REPRESENTATIONS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN SELECTED KENYAN FEATURE FILMS BY WOMEN FILMMAKERS

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MARCH, 2023

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university

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We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the student under our supervision.

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DEDICATION

To

Dad and Mum

You ensured I got the best education and always supported me to further my studies.

Crystal

My best friend, cheerleader and mentor. You went out of your way to ensure my dreams see light of day. I remain eternally grateful to you.

And

My dear and loving family

George

Maxyne

Ethan

For your patience during the long working hours.

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ABSTRACT

This study was premised on the notion that feature films by Kenyan women filmmakers are an important part of cultural discourses about hegemonic masculinity, and has a bearing on the ways in which practices of hegemonic masculinity are understood in society. In this regard, it interrogated feature films as sites for negotiating and reconstructing norms, ideals, and practices of hegemonic masculinity in Kenya today. Using three selected feature films by Kenyan women filmmakers, the study examined representations of hegemonic masculinity and how practices of hegemonic masculinity are reconstructed in the contemporary society. It also analysed aesthetic and technical filmmaking techniques used in the representation of hegemonic masculinity and ways in which the female filmmakers reconstructed hegemonic practices thereby providing alternative modes of being in society. Connell's (2005) theorisation of hegemonic masculinity offered useful critical tools for analysing representations of hegemonic masculinity in the selected feature films, and a social framework that enabled the study to place feature films within a larger context of history and culture. In this regard, forms of hegemonic masculinity such as dominant, complicit, marginalised and subordinate were analysed. Filmmaking techniques such as casting and directing, mise-en-scene, lighting, cinematography, spectator orientation through editing and sound were examined. Findings from the study showed the contradictory and declining practices of hegemonic masculinity in the contemporary society. It is evident from the study that the female filmmakers relied on context and characterisation to spur social consciousness, advocate for social change and reconfigure alternative modes of being in society which foster self-fulfillment and satisfaction. In this regard, the feature films function as engaging and informative avenues of discussing social agency as they provide alternative pathways to emerging issues in society.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KCB - Kenya Copyright Board

KFC - Kenya Film Commission

KFCB - Kenya Film Classification Board

KIMC - Kenya Institute of Mass Communication

MCSK - Music Copyright Society of Kenya

NACOSTI - National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation

PRSK - Performers Rights Society of Kenya

LGBTIQ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trisexual, Intersex, Queer

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In this study, the following terms were used as follows:

Hegemony: Dominance of one cultural group over another. That which comes about when the worldview of the ruling class is consented to as the standard for society (Herrmann, 2017).

Masculinity: Those behaviours, languages and practices in specific cultural contexts commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine (Itulua-Abumere, 2013).

Hegemonic Masculinity: refers to the ideals, attitudes and practices among men considered standard in socity and which perpetuate gender inequality, involving both men's domination over women and the power of some men over other (often minority groups of) men (Jeweks, 2017).

Homophobia: Fright and repudiation of the female gender attributes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the contextual foundation for the study giving the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions and assumptions, justification and significance, scope of the study, review of related literature, theoretical framework and research methodology.

1.2 Background to the study

Representations of gender in creative arts, film in particular, is not a new phenomenon. Benshoff and Griffin (2004) posit that historically film plays a pivotal role in the representations of gender showing the shifting terrains of gender across time. Hegemonic masculinity is one of the issues that is portrayed in film over the years. In fact, Connell (2005) posits that films are one of the primary vehicles for perpetuating hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). They do so by performing certain actions which are in line with the societal assumptions of what is said to be masculine.

Connell (2005) conceptualise hegemonic masculinity to subsume practices that legitimize men's dominant positions and justify the subordination of the common male population and women and other marginalised ways of being a man. Since then, the concept metamorphosized severally. Hearn and Morrell (2012) consider hegemonic masculinity as a set of values established by men in power which functions and organizes society in unequal ways. Further, they differentiate hegemonic masculinity in terms of hierarchy

among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, ideals, interactions, and power. Itulua-Abumere (2013) considers masculinity as "those behaviours, languages and practices, existing in specific cultural and organisational locations, which are commonly associated with males and thus culturally defined as not feminine. Instead, masculinity is a gender identity that is produced by the social, political and cultural practices of the society. It has represented the social and cultural interpretation of maleness learnt through engagement and participation in the society (Itulua-Abumere 2013).

UNESCO (2014) conceptualizes hegemonic masculinity as a manifestation of society's ideal of how male behaviour should be and it functions to legitimize the social ascendency of men over women and emphasizes superiority of 'men' over marginalised men. Hegemony means "dominance". Contextually, hegemony is the cultural dynamics by means of which a social group claims and sustains a leading and dominant position in a social hierarchy (Morrell and Blackbeard, 2015). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity has preserved its fundamental notion that it is 'a culturally idealized form' and as a social structural concept has been applied to comprehend the masculinities that have been authenticated via social institutions and social groups.

Hegemonic masculinity is manifested in the society's cultural and aesthetic productions such as film. Connell (2005) posits that films are one of the primary vehicles for perpetuating hegemonic masculinity. They do so by performing certain actions which are in line with the societal assumptions of what is said to be masculine. Due to repeated

performances, hegemonic masculinity can suppress and marginalise women or other varieties of masculinity such as queer sexualities. Modes of representation of hegemonic masculinity in film include but not limited to characterization, language, relationships between characters, their conflict, experiences and mannish images and iconographic tools like knives, and guns among others.

Ging (2013) observes that both mainstream and art-house film have been on the frontline in portraying the fundamental changes in the acceptable performance of masculinity in the Irish Cinema. Films present how a particular society constructs gender at different times. She notes that the film industry has been proficient in reconstructing myths about manhood by presenting alternative images of the same. Illustratively, film has incorporated characters that are gay, transgendered, caring fathers and even committed homemakers. As such, film is an important part of cultural discourses about hegemonic masculinity, and can influence ways in which we understand practices of masculinity in society. It is on this basis that the study sought to examine representations of hegemonic masculinity in feature films by women filmmakers in Kenya.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

It cannot be gainsaid that feature films provide a canvas upon which forms of hegemonic masculinities are circulated, discoursed and reconstructed in society. The performance and circulation of these masculinities in film is rendered through techniques of representation, characterisation, and the symbolism of various items and objects in film. Therefore, viewers consume the ideals and practices of hegemonic masculinity as

portrayed in the films they are watching. Consequrntly, this study set out to interrogate representations of hegemonic masculinity in selected fiction films by female feature filmmakers. It examined how women feature filmmakers dexterously use film to reconstruct hegemonic masculinity thereby advocating for alternative modes of being in society. In this regard, the study analyses selected feature films as important sites for renegotiating and reconstructing norms, ideals, and practices of hegemonic masculinity in Kenya today.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine representations of hegemonic masculinity in selected Kenyan feature films by women filmmakers. Specifically, it addressed the following objectives; to:

i. Analyse forms of hegemonic masculinity portrayed in the selected feature films by women filmmakers;
ii. Examine techniques deployed by female filmmakers to foreground hegemonic masculinity in the selected feature films;
iii. Interrogate ways in which female filmmakers reconstruct hegemonic masculinity in society through feature film.

1.5 Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

i. What forms of hegemonic masculinity are represented in the selected feature films by women filmmakers?
ii. Which techniques do the female filmmakers foreground to depict hegemonic masculinity in selected feature films?
iii. In what ways do female filmmakers reconstruct hegemonic masculinity in the society through feature film?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions, that:

i. There are forms of hegemonic masculinity represented in the selected feature films by women filmmakers
ii. There are various techniques deployed by female filmmakers to foreground hegemonic masculinity in selected feature films
iii. There are various ways in which female filmmakers reconstruct hegemonic masculinity in the society through feature film

1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

This study comes at the time when discourses regarding sexualities abound not only in the country but across Africa (see Tamale, 2011). Tamale posits that sexuality is one of the issues that, for decades, has evoked varying debates in Kenya. A case in point is the on-going debate as to whether queer students should be allowed in boarding schools across the country or not. As Dina Ligaga (2020) eloquently teaches us, sexuality in Kenya is grounded on institutionalised moralities supported by existing structures of patriarchy and traditions. In part, the institutionalised moralities regulate and sanction sexual relations. Thus, the study not only catalogues forms of hegemonic masculinities but provides an understanding of the dynamic, multiple and fluid forms of hegemonic masculinities in society. It is instructive to note that this study sheds more light on the dynamics of emerging masculinities including patterns of uptake in Kenya today.

There exists a paucity of critical studies on hegemonic masculinity in Kenya, feature film in particular. A vast majority of studies available on gender focuses on representations of femininity in creative of works of art such as film. For example, Mathenge (2013) investigates character roles accorded to female characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*, a Kikuyu film and Mueni (2014) conducted a comparative analysis of the representations of womanhood in local and foreign television soap operas in Kenya. This study not only delves into this lacuna but also departs from existing scholarship by focusing on representations of hegemonic masculinity in feature film and how female filmmakers use

feature films to perform emerging hegemonic masculinities and advocate for alternative modes of being in the contemporary society.

1.8 Scope and Delimitation

In order to conduct critical analyses on representations of hegemonic masculinity, the study delimited itself to three selected feature films by Kenyan women filmmakers, namely: *Dangerous Affair* (2002); *Soul Boy* (2010) and *Rafiki* (2018) based on the selection criterial outlined in section 1.11.5. Further, the study delimited itself to the analyses of forms, techniques of representing hegemonic masculinity and ways in which the female filmmakers reconstructed hegemonic masculinity as depicted in the selected feature films. Aware of the fact that there are different viewpoints of hegemonic masculinities advanced by different scholars, this study delimited itself to the tenets of hegemonic masculinity as espoused by Rawyen Connell (2005).

1.9 Review of Related Literature

1.9.1 Introduction

Various scholars have termed hegemonic masculinity as multiple, fluid, and dynamic and that it serves the economic, political and cultural elite (Connel (2005); Herrmann (2013)}. Cognizant of this fact, this chapter reviews related literature which maps practices of hegemonic masculinity in film, techniques of representing hegemonic masculinity and critical studies on feature films in Kenya.

1.9.2 Practices of Hegemonic Masculinity in Film

Cinematic representations of hegemonic masculinity, like in other disciplines, is contested and tied not only to dominant social values but also to marginal groups and practices. Various critical studies on masculinity in film have tended to examine patterns involved in cinematic representation of men and to extricate configurations of masculinity as cultural constructs not determined by biological categories. Studies on masculinity in film emerged as a consequence of feminist film studies in the 1970s (Connell, 1988). Formative studies on masculinity in film focused on politics of representation, linking them to historical reality while often simultaneously theorizing men and masculinity showing how different cultures and different historical eras create different gender regimes, so different patterns of masculinity (Connell 2002, p.141).

In the 1980s, studies emerged showing that there are more than one form of masculinity and that masculinity is not static and eternal but it is shaped by historical realities in varying contexts. The various forms of masculinities develop different relations with each other and different power focuses and institutions, and they are represented in various forms in various cultural products (Özbay and Baliç 2004, p.92-93). Implying that masculinity may vary due to the changes in time and people (Kimmel 2005, p.25). Thus, masculinity differentiates depending on factors such as historical, class, cultural, sexual identity, sexual orientation, religion, race, and ethnicity, and as a result various forms of masculinities have emerged over time.

In the 1990s, a number of studies emerged providing diverse approaches to studying masculinity in film. Basing their analyses on Hollywood films, contributors Cohan and Hark (1993) focused on the analysis of masculinity across film genres. In the same vein, Kirkham and Thumim (1993) examines masculinity using sexuality, genre, and ethnicity as viewpoints. Using the approach of "women reading men", contributors to Kirkham and Thumim (1995) examine the portrayal of masculinity in film across European cinema such as the British, Italian, Spanish, and French cinemas. Sharrett (1999) focuses on figurations of masculinity in 1980s and 1990s popular US cinema, highlighting constructions of male heroism, villainy, madness, and suffering. Most of these studies focus on masculinity as the organising principle.

Critical studies in the years 2000s, however, show a shift to specific thematic concerns in studying masculinity in film. Focusing on films in chronological and generic categories as well as on individual films and stars, Lehman (2001) examines homosociality and homosexuality in US film, though with films from Canadian, British, and North African cases. Powrie et al (2004) examine queer screen masculinities including representations of fatherhood in major Hollywood and European stars from the 1920s to the early 2000s. Gabbard and Luhr (2008) presents an evolving theorisation of gender with a detailed analsysis of gender representation in film organised around stardom, sexuality, and genre. Engaging emerging trends in film such as performance, genre and cycle theorisations, Shary (2013) investigates constructions of masculinity in the turn of the millennium focusing on male identity, friendship, sexuality, race relations, and parenthood.

1.9.3 Techniques of Representing Hegemonic Masculinity in Film

Critical studies on masculinity in film have shown that there are various techniques used in representing hegemonic masculinity, which include but not limited to nature of characterisation, use of symbolic objects and iconographic tools {Sharrett (1999), Lehman (2001) and Shary (2013)}. Nature of characterization is viewed as one of the prime ways of depicting hegemonic masculinity. Male characters provides phallic power to real men or denies those considered less male. Indicatively, long hair is associated with manhood while baldness symbolises castration.

Use of symbolic objects and iconographic tools are important in figurations of hegemonic masculinity in film (Shary 2013). Illustratively, Ousmane Sembene's *moolaadé* exploits symbols to represent the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The character Amath, symbolises patriarchy whilst his brother Cire represents subordinated men in the conventional society. Male hierarchy in both family and community coerce Cire to publicly humiliate his wife, Colle to submission, thereby, proving his masculinity. Cire's relationships with his wives have always been gentle to the annoyance of his brother and entire community. In addition, the use of the whip symbolises violence. Amath forces a leather whip into the hand of Cire for him to whip his wife to subjugation. Conversely, Cire panics and confesses to have never beaten a woman including his daughter. Both Cire and his wife feel brutalised by patriarchy and exhibit patriarchy's obsession with power and the hierarchy of masculinity. In relation, Dipio (2008) asserts that "Manhood thus becomes a performance in a way that being a woman does not. The girl is typically encouraged to continue nurturing like her mother who is a model ready to hand while the

boy is encouraged to perform according to a 'script'... It is the manhood script that denies the emotions that are necessary for identifying and responding to needs and therefore the needs themselves. Moreover, the specific need for status comes from a society in which male dominance is replayed in many different areas" (p.155).

1.9.4 Critical Studies on Film in Kenya

Critical studies on the representation of gender in Kenyan film has been on an upward trajectory since the turn of the century. A number of critical studies interrogate various thematic concerns based on figurations of sexualities such as Giruzzi (2015), who presents a feminist approach to contemporary female Kenyan cinema while Ellerson (2010) focuses on the contribution of women in feature film production in the country. Anchored on the binary between tradition and modernity, Mukora (2012) investigates how filmmakers contest traditional practices of sexuality in society.

Discourses on representations of sexuality in creative works such as film evoke varying reactions from the general citizenry in Kenya. In the Kenyan society, sexuality is anchored on institutionalised moralities which regulate femininity and sanction sexual relations supported by existing structures of patriarchy and traditions. McNamara (2016) shows emergent practices of sexuality and culturalisation in Kenya's urban audiovisual films. Kebaya (2017) investigates how the liberal young female adult reconfigures sexuality and reinvents her voice in stifling Kenyan society. Focusing on *Rafiki*, Osinubi (2019) analyses queer subjectivities in Kenyan cinema.

The above reviews on review of related literature show that scholars approach the subject from multiple vantage points. The review has also shown the plurality of approaches used in analysing respresentations of sexualty in Kenyan film. This study, however, departs from these existing studies on Kenyan film by focusing on representations of hegemonic masculinity in selected feature films by women filmmakers. It looks at techniques used by the female filmmakers to articulate the various forms of hegemonic masculinity and how they advocate for alternatives modes of being in the contemporary liberal Kenyan society.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

This study espoused R.W. Connell's theorisation of masculinities, as advanced in his book *Masculinities*, as its theoretical framework. The first edition was published in 1995 and the second edition, upon which this research was nested, in 2005. From the onset, it is worth noting that R.W. Connell is a researcher in gender studies and specialises in the social construction of masculinities. She is a rather controversial personality and it adds to note that she was born male (Robert William Connell) but is now a transgender woman. *Masculinities* was published under the name R.W. Connell but since 2007 she has used the name Raewyn Connell in her published books.

The term 'hegemonic masculinity' has been used in gender studies since the 1980s but is theorised in *Masculinities* (2005/1995). The book consists of theoretical material as well as empirical research where four groups of men have been interviewed and analysed in relation to the dynamics of masculinities. Connell explains that "hegemonic definitions of

masculinity are based on independence, aggression, competition and the capacity to control and dominate" (Kaufman and Kimmel 1994, p.271). Moreover, he argues that the hegemonic form of masculinity is the ideal and revered one. It is not necessarily the most common form of masculinity, but it is the desirable form. Though the term 'hegemonic masculinity' is still relevant when discussing the culturally idealised form, Connell (2005, p.10) avers that we should speak of 'masculinities', not 'masculinity' when referring to how the male gender is constructed. This is because there is no universal pattern of masculinity that applies everywhere. Moreover, there are multiple ways of manifesting the male gender, its social aspects and dynamics – not just one. Segal (2007, p.xxxiv) argues that by not using 'masculinity' but thinking and talking about 'masculinities' we generate understanding of the differences between men. The types of masculinities that – according to the theory of hegemonic masculinity – coexist, are produced simultaneously and are in tension with hegemonic masculinity, are explained in chapter two. Connell (2005, p.11) reminds us that most men live in a situation where they find their identities in tension with hegemonic masculinity and the expectations associated with it. Some men may also distance themselves from hegemonic masculinity in their culture.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity is formalised by Connell (2005) explaining the term hegemony and its relations to other masculinities, which are in subordination, complicity and marginalisation. Connell (2005, p.77) explains that at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than the others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently

accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women and other men.

Since hegemony is a cultural dynamic where a group holds a leading position over other groups, we have to acknowledge these other groups and their position. Subordination is the term that Connell uses to describe these groups of men. An important example of this dominance/subordination is heterosexuals and homosexuals. Heterosexuality is considered to be part of the hegemony and gay people fall to the subordinated category. The third term used by Connell in context with hegemonic masculinity is complicity. A brief explanation for this is to say that most men are not actively and fiercely acting out the role that hegemony has set for them. Indicatively, Connell (2005, p.189) avers that majority of men take part in commercial sport only as consumers of it. Furthermore, she explains that a man is more prone to cheer for his favorite team in front of the television, passively, than playing the sport himself, actively. "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense" (Connel 2005, p.79).

The last terminology that Connell uses is marginalisation. To her, marginalisation is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group (Connel 2005, p.80-81). Connell pinpoints that huge events on television like *Oscar night* and *Superbowl* are orchestrated to affect people's behaviour. These events promote certain kinds of gender-appropriate ways to function by displaying certain examples of

femininities and masculinities. In addition, he claims that the most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are figures we constantly see in media representation, such as film actors or even made-up characters, such as the characters that were analysed in the current study. Therefore, the preferred choice of hegemonic masculinity is deliberate for reconstruction in the selected feature films that formed the corpus of this study. This forms the basis upon which the selected feature films were analysed in order to unravel ways in which masculinity is represented and reconstructed in the Kenyan society through feature film.

1.11 Research Methodology

1.11.1 Introduction

This section details the research methodology adopted in the current study. It outlines the research design, target population, sampling procedures and sample size, describes data collection procedures, analysis and interpretation of the findings.

1.11.2 Research Design

Kothari (2004) describes a research design as "a way to systematically solve the research problem" (p.8) and "constitutes the blueprint for collection, measurement and analysis of data." (p.31). Since the proposed study is anchored on a textual exegesis of the selected feature films, it adopts a descriptive research design. Kothari (2014, p.37) refers to a descriptive research design as that study which is concerned with describing the characteristics of a particular individual, or of a group. The design was guided by three (3) aspects, which formed the objectives of this study. One, to identify and analyse forms of hegemonic masculinity; two, explain techniques used in the figurations of

masculinity; and three, describe ways in which the female filmmakers reconstruct hegemonic masculinity thereby suggesting alternative modes of being in society.

1.11.3 Target Population

Creswell (2013) avers that a target population is a group of individuals or participants with specific attributes of interest and relevance for a particular study. It contains unique characteristics fit for the phenomena under study and upon which findings are generalised. The target population for this study constistuted thirty-three (33) feature films by women filmmakers which portray practices of masculinity in society.

1.11.4 Sample Size

Kothari (2004) defines sample size as "the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample" (p.56). The number of units to be included in a study constitute the study sample. The size of the sample must neither be too large nor too small but, should be optimal and should be efficient, representative, dependable and pliable. In this regard, three (3) Kenyan feature films by female filmmakers constituted the sample for this study. These were arrived at based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined below.

1.11.5 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

a) Inclusion Criteria

Patino and Ferreira (2018) describe inclusion criteria as "the key features of the target population that the investigators will use to answer their research questions" (p.84). The

criteria offers specific characteristics which allow a smaller size of the target population to be used in the study. The following constituted the inclusion criteria for the study:

i. Kenyan feature films by women filmmakers
ii. The feature films should have been produced after the year 2000
iii. The feature films should have the young male adult as protagonist
iv. The feature films have a singular focus on hegemonic masculinity
v. The feature films should fall within an eight-year (8) interval in terms of the year of production

b) Exclusion Criteria

Patino and Ferreira (2018) describe exclusion criteria as features of the potential study participants who meet the criteria for inclusion but have additional characteristics that could interfere with the success of the study. Thus, such participants are disqualified as possible targets for a study. The exclusion criteria for the study was as follows:

i. Kenyan feature films by women filmmakers produced before the year 2000
ii. Feature films by women filmmakers which fall outside the eight-year interval in terms of year of production
iii. Feature films by women filmmakers which do not have young male adult as protagonist
iv. Feature films by women filmmakers which focus on gender other than hegemonic masculinity.

1.11.6 Sampling Techniques

The study adopted purposive sampling technique in selecting the three feature films by Kenyan female filmmakers namely: *Dangerous Affair* (2002); *Soul Boy* (2010) and *Rafiki* (2018). Creswell (2013) observes that in purposive sampling, the researcher tenaciously selects individuals to study based on how they inform the understanding of the central research problem in the study. The selection of the feature films for the study was guided by the aim and objectives of this study.

1.11.7 Data Collection

a) Primary Data Collection

Kothari (2004) posits that "primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in character" (p.95). Primary data for the study was obtained from watching, "reading" and interpreting various aspects in the selected feature films by Kenyan women filmmakers. Governed by the objectives, primary data emanated from a thorough reading and interpretation of the selected feature films.

b) Secondary Data Collection

The researcher undertook extensive and intensive library research to obtain secondary data for the study. Sources for secondary data included scholarly articles, books,

dissertations and internet sources. Secondary data was used to augment analysis and intrepretations of primary data and making inferences.

1.11. 8 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used in the analysis and interpretation of data obtained from primary and secondary sources. Kebaya (2016) opines that thematic content analysis enables data identification, analysis and interpretation on the basis of themes (categories) and sub-themes that emerged from the corpus under study. Using thematic content analysis, data obtained was grouped into themes and sub-themes guided by the objectives of the study for easier analysis, ultimately, draw justifiable and valid conclusions.

