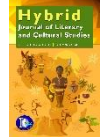




Oppression, victimhood and liberation: Interrogating character representation in Darrell Roodt's *Sarafina* (1992)



Research article



Published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global in the *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2022

© 2022 The Author(s). This article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

Article Information

Submitted: 11th October 2021

Accepted: 15th December 2021

Published: 19th January 2022

Additional information is available at the end of the article



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ISSN 2707-2150 (Online)

ISSN 2707-2169 (Print)

To read the paper online, please



Lispah Moraa Ntobo, George O Nyandoro & Margret Barasa

Department of Languages, Linguistics and Literature, Kisii University, Kenya

Correspondence email: ntabolisper@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9823-0901>

Abstract

This study sought to interrogate character representation of victimhood in the film. It focused on how characters have been depicted to represent oppression, victimhood and resistance towards liberation in the film *Sarafina*, a South African film. The study is hinged on qualitative research design. Secondary sources that comprised of scholarly publications, dissertations, thesis and articles related to the study have been consulted. The study employed postcolonial theory to highlight how oppression leads to loss of identity on the characters thus leading to victimhood, hence the oppressed try to fit in the system through adopting the ways of the oppressors but they were not fully accepted by the white supremacy and thus triggering the urge to resist so as to liberate themselves from the colonialist. The study concluded that liberation is a process that is achieved through growth. Filmmakers depict liberation through use of characters. They do so by mapping abstract ideas of oppression, victimhood and resistance on the characters.

Keywords: daughterhood, gender, identity, memoir, re/signification



How to Cite:

Ntobo, L. M., Nyandoro, G. O., & Barasa, M. (2022). Oppression, victimhood and liberation: Interrogating character representation in Darrell Roodt's *Sarafina* (1992). *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 4(1). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/hybrid-literary/article/view/719>



Public Interest Statement

By analysing the representation of characters in *Sarafina*, the research contributes to the genre of realist liberation films. It also helps film scholars in understanding that characters in different genres of film are represented differently using different filmic techniques. This is important in deciding on what technique element to employ where and why. The research also adds to the cinematic theories of films since it gives concrete examples of the filmic techniques used in representation of characters and how in return this communicates the objectives of the film.

1.0 Literature Review

1.1 Theoretical framework

The study employed the postcolonial literary theory. The theory was founded by Frantz Fanon (1952 & 1961) and advanced by [Edward Said \(1978\)](#). The study focuses on the tenets of orientalism, Imperialism, Ethnocentrism and effects of colonisation so as to analyze the study. Fanon in *Black Skin White Masks (1952)* focused on the various cultural effects of colonisation on political, linguistic and cultural experiences of societies that were former European colonies. The theory asserts that the colonised have been part of the process of subjugation subsequent to the cultural arena affiliated by the imperial process of the moment of colonization to the present day.

According to [Said \(1978\)](#) postcolonial literary theory focuses on the differences between the white colonialist and the natives. The colonialist subjected the natives to oppression through science, learning and history. They achieved in making the natives feel inferior by bringing their ideologies and subjecting them to the natives and ruled them morally and intellectually. As a result, the native societies lost their national and cultural identities. However, with time the colonialist who were once unchallenged began to be challenged by the natives and as a result this led to conflict between the colonialist and natives. The study employed this tenet of orientalism to analyse how native characters in the film *Sarafina* are oppressed by the colonialist through subjecting them to the ideologies of the colonialist, the effect that this orientalism has on the natives and how this resulted to the natives resisting this oppression.

[Knanal \(2012\)](#) asserts that postcolonial theory's major aim is to understand the loss of power, identity and culture when natives are dominated by a conquering force that is ethnocentrism. The theory is indebted to the history of the western colonization, imperialism and decolonization in Asia, India, Latin America and Africa. He goes on to say that the major contribution of postcolonial theory is to challenge the traditional value and epistemology that fuels the western philosophy, politics, education and socio-economic theory. The study employed this tenet of ethnocentrism to focus on loss of identity and power among the natives and how this led to their oppression.

According to [Elam \(2019\)](#) post-colonial theory concerns itself with political, aesthetic, economic, historical and social impact that the European created on Africans in the 18th century. Elam claims that the world we live in is impossible to understand unless one relates today's experiences to the history of imperialism and colonial rule. The theory accounts for globalisation and global modernity. It has invested in reimagining politics and ethics from underneath imperial power an effort that remain committed to those who continue to suffer its effect. The study will employ this tenet of imperialism to demonstrate how it led to oppression in the film *Sarafina*.

This study aims at analysing the filmic representation of characters in the liberation film *Sarafina*. In order to achieve this, the study employed the tenets of postcolonial theory approach in relation to the objectives of the study. The study analysed how characters in the film are represented to bring out political, social and economic oppression. The study focused on how natives were oppressed through science, literature and education. In addition, the study highlighted using this theory how oppression led to loss of identity on the characters thus leading to victimhood, hence the oppressed tried to fit in the system through adopting the ways of the oppressors but they were not fully accepted by the colonialist and thus triggering the urge to resist so as to liberate themselves from the colonialist.

1.2 Depiction of victimhood

According to [Montville \(1993\)](#) victimhood is the state of individual and collective ethnic mind that occurs when the traditional structures that provide an individual sense of security and self-worth through membership in a group are shattered by aggressive violent political outsiders. As a result, victimhood is characterized by either extreme or persistent sense of mortal vulnerability. The current study recognizes Montville definition of victimhood. It will thus borrow from it to show how characters in the film *Sarafina* have been depicted to bring out victimhood.

