonomy. These jobless young men then are forced to become thieves so as to survive in Nairobi. Economic alienation runs through the three films, In *Kibera Kid* the residents of the slum have no jobs, therefore no money. In *The Rugged Priest* the people are beaten and displaced out of their land leading to the economic alienation.

Different shades of political alienation such as violence against a certain group of people and evicting them from their land as seen in *The Rugged Priest*. Another shade is that of the government's failure to put into systems to take care of people in slums or create jobs for the youth who are the majority in Kenya.

This chapter has also made a considerable comparison of the life depicted in the film and the real life in Kenya. The findings are that the films are realistic and they depict activities that actually happen in the country. The films seem to act as voices that filling in for the silences in the community. For instance the killings depicted in *The Rugged Priest* actually happened. The death of Father Antony Kaiser has raised very many questions in the country and even internationally. Nyanja's film comes in to fill the state

sanctioned silence on the murders depicted in the film. Kibera slum is a real place in Kenya and the experiences of the characters in the film *Kibera Kid* are familiar to the people living in the slum such as young kids committing petty crime to fend for themselves. This brings out the writers and directors of these films as people who are concerned about alienation in the society. These directors are depicted as social realists who see alienation in society and use film as medium to comment on this malaise.

It should be noted that these films are a way of reacting to the alienation in the society. The directors come across as activists against alienation in society. First they emphasize the fact that people who find themselves in alienating situations eventually are forced to react to it. The masses in the *Kibera Kid* and *Nairobi Half Life* have reacted by getting to self-destructing behavior such as joining gangs. These gangs in both *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid* are involved in stealing. In *The Rugged Priest* Father John starts revolution against the evil politician Mr Shompole. The directors have also given Kenyans solutions to the alienation presented in their film. *Nairobi Half Life* rouses the masses through the theatrical play where richer people in the society are reminded of economically and socially alienated people. *Kibera Kid* suggests that to end the social and political alienation of the slum dwellers they need to get educated in order to improve their lives. *The Rugged Priest* suggests that people need to stand against all forms of political alienation by speaking out against them. In the next chapter, I will examine the cinematic techniques in the development of the theme of alienation.

Chapter Three

3.0 TECHNIQUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME OF ALIENATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I examine the cinematic elements that have been used by the different directors to develop the theme of alienation. Film has several elements such as sound, diegetic and non-diegetic, lighting, scene and design and cinematography. The directors have used these aspects to develop alienation. The first two films *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid* have very similar filmic aspects mostly because they are set in one place that is Nairobi and the sets are also in the slums. *The Rugged Priest* is different because it has diverse settings and the main character in the film Father Antony Kaisler, is not in the class of the poor proletariat shown in *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid*. The father belongs to the elite class, for he is not directly affected by the alienation like Alice and the other two Maasai raped girls.

3.1.1. Mise-en scene: The Set

The set of a film can tell a story by itself. It can declare whether a person is rich or poor. The set can also explain the frame of mind of a character. A well-organized house suggests the presence of a person who is meticulous while a disorganized house suggests that a character is a disorganized person. Mise-en scene is described as everything that appears in the framing, the characters, lighting, décor, props, setting and costume. When well thought about and shot in a film; the set design can help audiences to deduce themes that are in the story. The study will examine the scenery or the setting that has been presented in the films, then it will juxtapose between that of the alienated masses and the

oppressors who cause their alienation. Set design is defined by Shyles, Leonard in *The Art of Video Production* as

All the scenery, background, and furnishings intended to be seen by the camera, including items associated with interior locales, such as walls and floors, fireplaces, bookcases, doors and staircases and items associated with exterior locales such as park benches, trees, storefronts, streetlamps and even mountain views (1994:245).

The set in *Nairobi Half Life* has been dedicated to exposing the struggles and the hard lives of the poor in Nairobi compared to the comfort of the rich. These settings have been juxtaposed to show the rift between the owners of the factors of production and the poor. The whole of *Nairobi Half Life* is shot on location. The director used a realistic setting where authentic pieces are used. The film is shot in the down-town parts of Nairobi. This part of Nairobi is a slum. The camera lingers on the scrap metals that are dumped all over the little shanty. The dirt and the disorganization of things around the shanty depict the kind of lifestyle that Oti and the other gang members live in. The shanty is depicted as dirty and overwhelmingly congested. The house that the gang sleeps is a cramped little space; which house five people, Oti, Waf, Kyalo, Mose, Mwas and often Amina who is Oti's girlfriend. The house has no furniture have no furniture so they have spread out a few mattresses. This kind of housing is contrasted with the nice houses of the people that Oti and the gang steal from. Their houses are depicted to be big and spacious with beautiful lawns and gates. This kind of setting has been chosen deliberately to show just how big the rift between the poor and jobless people is with the bourgeoisie.

The places that the gangs hang out are made of tin; the hotels are what Kenyans call 'kibandas' where food is cooked from outside and it is exposed to dust and dirt of the shanty. On the other hand rich people like Cedric, Mwas' co-actor go to nice clubs in Westlands. The play within the film also depicts a house of a very rich man. This man, Ronney, owns nice chairs, a huge television set, micro waves and other electronics. This particular house can be juxtaposed with the cramped place Mwas and Oti's crew stay: They own nothing; in fact they believe that they should live for the moment. At one scene we are shown a successful journalist (Jimmy Gathu) being interviewed at the Nairobi Hilton hotel. The scenery is serene and relaxed, he laughs with the interviewers during the interview. This journalist depicts the kind of life the rich live; they have the luxury to laugh and can afford to be happy. The lives of the poor in this city are the complete opposite for at this same time the hawkers in the city are being chased by the city council askaris. It is in this chase that Mwas is arrested and taken to central police station. On one hand happy relaxed and comfortable people on the other hand disturbed and harassed people.