1.11.9 Ethical Considerations

Creswell and Creswell (2018) admit that researchers need to anticipate some ethical issues that may arise while conducting their study since, research involves collecting information from people and about people. Based on this perspective, the researcher obtained research permits from the following bodies before beginning this research:

i. Machakos University Graduate school
ii. National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation.

1.12.Organisation of the Study

This study is structured as follows. Chapter one (1) provides a solid foundation for the study. Chapter two (2) focuses on forms of hegemonic masculinity in the feature films, Chapter three (3) examines techniques used by the female feature filmmakers to foreground hegemonic masculinity while chapter four (4) investigates reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity in the feature films. Chapter five (5) summarises key findings of the study, gives the conclusions and delineates areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

FORMS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN THE FEATURE FILMS

2.1 Introduction

As pointed out in chapter one, society continues to witness diverse situations that draw upon representations of hegemonic masculinity in the social fabric of everyday life. For instance, media is awash with reports of cattle rustling, bandit attacks and other social unrests, often carried out by disenchanted and socially excluded young men, have been at the centre of discussions on ways in which masculinity is exhibited in Kenya today. Discussions regarding the social dysfunction of men remain highly dependent on media-led reports on the problem of men in society. Many of these discussions grapple with contemporary issues facing men in society today such as unemployment, disillusionment, the decline of men in society as result of alcoholism and drug and substances abuse among others.

More importantly, what emerges from these discussions is the decline of the power of men in the contemporary society. Notably also is the shifting terrain of gender inequality in society with women taking up masculine roles. Despite the fact many of these developments are contradictory to practices of hegemonic masculinity and context-dependent (Haavind and Magnusson, 2005), there are indications that men are losing ground particularly on the eccentric practices of masculinity with more and more women in gainful employment and positions of power. An indication that the pursuit of gender

equality is increasingly gaining ground but also the realization that the lack of awareness and reflexivity of men in society is at the centre for the decline of masculinity.

Guided by objective one of the study, this chapter frames forms of hegemonic masculinity in society by unpacking how they are depicted in the selected feature films. Connell's notions that the forms of masculinity are not only inter-related but also determined by context and prevailing cultural values form the fulcrum for analysis and interpretations in this chapter. Focusing on the patterns and actors involved, the chapter examines dominant, complicit, marginalised, and subordinate forms of masculinities thereby showing that hegemonic masculinities are not only manifested in various forms but also contextual, adapting to the changing domestic and public contexts while maintaining the basic patriarchal structure (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

The chapter pays attention to transformations of hegemonic masculinity and, to an extent, men who are not able to occupy or demonstrate qualities associated with practices of hegemonic masculinity. A close analysis of how men in precarious situations within certain contexts reveal the declining nature of masculinity occasioned by the changing socio-economic and cultural fabric in society. Although focus in this study is primarily on men, the chapter shows that hegemonic masculinity is a relational concept. It demonstrates how hegemonic masculinity involves both male and female thereby showing that practices of hegemonic masculinity in society are dependent on the female gender as well. More importantly, the chapter takes cognizance of the emerging dominant female masculine in the selected feature films. Thus, this introduction has dialogically framed issues surrounding the practice of hegemonic masculinity envisaged in this

chapter. However, to fully tease out these issues, brisk synopses of the selected feature films are necessary at this juncture.

2.2 Synopses of the Selected Feature Films

2.2.1 *Dangerous Affair*

Dangerous Affair (2002), directed by Judy Kibinge, is centred around a young couple, Murags and Kui. The first act gives the viewer a glimpse into the life of the male protagonist. Murags is filmed in bed with an unknown woman whose name he does not seem to remember, an act that angers the lady. Further, his indifference towards intimacy is foregrounded by the manner in which he listens to recorded massages on a hoary telephone answering machine from his many girlfriends. The central conflict is introduced in the scene where Murags meets Kui (his wife-to-be), changing her car tyre along the road. Kui, who has just returned to Kenya, has been working as a banker in New York. She seems to be his alter-ego especially because she turns down Murags' offer to buy her drinks. Her domineering nature is accentuated more when she splashes him muddy water. Although Murags' ego is bruised, Kui's act of changing her car tyre on her own, fascinates Murags and draws him towards her as is evidenced by the manner in which he affectionately describes her to his friends over drinks later that day. He says, " Kui is nasty…awfully hot on the road…in a RAV 4" (Kibinge 2002, 00:07:07). In this scene, the viewer is provided with expository information about Murags' 'boys'. Just like him, Otile and Francis are involved in non-committal sexual relations. For one, Otile is reluctant to marry his fiancé of five years although Sophie is eager to cement their union.

On learning about Kui's "virginity" from Brenda, Murags make it his mission to deflower her within a week. However, he is not able to achieve this because Kui does not come to the tavern again. Even after reestablishing contact, Kui swears that she can only give up her "virginity" to a man who marries her. As a result, Murags, a casanova, resolves to work towards winning her heart. To bolster his chances, he cuts his drinking with his boys, stops chasing after women and changes his perspective on the role of women in men's lives. However, his change does not last long with the re-entry of Rose, his old love.

The filmmaker cuts a sharp contrast between Murags and Jimmy, Rose's cuckolded husband. While Murags is casted as an example of a dominant masculine who embodies revered masculine attributes, Jimmy is portrayed as an inadequate and insecure masculine who is forced to put up with the indiginity of his wife's public affair. Though married to Jimmy and with two children, Rose is the opposite of what is expected of a woman. Because her erotic desires are largely unattained in her marriage, she initates an extra-marital affair with Murags and takes charge of it. Her sexual aggressiveness makes her indispensable to Murags. Consequently, Murags nearly boycotts his wedding to Kui to keep Rose. His father coerces him to turn-up for the wedding, which he does with little enthusiasm.

The marriage between Murags and Kui develops cracks immediately after their wedding as Kui takes control of their home, changes everything to her liking, and controls what he eats and drinks thereby challenging his position as the man of the house. Kui's pregnancy

and arrival of their first baby drives a wedge further into the couples' strained relationship even as Murags' falls in and out of the relationship with Rose. Their secret affair is unearthed by Rose's husband, an act that sparks a series of incidents in the couples' lives. This marks the climax of the story told. While Kui moves back to her father's house in order for him to sort out her marital problems, Rose's father takes away her children as a punishment for destroying her marriage. Murags, who does not have a 'real' job, moves in with Rose as his divorce process begins. Eventually, Kui exposes her real self during a divorce meeting with Murags: smokes and confesses that she was not a virgin after all.

2.2.2 *Soul Boy*

Hawa Eussman's Soul Boy (2010), is couched on the famous Nyawawa myth among the Luo community of Kenya. The myth tells of evil spirits inhabiting the dark waters of Lake Victoria. Sometimes during evaporation, these spirits escape into the clouds and travel to the foothills of the lake. It is believed that these evil spirits bring misfortunes to a family they call on. Similarly, residents of Kibera Slum in Nairobi, the setting of the film, employ the myth to explain bodies of dead men found along the shores of Nairobi River during El Nino rains.

Eussman's film recounts tribulations of a young protagonist, Abila, as he embarks on a journey to save his father's lost soul. When Abila's father, fails to open his shop one morning due to a terrible hangover as a result of heavy drinking, he tells Abila that his soul has been claimed by Nyawawa, a strange and mysterious woman who lives at the

edge of the slum near Nairobi River. On one hand, Abila's father is constructed as an irresponsible man who subverts ascribed traditional partriachial roles of being the provider, protector and caregiver of his wife and child. He has given in to irresponsible drinking behaviour and it is during one these drinking sprees that he finds himself entangled with Nyawawa thus, loses his soul to her. On the other hand, Abila's mother is shown knitting among her fellow women to earn a living. Ironically, young Abila is forced to assume the role of his father. He must help retrieve his father's lost soul and save their family business in the long run. Therefore, Abila goes to seek help from his mother who seems unperturbed by her husband's precarious state. On his way back, Abila confronts a man, Macharia, who previously worked as their watchman. Macharia tells him that his father was strangled and dragged to the dam by the dreaded and domineering Nyawawa, who holds power over men. Equipped with this knowledge, Abila decides to trace Nyawawa with the help of a young girl, Shiku.

In the film, Nyawawa is represented by a grotesque woman with a hoofed foot wearing a blue gown. Her mysteriousness is further augmented by her solitude and claim of being many things. Though greatly terrified by Nyawawa, Abila resents her claim that only a fellow man can rescue his father's soul, "not just a mere boy" (Eussman 2010, 00:17:31). After a tussle between the two, Nyawawa gives in. She tells Abila that his father has no qualms to confront his flaws. Instead Abila has to do so. Consequently, Nyawawa assigns Abila seven tasks, which if successfully executed, his father's soul would be restored. After his last task, Abila returns home to a jovial father tending to customers in his shop, his soul has been restored, just as Nyawawa had promised.

2.2.3 *Rafiki*

Rafiki (2018), directed by Wanuri Kahiu, is an adaptation of the Caine prize-winning short story, *Jambula Tree* (2006), by Ugandan writer Monica Arac de Nyeko. The story revolves around a blossoming forbidden romance between two young Kampala high school girls, Anyango and Sanyu. Despite coming from varied economic backgrounds, the young girls develop an intense mutual attraction for each other. Their passion unites them briefly until they are discovered and separated. To ensure that they do not meet again, Sanyu is sent to England to study by her rich family. The story is told from a first-person narration by Anyango, upon learning that Sanyu is returning home years after their separation. Relieving the past in a long flashback, Anyango recounts her hopes and elevated anticipation.

While *Rafiki* retains only the schematic story, it is dramatically updated and the characters completely reconfigured. The two girls, Kena and Ziki, about eighteen years old are living in the same neighbourhood in Nairobi, have just finished high school and are preparing for university studies. Despite their homophobic environment and their fathers' political rivalry, the two girls fall in love in what is carefully disguised as "rafiki" (friend) until they are discovered. Kahiu sets their love story against the broader canvas of multiple longings for connectedness, care and nurture by probing the fabric of friendships, kinship, religious and political affiliations.

Rafiki's dramatic structure is the classical three-act-play structure. The first act introduces the main characters, Kena and Ziki, and supporting characters such as their parents,

Kena's friends Blacksta, Waireri and Mama Atim. Different relationships among characters and the central conflict, the forbidden love between Ziki and Kena, are foreshadowed in this act. The central conflict is further reinforced through Kena's and Ziki's fathers' political rivalry, and their families' different ethnic and class affiliations. When Kena and Ziki are alone for the first time on the rooftop of a building, this marks the first plot point and transition to the second act (Kahiu 2018,00:17:40).

In the first half of the second act, their friendship develops into a romance and culminates at the midpoint of the film, where Kena and Ziki spend their first night together (Kahiu 2018,00:37:24). In the second half of the second act, they experience setbacks from their family and friends because of their relationship. The animosity towards them escalates into brutal mob violence, which marks the second plot point and the transition to the third and last act (Kahiu 2018,00:54:28). In the third act, we learn about the different reactions of friends and families towards their outing and the forced end of their relationship, because Ziki is sent to London. After a leap in time, Kena hears about Ziki's return to Nairobi after several years abroad (Kahiu 2018,01:11:40). The film finishes with an open ending and it is not certain, whether Kena and Ziki get back together. Therefore, the ending interrupts the closed storytelling of a conventional three-act-structure and opens it up for interpretations by the audience.

While adapting *Jambula Tree* into film, the script writer transposed the narrative perspective from first-person into objective point-of-view, which often happens when adapting a literary text into film. In *Jambula Tree*, the story is told by the first-person

narrator Anyango and we learn about her thoughts and feelings. In *Rafiki*, Kena is the main character and we follow her as the story unfolds, yet her thoughts are not verbalized in a voice-over and only her facial expressions and actions suggest how she might be feeling. Apart from the dialogue scenes in which Kena puts her thoughts into words, the filmmaker uses cinematic techniques like mise-en-scène and music to convey Kena's feelings and emotions.

2.3 Dominant Masculinity

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) aver that dominant masculinity is the epitome of manhood encompassing all traits desired in men and is the bar which every man is expected to measure up to. Personal traits such as toughness, assertiveness, aggressiveness and unresponsive, and qualities such as paternalism, power, leadership and a higher perception of the right to comfort characterize dominant masculinity. Schippers (2007) posits that dominant masculinity is a "social position, a set of practices, and the effects of the collective embodiment of those practices on individuals, relationships, institutional structures, and global relations of domination" (p.87). It exists when "its exaltation stabilizes a structure of dominance and oppression in the gender order as a whole. To be culturally exalted, the pattern of masculinity must have exemplars who are celebrated as heroes" (Donaldson 1993, p.647).

Power and wealth form key features of dominant masculinity. Ayodabo and Amuefula (2021, p.645) observe that power pervades practices of men in African societies and that "men of varying ranks of masculinity choose diverse grounds on which to compete with

one another, using whatever resources they have, for the differential payoffs that patriarchy allows them. For instance, in the film *Rafiki*, wealth and power are played out in the backdrop of the larger society. This situation is evident in the nature of competition between John Mwaura and Peter Okemi, who are vying the same political post (Member of County Assembly) in the same locality. Of the two, Peter Okemi is richer as seen in his lifestyle and the properties he possesses. He owns a well-furnished house and the flashy SUV car that he drives epitomizes material opulence. On the other hand, John Mwaura owns a struggling business and only reluctantly agrees to join politics.

The battle for supremacy, based on wealth and material endowment, between the two men, John and Peter, clearly plays out in the election contest where each one employs different strategies aimed at outdoing the other during the campaigns. While John engages in simple acts of kindness such as giving his customers items on credit, Peter deploys exquisite roadshow campaigns throughout Slopes. Moreover, their larger-than-life posters dominate their electoral district as if the more the number, the superior one becomes. The supremacy contest is further amplified in church when the vicar introduces Peter Okemi as a special guest while John is introduced as a man of great kindness who helps the needy. Consequently, making the two men stare at each other contemptuously. The filmmaker relies on the biblical allusion in not only naming the two characters Peter and John but relying on the knowledge that at one point in their discipleship, Peter asked Jesus that who between them (John and Peter), is superior to the other. In so doing, the filmmaker plays out the supremacy contest between the two characters using well-known biblical allusion that society can easily identify and relate with.

Dangerous Affair foregrounds practices of wealth and power in the context of sex and pleasure. The male protagonist, Murags, is portrayed as an affluent man who leads a lavish lifestyle, dresses modestly, drives a nice car and lives in a luxurious apartment. The film opens with montage shots of different but luxurious hotel rooms where Murags spends out with women. Supported by material opulence, Murags uses his penis to conquer and dominate women, earning himself the nickname dog among his peers. In *The Handbook Studies on Men and Masculinities*, Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005) aver that the penis serves as "a sign of male power, assertion, and achievement, a gun to conquer the world" (p.179). To, Bourdieu (2001) "the sexual act itself is seen by men as a form of domination, appropriation, 'possession" (p.21). This is manifested in the sexual escapades of Murags in *Dangerous Affairs*. The film begins with a scene in which Murags is having a heated exchange with an already charged woman. The woman is angry because he has forgotten her name even after having sex with her. He laughs and unapologetically tells the woman to borrow his underwear since she cannot find hers. Later at the bar, Brenda calls him a dog because he is accompanied by another woman. The filmmaker shows that sex is the motivating factor in Murags quest for Kui. He bets to buy his friend, Otile, lunch in case he is fails to deflower her within a week.

Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005, p.179) observe that men are more likely to have sex whenever they "have an innate specific turn on—a little out of the ordinary—which must be met when they feel like it. This is indeed realized in two incidents during Murags' and Kui's first dinner-date where in both cases, he gets turned on by her beauty. Another scene shows how Murags comes back from a late-night drinking spree and tries to force

himself on his wife who is already asleep. He extends the same behaviour to his lover, Rose. One night after drinks, he tells Rose he needs her but does not have money to rent a room. They end up having sex at the back of his car. Therefore, Murags satisfies his sexual urges whenever and wherever he feels like it.

Another prevalent feature of dominant masculinity is paternalism which Gurevich (2008) conceptualizes as "the concept of power which combines the element of benevolence with the elements of dominance and subordination… limiting the freedom of another person by means of well-meant regulations. In this way, benevolent intentions are combined with relations of power. . ." (p.519). Paternalism endows those with power the liberty and latitude to lord their authority over their subordinates in order to promote their own selfish interests. This is evident in Ziki and Kena in *Rafiki*. Against Ziki's will, her affluent father sends her away to London in order to distance her from an already developing relationship with Kena. Peter authoritatively decides the direction which his daughter's life has to take. He, therefore, sends her to study abroad in order for the future to be realized much to the chagrin of Ziki. Kena's mother, on her part, believes that "demons" have possessed her daughter and in order to save her daughter, she decides to take her to the church where "demons" will be exorcised. In the actual sense, the two parents are conscious of the fact that their higher perception of the right to comfort is threatened and their social standing in society tainted if the relationship is allowed to blossom. They are therefore doing everything possible to forestall the relationship between their daughters and to ensure that their social standing remains intact. In *Dangerous Affair*, Rose's father takes away her children as a punishment for her

promiscuity, which destroys her marriage. In both films, the power to make decisions is blurry to those who do not have it (Ziki, Kena and Rose).

Having a higher perception to the right of comfort does not discriminate against gender but enables those with the clout to impose and wield their influence over certain norms and practices among peers and subordinates. Murags in *Dangerous Affair* discourages his male peers against forging committed sexual relationships. He argues that by doing so, they deny themselves the pleasure that comes with having sex with multiple women. In a scene at Zigz bar, Murags tells his friends that a man does not need to get married till after forty years. He then teases Otile and Suzie who have been dating for five years without committing to marriage. He tells Suzie, "A man is not your man unless you put a ring on it!" Therefore, Murags' higher perception of the right to comfort is at play as he tries to influence his friends to live a carefree life which involves binging in drinking, partying and women instead of settling down in marriage.

Amin, Kagesten, Adebayo and Chandra-Mouli (2018) argue that gender socialization practices in society have for a long time propagated unequal gender norms and play a part in shaping certain gender attitudes (n.p). Such practices accord the male gender a higher perception to the right to comfort through practices which ascribe and set certain expectations for the male and female gender as is evident in *Soul Boy*. Even at his tender age, Abila begins to show his higher perception for the right to comfort when playing the role of father during a skit, he says that it is the role of the mother to take care of the children, cook for them and do other chores in the house. As the father, his duty is to

discipline his children, and think about the future, not cleaning utensils. Although boys are socialized to become dominant masculines, when they are young, they have certain limitations due to their age. They are constantly reminded that certain practices are preserved for grown-ups. Nyawawa reminds Abila that he is too young to save his father's soul, and that it is only a grown man who has the ability to perform such an enormous task.

Kimmel, Hearns and Connell (2005) assert that gendered parents enforce gender stereotypes in the lives of their children even before they are born. These "children develop gender schemata without even realizing that the culture in which they live is stereotyped according to gender" (p.236). One such schema is the pre-natal discrimination that follows technological procedures like sonograms or amniocentesis that enable the parents of an unborn baby to determine the sex before birth. The news of an expected male child is applauded while that of the female causes disappointment, thus allows for "pre-natal discrimination" as Kimmel, Hearns and Connell (2005, p.234) highlight. Wanuri Kahiu's film, *Rafiki*, shows the excitement with which John's unborn son is announced by Mama Atim. She asks Kena if she is aware that, her father, and his new wife are expecting a son. Again, Mama Atim calls after her to remind her to share the news with her mother, John's estranged wife. Hence, children become a yardstick for a legitimate masculine father.

The filmmakers depict that those in the lower levels in the social ladder not only legitimize but perpetuate ideals of dominant masculinity. After a church service on

Sunday, John's new wife contemptuously answers Mercy's question about the sex of the unborn baby. On her part, Mercy asks her estranged husband, "You are man enough to have a son and cannot even answer me?" Mama Atim and Nduta congratulate the couple on the good news while the angered Mercy hurriedly leaves with her daughter, Kena, in tow. The jubilant news of the expected baby boy proves John as being a "real" man for bringing forth a male child as opposed to a female child (Kena) with his estranged wife. As Aurita and Huda (2020, p.617) explain, hegemonic masculinities are not only performed by those who benefit from it, but also by those who are oppressed because of it, more so women.

Amin, Kagesten, Adebayo and Chandra-Mouli (2018) posit that as boys transition to adolescents, their male peers become central in inculcating dominant masculine ideals physically, verbally or challenging each other into participating in risky activities to help them develop their dominant masculine traits (n.p). In *Soul Boy*, Bojo and his male friends challenge their counterparts from a neighbouring slum (Kambi Muru) to a game of "playing chicken" (Eusssman 2010, 00:08:57) on the rail tracks. They intend to lay on the tracks before an approaching train. The winners get to own the tracks. Although the game is extremely risky, the boys use it as a way of claiming masculine dominance over the losing team while at the same time, claiming ownership of the tracks in question.

Lehman (2001,p.54) posits that in the early years of adolescence, the male gang is crucial and the members rely on a certain activity to keep cohesiveness among members. The gang reinforces dominant masculine norms as exemplified by Bojo and his peers in *Soul*

Boy. Their gang is held together by group games such as playing cards and playing "chicken" on the rail tracks. They question Abila's friendship with a girl, Shiku. They tease them using lines from a Kenyan pop song "Si lazima tudu, tunaeza enda home na tuchill tu! / It's not a must we have sex; we can go home and just relax" (Eusssman 2010, 00:10:59). One of the boys tells Shiku that she just wants to be with Abila. To the boys, a girl and a boy can only have a sexual relationship as opposed to pure friendship.

Rogan (2015, p.56) observes that certain sporting cultures and activities not only orient men towards hegemonic masculine values but also offer the context upon which the ideals of dominant masculinity could be practiced. Male dominated sports such as football, skating and cards promote homosocial bonding among the participants. In *Rafiki*, the football team is mainly male-oriented with the exception of Kena, who the boys regard as a 'man' because she plays like a man. They recognize her masculinity and are ready to integrate her into the male-group. On the other hand, when Ziki asks the team if they could also play football with them, Blacksta declines and tells her that they could only be a distraction to the boys. Such male-dominated games form breeding grounds for socialization among men enabling them to construct their masculine identities based on male-dominated sports. Important to note is that the boys' perception to the right of comfort enables them to determine who to admit into their group or not.

2.4. Complicit Masculinity

Rogan (2015), views complicit masculinity as one which sustains, supports and upholds hegemonic practices in society. Hearn, Kimmel and Connell (2005, p.220) have shown that very few men are able to achieve the ideals of dominant masculinity creating room for other forms of masculinity which operate at the peripheral or liminal spaces, and are confined to the margins. Complicit masculines desire to be like the men manifesting features of dominant masculinity but due to their "lack" and/or "limitation" are confined to supporting, sustaining and helping dominant masculines to perpetuate their practices in society. In principle, complicit masculines perform the role of "helper" to the dominant masculines (Wojnicka 2021, 201). In other words, complicit masculinity works in tandem with dominant masculinities to control, conquer and subordinate other existing masculinities. Accordingly, complicit masculinity determines who accesses the dominant masculines when, how and under which conditions (Wojnicka 2021, p.202).