[Arrabal \(2019\)](#) in *Gender and Victimization in Margaret Atwood Novel Surfacing (1972)* focuses on how women are victimized through American pervasive politics, way of life and the dominance of overly patriarchal culture. The burning issue in the novel is that of women searching for identity in a society that is male dominated and thus women find themselves victims of men. The men abuse women sexually for their own satisfaction but this is right according to the law. This is metaphorically brought out by natural environment where the story takes place. Arrabal focuses on how Atwood metaphorically presents characters in the novel to show gender victimization. His study focused on gender victimization in novel genre. The current recognizes Arrabal study on gender victimization. It will however deviate from Arrabal and focus on how characters and not just female characters are presented to show victimhood in the film genre also unlike

Arrabal who focused on thematic analysis the current study will focus on character analysis. The current study will draw evidence from the film *Sarafina*.

On female victimhood Li (2018) focuses on how Edgar Poe analyses the female characters and their relationship with their husband and lovers in five short stories written by Poe; *The Legeia* (2009), *The black cat* (1934), *The oval portrait* (1842), *Morella and Berenice* (1835). The female characters in these stories are dead because of a mysterious disease caused by their lover or through their male lovers' persecution. In his study Li focuses on how the female characters are presented as sexual objects and the position they are given to serve men. Li concerns himself on how female characters are presented as victims of patriarchy violence; he however does not focus on how these characters are presented to bring out this victimization. Li's major interest is on short story and not film. This study will thus depart from Li by focusing on the depiction of characters to bring out victimhood in the film genre rather than short stories. Unlike Li whose study is gender based, the current study is not gender based and it will draw evidence from all characters in the film *Sarafina*.

In the analysis of sexual assault on teen comedy films; *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *Fast Time at Ridgmont High* (1982), *Revenge of the Nerds Super bad* and *Easy A* (1984), Halftied (2017) examines the messages that these films send to the audience surrounding the topic of sexual assault. The characters normalize sexual assault by inciting laughter and in return viewers get mixed reaction about sexual assault. In return the audience fall victims of sexual assault because of this pervasiveness. Halftied concerns himself with how characters in comedy film normalize sexual abuse and thus in return it became a norm in the society. The current study acknowledges Halftied analysis of comedy film and how it encourages audience to fall victims of sexual abuse, it will however depart from Halftied by focusing on liberation genre rather than comedy.

Crockett (2017) as cited by Guliz in *Intersectionality* examines how the black middle classes in the United States employ respectability as a strategy of resistance to deal with everyday racism. He illuminates the socio historical conditions that shape consumer micro political response to race as well as the boundary conditions on stigma avoidance and DE stigmatization efforts. Crockett mainly focuses on how the black middle class employ respectability as a way of dealing with racial oppression in the society. His study is sociological not based on literature. The current study is literary that deviate from Crockett study by focusing on how characters are presented to bring out oppression in fiction. The study will draw evidence from the liberation film *Sarafina*.

Ranganathan & James (2016) in victimhood, explores the extent to which the films; *Naa Bangaara* (2014), *Mardean* (2014) and *Lakshim* (2014) emphasize on the importance of individual resilience instead of social enabling factors for overcoming sex trafficking. The research focuses on the depiction of women's vulnerability and agency with respect to gender-based violence. By portraying sex trafficking and their related issues in a realistic

manner it is observed that none of the films move on to portray the rehabilitation and reintegration of the victims. Ranganathan & James focus on depiction of women's vulnerability in respect to gender-based violence on the films named above. Ranganathan and James research is gender based and focuses more on resilience in victims of oppression. The current study deviates from Ranganathan & James by focusing on how victims of oppression and not just resilience. The study will draw evidence from the film *Sarafina* to depict this.

O'Neil in *Portrayal of women in Movie Trailers* (2016) focuses on how women representation, sexuality, gender roles and violence remain constant over the last sixty-five years. She argues that women continue to be sexualized, stereotyped and remain relatively absent. O'Neils mainly focuses on how women characters in movie trailers are exploited sexually and through gender roles. O'Neil focuses on how women are victims of gender-based violence in movie trailers. He however does not concern himself on how women characters are presented to bring out victimhood in film. His study is inclined to victimization of one gender who work as sex workers that are women and how they are stereotyped sexually, the current study focuses on victimization of all characters in film. By focusing on the film *Sarafina* this study looks to fill this gap.

In the analysis of white heterosexual men in Norwegian films (Donnar, 2015) examines how the films reflect the wider trends that expose these characters as anxious and immature. The article is an evaluation of white male failure and inadequacy across western cinemas in the mid-2000s. More specifically it paid much attention on the Norwegian male complaints and ambivalence towards societal developments in favor of gender equality. The male characters are seen to exploit opportunities of sexual liberation in an attempt to reclaim destabilized masculinity however the desire to contain female sexuality and transform into heterosexual sexual maturity is frustrated and male anxieties remain unresolved. Donner focuses on how heterosexual men in Norwegian film are exploiting their sexual liberation. The study does not however focus on how characters are presented to show victimhood, this study will thus look to fill this gap by focusing on the film *Sarafina*.