One cannot help but deduce that Tosh Gitonga used the scene at Hilton Hotel to show that the rich live in relaxed and clean environment while the poor like Mwas and the other hawkers are in dirty environments where they need to eat their food from 'kibanda's' where food is exposed to dirt. The film lays bare the huge gap that exists between the rich and the poor in this society. For the rich represented by the likes of Waya, the journalistic and the police, their lives are comfortable, relaxed and happy they can afford to smile while that of the poor represented by Oti and the gang are

characterized by strive, pain and suffering. The scene designer appeals for our sympathy through the sets on the films.

The setting in *Kibera Kid* does not differ greatly from that in *NHL*. The film is shot on location in Kibera. The scenery consists of hundreds of tiny houses made of mud and iron sheets, which are surrounded by horrendous dump sites that Kibera children scavenge in. The Razors gang stays in an iron sheet house that has gaping holes. At one instance there is a young girl who is looking through a hole in the tin house at Razors gang. The film also carries the horrendous site of dumpsters and a child scavenging through it looking for food, thereby sending the message that this slum is almost a forgotten place, it emphasizes the social alienation of the people in the slum. This setting is compared to the clean environment that houses the school that the main character Otieno wants to go to. The school is green with spacious playgrounds that are not available in Kibera. The slum is full of ditches that run with dirty slimy water. The food stalls are all made of tin that is already rotting. The tin room that the razor gang stays in has no possession, it is an empty place. The set in *Kibera Kid* evokes the theme of social alienation because the set shows that the slum is forgotten by the government of the day.



A child looking for food at a dumpster as Otieno looks on, *Kibera Kid* (2006).

The Rugged Priest has two settings both set in the Rift Valley. Most of the residents live in traditional Manyattas however these houses do not have the basic facilities such as water, security and electricity. These people live a simple life, their traditional lifestyle and culture is still alive in the film. The lack modern seats, modern houses and modern churches. Father Kaisler conducts most of his masses under a tree in the scorching sun. For the holy table the father uses chapatti and soda. The father then comes up with ways to bring up a modern church building in the community and eventually this is the church seen at the end of the film. The houses of the poor in this film have no furniture while Ole Shompole's office has nice leather seats and tables. This juxtaposition clearly shows how the Maasai people are alienated from the mainstream society. On the other hand Ole Shompole's sophistication and his disdain at being associated with anything that is

Masaai, further marks his own alienation. His settings clearly put him at a different level with the other Maasai's, he is not in tune with his culture or his people that is why he behaves different from them. The set designs used in these films are realistic with all of them being shot on location. According to Shyles (1994) 'the function of a set is to provide scenery that supports, enhances and evokes the programs and in this case films tone and purpose.' In the films selected the sceneries are juxtaposed in order to bring to the audience the sense of alienation.

3.1.2 Mise-en-scene: Characterization

Characterization is also a major aspect of the mise –en scene. Mostly the director makes use of the characters themselves (their body size, appearance and their manner of talking), costume/wardrobe and make-up to convey important messages to their audiences. These aspects of the characters help to convey the personality of the individual or their status within the film. The characters stature, dress and make-up also help to convey the difference between one character and the others. The films discussed in this study have clearly shown the differences in characters through the choice of dress and also make – up. The choice of characters is left to the casting director; but the casting director makes all decision based on the specifications of the script writer. It is important to note that in the case of these two selected films, one character (Ainea Odhiambo) appears in two of the films because his body stature suited for the roles. His body is burly and he plays the role of the rich and the corrupt. Patrick Phillips makes a comment that,

Perhaps the most taken for granted aspect of Mise-en-scene is the actors. Actors contribute very significantly to Mise-en-scene. They convey meaning through physical appearance and through movement as well as through words they speak.

Some actors convey meanings that come from their familiarity in a particular kind of role. Beyond this, some actors –stars–convey meaning that derive from the off screen knowledge the audience has about them. (35)

Mwas, Oti, Waf, Kyalo and Mose are the young lads who are in a gang of jobless youths. Their unit is made up of skinny and lean youngsters who are accused by Waya of going everywhere in miserable faces possibly because of the harsh realities around their lives. Their miserable faces are a mark of constant harassment. They are harassed by the police and their lives are characterized by economic alienation. Their lean body statures are compared to the very well fed police officers and the oppressors who are represented by Waya. Waya is a hefty man, well feed and commanding. He often commands the miserable youths everywhere. The police on the other hand are fat, a sign that emphasizes that they have been corrupt. These police have a salary as workers of the police force yet they ask for more from the poor gang members. Thus the choice of the characters shows that the director took into consideration that he wanted to feature. The body statures of the youth are lean thus emphasizing their poverty. They are always looking miserable due to harassment and alienation this is contrasted to the oppressors are strong while the dehumanized people are lean and miserable.

In *Kibera Kid* the Razors gang has characters that are unshaven and dirty due to the absence of water. They look hungry and their eyes are always staring in space, the film does not show the Kibera children eating; their hunger empathizes the poverty in the slums and thus their economic alienation. Their stature suggests that their environment lacks basic facilities such as water. This emphasizes that slum is a forgotten place a place

where facilities are not available this emphasizes the social alienation of everyone in the slum.