Gómez (2007) observes that complicit masculines are accomplices who not only agree on the procedures for subordination but also carry them out. While dominant masculinity establishes the rules, complicity masculines implement them. The police and Kamangu's thugs, in *Rafiki* and *Soul Boy* respectively, exemplify practices of complicit masculinity. At the police station, the police taunt Kena and Ziki about their sexuality. One of them asks, "Between the two of you, we want to know who the man is?" The question reaffirms heteronormative patriarchal practices in society which prohibits same-sex relationships. In *Soul Boy*, Abi is startled when he sees their landlord, Kamangu, accompanied by his thugs. He fears that probably his father's shop has rent arrears. And

true to his assumption, Kamangu orders his thugs to stick an eviction notice on the window of the shop demanding twelve months payment within twenty-four hours, failure to which, all the goods would be confiscated. In this regard, the thugs are accomplices working at the behest of Kamangu.

Complicit masculines constantly seek recognition, favor and appreciation from both the dominant and other masculinities. Brod and Kaufman (1994) assert that, "ideologies of manhood have functioned primarily in relation to the gaze of male peers and male authority" (p.129). Complicit men always want to display markers of masculinity so as to gain approval from other masculinities. In *Dangerous Affair*, Murags' male friends always strive to gain Murags' approval and recognition by following his advice and engaging in similar activities as him. Just like Murags claims that a man does not need to get married till he is forty, both Otile and Francis are involved in non-committal relations. Otile is reluctant to commit to his fiancé of five years even though Sophie would like to solidify their union. In order to please Murags, Otile prioritizes his studies and a job promotion before he settles down with her.

Complicit masculines are always anxious and perturbed upon noticing a change of fortune in their benefactor. For instance, Murags' friends are alarmed when they realize that Murags, their revered masculine, has lost his sexual prowess, stops over-indulging in drinking and suddenly changes his lifestyle and ceding control in the planning for the wedding. It is instructive to note that during their traditional wedding, Kui asks Murags to go slow on alcohol, later made him promise not to drink so much before their wedding. A

similar incident recurs on a dinner party with friends, she pushes away a can of beer that Murags is having. Instead, she serves him a glass of wine. Therefore, the boys are also apprehensive over his change of perspective towards women as well. They, therefore, set forth to remind him of what they had agreed before and his sentiments towards women. For instance, in a scene where Murags and his boys are organizing his wedding preparations, they are joined by a group of girls during a break. When Murags dismisses his supposed female companion, his friends tease him about abstaining yet he is not married. Francis tells him that it will be boring "having fun with the same old hag" when he is finally married. When he finally agrees to reignite sexual contact with his former lover, Rose, his friends sigh with relieve. Francis specifically exclaims, "Finally he has a conscious! Hallelujah!" This shows their complicit is only relevant if the dominant masculines keep fidelity to the agreed procedures through which subordination of other masculinities is carried out.

In sustaining dominant masculinity and keeping their relevancy, the accomplices deploy panegyrics, self-praises and hero worship of their benefactors. Brod and Kaufman (1994, p.136) notes that it is the feelings of the powerless, in this case accomplices, who make the dominant masculines to feel the power they wield. This implies that it is the collective support of the accomplices that makes the dominant man powerful. However, there are times when the dominant masculine loses the power of the accomplices as they change tune from self-praise and hero-worship to reproaches. This situation befalls Murags when he loses the faith and support of his male friends as a result of destroying his marriage. At one point, Otile tells him, "This time you went far dog" (Kibinge 2002, 01:42:33). In a

different scene at Zigz bar, the 'boys' do not come to Murags' aid when their women reject him and his lover at their table. Instead, they shrug their shoulders and stare at him coldly to show their disapproval. The friends can only approve of his dominancy as long as he gets his acts together. Their non-complicity means that power is never an individual possession, but rather a group investment and can only hold, if the group also holds.

2.5 Marginalised Masculinity

Haywood and Johansson (2017) posit that marginalisation describes the position of individuals, groups or populations outside of "mainstream society", living at the margins of those in the centre of power, of cultural dominance and economical and social welfare' (p.5). This implies that marginalised masculinity is framed through the dominant cultural logic of difference and how such processes of difference are experienced. This framing becomes apparent in the feature films where characters such as Jimmy and Abila's father in *Dangerous Affair* and *Soul Boy* are framed in reference to the dominant practices in society. Jimmy, for instance, is juxtaposed with the dominant masculine, Murags, and found to be lacking in all spheres of life. In a scene during Murags' wedding, he acts like a clown. His conduct and mannerism during Murags' wedding not only embarrassed his wife but also portray him as coarse, hence his marginality. This explains why his wife, Rose, denigrates him.

Marginalised masculinity is characterized by lack of access to social, economic and cultural opportunities and resources. Haywood and Johansson (2017) notes that due to the

lack of these essential and basic resources, marginalised masculines are faced with a wide range of issues such as high levels of poverty, low educational opportunities and poor access to health, social welfare and proper housing provision. Haywood and Johansson (2017) further opine that men may be marginalised because of their social, economic and cultural location rather than the version of manhood in which they invest and perform. This is evident in the situation that Abila's father in *Soul Boy* finds himself in. He has to raise his family in Kibera, a slum area, because that is the location where he can afford housing and provide for his family. However, he is not able to sustain his family and pay rent promptly because he spends the meager profits he makes from the shop in gambling and drinks. The tribulations that Abila has to go through are occasioned by his father's inadequacies. Therefore, in this sense, marginalisation is caused by the structural organisation of social and economic relationships that affect men.

Marginalised masculinities are deficient of heteronormative markers of authority in society such as wealth, material opulence and responsibility. As a result, marginalised men shy away or hibernate from the limelight to avoid public scrutiny and scorn. Jimmy, in *Dangerous Affair*, lacks markers of authority in society. Consequently, he prefers to stay at home, largely in bed. In one scene, he jumps out of bed after his wife has left to see off their children to school. He goes to the refrigerator and picks a can of beer and cleans a dirty spoon using the edge of his shirt before using it. Further, he regresses into heavy drinking, playing and dancing to loud music while his wife struggles to help their children do their homework. All these portray him as callous, objectionable and reckless.

Jimmy's marginalisation is rendered not only by his callousness but also his powerlessness to provide for his family. Rose, his wife, has been forced to shoulder the responsibility of providing for the family. On many occasions, she beseeches Jimmy to make himself worthwhile by looking for a job but her pleadings fall on deaf ears. Even the children are alarmed by his state. In one scene, their son whispers to his sister, "daddy is always sleeping" (Kibinge 2002, 00:12:52). This situation forces Rose to go to seek solutions to her marital problems. In one scene, Rose is shown in a company of men playing pool at Njugunas' joint while they suggest possible solutions for her marital issues. In this regard, Jimmy is portrayed as living under the shadow of his wife for he is not man enough to provide for his family.

Jimmy's marginalisation is further amplified when his virility is put into sharp focus by his wife. Rose is erotic and enjoys sexual contact more than society expects her. However, her erotic desires are largely unattained in her marriage. Rather than subserviently submitting to her unfulfilling marriage, she seeks her sexual satisfaction outside marriage. She, thus, enters into a relationship with Murags and takes charge of the extra-marital affair. Rose's sexual aggressiveness makes her indispensable to Murags, and eventually, they both break their marriages so as to stay together. Consequently, Jimmy is made to endure the indignity of his wife's extra-marital affair with Murags. When he confronts them together in a lodging, Rose humiliates him further by choosing Murags over him. This is the lowest level of Jimmy's marginalisation because he is not only inadequate but symbolically castrated.

Marginal masculinities compensate for their inability to use their power by engaging in deviant activities such as violence and deviant behaviour. Haywood and Johansson (2017) opine that because of their disadvantaged positions, socially, economically and culturally, marginalised masculines often engage in physical violence conduct and criminal activities like theft and fighting in order to exert their power. Pierre Bourdieu lists physical violence (especially in acts of revenge), as the first and foremost duty of a 'real man' (p.51). In *Dangerous Affair*, Jimmy physically assaults his wife, Rose, on the first night she spends out with Murags. He not only results to violence when he tries to beat his wife to submission when she spends a night out at her lover's house but also avenging her inability to recognize him as man enough. Moreover, he exposes his inadequacies as man as he does not possess the power to restrict his wife's movements and particularly her association to Murags, her lover. He, therefore, opts to continuously stalk and watch over her when she goes to work.

Marginalised masculinities overindulge in alcohol, drugs and substance abuse as a coping mechanism for their deficiencies. Roger Horrocks (1994) observes that though alcohol is a masculine affair, masculine social pressure such as social status in society has exacerbated and reinforced risky drinking behaviours among men. Risky drinking is witnessed among marginalised men who feel vulnerable and use alcohol to suppress their emotions and feign normalcy. Jimmy and Abila's father in *Dangerous Affair* and *Soul Boy* overindulge in alcoholism to hide their inadequacies. Staring at the eminent closer of his shop as a result of accumulated rent, Abila's father in *Soul Boy* drains himself in alcohol. He only regains his sense after Abila has rescued his soul. Unable to withstand

humiliation from his wife Rose, cuckolded husband, Jimmy, spends most of his time drinking and dancing to hide is emotions and vulnerability.

2.6 Subordinate Masculinity

Bruce (2010) claims that subordinate masculinities occur when some of the characteristics attributed to idealized masculinity dislodge from the male body-type that society and culture privilege. Rogan (2015, p.33) characterizes subordinate masculinity as effeminate as it lacks the authentic masculine ideals and therefore, perceived as inferior to the reigning masculinity. This is evident in Blacksta, in *Rafiki*, who not only has difficulties in expressing his desire for Kena but breaks down on learning that Kena has no desire for heterosexual relationships. He does not fathom the fact that Kena openly turned him down yet he has stood with her throughout her tribulations.

Blacksta is a more ambivalent subordinate masculine. On the one hand, he joins Waireri in making fun of Tom, the gay character, though without using insulting words. On the other hand, he wants Kena to become his wife and cares for her even after her involuntary outing. There are two scenes in the film where Kena and Blacksta spend time together alone. This section delves deeper into these encounters, because they tell a lot about the subordinated Blacksta. After Ziki and Kena had an argument about secretly holding hands during church service, Kena sits alone outside and seems pensive and melancholic (Kahiu 2018, 00:46:57). Blacksta arrives on his motorbike and asks her if she is okay. Kena slightly shakes her head and looks down. But she does not need to verbalize her feelings because they understand each other without words and Blacksta

does not dig deeper. Instead, he invites her for a ride on his motorbike to relieve her of the stress. When Kena gets on the motorbike, the soft non-diegetic song “Nita” by Njoki Karu plays in the background creating a dreamy atmosphere. Consequently, the song can be understood as an ambivalent foreshadow to Kena’s grappling with her own future and Blacksta’s dreams of a future with Kena as a wife.

Another scene shows Kena and Blacksta seated on the top of a hill watching the sunset. The lighting is dominated by the colour purple and creates a romantic atmosphere. A close-up of Kena’s face is followed by a close-up of Ziki’s face, who turns her head in slow-motion and smiles at her. In a reaction shot, Kena mentions: “I wish we could go somewhere where we could be real” (Kahiu 2018, 00:48:51). At this stage, Blacksta turns his head towards Kena with a confused look on his face and asks: “Real aje tena? (What do you mean ‘real’?)” (Kahiu 2018,00:48:55). Forced back to reality, Kena plays it down and the two continue sitting silently next to each other. Much remains unsaid between them with the silence covered up by the song “Nita”, playing in the background.

Blacksta’s last appearance in the film is towards the end, when Kena visits Slopes after she has heard about Ziki’s return (Kahiu 2018,01:13:36). A wide shot shows Blacksta and Waireri engaged in a conversation beside the street. Kena enters the frame on a motorcycle, which drops her and leaves. She does not live nearby anymore and has distanced herself from her old life and friends. Kena greets the two from afar and in a medium reaction shot of Blacksta, he seems nervous and biting his lips, but tries to play cool and answers her greetings. All these aspects show his subordinate masculinity.

Subordinate masculinities are controlled and subjugated by other masculine practices. Kamangu, in *Soul Boy*, exhibits attributes of subordinate masculinity. He cannot be able to carry out his orders to his tenants without enlisting the services of his gang. His safety and wellbeing in the slum is dependent on his gang. Also, the survival of his businesses in the slum is sustained by his gang. This observation is in tandem with Bruce (2010)'s postulations on manifestations of subordinate masculinities in society. Bruce avers that subordinate masculinity exists in a hierarchal structure comprising subgroups upon which masculine ideals are performed and meted out. In the subgroups, there are members who are high up in the hierarchy while others are at the lower level of the hierarchy. This explains the kind of engagement that exists between Kamangu and his gang.

Subordinate masculines are depicted as malleable, vacillating and naive. According to Bruce (2010), concepts of maleness and masculinity have been shifting over time. Due to the changing socio-cultural environment, idealized phallocentric practices have lost their social privilege as more and more men lose their phallic authority, maleness and cultural identity. As a result, men take new forms of masculinity such as subordinate masculinity. This situation is evident in the demeanor of Kui's father in *Dangerous Affair*. Besides keeping no boundaries, Kui helps foreground her father as a subordinate masculine. During her marriage negotiations, Kui tersely interrupts a serious conversation between her kinsmen and her husband-to-be by first, planting a kiss on her father's forehead before pulling him out of the conversation. She holds her father's hand as she leads him away, an act which leaves Murag's mother and aunt baffled away. While introducing him

to Murags and his friends, she keeps caressing and hugging him. The father is a feeble subordinate masculine who is overpowered by his strong-willed daughter. He does not rein in or reprimand his daughter over her skimpy dressing. The traditional woman is expected to dress modestly and preserve her body wholly for her man. Therefore, any form of exposure goes against societal expectations and is always rebuked. Kui dresses in a skirt and a crop-top which exposes a good part of her waist and stomach. Consequently, Murags' mother describes her as one who has no shame and the kind that does not listen to advice. She feels that her son is getting himself in trouble by marrying a woman as such. Therefore, Kui's father's waning authority and subordination is evident throughout the film.

Subordinate masculinity is characterized by the lack of external attributes that are acceptable for attracting women, often considered as being unable to perform masculinity. Connell (2005) posits that subordinate masculinity is manifested in society in the dominance of heterosexual men over homosexual men. She adds that this act of domination is much more than a cultural stigmatization of homosexuality or gay identity. Gay men are subordinated to straight men by an array of quite material practices. Tom, in *Rafiki*, is a subordinate masculine. For instance, when Waireri insults and shoves him at Mama Atim's shop, Tom does not reiterate in any manner. Haywood and Johansson (2017, p.27) observe that men in dominant positions use verbal slurs and harassment to authenticate their power over subordinated men. Waireri does not miss out an opportunity to verbally insult the alleged homosexual Tom. He uses the derogative term *shoga* (faggot) to address him and jostles him whenever he passes by (Kahiu 2018,00:05:00). In

another scene Waireri endorses physical assault against Tom and makes fun of him (Kahiu 2018,00:36:53). Tom experiences verbal and physical violence from other men because he is gay. This shows how masculinity and sexism are interwoven structures of oppression in a heterosexist patriarchal society.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to examine forms of hegemonic masculinity as depicted in the selected feature films. Using a character approach and guided by Connell's theorization of hegemonic masculinity as a starting point, the chapter has shown how the female feature filmmakers have used various characters to portray ways in which forms of hegemonic masculinity such as dominant, complicit, marginalised and subordinate are manifested in society. Consequently, characters like Murags in *Dangerous Affair*, Peter and John in *Rafiki* are portrayed as dominant masculines while Murags' friends, the "boys", in *Dangerous affair* and Kamangu's thugs in *Soul boy* are portrayed as complicit masculines. Jimmy and Abila's father in *Dangerous Affair* and *Soul boy* respectively are depicted as marginalised while Blacksta in *Rafiki* and Kui's father in *Dangerous Affair* are shown as subordinate masculines. The feature filmmakers rely on various social and cultural contexts to foreground masculine practices in society as exhibited by the characters.

The next chapter examines techniques deployed by the female filmmakers to represent hegemonic masculinity practices in the feature films.

CHAPTER THREE

FILMMAKING TECHNIQUES IN THE SELECTED FEATURE FILMS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined forms of hegemonic masculinity in the selected feature films by women filmmakers, which included dominant, complicit, marginalised and subordinate masculinities. It showed how the female filmmakers have used various characters in diverse social contexts to divulge different types of masculinities in their films. Guided by objective two, this chapter investigates techniques deployed by the female filmmakers to foreground various forms of hegemonic masculinity in society. The techniques are broadly categorized into aesthetic and technical techniques as analysed in this chapter. The analysis of filmmaking techniques in this chapter is premised on the understanding that filmmakers rely on a combination of capabilities, knowledge and technical expertise in feature filmmaking in order to foreground the forms of hegemonic masculinity in their films.

3.2 Aesthetics Techniques

These comprises visual representation of elements in film such as set, lighting, casting, props, costumes which are utilized by the filmmaker in a particular scene of a film in order to achieve the intended impact or meaning to an audience.

3.2.1. Directing/ casting

Casting is a pre-production process that entails choosing the right characters to fill the character roles in the story within a film. A director's success lies on the choice of his/her

cast and the ability to bring out the roles the characters represent in the film. Casting is significant because having the right actors meets a filmmaker's vision while a miscast role destroys a character's authenticity and believability, which could be detrimental to a filmmaking process. Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier (2013) opine that a director must look beyond the characters' given qualities and dwell on that which mobilizes and challenges them (n.p). For example, in *Dangerous Affair*, Murags' internal need is to conquer as many women as possible while his external objective is to assert his masculinity and gain the approval of his male counterparts. This forms Murags' through-line or super objective, which he pursues throughout the film. At the beginning of the film, he is filmed with different women, however, as the story unfolds, we get to know that his obsession over the female protagonist's virginity forms the driving force for a hot pursuit.

In *Soul Boy,* the protagonist's through-line is to retrieve his father's lost soul, which has a bearing on all the decisions he makes as the story develops. If Abila fails to achieve his objective, the consequences are grave. Both his father's life and their family grocery shop are at stake. As Rabiger and Hurbis-Cherrier (2013) state, "characters become motivated when the objectives are imperative and the stakes are high" (n.p). Hence, Abila must make a bold decision; to face the dreaded Nyawawa, who is the only solution to his problems. Noticing Abila's anxieties, Nyawawa quickly asserts herself by first intimidating him and using metaphors in her speech which Abila cannot comprehend. She then assigns Abila tasks that must be accomplished before dawn.

To hold the audience's attention, filmmakers create obstacles that frustrate characters from achieving their objectives. The characters are compelled to devise ways of surmounting these obstacles in order to achieve their goals. Creating obstructions to a character's objectives forces them do something about the situation they are in through actions. And it is through these actions that their true nature is revealed. Still, choosing to do nothing about the obstacles tells us something about them. For instance, Kena and Ziki in *Rafiki* are faced with challenges which threaten their relationship. Instructively, Kena steps up to steer and pull the relationship together. Hence, on one hand, Kena embodies masculine ideals of independency, decisiveness and perseverance, while Ziki pulls back and becomes docile.

Every character has an idiosyncratic manner of speaking which defines him or her. In *Rafiki*, the first appearance of the allegedly gay character, Tom, is introduced in sexist terms evident in Waireri and Blacksta's vocabulary and syntax:

> Waireri: Unaangalia nini wewe shoga? / What are you looking at you faggot?
> Kena: Cheki, anakuumizaje? /Look, how does he concern you?
> Waireri: Manze, ananiumiza nikifikiria kile ye hudo. Wee unadhani Sir God ametulia tu akicheki wanaume hapa hivi wakimangana haga? / He hurts me whenever I think about what he does. Do you think God is ok watching while men have anal sex?
>
> (Kahiu 2018, 00:05:18)

In this dialogue, Blacksta and Waireri indirectly tease Tom of leaving his "girlfriend" cooking for him at his house. When Tom looks at them, Waireri insults him in a derogative term, Shoga/faggot, a term used widely to refer to homosexuals. Then he

openly expresses his disdain for the manner in which they derive their sexual pleasure (anal sex). Haywood and Johansson (2017) state that men in the dominant masculine position, use verbal harassment to authenticate their power over subordinated men. Additionally, Haywood and Johansson (2017) posit that "using feminine categorizations, such as being called a girl or homophobic nicknames, is often part of this form of harassment" (p.27). Thus, Waireri and Blacksta use name calling strategy to marginalise Tom due to his sexual orientation.

Kibinge deftly withholds expository details about her female antagonist in *Dangerous Affair*. Towards the end of the film, we learn that Kui was not a virgin as she had made us believe when she first met Murags at Zigz (Kibinge 2002, 01:41:18). At the beginning of the film, Murags eavesdrops on Brenda and Kui's conversation at the bar. He concludes that Kui is a virgin and the knowledge becomes his super-objective in the subsequent scenes. The filmmaker leverages Kui's virginity to control Murags. To motivate the exchange of exposition, Kui uses her backstory as revenge against her estranged husband when they meet to finalize their divorce (Kibinge 2002, 01:46:52). The director makes this scene interesting by incorporating both action and dialogue: Kui takes out a cigarette, lights it and begins smoking. Murags is shocked but Kui responds: "Nasty habit I picked up in New York." Then she scornfully blows out smoke and continues, "All to pop a virgin. Now that's something to laugh at" (Kibinge 2002, 01:47:09). Here, Kui attacks Murags' internal objective (her virginity). To undercut his sexual potency, she proceeds to toss to Murags and says, "Here's to the lousiest lay I have ever had in my life." Hence,

Kui tries to destroy Murags' manhood by aiming at both his inner objective and the external objective.

3.2.2. Set Design and Lighting

Lewis (2014, p.81) posits that set design forms a significant part of the design scheme because they allow the filmmaker to use imagination, creativity and skill to recreate the larger real space in which the film's story takes place. Thus, film directors have a role in creating set designs that realize their vision and address the needs of the script heightening the reality of the film. The set of the opening scene in *Dangerous Affair* portends a personal space (Murags' house) as seen in an elaborate establishing sequence. The establishing shots takes the audience on a tour of Murags' house commencing from the dining to the bedroom through the corridor and bedroom. To create contrast in the set, the interior is alternated with the exterior to contrast the feeling as illustrated in another set, (Kibinge 2002, 00:02:29). The scenery created in the establishing shot creates a cool and quiet mood associated with a palatial residential home. Natural lighting has been used to reinforce a natural ambiance created by a green landscape consisting of well-trimmed hedges and reeds. Both the interior and exterior architecture and furnishings lend a degree of realism to the film and locate it in the modern times.

The set design at Zigz bar establishes an authentic milieu while simultaneously producing detailed version of a lavish and exclusive joint. The camera pans from the bar counter to the centre where revellers are seated around tables drinking the night away. The central

area locates Murags in the company of a woman and other friends. Another shot shows Rose and male friends playing pool at a corner. The audience can tell the time of the day (night) because a low-key light has been used to illuminate the setting, therefore, creating a relaxed mood. This set also epitomizes material opulence on part of the revellers and has been re-created throughout the film to underscore the context on which Murags and his peers produce their masculinity.

The filmmaker in *Rafiki* creates a romantic set accentuated by multicoloured candles matching the white, pink, blue and yellow colours of the strips printed on the adjacent bedsheet (Image 1). Using a variety of colours symbolizes the intertwinned lives of queer sexualties in the country. Additionally, candles are a source of lower temperatures as they make the colours in the set warmer, thus, a friendly environment for a romantic mood. The romantic scene is located in an abandoned van where Kena and Ziki hide, away from public surveillance in order to express their feeilings for each other.