Blasdell (2015) focuses on portrayal of prostitution in *Reel or Reality* films. He examined the female characters engaging in street level prostitution in the US through victimhood between 1992-1997. The films presented prostitutes in such a way that it failed to mobilize moral outrage and in return it did not encourage the viewers to care about the issue of prostitution. Blasdell study focuses on how female characters are presented as victims of sexual abuse through glorifying prostitution. This study departs from Blasdell by paying attention to the representation of characters to bring out victimhood by analysing the film, *Sarafina*.

Cojocar (2015) on victimhood challenges the abolitionist movement's unidimensional interpretation of women who are engaged in sex work as victims trafficked

in the sex industry. By analyzing the experience of a formerly victim of sex trafficking and interpretation of the lives the victims lived in Japanese sex industry Cojocarú introduces the concept of ‘secondary exploitation’ where these representations are framed and repackaged for consumption by opportunistic actors. Cojocarú concerns himself with challenges that sex workers victims experience especially when the victims have been trafficked. The current study acknowledges Cojocarú contribution to victimhood, however the current study will depart from Cojocarú by focusing on victimhood of oppression due to colonial supremacy rather than sex workers. By focusing on the *Sarafina* this study will look to fill this gap.

Roth in *The Lion King, A Short History of Disney Fascism* (2006) shows how only the might and beautiful triumph while the weak only survive by serving the strong. The weak ones in *Lion King* (1994) Film who are represented by the antelopes and zebras vehemently bow down before their king an indication they are ready to serve him and the king who is a carnivore makes no attempt of eating them if they are willing to serve him. Roth focuses on victimhood in *Lion King* and shows how the weak ones only survive when they serve the powerful and the ruling class. The current study will borrow from Roth to show how blacks survive by serving and adhering to the rules of the white supremacist. To achieve this, the current study will draw evidence from the film *Sarafina*.

2. Results, discussion and analysis

2.1 The static, dynamic and round characterisation of victimhood

Representation of victimhood is depicted in the film *Sarafina* through static, dynamic and round characters. According to Gaiman, Gladwell, Brown, Atwood, Carol and Baldacci (2021) Static characters as those who do not change throughout the narrative. They play supportive roles in narratives and they do not undergo internal growth meaning they remain static. Dynamic characters on the other hand change over course of time in a story. These characters change as a result of growth which is caused by different experiences they undergo. Some dynamic characters play major roles in fiction but others play supporting roles. Round characters are fully developed in any piece of art. They are complex and show desire towards something. Their opinions are highly respected by others in the film. Round characters are given influential roles in narratives and they are highly loved or hated in a narrative. The filmmaker depicted victimhood through static, dynamic and round characters in the following ways.

2.2 The confessors

Rosenberg (2003) asserts that recognition of one’s victimhood is a normal response to trauma and can help reestablish a person’s confidence. In the film *Sarafina* characters such as Mary Masumbuka (teacher) Shawn (student) and Sarafina (main character) come out

in terms of dialogue to admit that they are indeed being oppressed. Mary Masumbuka is one round character in the film *Sarafina*. From the beginning of the film, she is depicted as this character that creates awareness on the oppression that the blacks go through. Masumbuka desire for change is depicted throughout the film. She presents victimhood by clearly pointing out in her history lessons the negative impact the coming of the white supremacists has on blacks. For instance, the negative impact the great trek of 1836 brought on the blacks. These impacts include the confiscation of their land and leaving them as squatters in their own land, unfair distribution of resources, police brutality, blacks being taught foreign language, permits to work for the white supremacist among others. In her teaching she focuses on how some white supremacists who were passing through South Africa decided to stay since they felt that Africans were nothing in their land. In return they became controlling took everything that belonged to the blacks forcefully. They introduced sjamboks, passbooks, Afrikaan lessons and PWC that led to the suffering of the blacks. Mary Masumbuka teaches this to her students so as to make them aware of the injustices that the aggressors brought about to Africa. This contradicts what the white supremacist wants the teachers to teach in school; that the coming of the white supremacists helped bring democracy, justice and fine school. To achieve this, the filmmaker employs the use of narration.

Mary Masubuka: Here comes Jan Van Riebeeck in his boat followed by many other boats... they pass South Africa and they are thirsty and stop here for a drink... so that is what South Africa is for the whites a gas station stop to somewhere else, a Pepsi and pizza in the sun... so now begins the great trek of 1836. The white boys are looking north; they say what do you see? I see great land man, beautiful land! Anybody there? No! Just a few Kalfirs sticking spears on each other's future. So why do you say we make a trek. Good idea and what does that bring to us Sjamboks, passbooks, PWC, Afrikaans lesson...

From the history lesson Mary Masubuka points out to her students how the explorers of the 1836 great trek saw the natives of South Africa. What began as a stop for refreshment led to the confiscation of the land belonging to blacks. According to the aggressors there was nobody but primitive Africans who were killing each other with spears. Hence justifying their actions of taking over the land and mistreating the Africans. While teaching she sarcastically mimics how the white supremacists admired land belonging to the blacks and how they overlook the Kalfirs living in the land as nothing. She varies her tone throughout the lesson and this helps in emphasizing the injustices of the white supremacists on Africans. As she teaches a white police officer peeps through the window, Mary's face is painted with fear and stares at the police and changes her lesson

to pointing out the great achievements of the white supremacist on the blacks. The students innocently look outside and noticing that the white police officer is listening to what is being taught they at once and unanimously agree with Masubuka that the white supremacist have brought them civilization. This communicates fear as well as lack of self-expression of the blacks. They fear expressing what they see and experience in their own country. The mention of sjamboks communicates the violence that the blacks are subjected to since the coming of the white supremacists, the passbooks communicate the cessation of movement that was subjected on the blacks by the white supremacists and the Afrikaans lesson communicate the introduction of foreign language and culture on the blacks.