Characters in *The Rugged Priest* also showcase the disparities between the rich and the poor. Shompole is big and burly while the parishioners are thin. It is important to note that Ole Shompole, played by the actor Ainea Odhiambo in *The Rugged Priest*, takes up the role of one of the corrupt police officers in *Nairobi Half Life*. In both films he plays the role of a rich man, meaning that the two different directors make use of his well-fed body as a presentative for the oppressor. His body stature (he is well fed) is a symbol, in both films he represents the corruption of the mind since in both films he is an evil man. In *The Rugged Priest* he leads people in killing people and in arson. In *NHL* he is a corrupt officer who kills the youth in cold blood.

3.1.3. Mise -en -scene- Costuming

The way a person is dressed up in film can tell the historical period being depicted, the social class that the person belongs to or even the occasion for which one is dressed for. Costumes of films made to depict the Elizabethan times are different from those costumes in films made to depict the modern day life. Therese Anderson in “Costume Cinema and Materiality: Telling the Story of Marie Antoinette through Dress” argues that ‘clothes are a key feature in the construction of cinematic identities, and one of the tools filmmakers have for telling a story’ (103). In this argument it is clear that costumes can place each character in their social status and can explain their frame of minds. The films under this study have used costuming to show the gap that exists between the poor and the rich. In *Nairobi Half Life* the costuming clearly defines the difference between those who have and those who do not. The police officers in *Nairobi Half Life* are dressed in

warm comfortable clothing while Oti and other members of the gang are thinly clad in dirty T-shirts for instance, Mwas' blue and white striped T-shirt is torn at his breast, yet he wears it for the most part of the film. The likes of Waya, the corrupt police officers and Cedric Mwas' co-actor look smart in nice warm and expensive clothing. The torn T-shirts are juxtaposed against the warm clothes of the very rich in the society such as Waya to emphasize their poverty. They are jobless; they cannot afford to buy clothing for themselves, they are thus economically alienated. It can be concluded that the director uses this juxtaposition in these costuming to clearly show the differences between these two social classes.

In *Kibera Kid* Otieno the main character is dressed in rags. Throughout the film he is in a torn maroon T-shirt that emphasizes his poverty and the social alienation. His face is always dirty and he looks hungry clear signs of deprivation. In the whole duration of the film not once are the razors shown to be eating. These children do not change throughout the film. Their rugged clothes are juxtaposed with the bright clothes that are worn by children in the school that Otieno wants to go to, which is mainly a school for children of the rich who can afford it. The poor children in the slum cannot afford schools; their poverty is decried by their poor clothing.

The Rugged priest plainly uses costumes as a means to develop political alienation; most of the Maasai parishioners are different from Ole Shompole. The rich Ole Shompole is always in a suit while the parishioners are thinly dressed in their lesos and Kikois which are the common clothes for the Maasai. The two young girls that Ole Shompole kills are dressed in old and worn out dresses. These dresses contrasted with the expensive suits that the MP wears plainly show the difference between the two social economic classes.

In this clothing the alienation of the MP is also laid bare, while his people dress in Lesos he has acquired foreign tastes he wears suits even in hot sun. He is different from his fellow Maasai's as he abandons his people's simplicity, he becomes sophisticated and this leads to his social alienation. His alienation from other human beings can explain his deeds such a serial rape and murder.

3.2. FILM SOUNDTRACK AS AN ELEMENT

Sound is another major aspect of the film that filmmakers use to allude to the thematic concerns within the film. The soundtrack of a film consists of both diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Diegetic sound is that which the source is visible to the viewer while non-diegetic sound is that which is the source is not visible to the viewer. Diegetic sound includes dialogue in the film and music whose source is visible. Non-diegetic sound includes background music, sound effects and it could also include the voice of a commentator who is not visible.

3.2.1 Dialogue

Dialogue in a film is diegetic sound the audience can see the source of it. The masses have adopted a language to express their identity or as a way to keep the closed and independent circles that they hold. The people have found a language that is proudly their own; something that distinguishes the others (rich people) from them, the Sheng language that is spoken in the slum. In *Nairobi Half Life* Mwas and the gang are prone to speaking in Sheng, their language, which is different from that of the rich people in the society. This language is spoken by people like Mwas who understand English but choose to speak 'luga ya mtaa.' According to John Mugubi and Wesonga (2012) Sheng as a register mostly draws its body of words from Kiswahili and English. However it is also

greatly influenced by other Kenyan languages such as Gikuyu, Kamba and Dholuo. The youth in NHL communicate in Sheng when in the slum; this register is changed the moment they leave the slum environment. For instance when Mwas speaks to Cedric his co-actor, he uses correct English throughout their conversation. At the Phoenix Mwas also sticks to grammatically correct English while a moment later in the slums he mouths the register of the slum, Sheng. The gang uses this language amongst themselves as a way of identifying themselves as being different from the other residents in Nairobi.

Kibera Kid which exhibits a socially alienated people also carries in it the desire of the slum people to identify themselves with a particular register. Since the whole film is shot in Kibera most of the characters, use sheng. The difference in dialogue between *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid* is that the director of *Kibera Kid* is a German national, so the characters use English more often than in NHL, since he is the writer of the script: nevertheless the characters often use the slum register as a confirmation that they recognize themselves as different, and therefore try to talk differently from the rest of the people in society. This language marks their space and excludes the others from their conversations. The Sheng as a register has both polite words and very impolite words. The gangs both in NHL and the Razors gang use impolite words, words like ‘Mag’oi,’ Makende’ these are all words that they use often this further marks their alienation. When in the slum they exhibit carelessness of speech, they do not care about manners here. Clearly language has in two languages has been used by the characters to mark their space. They have recognized where they belong in the economic class and therefore identify themselves with Sheng. This is the reason Mwas will speak English with Cedric

but stick to Sheng while in the slum. Sheng marks their alienation from the members of the mainstream society in Nairobi.