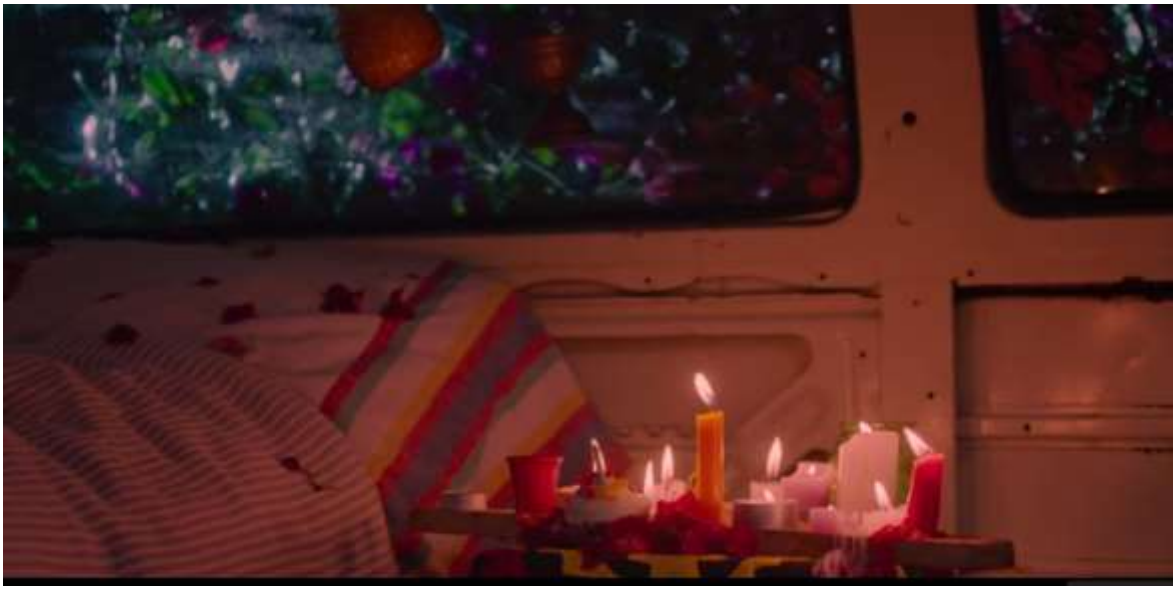

Image 1: Romantic set in the abandoned van

The following scene is set in a public playground at night (Image 2). It displays the scene where Ziki and Kena are smoked out of their hide-out (van) before being flogged by a mob. To foreground the danger that awaits Kena and Ziki, the set is shot using a low-key lighting (half-lit and half-dark) in what Lewis (2014) refers to as chiaroscuro: a lighting technique that "exploits gradations and variations of light and dark in an image'' (p.77). The filmmaker achieves this technique by relying on an illumination of top street lamp, situated at a distance and a lantern lamp available at the set to alternate between light and darkness. Sometimes the filmmaker lights the two girls' faces to direct the viewer to read their helplessness in the middle of a dark and unforgiving homophobic world.

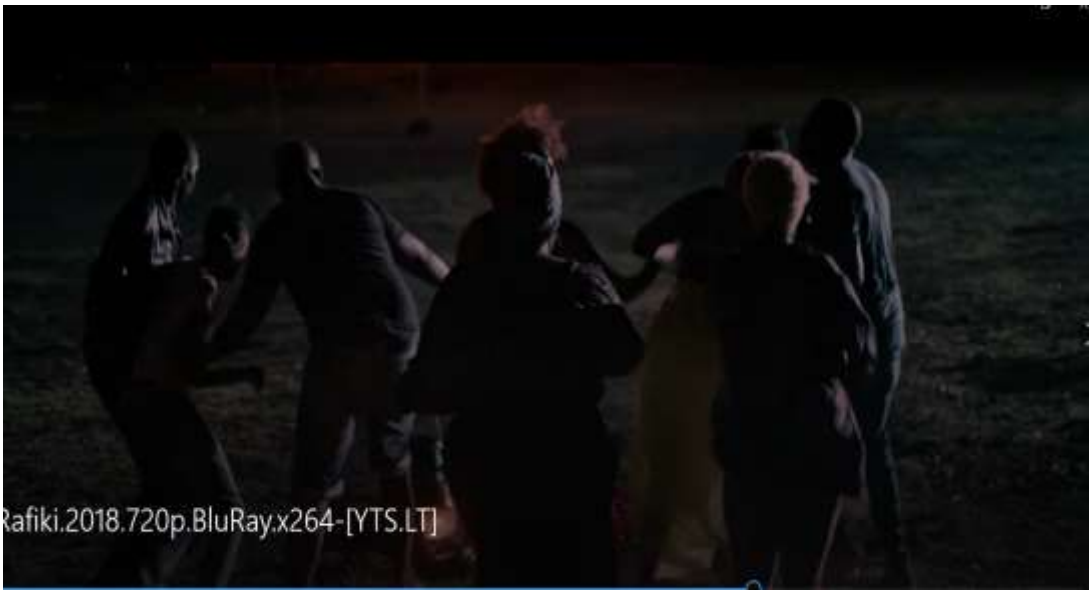

Image 2: A night scene at the public playground

In the scene at the police station, Kena and Ziki sit at a distance from each other as illustrated in the two-shot frame below (Image 3). It draws the viewer to the difference between the two players. Although hurt and wounded, Kena seems determined to get

closer to Ziki. Ziki, on the other hand, seems dejected and afraid. She remains unmoved by Kena's gesture of trying to get closer to her, probably to comfort her. Moreover, the blue walls of the police station and the fluorescent lighting create a cold tone symbolizing the cold treatment that the injured girls are met with at the police station.

Image 3: Two-shot frame of Kena and Ziki at the Police Station

In *Soul Boy*, the filmmaker works with motivated light from wall crevices and holes in the roof of a dark shanty to create the intended setting of poverty and deprivation. In the set, Nyawawa is positioned alone in the middle of the frame of a full shot and is illuminated by a single top-lighting to highlight some of her grotesque features such as hoofed foot. Darkness loomes over most part of the set directing the viewer's focus to the strange, isolated character in the shot and the sinister atmosphere ellicited.

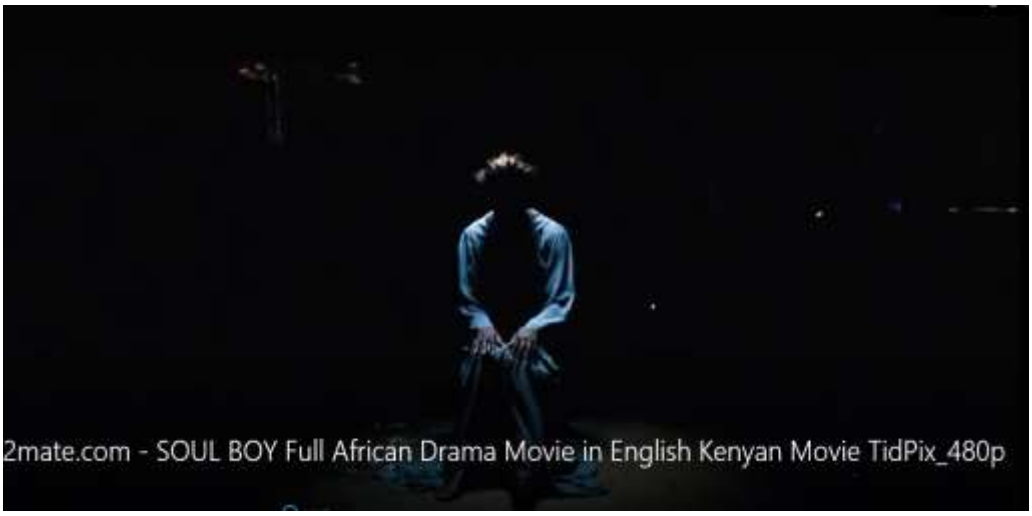

Image 4: A full shot of Nyawawa in the middle of the frame

As Abila, approaches her, the viewer can notice how his face is partly lit exposing two shafts of light reflecting from the eyes. The same is replicated on Nyawawa's eyes. The filmmaker incorporates fantasy (the hoofed foot) with realism to create an eerie atmosphere that is still enhanced by Nyawawa's metaphorical expressions. The atmosphere, coupled with Nyawawa's expressions reinforces fear in Abila.

In another scene, the filmmaker creates a pleasant view of grandeur, extravagance and precision resulting from a blend of exquisite items on the set (Image 5). The yellow seat covers compliment the golden colour of the walls, floor and dining table therefore creating a warm and relaxed atmosphere suitable for a family dinner. In addition, the walls are fitted with fine paintings to reinforce affluence. The white feathery carpet matches with white sofa set covers in the rest of the room to signify precision and reverence. The room is lit by soft, warm light emanating from many angles: an over-head bulb provides the key-light, the fireplace together with the side lamps staged at the peripheries of the room act as practicals.

Image 5: An Affluent set in Mr. Brian's House

3.3. Props, Costume, and Make-up

3.3.1 Props

Once the set design has been completed, the filmmaker can put final touches to the set by placing objects known as props that match the design sketches. If used appropriately, props can tell a story. The opening scene in *Dangerous Affair* shows how strategically props have been used to narrate the story. The viewer only needs to follow the camera as it pans through Murags' house. The first shot locates empty liquor bottles placed on the dining window before closing in on other empty beer bottles on a stool and on the floor of the bedroom. Then the viewer is directed to a torn condom wrapper deliberately placed at the edge of the bed. Next, the camera captures a man and woman's shoes and clothes lying on the corridor and bedroom floor before introducing the viewer to a two-shot of a couple in bed. The audience can tell that the couple in the room has been overindulging in alcohol and sex. The three significant props: liquor bottles, torn condom wrapper and scattered clothes are symbolic of the hedonistic nature of the male protagonist, Murags.

While alcohol has been associated with dominant masculinity, it can also symbolize weaker masculinities. For example, Jimmy in *Dangerous Affair* exhibits low regard for the importance of work. He prefers to stay at home taking beer and watching television. One scene (Kibinge 2002, 00:13:59) shows him taking a can of beer from the refrigerator after his wife and children have left home, and in another scene (Kibinge 2002, 00:23:42), he sits on the kitchen counter, beer in one hand as he sways to the rhythm of the music from his earphones. When his wife jilts him, Jimmy results to alcohol to drown his sorrow. Thus, alcohol functions as an outlet for his failing masculinity.

In *Dangerous Affair,* different props have been used to bring out contrastive denotations. Rose is shown reading a book entitled "Codependent No More" while her marginalised husband dances to loud music next to her (Kibinge 2002, 01:01:01). A wedding photo of the two is placed on stand just behind the couch on which Rose lies. Casting the two props simultaneously projects the two characters' status. As is evident from the book Rose is reading, the two are worlds apart and cannot depend on each other for their emotional, psychological, economic and sexual wellbeing.

Kibinge and Wanuri use cars as symbols of mobility and to underscore dominant masculinity in their films. In *Dangerous Affair*, both the protagonist and antagonist own cars. Murags uses his car to guard and maintain his status in society while Kui's RAV 4 car is used to depict both her affluency and social standing. Similarly, in Kahiu's *Rafiki*, Peter Okemi's flashy luxury SUV symbolizes material abundance while at the same time functions as a strategy of intimidation on Okemi's political rival, John Mwaura. In one

scene the SUV car is strategically packed opposite Mwaura's struggling business (Kahiu 2002, 00:16:43) and at the police station, Okemi and his wife pick up their daughter using the car. On the other hand, Mwaura is not shown with any car in the entire film. Therefore, the filmmaker draws an economic distinction between Okemi and Mwaura, two men contesting for power and hegemony.

3.3.2 Costume, Make-up and Hair

Another critical aspect of mise-en-scène is the physical appearance of the actors to mirror the characters they represent on screen. Lewis (2014, p.67) notes that a character's social status, occupation and attitude can best be understood by looking at their costumes, make-up and hair. The filmmaker begins with the actor's physical appearance before transforming them into fictional characters through costumes, make-up and hairdo.

In *Rafiki*, the filmmaker reconstructs Kena as a masculine character. She dresses her in shirts, trousers, caps, male shoes and styles her hair to express her masculine orientation. After she meets Ziki, she adjusts her colour scheme to incorporate that of Ziki's in order to portray her growing affection for her. On their first date at Uhuru Park, she puts on a baggy yellow top, a pair of jeans and a pink cap that match Ziki's skirt and magenta hair. Ziki, on her part, wears a black sleeveless top with an inscription that reads, *"Bad News"*. The inscription could probably describe Ziki's sexual orientation as it is a subversion of the heteronormative practices revered in a society (Image 6).

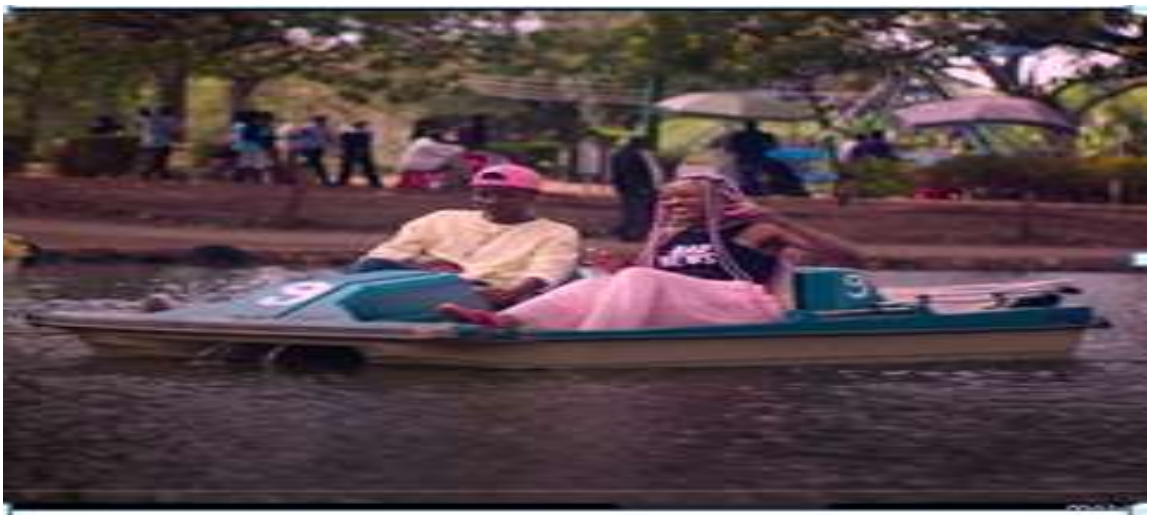

Image 6: Shot of Kena's and Ziki's appearance at Uhuru Park

During the night out, Kena wears a cap designed with a blend of blue, purple, pink, white flowers to match with the Ziki's hair extensions. She also knots her hair with a similarly coloured fabric. The deeper their affection grows, the more it is reflected in Kena's dressing. For instance, after the couple fights while at church, the proceeding shot captures Kena alligned to the right side of the frame to mirror her dejection and desolation (Image 7). The collar and breast pockets of her white shirt are made of "kitenge" fabric with patterns of green and purple to represent the conjoined lives of Kena and Ziki (Kahiu 2018,00:49:26).

Image 7: A medium shot of Kena's readjusted dressing style

Nyawawa, in *Soul Boy*, wears a long blue robe such that the viewer can only see her face, hands and feet. The blue colour of her robe is associated with the colour of the sky when reflected in water. Furthermore, long robes are often associated with spiritual people such as priests and wizards (Ojiambo 2019, p.95). And because the original Nyawawa myth among the Luo people is drawn from Lake Victoria, Nyawawa in *Soul Boy* is similarly linked to Nairobi Dam located at the periphery of the slum. Thus, her robe together with the hoofed foot make her seem supernatural and powerful over unfaithful men who desire her. For this reason, Abila fears that his father has also lost himself to the Nyawawa and so she is the only one capable of saving his father's soul.

Interestingly, the male protagonist, Abila, wears a faded green shirt, blue jeans and sandals from the beginning of the film to the end. He only changes his shirt when he visits a rich white family in Karen where his aunt works. And he does that, on Madam

Claire's orders. His appearance corresponds with the kind of treatment he receives when he boards a matatu to Karen. The matatu tout asks him:

> Tout: Have you got money for fare? It's forty bob. *(Abila offers him half the price.)* That's only twenty. It's forty bob! Ever taken a share taxi before kid? *(*And when Abila asks to be dropped off at his destination, the tout tells him) First you pay only twenty bob, now this? You are not making any friends, get off!
>
> (Eussman 2010, 00:31:07)

When Madam Claire sees him, he asks Abila's aunt to have him take a shower and wear one of Amy's shirts, thus, indicating a shift to his current affluent context. On his return to the slum, he puts on the same faded green t-shirt, representing an economically strained context. His unchanging appearance in the film, thus, mirrors his marginalised status. A similar description fits the thief in the film. As shown in full shot below, he wears a faded black trouser, and filthy, oversize t-shirt (Image 8).

Image 8: Shots showing the physical depiction of the thief

In the medium shot, the filmmaker shows his natural features: dark skin, smoky deep eyes, fat lips, sharp nose and ears, to give him a thug-look as he desperately tries to

search for a place to hide from the angry mob. In the two shots, the thief cuts a flown imagine of a helpless grown masculine who not only struggles to regain his lack of power through criminality, but also, depends on a young boy, Abila, to save his life.

To epitomize his affluent state, the protagonist, Murags, in *Dangerous Affair*, meticulously dresses in custom tailored suits, his face always clean-shaven and his hair perfectly done. Thus, the filmmaker uses enhancements to highlight his good looks. In the first scene, the viewer is taken through Murags' morning routine: showers, brushes his teeth, shaves his beard, puts on perfume, dresses up in suits and matching ties before leaving to work. However, he transforms depending on the context and time as depicted in the beer-parties with his friends. In these events, he is filmed mostly in long khaki pants and checked shirts. Murags falls into a category of men that Hearn, Kimmel and Connell (2005, p.282) refer to as, "the New Lad", who is constantly conscious of his physical appearance. His sophisticated look, thus, functions as an identity marker for an upper-class youth masculine.

The antagonist in *Dangerous Affair*, Kui, is almost always skimpy dressed (Image 9). The following shots capture Kui's mode of dressing during two of the most significant occasions in her life.

Image 9: Shots showing Kui's Skimpy Dressing style

The first shot is captured when Murags' kin meet Kui's to ask for her hand in marriage to Murags. Kui is in a sleeveless crop-top that displays her belly-button and a long skirt with a thigh-high slit at the back. Murags' mother and aunt express their disdain for the bride's manner of dressing. Murags' mother says, "My son is in trouble. […] But the way she looks, she looks like one of these girls who never take advice from anybody. Look at the way she is dressed, like a street girl" (Kibinge 2002, 00:26:15). The society already judges Kui as rebellious based on her mode of dressing. The second shot is from a scene capturing Kui's and Murags' ruracio (traditional wedding ceremony). Although dressed in a traditional attire, Kui's dress exposes a good part of her thighs. We expect her to cover her body from her parents and in-laws as well, but she does the exact opposite. In both shots, Kui subverts all societal expectations on a married woman and instead, expresses her masculinity by dressing the way she deems fit.

In the same film, Jimmy is mostly dressed in clothes that mirror his marginalised social status. The close-up in (Image 10) is extracted from a scene where he wakes up after his wife and children have left in the morning. The scene captures him in a blue flowered short and an old baggy beige t-shirt inscribed: IT TOOK ME 30 YEARS TO FEEL THIS GOOD. The words highlight his docile attitude in a better portion of the film. Additionally, there is a conspicuous brown stain on the upper front part of the chest. His unkempt hair and beard, further, accentuate his slovenly appearance corresponding with a carefree existence in which Jimmy dwells in.

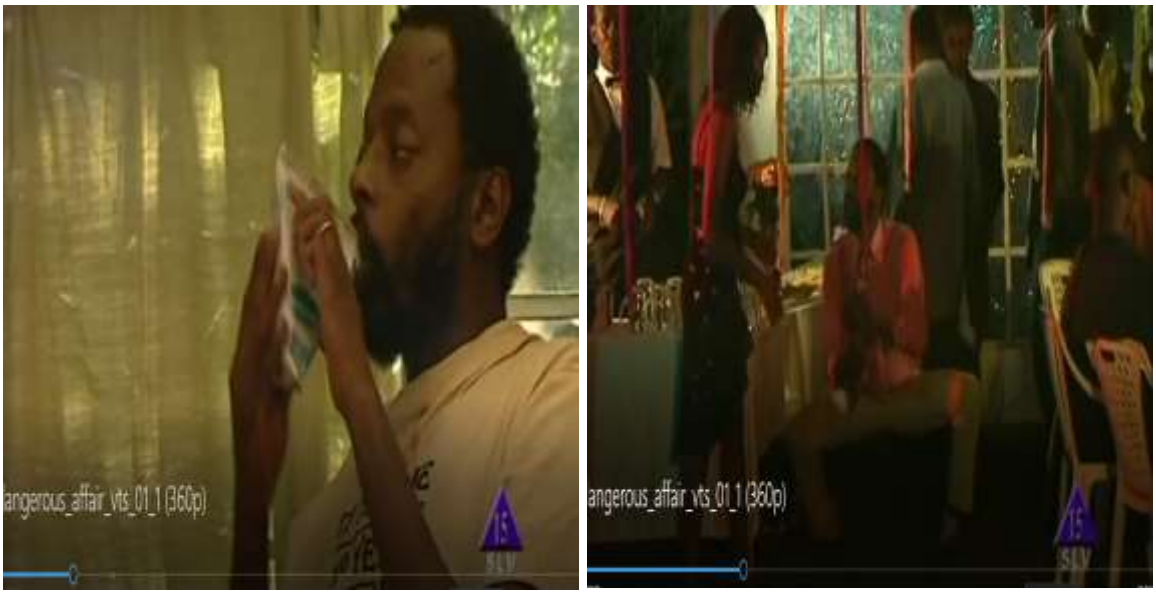

Image 10: Shots of Jimmy's Dressing Style

In the second wide shot, Jimmy seems out of context by his physical appearance. Although it is a night party, he is dressed in khaki trousers, a creased pink long-sleeved shirt and an un-matching tie. A conspicuous contrast can be sited between Rose, who is dressed in a dinner dress, and her husband Jimmy in this shot. His costume, coupled up with the outrageous dance moves, make him appear clown-like.

The filmmaker in *Rafiki* deploys make-up and hair design to bring out the image of Tom, the gay character (Image 11). He styles his hair backwards in neat rows to achieve a feminine-like look. The shirt tights around his chest allowing the viewer to notice his skinny body. Tom lacks the mesomorphic body type revered and admired by a majority of men. A fresh scratch on the left arm and a white bandage on his cheek indicates a possible assault probably due to his sexual orientation. It also symbolizes the humiliation that the marginalised and defenseless homosexuals face in a hostile homophobic society.

Image 11: A medium shot of Tom

3.4 Cinematography

Brown (2016) defines cinematography as an act of "taking ideas, words, actions, emotional subtext, tone, and all other forms of nonverbal communication and rendering them in visual terms" (p.2). Thus, cinematic techniques are methods and skills used to

enrich the meaning conveyed by the composition in a film, which include shot composition, camera angles and frames among others as analysed below.

3.4.1 Shot Composition, Camera angles and Frames

Shots are the building blocks of any scene in a film. Meanings can be derived from different shot angles, heights and types (Hunt, Marland and Rawle 2010, p.119). Brown (2016, p.60) notes that shots are the visual language of a film that the audience can be able to relate to. In addition, he classifies shots into two broad types: first, framing shots- these determine how much should be contained in a frame. Second, function shots - determined by the purpose they project during editing. The female filmmakers have utilized a variety of shots depending on the purpose and to portray the intended meaning in a given scene.