The filmmaker also employs the use of a close up shot of Mary Masubuka to expresses the pain and the injustices that these foreigners brought about to the blacks. This helps in sensitizing the learners as well as creating an empathetic mood in the film. Through Mary Masubuka the students are made aware that though the aggressors hide behind developments such schools, democracy and religion in reality they are the ones behind injustices such as violence, work permits and many injustices that the blacks are facing. The acknowledgement of these injustices brings out the suffering that the blacks are going through in the hands of the white supremacist.



Picture 13 a medium shot of teacher Mary Masubuka teaching students on the effects of colonization

The instance where Crocodile and Sarafina fight to play the role of Mandela in the school play is a clear indicator that the students know the injustices that are being done to them in the country and would wish to showcase how these injustices are later overcome. The main character Sarafina is a dynamic character. She undergoes tremendous growth throughout the film. At the beginning she is presented as a young innocent school girl who wishes for nothing but to be a star just like her icon Nelson Mandela. She speaks against violence and advocates for peace. She loves school and is willing to study so as to have a

bright future. However, as time goes by, she discovers that the only way she can be a star like her icon is by fighting aggressors. She also discovers that school books are full of lies and that the white supremacists are only keeping them in school so as to avoid them on the streets. The script she recites to her history teacher and the rest of the class on how Mandela walks home free from prison is a true reflection and confession of the suffering that blacks are going through and their wish of becoming free from these suffering.

Sarafina: The day Nelson Mandela walks free! All the crowds!
Everyone laughing and singing.
Student: Yes Sarafina (joining in a song)
Free at last Nelson Mandela,
Walking down the streets of Soweto
Sarafina: And he speaks to the people. Free at last! Nelson Mandela.

The wishful thinking of the students that is expressed through the school play script clearly unwinds the fact that the students have recognized the injustices being done to them and they hope to communicate these injustices through a school play. The freedom of Nelson Mandela metaphorically means the freedom of the blacks from the injustices they are being subjected. The dialogue between Mary Masubuka and Sarafina is evident that the blacks are aware of the injustices done to them.

Mary Masubuka: I liked your idea for the show, Mandela free.
It will make a great show, only...
Sarafina: Only they won't like it.
Mary Masumbuka: No they won't
Sarafina: So you're saying we shouldn't do it
Mary Masubuka: Am saying it will make trouble
And right now, they are looking for the trouble makers.

From the conversation Mary Masubuka has been presented as a confident character who helps in revealing the fearful nature of the protagonist (Sarafina). The above conversation also reveals what the blacks go through. It is clear that the natives are not allowed to express themselves. The white supremacists have created fear in them in such a way that they cannot express what affects them in the society. Though the students have good ideas on what the school play should be all about they cannot express it freely because if they do so they will be considered trouble makers in the society. Thus, there is no freedom of expression. The filmmaker has employed the use of scene- en -scene to reveal this. The scene where Sarafina recites her play to the rest of the class is immediately followed by the scene Mary Masubuka confesses to Sarafina that if they cast the play, it will create

trouble. The arrangement of scenes helps in juxtaposing the expectation of the blacks verses the reality. The blacks have the desire of expressing and make known what they are going through in terms of play but this is suppressed by the white supremacists who would want nothing but only good deeds to be expressed about them.

Shawn one of student is presented as a static character. In the film he is always inciting the other students to stand up and fight the injustices that they are facing. Through the dialogue that they have with the rest of the class in school much is revealed about the injustices of the Boers to the natives (pg. 81-82). From the dialogue we learn that the Boers use schools as a way of preventing the Kalfirs from confronting them in the streets and not to get education. We equally learn that people who go against the Boers regime disappear without a trace (Mary Masubuka and Shawn) and that teachers are closely monitored so as not to influence the students. The filmmaker has achieved this through the use of shots. The picture (14) is proven to Shawn's allegations that people who go against the white supremacists disappear. What is worse is the fact that Mary Masubuka is arrested in school as her students watch. Though students try resisting this the white supremacists give them a deaf ear. The incident of a teacher being arrested before her students is meant to create psychological fear on the students that despite of their position in the society if they go against what the white supremacist wants, they will be arrested anywhere and at any time.



Picture 14 an image of Mary Masubuka being arrested for being accused of teaching communism as her students watch

From the picture Miss Maubuka is forcefully being dragged to the police vehicle as her students watch helplessly. Though in fear she communicates using her fist that they should fight this kind of treatment just the way the Russian people fought and defeated the Napoleon army. The choice of topic that Mary Masubuka teaches the day she is arrested helps to emphasize the victimhood that the blacks are subjected to. The topic metaphorically acts as a way of calling upon the students to unite against the injustices of the white supremacists.

Miss Masubuka:

... so what do we learn from this, that Napoleons army, the best equipped, the best trained army, the most powerful army in the continent. Everybody says they cannot be beaten. So what happens? They are gone. Why? Were they beaten in battle? No! They were defeated by the people...people can defeat the army History has proved it.