The Rugged Priest is different from the other two movies first because it is set in two villages in the Rift Valley, therefore these people although equally alienated they do not live together neither do they share a language. On the other hand Father Kaisler the major character in this film is a USA citizen and he does not manage to learn the language of the people. The poor in *The Rugged Priest* use Kiswahili and the Maasai language. Ole Shompole often mixes English and Swahili. The dialogues in these three films suggest that the oppressed have come up with their own way of speaking.

3.2. 2. Background Music

The background music is part of the non-diegetic film sound; it plays a major role in not only commenting on the action on the screen but also brings out the character's feelings. According to Dennis DeNitto *Film Form and Feeling*, 'the most intriguing roles that background music can play is to comment on the action and the characters.' Music according to Dennito can tell us whether the action on the scene is a happy occasion or not. Music can also symbolize the character frame of mind, whether happy, sad or even confused. The selected films have used the sound track to achieve various effects. *Nairobi Half Life* has an active soundtrack that has been used to allude to the theme of alienation that is seen throughout the film. The soundtrack starts the moment Mwas leaves the village en route to the city. The song played is a Kikuyu lyric that comments on what is happening in Mwas' life. The trouble that he has at home in a poor family and his desire to become an actor, something that he cannot accomplish in the village that he

lives in. The song has traditional beats maybe to later contrast it with the next song in the soundtrack.

Thai thai mathina ni maingi

(Pray pray the problems are many)

Thai thai mathina ni maingi

(Pray pray the problems are many)

Thai thai Ngai hari na Hinya

(Pray pray God is powerful)

Thai thai riuturi na moyo

(Pray pray now that we are alive).

This song seems to put across the message that the problems of the character on the screen at the moment are many and that there is need of invoking God, for he is powerful. It also says that we should pray now that we are alive. This song can be said to foreshadow the problems Mwas encounters in future in Nairobi as a youngster who is alienated from economically and socially. At this point this song also could mean that Mwas is religious and a good young man but it also alludes to the hardcore criminal that the city is going to turn him into due to his alienation and the class stratification in the city.

This song is followed by a rapped hip hop song that is in complete contrast with the former traditional beats, of the “Thai thai” song.

Walisema tukoka ocha mimi siezi ngoja

(They said I could not wait to leave the village)

Nairobi huyo mimi nakuja kuja

(Here to Nairobi I come)

Mimi naenda milango napiga hodi hodi

(I go knocking on the doors)

... kama hauna ganji basi boss noma

(If do not have money, life is going to be difficult)

This next song is a commentary on Mwas' newness in the city, it also alludes that survival in Nairobi without money is next to impossible. It alludes to Mwas' struggle to secure a job in the city. He knocks on many doors without securing a job. Therefore, this song enhances the theme of alienation by bluntly telling the audience that it is going to be very difficult for Mwas who has been robbed to survive in the city. It reminds the audience of Mwas' alienated state while he was in the village because he desired to move to the city to become an actor.

After this song the film has subtle beats in the background and music is brought back into the story when Mwas is working at the 'kibanda' as a waiter; the background song is a coastal beat called 'Ndege Ruka'. This song starts in form of a faraway cry, eh, eh, eh ndege ruka na barua mdomoni eheheh Kukururu mwana alia aje? The song itself has a soulful beat that evokes fear, feels of loneliness and suffering sign alienation at this point of the story. Mwas is being exploited by mama Akinyi, his employer; the woman gives him all kind of odd jobs. He cooks, waits on customers and washes the never reducing pile of utensils. Not once is Mwas paid and he is therefore forced to sleep in the 'kibanda'

which allows in rain on rainy nights. This song suggests Mwas' gradual dehumanization, its sounds like Mwas wants to send a letter to describe his alienated state. The song also asks how a child cries out, it could be concluded that since Mwas is a grown up and he is not expected to cry out like a baby, the song expresses his pain. It alludes to impending despair, a place where he will do anything to survive in the streets of Nairobi, his eventual psychological alienation.

In the scene where Oti is has a romantic session with his girlfriend Amina and Mwas is getting sexually harassed by one of the other prostitutes, the soundtrack is a melodramatic reggae song. This scene carries in it psychological turmoil of the girls who have decided to sell themselves as commodities in a market place. This song whose beat is loud and haphazard further highlights Mwas' confusion at being harassed by a woman for sex. He panics and for a moment he does not know what to say to the prostitute. When he regains composure he shakes the girl off. The song at this point heightens the drama and the tension in the scene especially because Oti is having sex with Amina, an act that is both violent and sensual.

Later, when the gang goes to sleep in their simple house that shows how alienated unemployed youth are, the director chooses to use musical irony. The song at the background calls for upendo and umoja (love and unity) for people of all races and color in the nation. This background song is in tune with the Kenyan national anthem that calls for people to dwell in unity, peace and liberty. According to Dennis DeNitto

One of the most intriguing roles that background music can play is to comment on the action and characters. This may be done for obvious comic effect, for example

when we view a wedding in a church and hear funeral march on the soundtrack. A comic commentary however, can be subtle (48).