The female filmmakers have deployed establishing shots in the three films. In *Dangerous Affair*, the director gives an elaborate establishing sequence that begins from a dining window all the way to the bedroom. The sequence proceeds to give a view of the clothes and shoes scattered on the floor of the bedroom and corridor and then returns the viewer to a two shot of a man and woman in bed. Establishing wide shots are used in this case to show one of the several contexts in which the protagonist, Murags, performs his dominant masculinity through sexual pleasure.

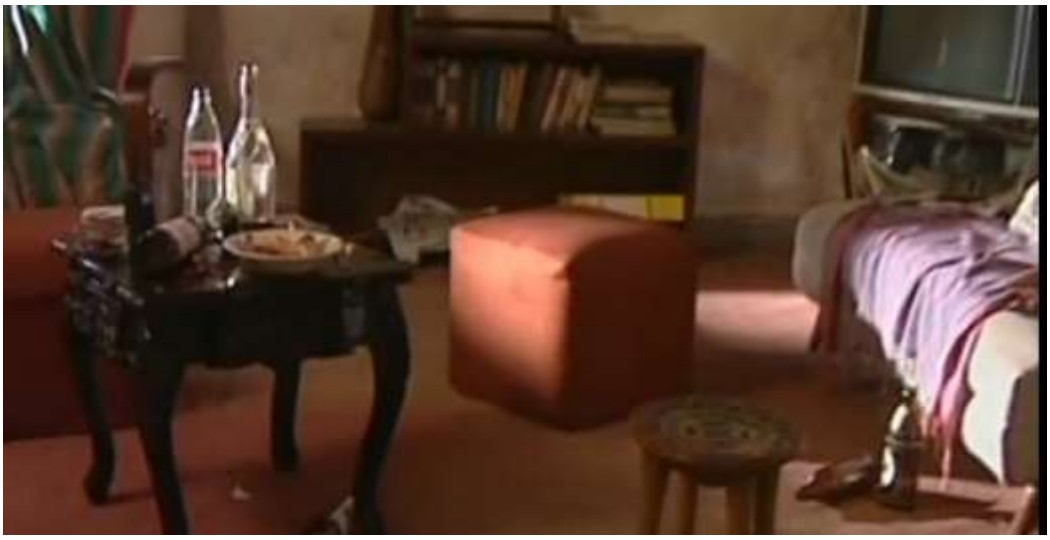

Image 12: A wide shot of Murags' bedroom

In *Soul Boy*, the filmmaker uses a combination of high angle and deep focus technique that according to Hunt, Marland and Rawle (2010), involves "keeping objects and characters from the foreground through the background in sharp focus" (p.106). The result of this technique is a shot wide and long enough to establish the context in which the male protagonist, Abila, performs his masculinity (Image 13).

Image 13: An establishing shot of Kibera Slum

The wide shot captures the slum houses at the forefront while the audience is still able to see Abila running to a far-off place at the background of the shot. Because of the depth of field, the viewer is at liberty to focus on any part of image that contains dramatic moments that may add layers of meaning in the interpretation of the scene. For instance, the poor housing facilities characterized by haphazard metal sheeting, overcrowding and a dirty environment shown here, are symbols of the poor economic status of the slum occupants. Haywood and Johansson (2017, p.5) observe that a lack of access to economic, social and cultural opportunities and resources is connected to a marginal status. Thus, men in Kibera Slum such as Abila and his father, may be marginalised due to their social, economic and cultural context.

Brown (2016, p.63) argues that close-up shots are one of the most important shots in the visual language of film because they place the character in isolation, away from the setting. Therefore, the audience can easily read their emotions without the interruption of the setting itself or other objects located within the obliterated background. Close-ups are widely utilized in the three films. In *Soul boy*, Eussman uses close up to show Abila's father's face as he helplessly lies at a corner of his shanty (Eussman 2008, 00:03:21). The close-up shows Abila's father as a dejected and frail man, unaware of his surrounding (Image 14).

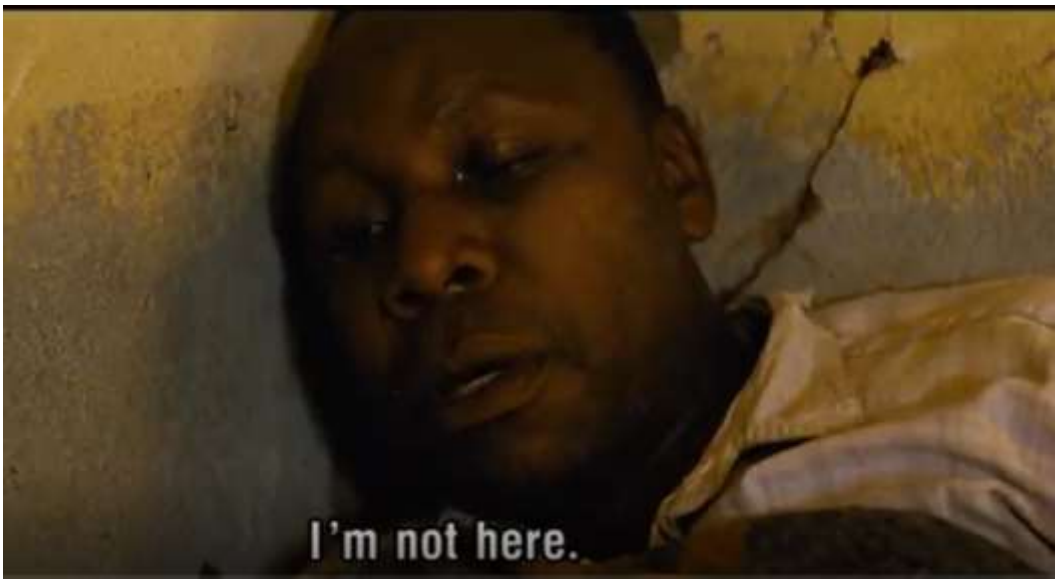

Image 14: A close-up of the face of Abila's father

Brown (2016, p.61) observes that close-ups that display a character's reaction towards what is said or something that has happened in a scene are referred to as reaction shots. In other words, a reaction shot shows a facial expression or body language portrayed by a character. In *Soul Boy*, a medium close-up of Abila when he meets Nyawawa, reveals the protagonist's perplexed face at the sight of the grotesque feature before him (Eussman 2008, 00.16:31). The camera cuts from Abila's frightened face and closes up on the feet of Nyawawa. It lingers there momentarily for the audience to notice the hoofed foot, thus, providing the viewer with a subjective view of what the character is seeing. The hoofed foot elicits a feeling of fear and subjection on Abila, therefore marginalizing him.

In *Dangerous Affair*, when Murags first sees Kui changing her car tyre, a medium close-up shot is used to show his amused face at the spectacle before him. The camera then slowly tilts upwards to her exposed thighs and then face. Thus, the audience sees Kui through Murags' eyes as he lusts for her (Image 15).

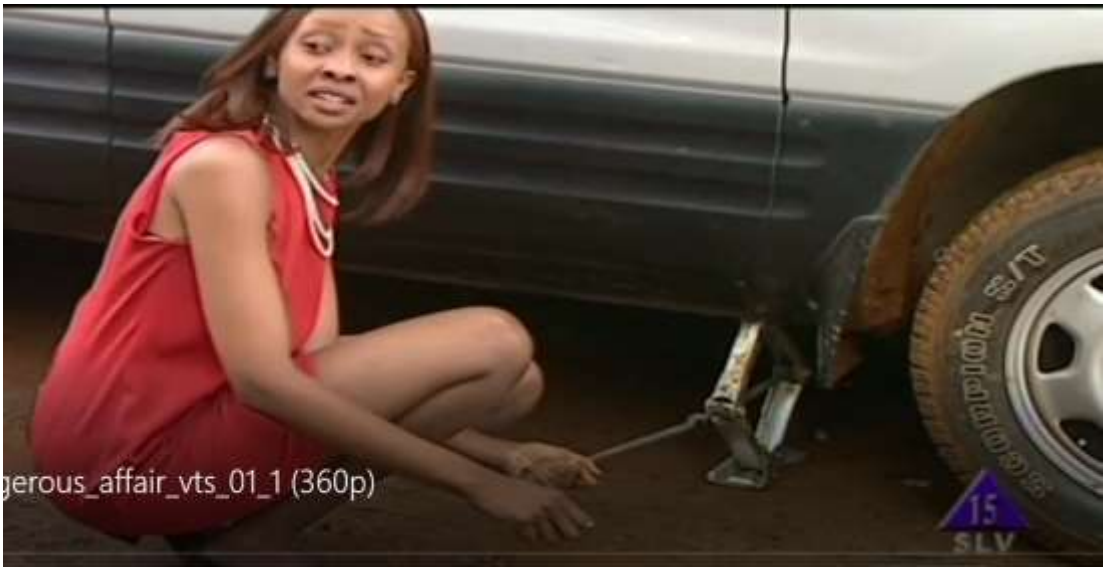

Image 15: A medium close-up shot of Kui changing a tyre

Using a a variation of a close-up shot known as over- the-shoulder, involving looking over the shoulder of Kui to a medium close up of Murags, the filmmaker shows how Murags lustfully scans Kui from bottom to top, back and forth as he sizes her up. The variation ties the two characters and places the viewer in the position of the character being sized (Kui). When she notices Murags staring at her, she asks:

> Kui: Aren't you gonna help me out?
> Murags: I have never seen a woman change a tyre before.
> Kui: There's nothing a man can do that a woman can't!
> Murags: Am sure there're a lot of things you can do.
> Kui: What did you say? Back off you creep!
> (Kibinge 2002, 00:03:27)

Connell (2005,p.169) asserts that sex role notions determine how a character is formed. Therefore, women have been socialized to dependency. That a woman will always depend on a man, and if she makes it out on her own, she is considered queer. In the above dialogue, Murags is amused by Kui's ability to change a car tyre on her own, while

Kui equates her abilities to those of a man. Murags' masculinity is threatened when Kui turns down his offer to buy her a drink. Shockingly, Kui splashes him muddy water as she speeds off leaving him embarrassed before his subordinate staff who have been spectators throughout the entire scene.

At the Zigz bar, Murags recounts his encounter with Kui to his friends, Otile and Francis, who are amused. The filmmaker once again employs over-the-shoulder shots to describe the relationship between the characters in the frames. Murags, has been deliberately positioned at the centre of his two complicit masculine friends. The director places the camera at an eye-level angle enabling the audience peer directly onto the eyes of the characters. In the conversation, he acts as a model exhibiting a desirable quality that his mates wish to possess.

> Murags: Am telling you, I really met this really nasty woman today. But she was…
> Otile: Awful hot? In bed?
> Murags: No! on the road.
> Otile: Oookay…In the day?
> Murag: Yeah, broad daylight. In a RAV 4.
> Otile: Ooooh, you dog!
> Francis: Bwana hi five for that!
> (Kibinge 2002, 00:03:27)

In *Rafiki*, Kahiu uses close-ups and selective focus to pull Kena and Ziki out of their surroundings in the van where they shelter from rain during a football match (Kahiu 2018, 00:25:08 and 00:25:17). The filmmaker blurs the background so that the players at

the forefront become prominent. Using an eye-level shot, the viewer is drawn into their eyes. Consequently, making the viewer feel a growing affection between the two girls.

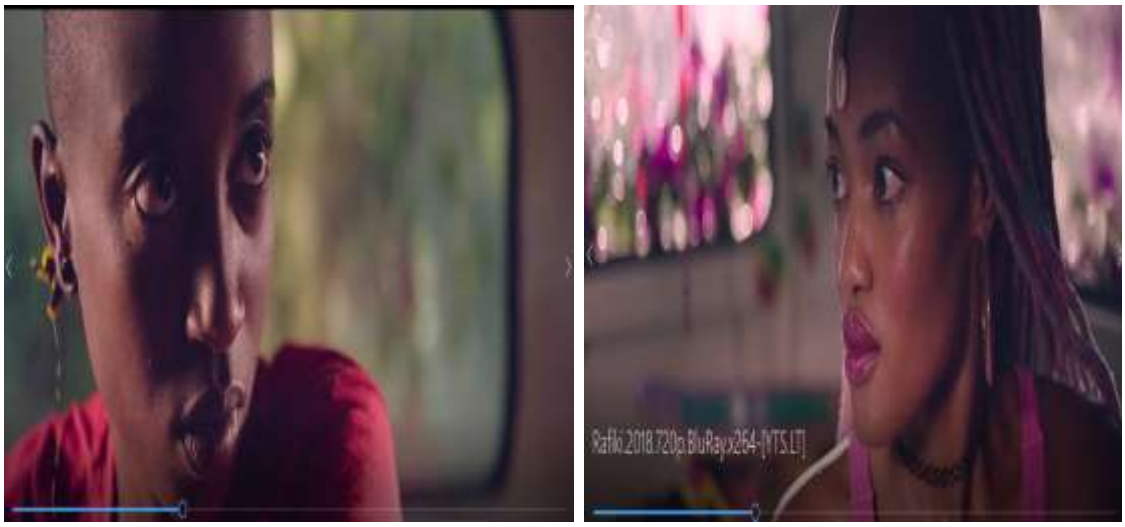

Image 16: Eye-level shots of Kena and Ziki

In *Soul Boy*, the filmmamer utilizes a three-shot frame to show the two parents trying to save their daughter from chocking (Image 17).

Image 17: A three-shot frame of Mr. and Mrs. Brian

The audience can deduce a situation of helplessness from the facial expressions on the couple's faces. Mr. Brian's masculinity is brought to question as a result of his inability to save his daughter as expected of a father. Additionally, the shot is taken from a high angle to emphasize on the helplessness by diminishing the characters against the background. The two are looking up (from a disadvantaged position) at another character, Abila, who has come to their aid.

3.5. Spectator Orientation through Editing

Editing as a critical element in a film's communication process has the potential to direct the viewer's attention towards a certain aspect in the film. This is achieved through the way shots are carefully put together in a controlled and regulated way by a series of techniques that permit the spectator to put the pieces together like the pieces of a puzzle. Editing beats long take and deep focus photography through the changes in view point implied by differences in the shots in order to ensure that the spectator can follow and take part in the action. This is based on the fact that the whole idea in composing a particular mise-en-scene is to include or orient the viewer as much as possible to the intended meaning of a scene.

The filmmakers of the films under study have a role of directing the editor to organize certain shots in a film in a such a way that the audience's attention is drawn to certain aspects and meanings associated with them. In *Rafiki*, the filmmaker uses the 180-degree rule of continuous editing during a confrontation between Ziki and Kena outside the church during a sermon. The 180-degree rule comes in handy in scenes featuring conversations, forcing the editor to cut back and forth between the characters involved

(Lewis 2014, p.132). According to Lewis, the axis of action is drawn between the characters in a scene and the camera stays within the half circle in front of the axis when filming. The rule upholds spatial continuity in a given sequence. The first shot establishes the spatial relationship between Kena and Ziki and the objects in the scene. We are able to notice the sign board announcing the church and also another character (Nduta) walking into the background space of the frame. In what Lewis (2014) terms as shot-reverse-shot, the subsequent shots alternate between Kena and Ziki as they argue about displaying affection in church. The introduction of Nduta into the frame, represents a throughout-societal surveillance on queer sexualities.

In the scene where Kena and Ziki make out for the first in the abandoned van, the ambience, through the shots, is carefully arranged so that the audience fully understands that the two will eventually make out and this happens when we hear the sound of kissing and soft moans. The editor treats us to a wide shot depicting a romantically decorated space. Brightly lit multi-coloured candles placed alongside a cupcake. Next is a neatly spread bed decorated by purple hibiscuses. Then back and forth reaction shots of the two girls sitting side by side follows. As soon as Ziki picks up the cupcake, a parallel montage sequence begins. The editor cross-cuts between Ziki biting into the cupcake and close-ups of the two kissing and making out in bed. The jump cuts become arrhythmic because they produce noticeable skips between shots. The action on the screen does not synchronize with the sound of the soft moaning accompanied by heavy breathing. Hunt, Marland and Rawle (2010) posit that "Art can be subversive and it is often in breaking the rules that the artist makes his or her trade" (p.149). Thus, the filmmaker, here, breaks

the rules of continuity editing in order to immense the spectator into the intimate world of the queer sexualities where time and space do not count.

In *Soul Boy*, shots are arranged in a way to evoke fear in the scene depicting Abila's encounter with Nyawawa. First, we see a full shot of Abila looking at Nyawawa followed by a close-up of what he is looking at: Nyawawa'a hoofed foot. Next, follows a cut to Abila's perplexed face. As Abila follows Nyawawa to her hide-out, he is captured in poorly lit frames to imply danger. When he finds her, a medium close-up shows the shinning pupils of his eyes while the rest of the frame remains dark. A full shot of Nyawawa lit by a single light from above comes up. The subsequent shots cut back and forth between Nyawawa and Abila. Not only do we turn to each character as they converse, but also get reaction shots of Abila and at one point the camera closes up on Nyawawa's hoofed foot again. In another shot, her long unkempt nails are shown, emphasizing her strangeness further. Whom the editor chooses to show us in this scene is significant. Nyawawa's foot is given prominence in order to instill fear in both the character and the spectator.

Eussman uses an eyeline match to show us Abila spying on the rich white family having dinner. This editing formula first shows us Abila peeping at the doorway and then the next shot reveals to us what he is looking at (Image 18). The eyeline match to what he is looking at; Mr. Brian's family settled for dinner. We can read disbelief in his face such that it seems as though he has discovered something- that there is a gulf between his world and the current world of the rich.

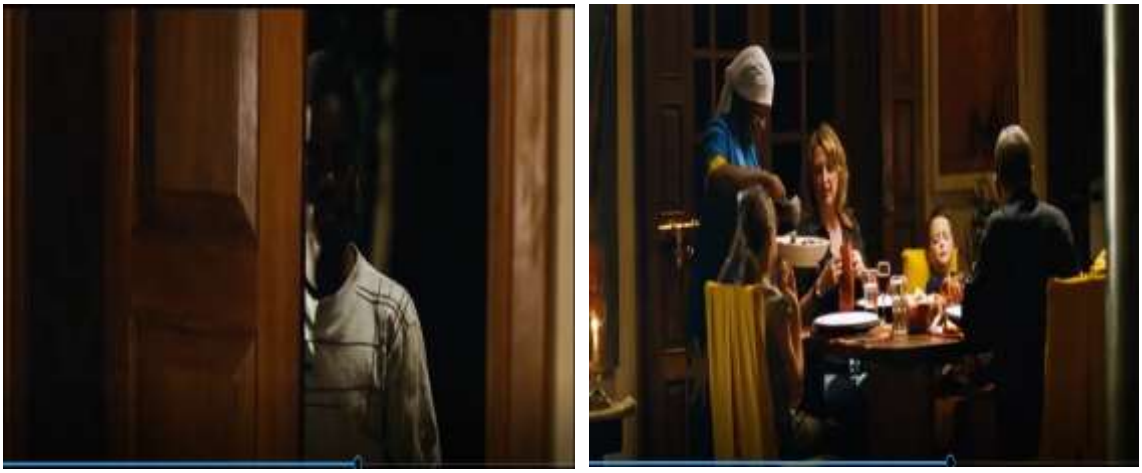

Image 18: Shots of Abila's eyeline match peeping at the doorway

Another subsequent pair of shots show a change in Abila's gaze. The first medium close-up shot shows Abila's startled face gazing. The payoff comes when we see a subjective shot of Mr. Brian trying to save his choking daughter. Abila confirms that even if their worlds are gulfs apart, common mannerisms such as choking cuts across. He also notices Mr. Brian's helplessness in this scene. The two sets of shots give the viewer access to the character's point of view while at the same time maintain spatial continuity by use of eyeline matches.

Eussman introduces an insert of the solar system while filming Amy's room (Eussman 2008, 00:42:29). Brown (2016) describes an insert as "a tighter shot of a detail from the larger scene" (p.9). The filmmaker uses an informational insert to reveal some information that she needs us know- a model of the solar system with the sun at the centre. When Abila lays on the couch in Amy's room, we are provided with a shot of him staring up at something, an eyeline match shows us a shot of the solar system hanging down from the ceiling board. Here, the solar system is linked to Abi's change of fortune.

According to Nyawawa, Abila is required to watch out for symbols of the sun to guide him solve his problems. The act of saving Amy, besides rewarding him with enough money to save his family's grocery shop, also leads to acquisition of self-confidence as he is able to overcome his fears. Thus, he actualizes his masculinity in a different context. Instructively, the presence of Amy in this scene, is to show that she is linked to the cyclic nature of Abila's destiny.

Although most films use the cut to transition from one shot to the next, filmmakers can use alternatives to the cut to move the viewer from one action, character, place or time to another. Judy Kibinge uses fade outs and fade ins in the establishing sequence of *Dangerous Affair*, to orient the spectator about her male protagonist in the film. To emphasize Murags' dominant masculinity, Kibinge uses overlapping editing technique to capture Murags and Kui's first date at Zigz bar (Kibinge 2002, 00:15:09). A single sequence in this scene, is shown and reshown multiple times. First, a medium shot of the couple dancing comes up before the camera tilts upwards to an over-the-shoulder close-up of the two. The later shot ties Murags and Kui together as a couple. Next, we are provided with a close-up of the musician then a wide shot of the couple in the middle of other revellers. The camera keeps alternating between the musician and the couple on the dance floor. In another scene, a wide shot taken from a high angle is used to provide the viewer with an expository shot which is in a club and importantly, one of the contexts upon which Murags' masculinity thrives (Kibinge 2002, 00:15:36). In Kibinge (2002, 00:16:06) a medium close-up is framed using a dutch tilt taken from a low-angle. Here, Murags stares down into Kui's face as shown in Image 19:

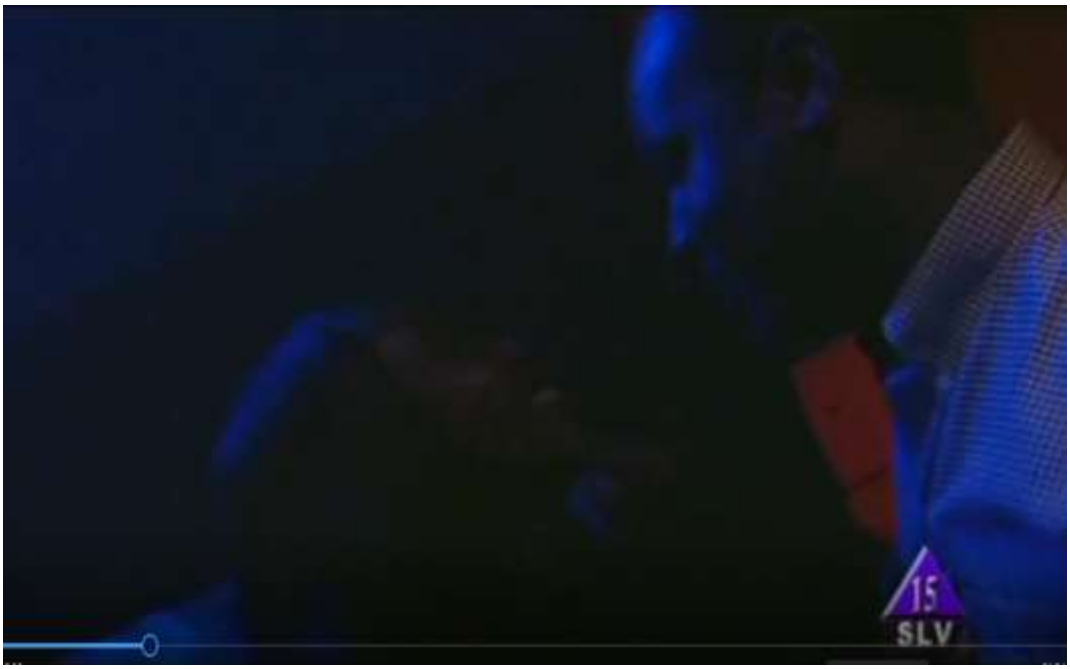

Image 19: A medium close-up shot of Murags staring at Kui's face

Brown (2016, 43) notes that a low angle on an actor makes him or her powerful and dominant. Indeed, the dutch tilt underscores Kui's subjugation before a dominant masculine. In this scene, the filmmaker expands an on-screen action's duration by filming a single event severally so as to highlight Murags' masculinity in this context.