The filmmaker has metaphorically used the Napoleons army in comparison with the Boers who are well trained and well equipped as compared to the blacks. For this reason, the blacks are overpowered by them. This helps in bringing out the injustices that the blacks are subjected to. We can therefore conclude that indeed the blacks are aware of the injustices that they are subjected to thus making them feel victims of oppression. Characters in the film admit that they are subjected to injustice by the white supremacists. They admit this through songs, school play, lessons taught in class and dialogues. In return these help the black characters in the film to reestablish confidence that they too deserve better and hence begin to resist the white supremacist way of ruling them.

2.3 The Associates

Some characters have accepted to be oppressed in the film. They do so by blinding their eyes on the injustices done to them by the colonialist. Characters such Angelina, the woman at the market, school principal, the teacher (the one replaces Mary Masubuka) and the society in general depict this. These characters have been presented as static in the film. They play supportive roles in the film but through the roles they play they portray victimhood. Shawn is presented as a static throughout the film. He plays the role of a stubborn student who influences others to fight the white supremacists. The conversation between Shawn and the rest of the class (one of the evenings) reveals his nature but shed more light on how the society accepts to be oppressed.

Shawn: The Boers want everything quiet, everything under control....

But we are not happy, we are not quite and we are not under control.

Student: People don't want the boycott of the Boers business.

They say we only hurt ourselves

Shawn: People say do nothing! People say what can we do?

People say please Mr. Boer beat me again! I say bullshit, fight!

Sarafina: Ok Shawn fight, but don't fight the school what is the use of that....

From the conversation above we learn that the society in general would rather have everything run the way it is than question the injustices done to them. This is driven by fear and by the fact that the injustices done to them are so traumatizing especially if they rebel. Sarafina also expresses her fears that if Shawn and like-minded students fight the school, they are likely to cause more trouble to themselves. She prefers if they do not fight but rather let things be the way they are. The fear of being victimized for going against the wishes of the aggressors makes them accept whatever injustice is done to them. The woman at the market also reveals that the blacks have accepted to be oppressed. When Shawn and his gang from school address the people at the market telling them to boycott the Boers business, the woman comes to the defense of the Boers.

Woman: Hey, hey, you shut up! You go home.

What is this fooling with other people's business?

Shawn: Why do you shop here mama?

Woman: Because I want to and am not your mama. Now out of my way.

Shawn: You want to give your money to the Boers!

You want to help them and not your own people?

Woman: You get out of my way! You boys have no one!

And all you do is make things bad.

What is your daddy doing letting you run wild like this?

Shawn: My dad is doing nothing! Just like you and that is why nothing changes.

The dialogue reveals that the woman and other people shop at the Boers business and not at the native's shops. They do so because they do not want to cause any trouble. They avoid questioning or rebelling against this because they do not like the implication it brings on to them hence, they accept what is dictated on to them to avoid trouble.



Picture 15 an image of a woman refusing to be told where to shop as others fearfully watch as she lectures Shawn and his gang

To achieve this filmmaker has employed the use of a medium shot to communicate what the natives are going through. From the picture we get a glimpse of the other black women listening as the woman lectures Shawn and his gang. From the picture we notice that they are tired and not excited. This creates the impression that they are fed up and not willing to confront anyone. Through this the filmmaker has created a resigned mood to show that the natives are tired of the oppression but not willing to fight back. A clear indication they have accepted oppression as the norm. Angelina (Sarafina's mother) is presented as a static character. Her rough experience as a single mother has forced her to accept the injustices done to her by the white supremacist. She overlooks the evils the white supremacists do to the blacks and comes to their defense that they are good people. She does so because she has a job and hence can be able to provide for children. The dialogue between Sarafina and her mother reveals all this.

Angelina: Have you gone crazy; you want me to lose my job?

Who is going to buy your books?

Sarafina: School books are full of lies

Angelina: You are a stupid girl Sarafina, get off that bed and show some sense

Sarafina: I want to kill them!

Angelina: Kill them! They are good people.

Sarafina: You have been a servant for too long mama.

Angelina: Maybe that is because your father has been dead for a long time

Sarafina: Papa died fighting

Angelina: Your father did not die fighting; he got sick in Mozambique and died!

Sarafina: He died for the struggle!

Angelina: Oh sure, he went away to be a hero and I stayed home to work.

Sarafina: Don't talk like that?

Angelina: I got four children and no man, my children cannot eat glory

Sarafina: We eat stiffen food!

Angelina: Food is food! You want to starve?

Sarafina: Maybe!

Angelina: The way you're going you may end up dead like your father

Sarafina: I rather die like him than live like you.

From the dialogue we conclude that Angelina prefers to be silent on issues that affect them. For instance, she would rather work and send her children to school even when they are being taught lies. The kind of food that her children eat does not bother her, to her food is food as long as one eats, they are lucky. The fact that she has a job makes her feel that the boss who is a white supremacist is a good person. She would rather continue to work as a maid rather than question the injustices done to her and other blacks. She

dresses in uniform so as to identify with her bosses and differentiate from other Africans who do not work. When called upon by her boss she answers with great humility. She does her job perfectly well to avoid any confrontation. She employs respectability as her way of survival. This clearly shows that Angelina has accepted to be oppressed hence becomes a victim of oppression. Angelina also dismisses the fact that her husband lost his life because of the struggle. She satirically makes fun of him by saying that he went away to be a hero while she stayed home to work. This draws the conclusion of the fact that Angelina prefers if her husband had stayed and worked in order to provide for the family as she does rather try to be a hero (fight for freedom) something that cost him his life. The conversation also reveals the effects of war on black families. Angelina is a widow as a result of her husband dying in war. She is left with four children to take care of. Since she has no job, she opts for a menial job as a maid in one of the white supremacist house. She leaves her children to be taken care of by her sister who is equally suffering due to the hard economic times caused by apartheid. She does this not because she wants to but because she has to meet her obligations of a mother. She painfully lectures her daughter that she has four children with no man. A painful reminder that she is playing both roles and it is not by choice. When her daughter retorts and tells her that she would rather die like her father than live like her Angelina is painfully hurt and employs respectability by telling her daughter she has work to do. A painful acceptance that she got no influence of her own daughter and those circumstances have led her to live the life they are living.