DeNitto discusses the use of a musical irony to make fun or suggest the opposite of what is happening on the screen. In the case of the above case from NHL, the background sound calling for togetherness of all people of all races and tribes is ironic because the reality in the Kenyan nation as shown in this film is the opposite of the key words in the song; it is divided along lines of economic strengths and weaknesses. The state of the characters, suggest selfishness on the part of the nation. Their state also suggests its inability to take care of its youths so they roam the streets of the city jobless and hopeless. When Mwas and the other members of the gang steal, the instrumental music score is neutral- filler to the action. Copland argues that ‘music can serve as a kind of neutral background filler’ (Prendergast, 1954). The music on the scenes they steal is indifferent it almost seems to ask the audience whether these characters had an alternative out of their lifestyle.

The director has also made distinctive music score decisions to distinguish those that are alienated and those that have exploited the alienated, so that when the latter group is on the screen, the soundtrack is absent but when the alienated people are on the screen there is continuous music. This silence in these scenes where the exploiter is reverberates with meaning and emphasizes the economic alienation of the youth. While the exploited have emotions and feelings that can be underscored by music; the exploiter is incapable of feeling, the absence of music in their scenes suggests the death of their emotions. It is important to note when Waya, the two corrupt police officers and the other rich actors are on the scene, there is no background music.

Kibera Kid exhibits a short sound track just like the film itself. The music that enhances the social alienation of the slum people is a melancholic tune that communicates despair. It also emphasizes the sad and alienated state of the main character, Otieno. Apart from the melancholic tune in the background there is also the sound of the young boy rapping to his own music. The songs composed by Otieno are also an indicator of his alienated nature in fact the songs speak of his pain and the suffering he goes through in a bid to survive in the harsh slum environment. The below song rapped by Otieno but also played as background music for instance, has words that suggest his pain and his suffering.

In order to get kitu cha kumanga - In order to get something to eat

The razors crew mimi nikajiunga.-I joined the razors crew

24/7 ikawa ni kuhusstle- We hustled 24/7

To go astray thinking I am on the right way- Going astray thinking I am on the right way

Every day in the hood ni teketeke- Every day in the hood- Hurry hurry

Everyday kwa mtaa ni teketeke- Every day in the slum- Hurry hurry

This song highlights the fact that in order to survive in the slum, he had been forced to join the Razors crew. He claims that joining the crew was done involuntarily, society and the reality in his life pushed to a gang. Otieno, seems alienated from self, he lays blame on society but claims that he thought he was on the right way but he all along knew that he was wrong. This song is rapped by Otieno twice to emphasize his suffering and his need to leave the slum.

In the film *The Rugged Priest* sound effects have been used extensively to enhance alienation and alienating activities. The director, in conjunction with the sound director has used rhythmic beats that have been used in many horror and action films as background sound for danger. These sounds are fast and can be likened to heartbeats. These sound tracks are played when Ole Shompole and followers are burning down the villager's houses in Rift Valley. The same sound is repeated when the three hit men are hunting Father Kaisler; the same music is played when Kaisler races against Ole Shompole's hitmen. This sound effect is used to heighten the drama in these scenes tell the audience that there is eminent danger for the character on the screen. It also helps highlight the theme of political violence since it is a politician's hit men hunting down the defenseless in the society to kill them. In addition to creating a special ambiance for an entire film, background music can also heighten the drama of a specific scene or sequence (DeNitto, 1994:50). Therefore, according to DeNitto, this sound effect has been used to heighten the drama in the scenes where Ole Shompole is oppressing the common citizens.

3.3. CAMERA ANGLES AND CAMERA MOVEMENTS

Another important aspect of cinema that these films have used to evoke alienation is; framing camera angles and camera movement. The way a character is framed in a certain shot goes a long way in giving the impression that a director would like to convey to the audience. Camera movements can also comment on the action just like music and dialogue. The way a character is framed can clearly state his position and status in the story. The way in which subjects and objects are framed within a shot produces specific readings. The size and volume within the frame speak as much as dialogue. So do camera

angles. For instance, Golden notes that one of the first decisions that a director makes when designing a shot, is deciding how it will be framed. The main choices are close-up, medium shot, and long shot. Each has different consequences for the impression the director is trying to convey (2). According to Golden, the director chooses to use any of the shots to convey a particular message to the audience.

Nicholas. T. Proferes, in *Directing Fundamentals*, also makes a comment on the ability of the camera to tell the story.

Film is a language used to tell stories and the narrator of those stories is the camera, yes the director is the ultimate story teller but the voice she will use is that of the camera. There are six variables that a director can control with the camera, angles, image size (which affects scale and field of view), motion (up, down, tracking), depth of field (normal, compresses or deep, affected by focal length of lens and f stop), focus (selective within the frame) and speed (normal, fast, or slow motion). (40)

From the above arguments, it is clear that the camera is a narrator that can insert specific impressions into the story when deliberately used by the directors. Proferes lists down the variables that can be manipulated by a cinematographer. Camera angles refer to the camera position of the camera in respect to be character. The camera can take the high angle, the low angle or even at the eye- level angle. Different camera angles will mean and evoke different feelings from the audience. Camera motion is the movement of the camera in relation to the subject being filmed. The camera can track a character; it can pan over a surrounding or even a tilt. The depth of field in film refers to the space between the farthest and nearest object in a shot. The depth of field could either be

compressed, normal or deep. Focus refers to how clear the foreground, middle ground and background are shot. The size of an image refers to how big or small the image is; the size of the image is determined by distance of the camera from the object of interest. The camera speed is how fast or how slow the filming is done, manipulation of speed is done to expand or compress time.