3.6 Functions of Sound

Sound, as an integral part in film text analysis, can be classified into two broad categories: diegetic and non-diegetic sounds. Lewis (2014, p.152) defines diegetic sounds as those that emanate naturally from a filmic world, either from the characters or from the setting diegetic such as the crooking of frogs at night or tapping on a keyboard. On the other hand, non-diegetic sound "refers to anything that does not emanate from the fictional world (Hunt, Marland and Rawle 2010, p.165). The characters in the film cannot hear non-diegetic sounds but the audience can.

In film, certain sound patterns can be associated with hegemonic masculinity practices in society. Eussman's *Soul Boy*, opens with a sound of an approaching train before advancing into low pulsing notes that gradually increase in volume and tempo. These notes become the score of the film because they are played at varied intervals throughout the film. The score functions primarily as non-diegetic background music because it foregrounds the motif of the film, which is the mysterious and powerful nature of Nyawawa. Sonnenschein (2001,p.155) points out that music orients the audience to the setting of a scene. Thus, the screeching train-wheel sounds set a geographical locale of the film (Kibera Slum). Train tracks cut across the slum and it is the context upon which various strands of masculinities are to be reproduced in the film.

The musical motif again plays just before Abila locates his dead-drunken father lying on the floor against a wall in one of the corners of his room. The score is followed by a frightening sound as Abila's eyes locate his father in a sick and desperate state. Then, Abila's father groans and coughs in response to Abila's concerns on his current status. In a faster tempo, the score accompanies Abila as he closes their door and runs off to find his mother who he hopes to save his father. The tune underpins the urgency with which Abila treats his father's precarious state, especially after he confesses that a woman (Nyawawa) has taken his soul.

Different sounds have been used to create realism and suspense as Abila searches for the Nyawawa's shanty. First, eerie sounds dominate the darkness in the shanties and second,

when Abila reaches Nyawawa's house, the door produces a creaking sound as he opens it. The filmmaker, in this scene, synchronizes both diegetic and non-diegetic sounds to get the audience more involved in the film. The frightening sounds emanate from an unidentifiable source in the filmic world thus non-diegetic, while the creaking sound originate from opening an old door and are considered diegetic. The sounds coupled up with the low-key lighting advance a mysterious and apprehensive atmosphere in which the scene takes place. In return, the atmosphere emphasizes on the great power and dominance associated with Nyawawa. Her strangeness is further highlighted by her high-pitched tone with which she addresses Abila. Nyawawa claims that she is many things, causing more confusion to Abila. He cannot fathom the strange being before him.

In *Soul boy,* the filmmaker uses diegetic pop-music to pin-point socialization as a key attribute of hegemonic masculinity (Eussman 2008, 00:09:24). Bojo and the boys downplay Abila and Shiku's friendship by lip-synching to a music track known as "Si Lazima" by a Kenyan pop band, P-Unit. The song thus: Yaani wasee niwaulize…ni lazima tu-do? Si lazima tu do… tunaeza enda home na tu-chill tu. Si lazima tu do tunaeza home na tuchill tu! (Hey guys? Will we go all the way? - Not all the way…We can be with her all day, but won't go all the way!) (Eussman 2010, 00:09:22). The boys have been socialized to establish same-sex bonds with their peers and these bonds help perpetuate the hegemonic model. Therefore, any association with the opposite sex would suggest a sexual relationship. After Shiku narrates the myth of Akinyi and Nyawawa, Willie teases her:

Willie: Quit giving History lessons and just say you want Abi.
Shiku: You are such a child!
Willie: Child? Ever spread your legs? You know nothing!
Shiku: Spread yours then we will see!
Willie: Again begins the 'Si Lazima' song in retaliation.
(Eussman 2010, 00:10:58)

Lewis (2014) lists voice track as one of the categories of sound that filmmakers work with. The characters read lines from a scrip; these spoken words help propel the story forward. Thus, the diegetic dialogue above has a motive, which is to show how boys unapologetically embody hegemonic masculine characteristics such as telling dirty jokes about women. They associate femininity with sex and nothing more.

A non-diegetic dramatic crescendo culminates in the scene featuring a thief running away from angry pursuers. The film director uses an upbeat pace together with several voices of the pursuers to introduce the dramatic scene and as result heighten tension. As the thief stops near Abila's house, the sound drops in volume such that Abila is able to hear the sound of a sewing machine that has a sign of the sun. The sign indicates another task that Nyawawa had assigned to Abila- to help a sinner who is in trouble without judging him. The music gives an "advance knowledge of a threat" (Sonnenschein 2001, p.155). The thief's life is threatened and he can only turn to a younger masculine for protection from his pursuers.

Eussman uses a non-diegetic pop song to signal transition from the slum to the suburbs of Karen, a location populated by the upper-class residents. A pop song, "Dirty Laundry" plays in the matatu which Abila and his aunt board to Karen. As the song plays, Abila

recalls another task imposed on him by Nyawawa: “Fight a battle against a new world” (Eussman 2010, 00:32:26). A change from the musical motif to a different pop song draws the viewer’s attention to the shifting contexts. During supper at Mr. Brian’s house, Amy chokes on a fish bone. As a desperate father attempts to save his daughter’s life, low dissonant notes punctuate the background. Low notes in this context signify Amy’s endangered life. One cannot help but notice how Mr. Brian’s masculinity is put to test. His loud and fast breathing can be heard as he throws a despondent glance at his crying wife. The tune reaches the climax when Abila finally manages to help Amy. Mr. Brian’s inability to save his daughter’s life as expected of a father marginalises him as a ‘real man’.

When we are first introduced to Jimmy, Rose’s husband, in *Dangerous Affair,* we see a hand raise a curtain in order for us to see Rose and the children run to board a matatu. Then, the hand reaches for the radio knob. Immediately Zeendukah’s song, “Sha Sha” begins to play in fast paced beats often associated with youngsters. Then the camera cuts to a shot of legs putting on slippers and ecstatically begin dancing to the beats on the radio before getting the full view of Jimmy. Here, Kibinge chooses to use diegetic pop music and ensures that we register the source of the music in the scene. A replica happens in another scene (Kibinge 2002, 00:24:04) where we see Jimmy seated on kitchen counter drinking beer, earphones in place as he sways to Amani’s song, “Ninanoki”. These two scenes characterize Jimmy as a marginalised masculine who has failed in fulfilling his patriarchal roles as the head and breadwinner of his family. Instead, he falls back into drinking beer and dancing to pop music.

In another scene, Redsan's "Julie" is used to comment on Jimmy's feelings towards Murags and Kui's wedding (Kibinge 2002, 01:01:07). He excitedly dances and lip-synchs to the song as it plays on the stereo on the table. Jimmy feels relieved of his insecurity with the knowledge that his wife's lover has finally married another woman. However, the song is ironically used because the singer talks of a lover who is thwarting his efforts of loving her. He goes on to list what he would do in order to keep her. We know that Jimmy is very happy about the wedding but Rose is hurting about the whole situation. Thus, the song is sort of addressing her as opposed to Jimmy.

A comparison can be noted between the music that plays at 'Zigs' bar and that of Njoroge's. Zigz plays cooler non-diegetic music with low notes and slow tempo. It is here that the wealthy members of the society such as Murags, Brenda and Kui uphold their affluent statuses. However, at Njoroge's dissonant music schemes dominate the space such as Kikuyu live band songs "Mugithi nites" and heavy recorded crank rap music tracks like Gidi and Maji's "Atoti" and "unbwogable". The disorganised sort of tunes seem to suit the disorganised revellers. Complicit masculines such Murags' boys, Oti and Francis, breed in such contexts. At one point, Francis confesses that at Njoroge's, the waiters are faster, there is plenty of roasted meat and readily available 'girls'. Strikingly, Murags also likes Njoroge's dark joint as this is where he gets his accomplices and can easily patronize them.

In *Dangerous Affair*, Kibinge dexterously deploys specific sounds to define her male protagonist, Murags. The opening non-diegetic sounds in the establishing sequence have a bearing on the entire film. It prepares the audience for the unfamiliarity in Murags' sexual adventures. On their first date at Zigs, a musician, Didge, plays "Tingisha Kiuno" as the camera scans the audience for Kui and Murags. The song functions as a commentary on the scene as it describes a woman in sexual terms. Murags tells Kui, "You are pretty in here…that and something else you got" (Kibinge 2002, 00:48:07). We get a hint of how Murags perceives Kui- an object of sexual gratification. On the eve of Murags' and Kui's wedding, Didge's "Shoulda coulda" plays after Murags and Rose have had a confrontation (Kibinge 2002, 00:48:07). The song offers us as emotional interpretation of the scene. Murags seems contemplative on his true feelings for his wife-to-be and at the same time his lover. The following morning, he tells Otile that he is not going to his wedding. Playing with the feelings of both women reveals the true character of Murags that forms the leitmotif of whole film.

Rafiki opens with sounds from hooting vehicles. From the onset, the viewer is made aware that the film is set in a city characterized by disharmony from loud-volume, high-pitched sounds of vehicle horns and people. Additionally, these sounds form the score of the film because they comment on the filmmaker's vision of a free world for queer sexualities to thrive in. As the film proceeds, we get to know that the two girls, Kena and Ziki use a public space (an abandoned van) in which they nature their love for each other. Thus, the opening score foregrounds an important setting of the film- an ambivalent space in which queer sexualities can comfortably exist.

The sound of rotor blades is synchronized with the recurrent image of the helicopter (Kahiu 2018, 00:02:35). Even when the helicopter is offscreen, we hear the sound of the rotor blades from a distance (Kahiu 2018, 00:18:02). Kena and Ziki exchange glances before leaving to find a safe place away from surveillance of the likes of Mama Atim and Nduta. In this later instance, the helicopter sound seems like a warning on the developing affection between the two girls. In another scene, we hear the sound of rotor blades before the appearance of the helicopter into the scene where Kena and Ziki have had sexual intimacy (Kahiu 2018, 00:43:48). This time, the sound is more pronounced than the previous scenes. In this case, the sound symbolizes government disruption on the advanced sexual relationship between the two girls.

Sonnenschein (2001, p.155) posits that music could function as an emotional signifier that enables us to process the feelings of the characters on screen. On a date at Uhuru Park, Mumbi Kasumba's song "Ignite" play right from the time Kena and Ziki board a tuktuk outside Ziki's house, then at Uhuru Park and extends into the night at a club. The song resonates with the carefree romantic mood between the two girls as they enjoy happiness and physical intimacy. The filmmaker matches the song with onscreen images thus, contributing to the narration of the film. For example, at the instance where Ziki asks Kena to go on a real date, Kasumba sings: "If there is a season for love, you prove it now." In response to Ziki's request, the next scene features the girls walking into a club. As they kiss behind the curtains, the song underscores the scene. Hence, this non-diegetic song comments on the character's inaudible feelings.

The final scene of *Rafiki* features Njoki Karu's song "stay". Although, we do not locate the source of the song within the film, it begins to play immediately when we see a hand with orange nails touch Kena's shoulder: "Walk with me far above the horizon. Play with me, we can put the stars to bed. Watch with me, 'till the morning sun arises. Wait with me, just wait with me till the end". The camera then, tilts to Kena's smiling face against the hues of the sun before it pans out. The song, together with the orange hues of the sun and the nail paint on Ziki's supposed hand symbolize the filmmaker's hope for freedom for queer sexualities in a heterosexual world.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has delved into various aesthetic and technical techniques used by female filmmakers to represent hegemonic masculinity in the selected feature films. The chapter has shown how mise-en-scene, cinematography, spectator orientation through editing and sound have been used in meaning making process and perceptions concerning masculinity in the films under study. Through proper casting and directing, the chapter showed how actors have been enabled to develop into their roles and the masculine characters they imitate in real life. Set designs recreated the larger real space in which the stories unfolded thus heightening realism in the selected feature films. Further, the chapter showed how lighting was used to create certain moods in scenes and to provide clues on the time of the day actions in the films were taking place. The chapter showed how certain props have been used to foreground character opinions and actions as they are associated with specified forms of masculinity. Costumes, make-up and coifs have

been used to construct characters into types of masculines intended. The chapter also examined how cinematography affects the audience's perception of various strands of masculinity. Shot compositions, camera angles and frames were shown to directly affect visual representation of masculinity in selected feature films. Sound has been used to comment on and affect mood of scenes. The chapter showed how certain sounds are associated with specific masculines, thus, underscoring different motifs in the films under study.

The next chapter examines reconstruction of alternative modes of being in the selected feature films.

CHAPTER FOUR

RECONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE MODES OF BEING IN SOCIETY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how female filmmakers provide alternative modes of being in society by reconstructing hegemonic masculine practices in society through film in what can be considered as a "patriarchal" or "feminist" configuration of masculinity (Lotz 2014, p.35). By analysing the alternative modes that the female filmmakers envision, the chapter shows that film creates a space for imagining novel ways of performing masculinity and advocates for the internalisation of "prohibited forms of emotion, attachment and pleasure" (Connell 2005, p. 85). The chapter is prompted partly by what Lotz (2014) termed as a "seismic shift" (2014, p. 64) in representation and partly by deliberate efforts made by the female filmmakers in reconfiguring patriarchal practices of masculinity as a form of self-fulfillment which confirms, and even celebrates, the "alluring" "mystique of masculine power" (Albrecht 2015, p.71-72). The chapter contends with the idea that films are capable of reinforcing certain beliefs or behavioural change, which is directly related to the understanding of feature films as vehicles for knowledge; the feature film is "constantly allocating to the viewer not only a physical view of the scene but also an ideological position with respect to the reality being portrayed" (Tan 1996, p.21). It also shows that feature film has potential to reconfigure hegemonic models of hegemonic masculinity thereby shifting "performances of masculinity and the ways in which traditional versions of masculinity continue to lurk in popular discourse" (Albrecht 2015, p.9).

4.2 Reconfiguration of Hegemonic Masculinity through Feature Film

Focusing on different forms of masculinity such as dominant, complicit, subordinate and marginalised, chapter two showed ways in which masculinity is embodied in feature film. The chapter showed how conventional enjoyment of male "phantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control" (Neale 1983, p.3) are manifested in dominant and complicit masculinities and which work in a way to disenfranchise subordinate and marginalised masculinities as depicted in the selected feature films. The analyses also showed that while hegemonic masculinity occupies a place of "cultural authority and leadership" and serves as a "normative standard" (Connell 2005, p.79), it only corresponds to a small number of men and thus, other forms of masculinity such as complicit, marginalised and subordinate persist alongside it.

Using various characters such as Murags, Jimmy and Otile in *Dangerous Affair*, Abila and his father in *Soul boy* and Peter and John in *Rafiki*, chapter two showed ways in which hegemonic masculinity is embodied in feature film. Through the nature of characterization, the chapter showed that dominant masculinity in its perfect form is best embodied in what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) call "exemplars" (p.846). The dominant characters such as Murags in *Dangerous Affair* are implicated in both the patriarchal hierarchy of power between men and women, and the subordination of marginalised masculinities. Through fantasy images in the feature films, male spectators derive vicarious pleasure through the attitudes behaviours and practices of such dominant characters and venerate them in both public and private spheres.

In their interpersonal lives, men are expected to be "bread-winners" (Connell 2005, p.29-35), bringing home a working wage to support their wives and children, and in sex, virility, potency and conquest are idealized. However, in the feature films, the filmmakers have shown that these practices are fast fading in a society that is agile and adapting to global forms of socialization through the reconfiguration of characters such as Jimmy in *Dangerous Affair*, Abila's father in *Soul Boy,* and Kena and Ziki in *Rafiki.* In this regard, feature films present alternative modes of being and in a sense repudiate traditional practices of masculinity. Murray (2002) posits that a film is analysed both as a vehicle of representation and in the context of its production, distribution, and reception, "it can be a valuable source for both history and historiography" (Murray 2002, p.41- 42). This inherent transference of representation makes film a very powerful tool for social influence and change. The feature films, therefore, explicate ways in which diegetic discourses mirror social discourses in society. For instance, by depicting Jimmy in *Dangerous Affair* and Abila's father in *Soul Boy* as liabilities to their families, the filmmakers not only reconfigures but also spurs a social conversation regarding masculinity in society today.

The extent to which film spurs and influences social consciousness is well documented. Sutherland and Feltey (2010) argue that "movies are a particularly important vehicle for the transmission of cultural norms and understandings" (p.36). Peck (2005, p.744) affirms this supposition when he asserts that "fictional media sources, including film and television, may have persuasive effects on public attitudes and beliefs, especially through

their depiction of popular cultural embodiments", a fact conceded by Appel (2008) who also notes the role of film in negotiating cultural experiences. The filmmakers invites us to reflect on the helplessness both Jimmy in *Dangerous Affair* and Abila's father in *Soul Boy* find themselves and in the process a urge us to reconsider prevailing socio-cultural practices. The duo's girth signifies failure to uphold the strictures of masculinity, connoting emasculating qualities such as weakness and loss of control. For instance, the loss of control is witnessed in Jimmy's act of beating up his wife after she spends a night out with her lover and is further amplified by his acts of policing his wife even when she is at her work place. Noticeably, by resigning his fate to his son, Abila's father has lost his status as well. In this regard, the filmmakers prod for socio-cultural change as they not only reconfigure hegemonic practices but also shift focus to alternative ways of being, thereby showing that society cannot rely on hegemonic practices for its continuity.

In portraying Jimmy in *Dangerous Affair* and Abila's father in *Soul Boy* as subdued and incapable masculines, the filmmakers nudges the audience to reflect on the so called "alpha male" status in society. Through these two characters, the filmmakers have opened up a social conversation predicated on the changing cultural times, and, at a subliminal level, influences behavioural change among audiences in Kenya. The characters thus become sites for multiple contradictory readings of what the filmmakers portend. On the one hand, the audience is sympathetic of their state as subdued men, an unsettling situation by any standards. On the other hand, their state engenders a potential redefinition of masculinity, or at least, a prospective movement towards its reconfiguration. Perhaps, this later realization is manifested at the final scene of *Soul Boy*

where all forms of masculinity are in constellation as the characters converge. The implication of this is that the filmmaker provides a social praxis between feature film and cultural practices which enable film to play an active role in the reconstruction of societal issues in a manner particular to its form.

It cannot be gainsaid that the female filmmakers are urging for the need to rethink the image and status accorded to the alpha male in society. In *Dangerous Affair,* for instance, the filmmaker's diegesis presents us with the lethargy of hegemonic masculinity through the protagonist. Murags is struggling with his routinized morning grooming ritual and a myriad of internal voices which foreshadow his overall indifference towards intimacy. The film shows a close-up of his hand switching on a hoary telephone answering-machine which plays back recorded messages from his string of girlfriends. The film then cuts to the next scene of him grooming with an accustomed nonchalance that betrays his inattentiveness to the answering-machine. We can infer that he is deliberately ignoring the callers or merely passing time by listening to their excruciating naggings. Sheila earnestly implores him to prove his loyalty, unlike "the other guys"; Njeri reminds him of their upcoming date "to the movies"; and Ciru reprimands him for not calling. But of all the messages, the fourth and fifth are perhaps the most unsettling ones to him. The fourth anonymous caller teases thus: "Murags, I know you are there, pick up; we had such a good time last weekend…". Murags seems nonchalant and carries on unperturbed, a situation which is unsettling. By juxtaposing the "then and now" binary in this scene, the filmmaker shows the incongruity and unsustainability of hegemonic practices in society.

The fourth message, informing Murags of Rose's return to town, jolts him to a halt on his way out and arouses his interest. He hesitates and trails her voice back to the answering-machine, but eventually shrugs and heads out. Essentially, Murags' indifference is presented as the inevitable collapse of an inherently unstable and unsuitable mode of masculinity, showing that hegemonic masculinity is an impossible ideal which collapses under the weight of its own contradictions. Hence, Murags' insatiable desire to conquer many women collapses with his pursuit for Kui and the return of Rose. The unsustainability of his desire is dealt another blow when Kui insists that they will only have sex on their wedding night. Murags' self-centered objective exposes fundamental contradictions at the core of the construction of hegemonic masculinity, which is, that it is founded on the fear of failure to conquer, devalue and displace own feelings, an emotion that is itself antithetical to hegemonic masculinity. Thus, in order to prove his prowess, Murags wagers with his friend Otile to bed Kui within a week. However, he is left trapped in an inescapable double-blind because his objective is at variance with Kui's and that his social standing is at risk if he opens up and admits his failure to his friend, Otile. The filmmaker, therefore, shows that it is not only self-denial that these alpha men practice through the performance of their masculinity but the failure to admit that the centre can no longer hold. In essence, Murags' failure is widely projected as a metaphoric failure of hegemonic masculinity hence the need for an alternative mode which requires an absolute abjuration of the self and the unachievable requirements in hegemonic practices.

It is imperative to note that *Dangerous Affair* not only reformulates the domains of sex, intimacy and marriage as shifting, but also loose, temporary, and contradictory at times. Murags' charged virility and insatiable desire are emblematic of declining masculinities as a result of social upheavals that characterize contemporary society. Murags, and all the male characters in the film, reckon with a threatening loss of patriarchal power and authority. Thus, the performance of sexual wildness and virile masculinities foregrounds an internalized fear of failure or inadequacy in the male character. This profound internal fear is concretized in Murags' hesitation to get ready for his wedding day, and in the noncommittal heterosexual relationships of his male friends. The internal fear and feeling of inadequacy is inherently evident in Jimmy, Rose's cuckolded husband. Jimmy endures the indignity of his wife's public affair with Murags. His insecurities as an "inadequate" man are further compounded by his joblessness, hence inability to provide for his family.

Through Murags' and Rose's escapades, the filmmaker calls into question the reified institution of marriage and its foundational hegemonic requirements. The film's narrative not only permits repose but also produces a thought provoking reflective film experience that foregrounds possibilities for rebirth and agency. Murags' and Rose's extra-marital affair rouses both parties to profound dissatisfaction in their marriages. Caught up in hegemonic unions, they both long for intimacy and love. But as social pariahs, Murags and Rose can only fulfill their repressed sexual desires outside the confines of marriage. Thus, the film disrupts the continuity of "intimacy" and "security" of married life by showing the mistrust and suspicion of marital infidelity. Thus, the filmmaker reconfigures marriage partnerships as a modern 'transactional economy' that defies

hegemonic practices in their quest for personal fulfillment and satisfaction. In this way, feature films play an active role in transmitting cultural ideas which "contribute to the social reproduction of (our) society" (Sutherland and Feltey 2010, p.36). This social reproduction through films is essentially a reconfiguration of ideologies, which is made possible by the film's "role in the battle for control of the mind's eye" (Ross S. J. 2001, p.82). The allusion to the mind's eye suggests the film's capacity to influence not just emotionally, but also socially. Such an enormous influence is what this chapter shows as a reconfiguration of hegemonic practices, or simply, a social influence whose end is behavioural change.