Image 16 a close-up photo of Angelina watching with disbelief as her own daughter lectures her

From the picture one can see the pain written in Angelina's face. The war has brought in so much hatred and tension that even members of the family have turned against each other. The picture communicates pain that Angelina has lost influence of her own child

and she fears that if she goes on rioting then she might end up being killed just like her husband.

The history teacher (the one who replaces Mary Masubuka) is presented as a static character. He plays the supportive role of a teacher. He is also depicted to have accepted oppression to be the norm. When Mary Masubuka is arrested and taken away, he prefers not to question this but rather takes over from where she left from. His manner of dressing confirms that he identifies with white supremacists. He dresses in a suit and teaches with a lot of authority so as to be heard and be feared by the students. What is worse is the fact that he accepts to teach the authorized syllabus even when he knows that the content, he is teaching is not true. The filmmaker has revealed this through the dialogue between the students and the teacher. Through fear the teacher does not want to attend to the concern of students by telling them the truth about the whereabouts of Mary Masubuka after she is arrested from class. He prefers not to talk about it for this will land him in trouble. He further teaches the students the wrong content rather than the right content because this is what is directed to them by the white supremacists. The filmmaker has achieved this through the use of narration through dialogue.

Teacher: I am replacing your regular teacher for the rest of the term.

Sarafina: Sir, where have they taken Miss Masubuka?

Teacher: That is none of my business and none of your business!

We won't touch that subject again! Is that clear...

Teacher: Why did the Russian campaign of 1812 fail, what defeated them?

Crocodile: The people said

Teacher: I said what not who? The winter!

Napoleon hadn't recognized with the Russian winter.

He thought his army was safe in Moscow

But the people in Moscow had burnt down their city before he could get there.

Sarafina: So it was the people

Student: Burning!

Sarafina: The people burnt down their own houses rather than let the army win!

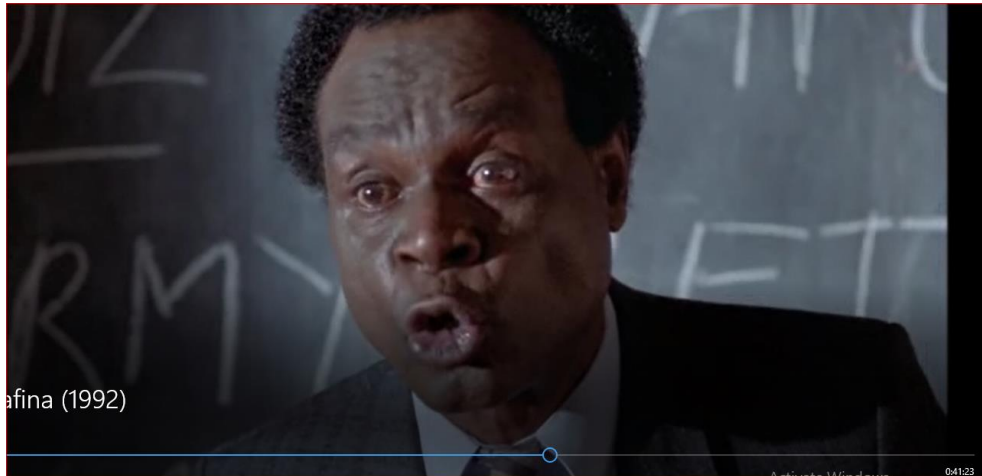
That is what you're teaching us?

Teacher: (with much vigor) I am teaching you the authorized syllabus.

The decision to burn Moscow.

From the dialogue we learn that professions such as teaching have been compromised because of fear teachers teach the wrong content to students rather than the right content. Some teachers have accepted this so as to avoid being in trouble. The teachers

who teach the right content against the crafted syllabus are arrested and they disappear just as the case of Mary Masubuka. This is done before the student thus resulting to psychological torture on the students and other teachers hence resulting fear and paving way for the white supremacists to oppress the natives.



Picture 17: A close up picture of a history teacher teaching his students with fear on the decision to burn Moscow

To achieve this filmmaker has employed a close up shot to show the fear that the history teacher has while trying to convince the students on the decision to burn Moscow. The eyes communicate fear while he is trying to shout on the top of his voice to convince the students that the decision to burn Moscow was as a result of winter and not the people. By using this shot the filmmaker creates a tension mood between the teacher and the students. The school principal has also been depicted as one who has accepted oppression as the norm. This has been portrayed through the dialogue he has with the lieutenant bloomer and Mary Masubuka in his office when Mary Masubuka is accused of teaching students communism and violence revolution.

Lieutenant Bloem: Do you teach the authorized syllabus Miss Masubuka?