The directors of the films studied in this project have used the camera work to aid in telling the story and to reveal the theme of alienation. Among the camera works utilized is camera movement, the long shot, and camera angles. The camera angles used are the high angle and the low angle. Golden posits that,

When a director places his or her camera above an object, looking down on it, the director is using a high-angle. This has the effect of making a character look smaller than normal; it emphasizes a character's weakness or powerlessness (3).

According to golden the high angle is effective to make a character, a thing or even a place look smaller and powerless. On the other low angles emphasize a character strength and size. These low angle shot are important for they emphasize the power a particular character has over the others in the film. When shot together in a film, the two angles are meaningful, they will show the power one character while the other is vulnerable. Barsam, in *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, 'The low angle is made with the camera below the action and typically places an observer in the position of feeling helpless in the presence of an obviously superior force (171).' On the other hand the establishing shot or the long shot is a shot at the beginning of a film used to establish or

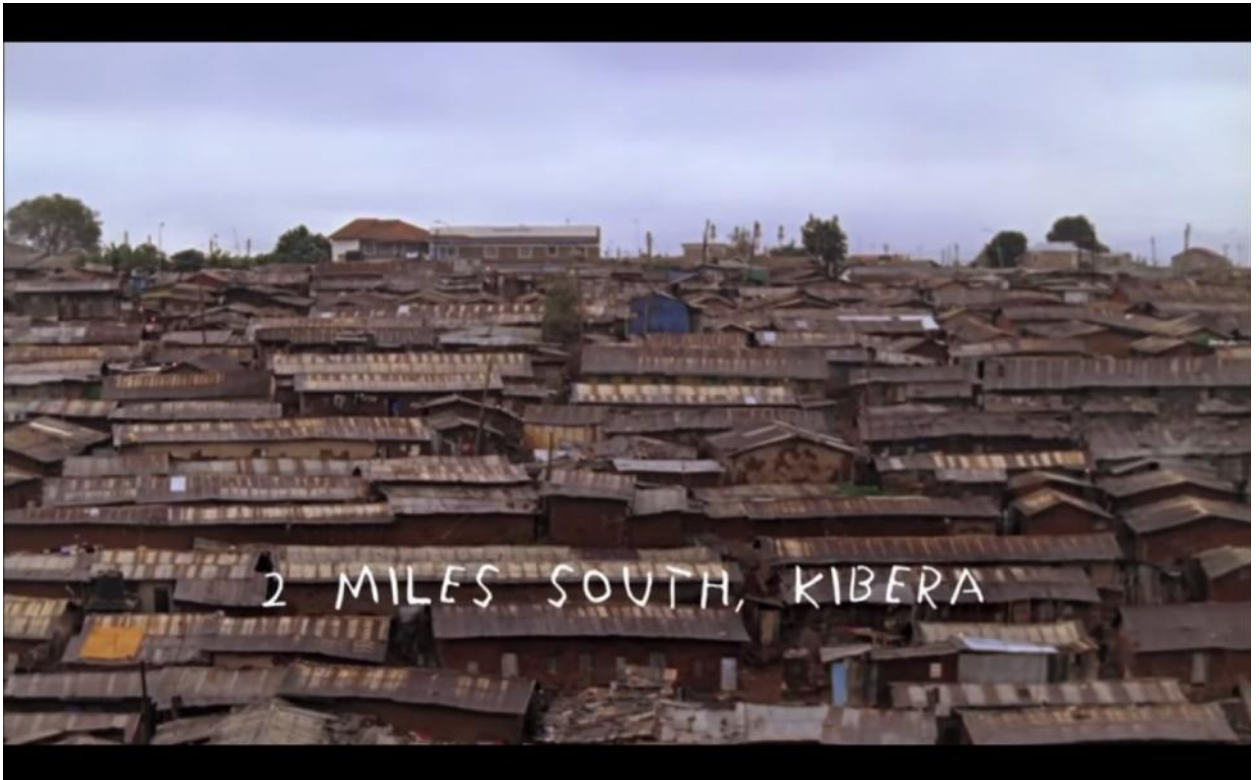
show the audience the place a particular action will take place. The Film Studies Dictionary describes it as,

A shot, usually at the beginning of a scene that situates where and sometimes when the action that is to follow takes place before it is broken up through editing. Establishing shots also make clear the spatial relations among characters and the space they inhabit.

The film *Nairobi Half Life* has used several camera techniques to narrate Mwas' alienation. The director has chosen a number of high angle shots especially when Mwas has just arrived in the city. The high angle shot helps to make Mwas look weaker and vulnerable in the huge city that he has arrived into. To the viewing audience, the high angle shot helps to enhance Mwas' confusion in the city. His loneliness in the huge city is enhanced by these high angle shots.

This high angle shot is used to enhance almost the same effects in *Kibera Kid*. When Otieno is rapping his sad song at the beginning of the film, the camera is in a high angle shot that emphasizes the fact that Otieno aka 2pac is vulnerable. At the same time the song that the young boy raps helps to reveal to the audience that the boy is socially alienated from the rest of the society. Kibera, the slum, is also introduced to the audience in a high camera angle. The children running through the slum look like insects, they are made small and insignificant by the camera angle thereby telling the audience that everyone in the slum is insignificant. The insignificance of the people in this slum helps the audience to perceive their social alienation. This helps me to conclude that all the high angle shoots that are shot to identify the slums in *Kibera Kid* mean that the director

intended to communicate to the audience that Kibera is belittled and abandoned; it lies helpless and alienated from the rest of the society. The director sustains these high angle shots in the slum as an emphasis of the theme of alienation.