The female feature filmmakers have also shown that the enduring conventional view of women in most African societies as belonging to "the hearth", is no longer tenable in the contemporary Kenyan urban social context. Female characters such as Kui and Rose in *Dangerous Affair* and Kena and Ziki in *Rafiki* break away from prescribed domesticity and mingle in the public sphere alongside their male counterparts. Caught up in the cusps of enduring social conventions and a profound yearning for freedom, these female characters continually transgress and obscure rigid social binaries. Rather than subserviently submitting to patriarchal domination, they are active participants in shaping and transforming the discourses, trajectories and outcomes of their lives and those of others as well. For example, on the one hand, Kui and Rose in *Dangerous Affair* refuse to be consigned to unhappy, unfulfilling marriages and leave their matrimonial homes at the slight sign of insecurity and discomfort. On the other hand, Kena and Ziki subvert cultural expectations as they show their strong-willed pursuit of their desires in life.

These women characters, therefore, reconstruct hegemonic practices in society and re-inscribe their bodies with personal freedom and agency. They reclaim control not only over their lives and bodies, but also of their sexuality.

4.3 Reconstruction of Queer Sexualities in the Kenyan Society

Macharia (2016) posits that Kenya has become visible as a site of and frame for the contradictions of queer livability on one hand and queer visibility on the other. Queer individuals are marginalised and often lack the power to claim their spaces and reference names in society. Consequently, they are forced to use coded names to refer to themselves as is evident in *Rafiki*. In the film, *rafiki*, a Kiswahili word which means friend, is used as a coded name to refer to persons in same sex relationships. Kena, for example, introduces herself to Ziki's mother as "a friend of Ziki" (Kahiu 2018,00:26:39). The film shows that queer individuals are grappling with their identities in a society that is regulated by tradition and religious practices. In this regard, the filmmaker uses characters' physical appearances including mode of dressing, make-up and hair style to reconstruct queer identities in society. Kena's and Ziki's modes of dressing are symbolically used in the film to reflect their feelings, emotions and attitudes towards each other. On the one hand, Ziki is reconstructed as feminine based on her dressing, long twisted purple and magenta hair extensions and pink lipstick. Both pink and purple colours associated with Ziki are considered feminine in mainstream gender practices. Colour pink is not only visible in Ziki's mode of dressing, but it is also the colour of where she lives. Kena, on other hand, is reconstructed as masculine. She wears trousers, shirts and accessories like caps which give her a masculine look. However, as the film

progresses, Kena's dressing colour scheme mirrors her growing affection for Ziki. The more she falls for Ziki, the more she acquires pink outfits. For instance, when Kena picks up Ziki for their first date at Uhuru Park, she wears a pink cap (Kahiu 2018,00:26:32) and later on in the film, Kena wears a pink dress as they prepare to go to church (Kahiu 2018,00:43:52). Although at first, Kena protests that her body is allergic to dresses, she eventually gives in. For Ziki, the dress makes Kena even more attractive. She tells Kena that she is "very sexy" (Kahiu 2018,00:44:25) in the presence of her mother who does not know about their romantic relationship and therefore does not suspect a sexual connotation of such a remark. When both Kena and Ziki see each other in the streets, Kena wears a white shirt with one of its sleeves made of kitenge fabric (Kahiu 2018,00:49:26). The sleeve has a pattern of intertwined lines in green and purple. This symbolizes that the lives of both Kena and Ziki are intertwined.

Kena's masculine reconstruction is further amplified by her outdoor activities - riding a skateboard and playing football – and her association with male friends. Men regard Kena as one of them: "Kena hucheza kama mwanaume. Si ndiyo, Kena? (She plays like a guy. Right Kena?)" (Kahiu 2018,00:22:41). Thus, Kena's male friends recognize her masculinity and readily accept her. While highlighting the different treatment of gender non-conforming men and women in the film, Osinubi (2019a) observes that gender non-conforming women "are praised for their vigour and performance of female masculinity – they are one of the guys – as long as their sexual preference for women is not openly expressed" (Osinubi 2019a, p.74). This explains why Kena's male friends readily accept her because they see her more of a man. Further, Osinubi's observation shows how

homophobia and sexism are interwoven in the patriarchal structures in society, leading to the distinction between gay men who dress more feminine and are considered 'less of a man' and lesbian women who dress more masculine and are seen as 'less of a woman' Thus queer men lose some of their male privileges while queer women to an extent benefit from male privilege. Waireri, one of Kena's male friends, is portrayed as a homophobic man who stops at nothing to verbally insult the alleged homosexual Tom. He uses the derogative term *shoga* (faggot) to address him and jostles him whenever he passes by (Kahiu 2018,00:05:00). In another scene Waireri endorses physical assault against Tom and makes fun of him (Kahiu 2018,00:36:53).

In another scene, Kena and Blacksta, her other male friend, are seated at top of a hill watching the hues of the sun as it sets. The lighting here is dominated by colour purple, which not only creates a romantic atmosphere but also mirrors Kena's inner emotional state. While she is compelled to hide her love for Ziki and feels inhibited by social spaces in Nairobi, at the top of the hill she experiences freedom and her dreams are become real. A close-up of Kena's face is followed by that of Ziki's, who turns her head in slow-motion and smiles at her. In another shot, Kena quips, "I wish we could go somewhere where we could be real" (Kahiu 2018,00:48:51). Now Blacksta turns his head towards Kena with a confused look on his face and asks: "Real aje tena? (What do you mean 'real'?)" (Kahiu 2018,00:48:55). But Kena down plays his question and the two continue sitting silently next to each other. Much remains unsaid between the two as the song "Nita" plays at the background. Once they return to the city, the music fades as street

noises slowly kick in implying that their future plans are met with the harsh reality of their daily lives.

4.4 Rethinking the Stifling Societal Constrictions to Queer Sexualities

The Kenyan state, through its legal framework and homophobic discourse, "promotes an invented national heterosexual citizenship centred on marriage and family, while erasing queer bodies, desires and practices from Kenya's history, present and future" (Van Klinken 2018, p.652). It is instructive to note that Kenya prohibits same-sex relationships and that queer desire is criminalized within the legal, political and also the social realm (Mwangi 2014; Macharia 2013a). Such relationships are frowned upon, criminalised and usually equate with sexual immorality, social degeneration and aberration. The criminalization of same-sex renders LGBTIQ people vulnerable to violence at the hands of ordinary citizens as well as law enforcement officials. Many of these victims of violence believe they have no recourse, and that the police are just as likely to persecute them as to protect them.

In *Rafiki*, queer characters navigate their lives against various structural forces, which form part of the larger social systems, including maintaining relations to their close family and friends, acquaintances, the neighbourhood and the church among others. The filmmaker depicts various threats and pressure from government and society towards the wellbeing of queer individuals. For instance, the recurring image of the helicopter in the film shows the omnipresent surveillance of queer practices in society as shown in the opening sequence of the film (Kahiu 2018,00:02:35). The helicopter is filmed from below

and could be a seen as a point-of-view shot. It is not just visible but also audible on the sound layer overlapping with the music and placed just before the chorus. The second shot of a helicopter is visually similar to the first one and marks the end of a short scene in which Kena and Ziki exchange some hidden glances (Kahiu 2018,00:12:33). Thus, the helicopter seems like a subtle comment on the forbidden relationship developing between the two women. And like before the noise of the rotor blades interrupts a song playing in the background, as if to remind the people in the streets that the government is present and observes everyone. The last appearance of the helicopter is framed differently to the other two (Kahiu 2018, 00:42:07). We can see a panorama shot of Nairobi's skyline, the image is horizontally divided by the horizon into two equal parts. From the upper left part the helicopter crosses the frame against the backdrop of the blue sky. Its noise is already audible before it enters the shot and the stereo sound makes it distinguishable. The roaring sound comes after a quiet intimate scene of Kena and Ziki having sex in the abandoned matatu. The harsh contrast of a close framing in the matatu followed by a panorama shot symbolizes the disruption of Kena and Ziki's relationship by authorities, in this case represented by the helicopter.

Monitoring of queer lives is further amplified by various activities in the film. In a scene which takes place in Kena's apartment block, she is framed behind the handrails of the staircase or from the floor below or above (Kahiu 2018,00:25:17; 00:50:52). This shows that the neighbours are constantly watching her and everything she does. The physical violence against queer people is a culmination of societal surveillance as is evident on the violence visited upon Kena and Ziki by the angry mob when they are discovered in the

matatu. While Ziki and Kena exchange hidden kisses during the night in the abandoned matatu, suddenly their safe space is invaded (Kahiu 2018, 00:54:28). They startle and look into the faces of Mama Atim and her daughter Nduta. Mama Atim calls up more people to come closer and to remove Ziki and Kena from the matatu. As the mob approaches, some people bang with their hands on the rear window of the matatu. The noise in conjunction with the darkness of the night creates tension. Ziki and Kena hold hands while they are being pushed away from the matatu by an angry mob. They are beaten up by the mob and left on the ground between dirt and trash. While Ziki and Kena are being beaten up, Mama Atim and Nduta do not actively participate in the beating. Instead they stand aside and watch the violence with serious looks on their faces (Kahiu 2018, 00:55:49). It seems like they feel a little pity for the two women, but at the same time consider the violence as a necessary lesson for them. The violence meted upon Kena and Ziki is emblematic of the ways in which discrimination, violence, and persecution permeate the lives of Kenyans who are gender non-conforming or are perceived to be involved in same-sex relationships.

It is instructive to note that police play an ambiguous role in the ensuing discrimination and violence against queer sexualities. In some cases, they protect these group of people from mob violence while, in other cases, they have outright failed in their responsibility of protecting and assisting them because of their presumed sexual orientation. This situation is mirrored in *Rafiki*. A hard cut brings us to a police station (Kahiu 2018, 00:56:36). Kena and Ziki are sitting on a bench in the reception room. Although the two women are bleeding from wounds in their faces, the police officers do not show any

empathy towards them. As representatives of the state, the two police officers are depicted as antagonists to the queer protagonists. The portrayal of hierarchy and power is conveyed by visual means. In the opening shot of the scene, the camera is positioned in an over-the-shoulder shot behind the police officers and slightly tilted downwards to achieve a high-angle framing. Ziki and Kena sit down in the background and are obliged to look up at the police officers, who are standing behind their reception counter. This shows the lack of agency from the authorities. The officers only laugh and make fun of them. They ask Kena and Ziki: "Kati nyie wawili nataka kujua: nani ndiyo ndume? (Between the two of you: which one of you is the man?)" (Kahiu 2018, 00:56:36). This question is imposed on the two girls by virtue of the power structure and shows how heterosexual people try to confine queer relationships into straight dynamics. Thus, queer individuals must endure the painful questions because they are not in a position to decide on their own how they want to be seen as homosexuals. This reflects their incapability of self-representation in a hetero-normative society where power structures are exploited to their disadvantage.

4.5 Reconfiguring Religion in the Alternative Social Spaces

The centrality of religion in societal discourses on sexuality cannot be gainsaid. This is because religion not only permeates the social life of majority of Kenyans, but religion as a social institution plays a critical role in framing the public discourse on sexuality in general and on same-sex sexuality in particular (Adamczyk and Pitt 2009; Jäckle and Wenzelburger 2015). It is instructive to note that the way religious leaders portray same-sex practicing persons will affect how these persons are treated in society. Most religions

have formal doctrines that reflect a negative perspective on same-sex sexuality. Religious leaders in the country have been at the forefront against same sex relations in Kenya who often characterise queer sexualities as being against African tradition and biblical teachings. Adriaan van Klinken (2019) explores the relationship between Christianity and queerness in Kenya. He problematizes the depiction of religion as inherently homophobic and offers four interdisciplinary case studies, one of them being a close reading of the book *Stories of Our Lives*. He reaches to the conclusion that the book "presents plenty of examples of alternative interpretations of biblical texts and understandings of God and Christ" (Van Klinken 2019, p.195). The stories are diverse and range from people who identify as Christian or Muslim to atheists who oppose the major religions due to their homophobic tendencies, and people who call themselves spiritual, but are not connected to Christianity or Islam. These varieties of stories dismantle the prevalent stereotype that constructs an opposition between queerness and religion, and paints a more nuanced picture as opposed to rigid dichotomies.

In *Rafiki*, church service is portrayed as a unifying occasion where all the people from the neighbourhood pray together. The sermon is not only limited to religious matters, but also open to communal issues. The priest mentions good deeds by individuals and after the service people stay to chat or to congratulate members on their newborn babies. The church is a place all sorts of people gather and sit next to each other including political rivals Peter Okemi and John Mwaura (Kahiu 2018, 00:13:17). Interestingly, the two opponents carry names of apostles, who are known from the bible for healing other people. But as Osinubi notes, Peter Okemi and John Mwaura "are not about to

collaborate or save anyone soon" (Osinubi 2019, p.72.). Later in the film, when they learn about the sexual orientation of their daughters, they react very differently to it. With their biblical names the two men can be seen as archetypes with contradictory religious standpoints regarding homosexuality.

In the film, the church service is depicted as a recurrent event which is not always easy to endure for queer people. One day, the priest condemns homosexuality in his sermon and tries to prove his point with a quotation from the bible:

> Hivyo Mungu aliwaacha wafuate tamaa zao za aibu, hata wanawake wakabadili matumizi ya asili kwa asili isiyo ya asili. Waelewa? Wanaume nao vivyo hivyo waliyaacha matumizi ya mke, ya asili, wakawakiana tamaa, wanaume wakiyatenda yasiyowapasa, wakapata nafsini mwao malipo ya upotevu wao yaliyo haki yao.
>
> (God left them to follow their shameful desires. Even women changed their natural ways to un-natural ways. Understand? And men did the same thing. They left women for unnatural ways and desired other men. They did shameful things with other men. And as a result of their sin they suffered.) (Kahiu 2018,00:45:39)

The biblical passage he cites is Romans 1:26-27. Another popular quotation to allegedly verify that homosexuality is unchristian, is Leviticus 20:13 ("If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them"), but this one only refers to male non-heterosexuality. The passage which Ziki and Kena are obliged to listen to also speaks about non-heterosexual women and their 'shameful desires'. During the priest's sermon, we are presented with medium reaction shots of the congregation towards the sermon. Tom, the queer guy, seems uncomfortable but maintains an indefinite and emotionless facial

expression (Kahiu 2018, 00:45:07). On her part, Ziki is in a playful mood and tries to secretly hold hands with Kena. A close-up shows how Kena refuses her gentle touch and pushes the hand away (Kahiu 2018, 00:45:42). Kena's reaction emphasises the fact that the church is not a safe place for them. The priest's words off-screen appear like a threatening commentary on their queer relationship and offers prayer sessions to 'heal' people from homosexuality.

When Kena's mother learns about her daughter's sexual orientation, she directly concludes, that demons must have possessed her child (Kahiu 2018, 01:00:01). Consequently, the following scene shows an exorcism ceremony in church. It opens with a medium shot of Kena looking directly in the camera, while different people have placed their hands on her head and the priest is speaking a prayer (Kahiu 2018, 01:01:27). It feels like there is a bond established between Kena and the viewers, because the camera is positioned at eye-level. Kena kneels, while the other people stand around her. This shows that they are the ones in power, and Kena is passive and must endure the procedure. She does so without batting an eyelid. Her mother and other women surround her and pray in low voices. In the last shot of the sequence, Kena closes her eyes, like she dreams herself away from this place. In the next scene she wakes up in her bed, but the church is still present, even in her private space: as Kena opens her eyes, we hear the church bell ringing from afar (Kahiu 2018, 01:02:18). However, Kena does not seem to be very much affected by the prayers. The sequence of exorcism is rather short and ends as abruptly as it starts. How Kena gets into this situation and how she gets out of it is not shown. However, this elliptic way of storytelling situates the religious scene as

disconnected to and without much impact on her future life as a queer person. In this regard, the filmmaker shows how queer individuals creatively blend biblical stories and Christianity in order to signify their own lives at the margins and to claim their spaces in society.

4.6 Emerging Spaces for Queer Sexualities in the Kenyan Society

Kenya is known for its matatus, privately owned minibuses which are used as means of public transport. These minibuses usually operated by men are quite heteronormative and misogynistic spaces. For instance, sexual harassment of women by both the crew and fellow male passengers happens repeatedly and the matatu men use sexist terms referring to a woman's physique to describe vehicle parts (Wa Mũngai 2013, p.236). In *Rafiki*, the matatu is reconstructed as a safe hideout for Ziki and Kena. After they get rained on during a soccer match, Ziki runs after Kena to the matatu to protect herself from rain (Kahiu 2018, 00:23:33). The white matatu is covered by bushes with purple blossoms. Coincidentally, it is hidden from the public in the same way queer people have to constantly hide their identity from public scrutiny. Ziki follows Kena into the matatu and discovers a new space, which is exciting and enjoyable for her. Kena literally opens the door to a new world for her. The two women sit on the bed and look at each other in the eyes without saying anything and this silence creates an intimacy between them. If the matatu is seen as a queer space created by Kena, then this is the first time in the film that Ziki enters a queer space and thus learns about an alternative reality in contrast to the heteronormative society she lives in. Although the rain in this scene is the only reason

which makes that the two women end up together in the matatu, it symbolizes the fact that they literally have to utilize the space as a safe haven from the outside world.

A few days after Kena and Ziki went on their date in a night club and kissed for the first time, the two spend a night together in the abandoned matatu (Kahiu 2018, 00:37:24). At first Ziki is reluctant and slightly angry because Kena went to the hideout without telling her. But she notices how Kena has romantically decorated the inside of the matatu with pink rose blossoms and many candles. She also placed a cupcake for Ziki on the table beside the bed. The moment Ziki reaches for the cupcake, a parallel montage sequence starts. The filmmaker treats us with alternating images of the two women sitting next to each other with close-up shots of them kissing and making out on the bed. Kena tells Ziki: "Just try it out" (Kahiu 2018, 00:38:36), before Ziki bites into the cupcake. Symbolically, Kena is encouraging Ziki to get intimate for the first time. The subsequent sex scene is implicitly filmed and mainly consists of close-ups of their hands touching and caressing each other. Throughout the scene we can hear soft moaning on the audio layer while sound and image are out of sync. The jump cuts as well as the asynchronous editing immerses the viewer into their world, where in this moment of romantic intimacy, time and space is of no importance any more. Thus, the filmmaker reconstructs the abandoned matatu as a queer space.

The old abandoned matatu, therefore, is not only reconstructed as a space for leisure and pleasure for the two protagonists, away from public scrutiny, but also recreates a space in which queer love and friendship thrives. In this way, the filmmaker shows that even the

most ambivalent space has the capacity to take on utopic form through the way it acts as a catalyst in creating a sense of belonging, communion and identity for queer individuals. Despite the fact that the matatu is projected as a queer space, where queer dreams are valid, it is a fragile and threatened space as well. When Ziki's mother catches her daughter and Kena kissing in Ziki's room, they run away from home to their hideout, the matatu (Kahiu 2018, 00:53:22). It is at night but this time the matatu is not lit by the warm orange glow of candles. Instead a cold white back light shines through the rear window of the vehicle and leaves part of their faces in shadow. The night is a time of hiding, but it is not to their favour, because this time it is also connoted with danger. They are aware of the danger that awaits them as an angry mob pulls them out of their safe space into the harsh reality.

The uncertainty of social spaces for queer individuals to thrive is reflected when Ziki and Kena discuss their future together. Kena dreams of a safe place for Ziki and herself: "I wish we could go somewhere, where we could be real" (Kahiu 2018, 00:48:51). Ziki proposes: "We could have our own place just me and you" (Kahiu 2018, 00:53:50). In their present life, they have to hide and constantly live in fear of being caught. This instability of their private space is visualized by many partitions throughout the film. These partitions separate Kena's and Ziki's rooms from the rest of their parents' rooms and give them the feeling of privacy, yet they are transparent and permeable. They divide their dreams from the reality. When the two women meet for the first time alone on the rooftop of a high building, they pass through blankets and cloth on the washing lines reminiscent of curtains (Kahiu 2018, 00:18:50). At the rooftop, they dream of a shared

future. They are above everything and look down onto other people, yet they cannot be seen. They are like strangers above the city and feel like they do not really belong to society. Kena and Ziki agree that they do not want to live a life like their parents: "Just staying at home and doing typical Kenyan stuff: doing the laundry, having babies, making chapo [chapati]" (Kahiu 2018, 00:20:02). By giving these examples, it becomes obvious that they disagree with heterosexual lifestyles. Jokingly and seriously at the same time, the two make a pact, and promise each other that they will "never be like any of them down there" (Kahiu 2018,00:20:24). The space they have created for themselves is temporal, but their time together is eternal.

Ombagi (2019) posits that there are spaces within Nairobi that, despite the prohibitive legal framework, are deemed "within the imaginary of its [queer] inhabitants, as friendly" (p.108). Such spaces, Ombagi opines, sit outside the public imaginary, as they challenge the function for which they were intended and therefore "subvert the systems of regulation and control" (2019, p.108). Ombagi's observations are important in understanding *Rafiki*'s queer spaces because they focus on the idea that many of these spaces possess an "ephemeral quality" and "can be found in the shadows beyond surveillance and control" (p.109). *Rafiki*'s lake and the nightclub where Kena and Ziki go on their first date are two such places where, to paraphrase Ombagi, "the city … breaks down" (p.117). Here we see Kena and Ziki kicking back, letting loose, and having fun, resonating with what Ombagi describes as the absence of surveillance. The carefree happiness and physical intimacy that Kena and Ziki share while holding hands in a paddleboat and, later, kissing in a night-club takes place in "ecstatic time". Worth noting

is the fact that at the nightclub, Kena and Ziki wore matching heart-shaped glasses, painted their faces, and danced. As their dance becomes more intimate, the scene cuts to the lovers sitting alone behind a curtain of some sort, away from the nightclub crowd. Here Kahiu draws out the connections between the queer gaze and queer utopia, as Ziki questions what it is that Kena thinks about when she thinks about Ziki. Kena responds: "Your eyes".