Miss Masubuka: Yes

Lieutenant Bloem: With additional material of yours?

School Principal: (with falling intonation) Mary!

You have to teach the authorized syllabus, you know that.

Lieutenant Bloem: What is this additional material of yours?

Miss Masubuka: I want them to know where they are coming from!

I want them to have a sense of pride in themselves

Lieutenant Bloem: Black pride!

Miss Masubuka: If you were!

Lieutenant Bloem: You're playing with fire
Miss Masubuka: Would you rather they were ashamed of themselves!
Lieutenant Bloem: I will tell you what I would rather,
I rather they believed in peace to go to school,
Get an education! Get a chance in life!
Not get their mind filled with crazy dreams!
Miss Masubuka: That maybe one day there will be no police in school.
That maybe one day they won't be afraid of each other?
School Principal: (with low falling intonation) Mary, you are a fine teacher;
I don't want to lose you.
Follow the authorized syllabus from now on please and nothing else.
Miss Masubuka: Right principal.

From the dialogue we conclude that the school syllabus is crafted by the white supremacists to be taught in schools for the blacks. If a teacher goes against the syllabus or uses additional material like Miss Masubuka then that calls for trouble. We also learn that the white supremacists believe in making the natives feel small through education. The education system does not allow the natives to believe in themselves. What is worse is the fact that some teachers like the school principal and the history teacher know this and have accepted it as the norm without questioning.



Picture 18. A medium shot of the school principal staring at Mary Masubuka with disbelief for engaging Lieutenant Bloom

To achieve this, the filmmaker has employed the medium up image of the principal to show how he watches with disbelief as Miss Masubuka confronts Lieutenant Bloom as he questions the use of additional materials in teaching together with the syllabus. The picture communicates the fear as the principal is aware the kind of trouble that Miss Masubuka is putting herself into. With fear he pleads with her to teach the authorized

syllabus so as to avoid any trouble or losing her job. Characters in the film are presented to having accepted oppression. They do so because of the fear that has been impacted on them by the white supremacists. Professions such as teaching are compromised by the white supremacists so as to achieve their goal that is oppressing the blacks. The school managers are controlled by the white supremacists and are used to implement their policies. The white supremacists have put the blacks in circumstances that have resulted to them to employ respectability so as to avoid confrontation and conflict with the white supremacist.

2.4 The Needy

Characters in the film *Sarafina* are depicted to desire security, respect and recognition both physically and psychological in an environment that is dominated by white supremacists. According to (Rosenberg, 2003) the human needs theory asserts that individuals and groups have the desire for security, dignity, respect in both physical and psychological terms that is involving identity, recognition, participation and control over their own destiny. Characters in the film have depicted this. For instance, Sarafina the main character has this desire to be a star just like the icon Nelson Mandela. The filmmaker has achieved this through narration, music and the background pictures. The monologue Sarafina has when she walks to Mary Masubuka office proves this to be true

Sarafina: Why can't I be you Nelson? Just once!
Make a big speech just the way you do it,
Mandela free at last everybody clapping and cheering.
Mandela's free and I am the star, just for the day ok Nelson?
Your day will come.

Sarafina has this longing of being a star in a society that is heavily oppressed. She hopes that someday her icon Nelson Mandela will be released but till then she just wants to play Nelson Mandela in a school play despite being a woman and give a speech just the way Nelson will do when he will be released. Her desire to play Nelson Mandela is however objected by Crocodile who claims that he will play Mandela in the school play because he is a man. This objection from Crocodile clearly reveals that women are victims of male chauvinism. The wishful thinking of Mandela free has been metaphorically been used to show the blacks desire for freedom in an oppressed society. The filmmaker has used this to communicate to the audience that the oppressed too have the desire for identity of self in a society that rarely recognizes them. The song *Sarafina* also depicts the need for being recognized. Sarafina fantasizes through this song that she is a star. People cheering and

clapping, being driven in a big car as the crowd try to get her glimpse of her and pictures as she signs their autographs.

*Sarafinaaaaa, when you talk the way you talk
The body temperature begins to rise
Sarafina, Sarafina you are the one
Sarafinaaaaaaa, when you walk the way you walk
Perspiration commence to cover me
Flowing down me body
Sarafinaaaa, sarafina you are the one
Sarafina, Sarafina you are the one.
Sarafinaa, sarafina don't you run away from me
Baby sarafina, baby sarafina
Sarafina sarafina sarafina mama yoo...*

The song depicts Sarafina's longing of being a star in a society where the blacks are oppressed and are not seen as people of importance. In the song Sarafina is important and she got an admirer who never wants her to run. The song figuratively means that inside she is a heroine and all she needs is to face her fears (sarafina don't you run away from me) so that the outer world will see her courageousness and she will be a star just the way she has been dreaming. In the song she is a star and her fellow students and the entire of Soweto love and admire her. The song is performed in Soweto and indication that the blacks are longing for geographical identity that they too from Soweto are important and they got dreams of being important people in the society. The filmmaker employs a long shot to depict the horrible living conditions of the people in Soweto.