A HIGH ANGLE SHOT OF KIBERA SLUM IN *KIBERA KID* (2006)



A HIGH ANGLE SHOT OF MWAS IN *NAIROBI HALF LIFE* (2012).

On the other hand, low- angle shot have been used in the film *The Rugged Priest* when framing Ole Shompole. The low camera angles exaggerate the size of the subject and make him/ her tower over the other characters. Shompole is the evil politician in the story. He is therefore shot in low angles to make him big and mighty while the other characters look small and oppressed thereby enhancing the theme of alienation. In this story the high and the mighty, as shown by Shompole take advantage of the helpless in the society. The scene where Shompole is addressing the crowd and inciting them to cleanse the Rift Valley of anyone who does not want to vote with them, his character is exaggerated, to make him appear threatening and dangerous.

The directors of the three films have also made use of the establishing shot that is used in most films to direct the eye of the audience. It gives the audience a space in which the

action that follows can take place. In these films, the spaces that are shown either identify the action going to happen as happening in the areas where the alienated people live or areas where the rich and mostly the exploiters live. The establishing shots of these films are long-range possibly to help the audience make a mental note of where exactly the next action is taking place.

In *Nairobi Half Life*, for instance, the director has concentrated on the use of establishing shots to establish the slum surrounding that Mwas get into when he goes in search of Dingo. The establishing shots have also been repeatedly used to locate space where other rich members of the society stay and hang out; for instance, The Phoenix where other better off actors like Cedric are is given a long establishing shot. *The Rugged Priest* uses establishing shots too to introduce us to the Maasai terrain as Alice is headed there. The road is rough and people have no resources here. The place looks abandoned.

Camera movements have been used as a great asset to aid the directors in the juxtaposition of the places and settings where the powerful and the mighty live and those where the poor and alienated live. *Kibera Kid* opens up its action with a pan over the clean, warm and welcoming Nairobi City Centre then the camera does a quick pan over to the Kibera slums where the likes of Otieno the main character are found. The slum is full of tin houses that are old and rusted while the pan of the city shows a well-kept environment cared for and nurtured. This contrast is a reminder of the disparities in development that characterize the land and people of the Kenyan nation, some are neglected and alienated while others are overdeveloped. In one of the young boy's song he says. "*The life that I leave sikutaka, eating and sleeping kwa takataka*". This song says that he did not choose the life that he lives eating and sleeping at a dumpsite. He

insinuates that society is responsible for the kind of life that he lives; therefore society has deliberately alienated him socially and economically.

CONCLUSION

This research project has analyzed the five forms of alienation: economic, social, political, psychological and the oppressor's alienation as presented in the selected Kenyan films *Kibera Kid* (2006), *The Rugged Priest* (2011) and *Nairobi Half Life* (2012). The economic alienation of the jobless people who lack economic autonomy is highlighted in *Nairobi Half Life*; they cannot afford decent meals, shelter or even clothing. The film depicts the struggle of these youth who roam the city without jobs. They are forced to do menial jobs that further alienate them since the pay is severally inadequate leaving the laborer in a position where he cannot afford basic needs. Labour power is reduced to wages. The gang in NHL made up of Oti, Mwas, Waf, Kyalo showcases the economic alienation of educated youth who have no jobs; joblessness makes them feel useless and frustrated to the point that they are forced to steal and even commit murder in order to survive. *Kibera Kid* exposes the economic alienation of the slum dwellers that lack opportunities to jobs, education and other facilities and this condemns them to poverty.

It is important to note that joblessness is the major cause of economic alienation in the *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid*. I conclude that whether characters are educated like in the case of *Nairobi Half Life* or uneducated as depicted in *Kibera Kid*, joblessness puts them at the same level. As long as they lack economic autonomy whether educated or not, they get alienated. *The Rugged Priest* highlights the economic alienation of the electorate where the factors of production are held by the rich and the politicians such as Ole Shompole.

The research concludes that people who are economically alienated more often than not also suffer social alienation. The economic alienation leads to poverty that makes them live together in deplorable parts of the city especially in slums as depicted in both *Nairobi Half Life* and *Kibera Kid*. These slums dwellers are then alienated from the mainstream society. Political alienation, on the other hand applies to *The Rugged Priest* where a group of people are exploited and dehumanized by the politician Ole Shompole. The Mp Ole Shompole's impunity robs the people energy to protest against being denied their rights. They feel helpless and powerless against Ole Shompole who displaces them from their land and rapes their children.

The research also noted the psychological alienation of specific characters in the films, in NHL Mwas, Moses and Amina are characters who are psychologically alienated, they have desires to be an actor, singer and a beautician respectively; however they are too poor to afford training to achieve any of them. These ambitions turn to fantasies that make them feel unfit among their peers; hence their alienation. Eventually they are caught up in the underworld, hopelessly still trying to achieve their dreams.

The research also concludes that film can successfully use several elements within it to develop the theme. In scene design the directors have cleverly established spaces of the exploiter as clean and conducive for human habitation while the spaces occupied by the exploited and alienated have no basic services such as water, electricity, toilets and other necessary services. It has also been noted in the research that the films were majorly shot on location such as Kibera slums thereby enhancing the conclusion that the alienation that is shown in these films can be compared to that of the Kenyans who actually live in this big Kenyan slum.