The final scene of *Rafiki* foregrounds utopia practices through the way Kahiu plays out the scene. Here we see the main character Kena a few years later standing on a hill and looking at the horizon as a hand touches her shoulder and softly says her name. From the brightly coloured nails and the smile on Kena's face, we can deduce that the hand belongs to Ziki, but Kahiu leaves the scene open to interpretation as the camera pans out and the credits begin to roll. Njoki Karu's song "Stay" forms the musical backdrop of the scene and the audience's last visual image of both Kena and the horizon is accompanied by the ephemeral sounds of Karu's voice. The choice of music seems to underscore the futurity that has been present throughout the film, as the closing credits roll and Karu sings: "Walk with me far above the horizon. Play with me, we can put the stars to bed. Watch with me, 'till the morning sun arises. Wait with me, just wait with me till the end". *Rafiki* imagines utopia through the visual affirmation of this ending. The ending not only creates the impression of a happy ending for its queer protagonists but also offers a kernel of hope for queer individuals by providing them with a glimpse of what a queer Kenyan future could be like. The film's projection of utopia resonates well with West et al (2013) postulation that "the ability to imagine one's self in a time and place far removed from

the present, with the freedom to act upon these desires must not be dismissed as a frivolous folly" (p.58). In offering its queer protagonists a future in the final scene, *Rafiki* projects, for its audience, the possibility of a happy and harmonious existence of queer sexualities in the Kenyan society.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The primary focus of this chapter has been to show how the female filmmakers reconstruct alternative modes of being in society through the feature films. The chapter has shown that the female filmmakers relied on context and the nature of characterization to spur social consciousness and reconfigure alternative modes of being which foster self-fulfillment and satisfaction in society. By portraying the decline of hegemonic practices, internal fears, feelings of inadequacy, self-denials and the cul de sac that the alpha male find himself in *Dangerous Affair* and *Soul Boy*, the chapter has shown the contradictions of hegemonic practices in society and that feature films function as engaging and informative avenues of discussing social agency as they provide "alternative paths, interpretations and choices towards expressing a new African consciousness, may surface" (Makhanya and Dlamini, 2003, p.57). The filmmakers creatively deploy the nature of characterization and deliberately juxtapose various situations in order to foreground prohibitive practices and provoke behavioural change in society.

The chapter has further shown that the female filmmakers are attuned to issues germane to society which they are part of in relating to and reconfiguring these everyday experiences in their feature films. Such an argument reifies a critical stance which

abridges cinema's embedded elements into its communicative role, drawing attention from its narrative per se while shifting attention to "the mise-en-scène as the real subject of interest" (Moen 2011, p.171). Essentially, *Rafiki* is a celebration of a queer cultural practice in Nairobi's social spaces that are deemed, within the social imaginary of its inhabitants, as friendly and that, despite various prohibitions, carry within them various forms of ambivalence in relation to queer lifestyles. The film shows how the protagonists – Kena and Ziki - negotiate the knowledge of queer desire, queer sex, queer eroticism and 'queer ambiance' (Hendriks, 2017) in the social spaces that they inhabit. Through the activities of Kena and Ziki, Kahiu, the filmmaker shows that spaces in which queer forms of being and becoming are forged are usually sites "full of pain and anxiety" (Nyairo and Ogude 2003, p.388). However, the filmmaker reconstructs spaces such as the church, the public park, and the abandoned matatu to transcend the purpose for which they were originally designed and attain new meanings. It can be discerned that the ways in which social spaces are reconstructed in the film allows queer individuals who occupy these spaces to easily invert or subvert them in ways that make it possible to practice their queer lifestyles.

In *Rafiki*, the filmmaker foreshadows equality and non-discrimination towards queer sexualities with time, but urges for the foreclosure of criminalisation of these individuals in society as shown as the necessary first step. By framing and reconstructing the discriminatory lived experiences and constitutional breaches of queer individuals in the film, the filmmaker plays a critical role of sensitizing the public on the human rights and values of queer individuals as an essential part of their democracy and societal values

regardless of their sexual orientation. In this regard, *Rafiki* shows us that the livability of queer lifestyles is largely depended on respect of human rights as the social and political pillars of society. Foreclosure of violence and decriminalisation against queer individuals in society will, however, require enforcement by police. This will lead to a reduction in public hostility, arrests and prosecutions of suspected homosexuals as well as a reduction in social exclusion. The net effect as the filmmaker shows is that sexuality, citizenship and belonging are fundamental rights to all regardless of their sexual orientation.

The next chapter presents a summary of the key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings of the study; draws conclusions based on the study's objectives, lacuna in knowledge and findings; and recommends areas for further research based on the gaps identified in the analysis and interpretation of findings for this study.

5.2 Summary of the study

This study elected to interrogate representations of hegemonic masculinity in selected feature films by Kenyan female filmmakers. Three research objectives were developed from which three research questions were drawn to be answered by the study. Related literature on representations of masculinity in creative arts, practices of masculinity in film, techniques of representing masculinity in film, and critical studies on film in Kenya was reviewed with research gaps that this study sought to fill delineated. Hegemonic masculinity theory was analysed as the theoretical framework of this study. A descriptive research design was used to address the research questions. Three feature films by Kenyan female filmmakers were purposively selected based on a laid down selection criteria formed the scope of the study. The study limited itself to forms of masculinity in the selected films, techniques deployed to represent masculinity in the feature films, and the alternative modes of being presented in the selected feature films. Thematic content analysis was used in the analysis and interpretation of data.

5.3 Summary of the Key findings

5.3.1 Forms of Masculinity in the selected Feature Films

Guided by the tenets of hegemonic masculinity theory as espoused by Raewyn Connell, chapter two analysed forms of masculinity depicted in the selected feature films, which included dominant, complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinities. The chapter established that masculinity was fundamental in cultural authority and leadership as it played a focal role in entrenching and supporting patriarchal practices of power and control in society. Despite the fact that masculinity is a conventional enjoyment of the male gender, it emerged that the practice of masculinity in society was hierarchical with dominant masculinity at the apex while subordinate masculinity was at the base of the pyramid.

Dominant masculinity is the most revered form of masculinity in society so much so because it is lorded with phantasies of power, mastery and control. The study showed that dominant masculinity cuts across the selected feature films and is characterized by power, wealth, paternalism, and a higher perception to the right to comfort in life as is manifested in lavish spending, overindulgence in pleasures such as alcoholism and sex. Murags in *Dangerous Affair*, and Peter and John in *Rafiki* epitomizes practices of dominant masculinity in society. The characters derive vicarious pleasure, attitude, behaviour and mannerisms from dominant masculine practices and venerate them in both public and private spheres of their lives. Findings from the analysis showed that dominant masculinity is practiced by a small number of men in society, disenfranchises members of

society, gender notwithstanding, and that its perpetuation in society is sustained by complicit masculinity.

Analyses in chapter two also established that complicit, marginalised and subordinate masculinities have developed alongside dominant masculinity in society as depicted in the selected feature films. These forms of masculinity are lacking in ideals of the hegemonic model and are controlled, marginalised and subjugated by dominant masculinity. Because their proclivity falls short of the ideal, a majority of male characters in *Dangerous Affair*, *Soul Boy* and *Rafiki* are grouped into these three forms of masculinities. These characters are deprived off the trappings of power, control and pleasure accorded to dominant masculinity, which is the normative standard with which men are judged in society. Jimmy and Otile in *Dangerous Affair*, Abila and his father in *Soul boy*, and Blacksta and Waireri in *Rafiki*, are located in these forms of masculinity. It also emerged that these forms of masculinity operate in close proximity with the mainstream but in spaces considered liminal, peripheral and confined to the margins in society.

5.3.2 Techniques used in the Representation of Hegemonic Masculinity

The various forms and practices of masculinity outlined above are expressively communicated to the audience through various techniques deployed in the selected feature films. In order to foreground the practices of masculinity in society, the female filmmakers have made conscious attempts to manipulate the elements of film used in the feature films in order to enhance meaning. Chapter three sought to present a critical

appraisal of the techniques used in the representation of masculinity in the selected feature films. It established that both technical and aesthetic elements of film had a major role to play in the representation and projection of hegemonic masculine practices in the selected feature films.

Analyses in chapter three distinguished four categories of film elements utilized to bring out masculinity in the feature films: mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing and sound. The chapter established that the three selected feature films made use of these technical elements to influence the audience's perception and to bring out the message being passed across with relative ease. However, the director's uses of cinematographic, editing and sound techniques vary across the three feature films. The analysis of mise-en-scene focused on the use of aesthetic elements in the representation of masculinity and how these elements sustain the audience's interest in the film. Whereas mise-en-scene provides the basic story to be told through film, it emerged that it stands out as the most fundamental element in foregrounding masculinity in the three feature films. The chapter showed that there are other elements which were found to modify mise-en-scene thereby creating the intended masculine perspective in the feature films included costume, props, make-up, set design, lighting, casting and directing. It was also established that mise-en-scene cannot operate solely in the representation of masculinity as it does not explore all the possibilities of the film medium. Hence, it relied upon other aspects of film such as casting, lighting, and cinematography among others.

Casting is one of the features examined in the representation of masculinity in the feature films. It emerged that the feature films' cast successfully brought out the characters as envisioned by the directors in line with those they mimicked in society. This successful representation starts with a convincing casting. Murags in *Dangerous Affair*, Abila in *Soul Boy* and Kena in *Rafiki* exhibit a conscious effort to execute their roles and develop their traits into familiar persons in the community. Murags in *Dangerous Affair* grows into his role as an arrogant, nonchalant and abrasive individual akin to dominant masculines in society. Abila, in *Soul Boy*, is projected as a timid boy thrust into his role of saving his family. Like any other teenager has to do at some point in life, Abila had to conquer his fear to execute his roles. Kena in *Rafiki* had to shove her femininity and step into her masculine role in the film. Right from riding the skateboard in the streets, hanging and playing with the male friends to taking lead in the relationship with Ziki, Kena indeed executed her role effectively as a queer masculine.

Characters' actions and opinions are easily foregrounded by intentional use of lighting, props and set design. Generally, lighting illuminates for better view. Yet, a deeper engagement with aesthetics regarding the use of light revealed that light was a strong factor in the representation of masculinity. Specific lighting creates mood for a particular character, theme or activity. This way, different colours with well-known denotations were used to enhance intended effects in the feature films. The nature of lighting in *Rafiki*, through the multicolored candles, creates a romantic mood and brings out the entangled nature of the queer lives. In *Soul Boy*, lighting is used to bring out the mysterious ambiance that surrounded Abila's encounter with Nyawawa. Sometimes, the

directors filtered lighting for particular aesthetic purposes as it happens in the final scene of *Soul Boy*. The film directors also used different light filters to create a sense of time such as morning, midday, evening or any other time a director desires. In *Dangerous Affair*, the director not only utilizes low to medium lighting to show the times of the day but to also create the ambiance for the dominant characters such as Murags to thrive, exert their masculinity and show off their power and wealth through wasteful spending in alcohol and sex.

Chapter three also examined cinematography as another feature which foregrounded masculinity in the selected feature films. A key focus on cinematography in chapter three was framing, shot composition and camera dynamics because they were deemed to directly influence the audience's perceptions of masculinity. It established that both the composition and framing of the shot had a profound effect on the visual representation of masculinity because both touch on how an image is composed and what is to be shown. However, these were largely influenced by what the directors opted for in camera placement in order to capture the object from different perspectives resulting into varied shot types and framing for aesthetic impact. It was established that the directors not only maintained a proper shot flow but utilized a variety of shots in order to foreground practices of masculinity in the feature films. For instance, wide-shots are used to establish the aura of opulence which characterizes dominant masculinity while a series of close-up shots locate the domineering Murags at the centre of various activities in *Dangerous Affair*. A two-shot frame is used to bring out the scene at the police station while long shots are used to bring out the scene where Kena and Ziki are attacked by members of the

community in *Rafiki*. Long and wide shots are used to portray the elegance of the rich white couple's dining area and Abila's act of saving Brian's daughter, thereby earning a reward which in turn saves his family in *Soul Boy*.

5.3.3 Alternative Modes of Being Portrayed in the Feature Films

Analyses in chapter four sought to establish how the female filmmakers reconstruct and reconfigure alternative modes of being in society through the selected feature films. It established that there is a tremendous decline of the hegemonic model with the filmmakers at the vanguard in providing alternative pathways to it in their feature films. The decline of the hegemonic masculinity was occasioned by inherent contradictions and unsustainable requirements, internal fears, self-denials, feelings of inadequacy, and the need to conform to emerging and contemporary practices in society among various characters. It emerged that the filmmakers relied on varying contexts and characterization to bring to the fore emerging forms of being away from the hegemonic model.

The chapter established that the filmmakers reconstructed hegemonic practices that governed sex, intimacy and marriage to conform to the agile contemporary society and to fit into the desires, tastes and preferences of the actors involved. Thus, marriages and related partnerships were reconstructed to adapt to the dictates of the modern 'transactional economy' in order to meet the need for personal fulfillment and satisfaction. In this way, the female filmmakers essentially reconfigure socio-cultural ideologies in society thereby showing the power of film to influence not just emotionally, but also socially.

The chapter further showed that female filmmakers are at the vanguard in not only reifying, domesticating but also reconfiguring emerging global culture practices in Kenya. It emerged from the analysis that queer masculinity is depicted in feature films. The filmmakers portray the youth as having broken away from traditional hegemonic constructions in society and embraced queer masculinity, a global practice, as a contemporary socio-cultural imaginary in Kenya. Through *Rafiki*, the filmmaker shows how the Kenyan youth negotiate the knowledge of queer desire, queer sex, queer eroticism and queer ambiance. It further reconfigures the social spaces in which queer forms of being and becoming are forged, and that, despite various prohibitions, the spaces carry within them various forms of ambivalence in relation to queer lifestyles. Consequently, the filmmaker reconstructed social spaces such as the church, the public park, and the abandoned matatu to transcend the purpose for which they were originally designed to accommodate the emerging queer social imaginary. It was established that the way in which such social spaces were reconstructed in the feature film facilitated the livability of queer lifestyles and allowed queer individuals who occupy these spaces to easily invert or subvert them in ways that make it possible to practice their queer lifestyles.

5.4 Conclusions of the study

Proceeding from the understanding that feature films by female filmmakers not only are part of cultural discourses about hegemonic masculinity but also do influence ways in which we understand practices of masculinity in the Kenyan society, this study sought to examine representations of hegemonic masculinity in selected Kenyan feature films by

women filmmakers. The analysis of hegemonic masculinity in the feature films focused on forms of masculinity, techniques of representation, and reconstruction and representation of alternative modes of being in the feature films.

Findings from the study showed that the female feature filmmakers canvass various forms of masculinity such as dominant, complicit, subordinate and marginalised masculinities in the feature films. Context and the nature of characterization play a critical role in understanding practices of hegemonic masculinity in society. The female filmmakers utilized diverse aesthetic and technical elements of film in representing hegemonic masculinity in the feature films. The female filmmakers reconstructed hegemonic practices governing sex, intimacy and marriage and reconfigured them to suit demands of emerging social imaginaries and the desires, tastes and preferences of the actors involved. Queer masculinity and the livability of queer lifestyles as an emerging socio-cultural imaginary was depicted in feature film in Kenya.

5.5 Recommendations for further research

In the course of conducting this study, the following areas emerged as requiring further research:

i. The interplay between the use of particular aesthetic and technical elements of film and the representation of masculinity following diachronic and synchronic approaches.
ii. Critical exegesis on patterns of representation of masculinity in film oeuvres by individual film directors

iii. Representations of Queer social spaces in Kenyan film

iv. A comparative analysis of representation of masculinity in Kenya by female filmmakers and their male counterparts

v. Feature films and the future of masculinity in Kenya.

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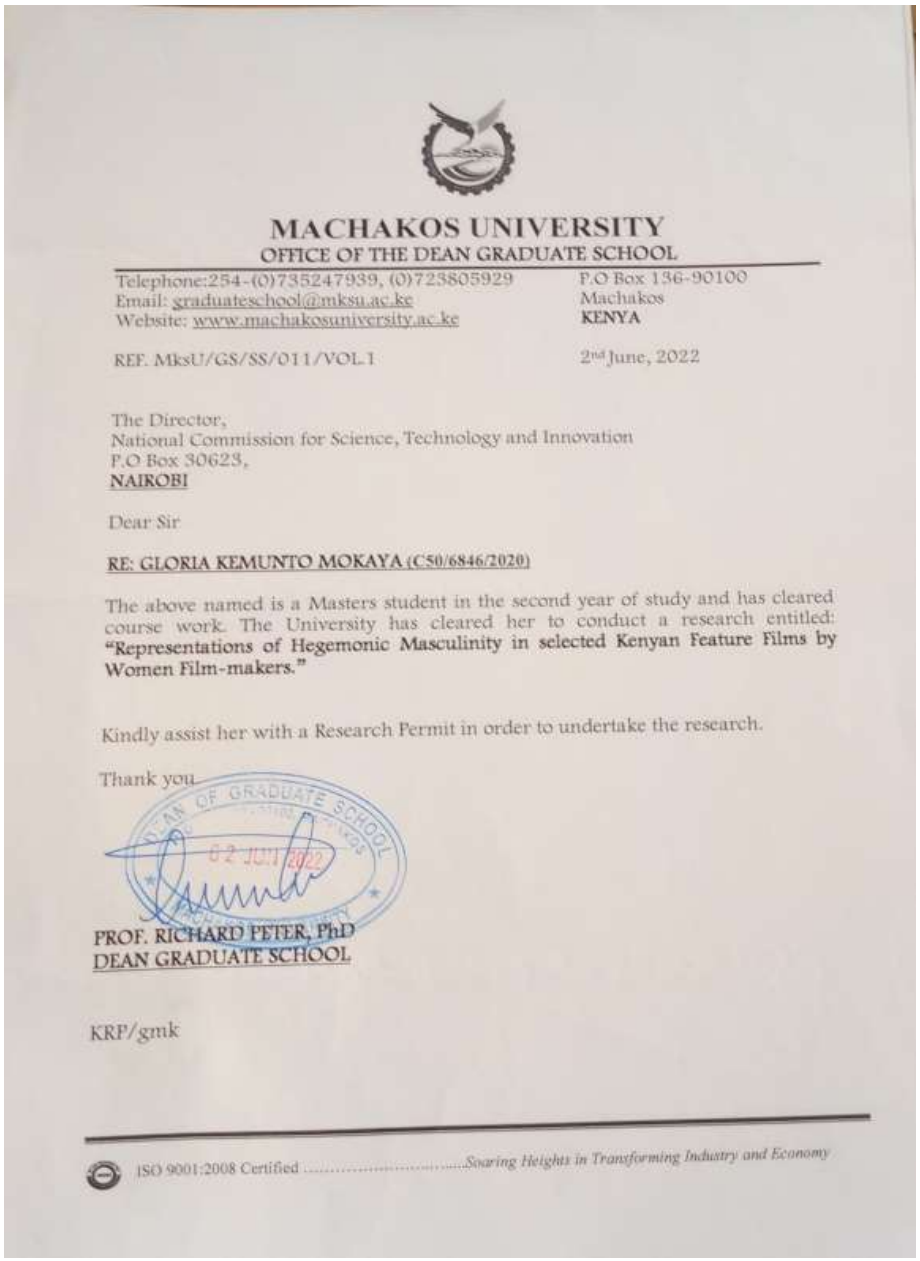
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION LETTER



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REF. MksU/GS/SS/011/VOL.1

2nd June, 2022

The Director,
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O Box 30623,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir

RE: GLORIA KEMUNTO MOKAYA (C50/6846/2020)

The above named is a Masters student in the second year of study and has cleared course work. The University has cleared her to conduct a research entitled: **"Representations of Hegemonic Masculinity in selected Kenyan Feature Films by Women Film-makers."**

Kindly assist her with a Research Permit in order to undertake the research.

Thank you

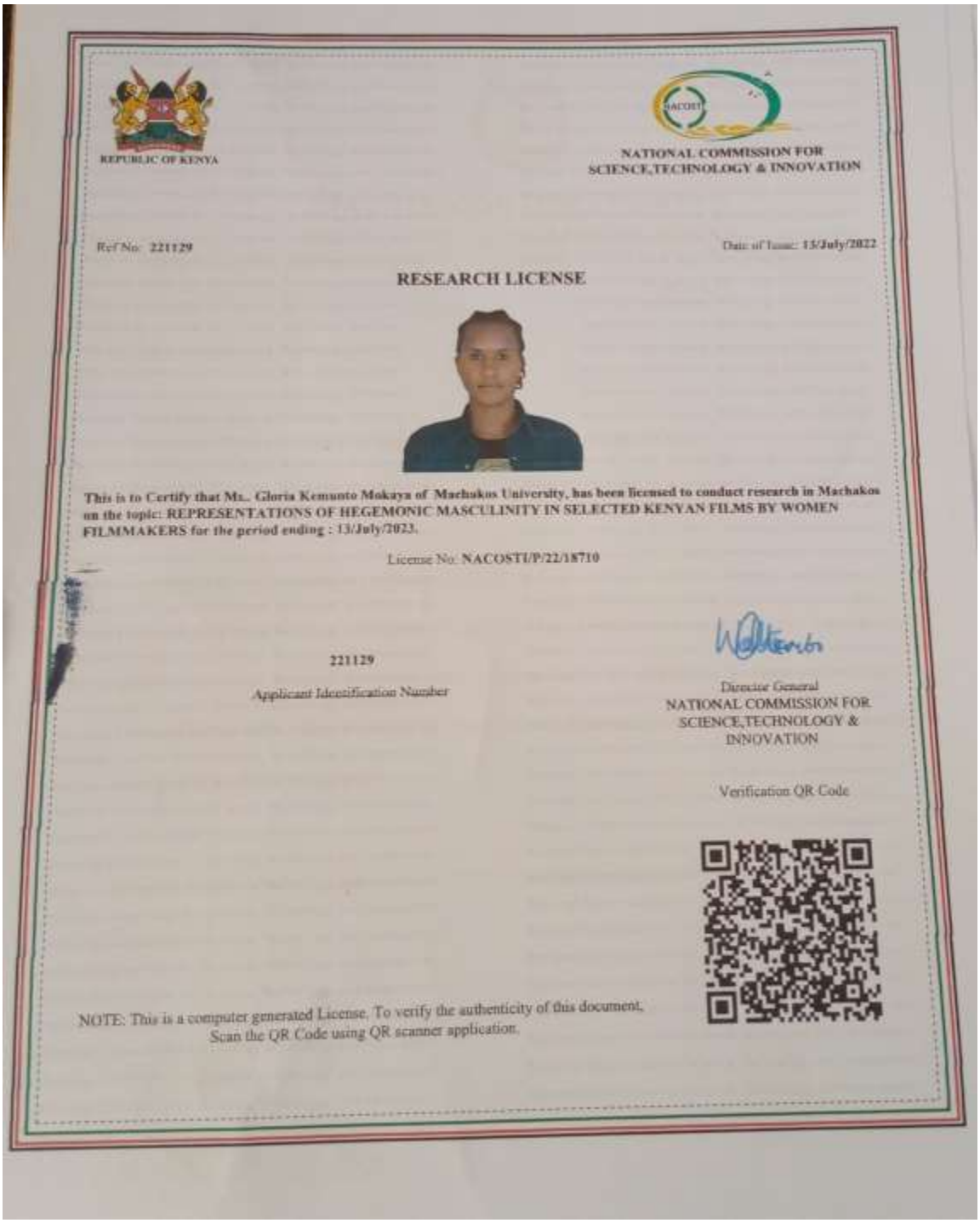
DEAN OF GRADUATE SCHOOL
02 JUN 2022

PROF. RICHARD PETER, PhD
DEAN GRADUATE SCHOOL

KRP/gmk

ISO 9001:2008 Certified .....*Soaring Heights in Transforming Industry and Economy*

APPENDIX II: NACOSTI PERMIT



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Ref No: 221129

Date of Issue: 13/July/2022

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. Gloria Kemunto Mokaya of Machakos University, has been licensed to conduct research in Machakos on the topic: REPRESENTATIONS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN SELECTED KENYAN FILMS BY WOMEN FILMMAKERS for the period ending : 13/July/2023.

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