Sound has also been used to enhance the theme of alienation in the films. In diegetic sound that is the sound whose source one can see within the film, the directors have given the characters a language that is specific to the downtrodden. Both *Kibera Kid* and *Nairobi Half Life* have extensively used the Sheng register to identify those people who live in the slum areas who are socially and economically alienated. Non-diegetic sound such as sound track has been used to enhance the sad mood that identifies the atmosphere around the alienated people. For instance, in the film *The Rugged Priest* when the three hit men run after the old priest in order to kill him, sound heightens drama in the action in this scene thereby enhancing the theme by helping to bring it out clearly.

The other technique used is that of camera and camera movements. The directors have used a combination of low-angle and high camera angles to highlight the greatness or vulnerability of those framed in a particular shot. The politician in *The Rugged Priest* Ole Shompole is particularly constantly shot using low-camera angles to exaggerate his size and suggest that he is an exploiter who believes he is larger than life. High camera angles have been used to identify the downtrodden in the society. The high camera angles have been used to exaggerate the insignificance of these characters and the places of the downtrodden. Shots especially establishing shots have been used in the films to establish the cramped spaces that the alienated people live in. The establishing shots have been used in *Nairobi Half Life* to show the places that the gangs live, which are dirty and cramped and the same establishing shot used to expose the clean and spacious places that the rich live in.

The camera movements used in the three films include pans that have been used to distinguish the better parts of the city in *Kibera Kid* and the poverty stricken Kibera

slums. Most of the cinematic elements used are to juxtapose the environment of the haves and that of the have-nots. Costuming has been used successfully to distinguish between the rich and the poor in the three societies presented by the three films. The rich are in expensive and warm clothes while the poor wear light clothing that is torn at times for instance the character of Mwas is in a torn stripped T-shirt for the better part of the film.

This research project concludes that the selected films have been used as commentaries on the society. The theme of alienation that is seen throughout these films is a representation of what is in the real society and particularly in Kenya as a nation. This conclusion has been made because it has been noted that *The Rugged Priest* is a film that was motivated by the story of the Catholic priest, Father Anthony Kaiser, aka father John Kaisler in the film. On the other hand the entire *Kibera Kid* film was shot on location in the Kenyan Kibera slums; therefore, it is fair to conclude the social alienation exhibited in the film is what the residents of Kibera slums go through in real life. *Nairobi Half Life*, on the other, hand carries in it the social alienation that youngsters who leave the villages to go to the city in search of jobs get and how these same young people get economically alienated because they remain jobless and when they get casual jobs, these jobs fail to meet their economic needs. The film NHL also shows the economic alienation of our Kenyan youth especially women who are jobless and who are forced to sell their bodies for money; this is depicted in the character of Amina. There it has been noted that the films are reflecting what is happening in the Kenyan nation, therefore, they are narratives of nationhood.

In addition to telling the Kenyan story of alienation, the directors give hope for the masses of Kenyans who are caught up in these alienating states. In NHL the director Tosh

Gitonga, uses the play within the film to pass his main message: the rich in society need to open their eyes and see the suffering of the poor in society. Then these rich people can come up with ways of alleviating the economic status of the masses instead of thinking of only how to accumulate more wealth. In *Kibera Kid* the director Nathan Collet suggests that the only way for social alienation to end in slums is for people in the slums to get educated. It can be argued that one of the ways to stop alienation in the society is by empowering the citizens through education of everybody whether in the slums or not.

In *The Rugged Priest* the subtle message given is that people should stand against all forms of alienation just like the main character Father John Kaisler; the director Bob Nyanja also seems to give the hope that even when the alienating forces kill the voices that are raised against oppression more people should rise up and not be covered by threats or even death. This is seen in the final scene of the film where the parishioners have named their young children after Father John Kaisler. The fact that the corpse and actual death of the priest is never shown in the film; makes me make a conclusion that voices that rise against oppression can never be silenced. The children that are named after the priest are a sure sign that the legacy that Kaisler had left could not die. This suggests that although the evil politician killed Father Kaisler, more people, just like Kaisler, with the zeal to fight injustice and exploitation will rise up to stand against alienation.

Finally, the films comment on the political and social issues prevailing in the society; therefore, it can be concluded that the films are a way the director have used to speak against issues like tribal hatred as exemplified in *The Rugged Priest*, joblessness, exploitation and general alienation of the common man in *Kibera Kid* and *Nairobi Half*

Life. This research report concludes that alienation is a major problem in the society, affecting people such as slum dwellers, the youth and the electorate and that it is a concern that the selected Kenyan films have addressed and seem committed to giving recommendations on how to end it. This study being one of the few studies on Kenyan films recommends that further research should look for more solutions presented by other film makers to end alienation.

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APPENDIX 1: FILMS

A History of Film in Kenya (1909-2009). Dir. Simiyu Barasa, Prod. Joy Wanjiku.

Twaweza Communication Production, 2010.

Kibera Kid. Dir. Nathan Collet. Prod. Collet Nathan. Hot Sun Films, 2006.

Nairobi Half Life (NHL). Dir. Tosh Gitonga. Prod. Tom Tykwer. One Day Films, 2012.

The Rugged Priest. Dir. Bob Nyanja. Prod. Isabel Munyua. Cinematic Solutions, 2011.

Xala. Dir. Ousmane Sembene, Prod. Filmi Domireve SNC. New Yorker Films, 1975.