Picture 19: An image of Sarafina fantasizing performing the song Sarafina in Soweto

From the shot we see they live in slums. Their poor living conditions present the suffering they go through that never give them room to dream of anything good yet they dream big of becoming stars (case of Sarafina). In the song, Sarafina is asked not to run away by the admirer. The admirer (Me) in the song has been metaphorically used to refer to Soweto where the effects of oppression are being felt. The song is a longing feeling for identity and recognition of the young people of Soweto. The choices of characters that perform the song are young people (students) an indication that there is still hope for change. The song however ends sadly because her wishful thinking is cut short by the presence of heavily armed police officers. The filmmaker ends the fantasy world of Sarafina by presenting heavily armed police officers to communicate the oppression the blacks are put through. Their presence mean that blacks are inferior beings who cannot be 'stars' just the way Sarafina dreams. Their presence brings Sarafina back to reality that she is black and hence not in control of her dreams but rather being controlled on whom to be. The police present the insecurities that the blacks have to fight so that they can have their freedom back



Picture 20: An image of Sarafina and her colleagues performing her fantasy song Sarafina as reality hits that they are being colonized

The filmmaker employed the wide shot so as to capture the jubilation of the performance. Through the picture the wishful thinking of a happy star is depicted. However, this is juxtaposed with the presence of heavily armed police officers behind the students who forcefully make their way through the performance. From the picture we conclude that the heavily armed police officers are likely to create fear on the performers. The filmmaker uses this picture to show how the white supremacists have created fear on the natives from achieving their dreams. The dialogue between Miss Masubuka and Sarafina also reveals the victimhood of the natives. They have this wishful thinking of what they want.

Sarafina: What do you want Mistress?

Mary Masubuka: Me I want very many things! I want the war to be over!
I want the hate to be over! I want my Joe back in my arms!
I want quite days and loving nights, I want babies,
I want to come home to kindness...

Mary Masubuka hopes that someday she will live her dream and she will be free from the oppression subjected to them. To achieve this filmmaker has employed the use of a close-up camera shot to bring out the emphasis of this. From the shot we see the wishful thinking of Mary Masubuka. This also helps to create the mood of empathy on what the war has subjected the blacks to. The picture makes us see the way Sarafina sees her teacher. She begins to see her like this person whose has been ripped off her future. The war has taken more than just freedom but humanity. Her needs are emphasized through the repetition of the phrase 'I want'. This helps in creating emphasize on the desire of what Mary Masubuka wishes to have. As a result of this Sarafina gains courage and goes for the gun hidden at Mary Masubuka's house. The action of her taking the gun and placing it on the table communicates that she is now ready to fight the oppressive powers of the white supremacists.



Picture 21: A close up of Mary Masubuka expressing her wishes

2.5 The Unsympathetic

According to Kaufman (2020) people who have been subjected to suffering before tend to project their pain and suffering to others. They feel they are entitled to behave aggressively and selfishly thus ignoring the suffering of others by focusing on themselves and leaving the others to suffer. This statement explains the behaviour of Constable Sabella and Sarafina's uncle. They are depicted to be victims of oppression who project their experiences to their fellow natives and family. They feel entitled to these behaviours at the expense of others. They use abusive language and violence to portray this. The duos

are portrayed as static characters that do not grow though out the film. Constable Sabella works with the white supremacist and shows no empathy on the natives. Sabella constantly brutally beats the fellow blacks as if he is a white supremacist. He spies for them and blackmails the natives so as to get information from them. He does this so that he can be favoured and appreciated with the white supremacists. In turn the white supremacists have rewarded him with the position of a constable, a car and build him a dream house. Although constable Sabella has been given all this he still stays in the same neighbourhood as the natives and for him to remain relevant he has to keep the colonialist informed of what is happening. These results to him behaving the way he does because if he does not measure up then he may not enjoy his benefits.



Picture 22: An image of Constable Sabella beating a student mercilessly for trespassing

The filmmaker depicts the selfish and cruelty nature of constable Sabella through the dialogue between him and sarafina.

Sarafina: Put Jabu down!

Sabella: Hey, hey take it easy.

Sarafina: Why don't you take out your sjambok and beat me?

Sabella : Did I ever hurt you?

Sarafina: Leave me alone!

Sabella: Oh baby, when did I ever give you anything but sweet words?

Sarafina: You know if I was a man I would kill you!

Sabella: Me! Why kill me?

Everybody loves Sabella, except the trash in the streets.

You see I sweep away the trash for you sweetheart.

I make the streets clean for you so that you can walk so pretty.

Sarafina: Our day will come

Sabella: Sure it will, but you need a policeman, you see everybody needs a policeman.

Sarafina: Not dead like you!

Sabella: Oh, so am the bad man, am i?

Ok go ahead, those kids burning the school you let them free!

Those kids threatening the store out of business, you let them free too.

Those moles running on the streets looting and killing you let them free...

You need me princess, you need me.

From the dialogue we can conclude that Sabella has been a victim of oppression before. He refers to his fellow natives as trash and he justifies his action of killing them so as to make the streets clean. He feels entitled to what he does to the level he thinks that even after the white supremacist leaves, he will still be of essence to serve his people. He justifies his actions and glorifies his position of being a policeman. He uses abusive language like moles to refer to the natives and feels entitled to it. He is insensitive to the suffering of the natives and that is why Sarafina refers to her as a dead.

The behaviour of Sabella can be explained to be a projection of what he has gone through or what he has seen the white supremacists do to the natives. He identifies with this cruelty and behaves like so because he has been psychologically traumatized from the cruelty of the colonialist. He is a victim of trauma who prefers to relate or identify with violence. Sarafina's uncle portrays lack of empathy to his family even when he knows that all of them are facing hard times. He uses abusive language such as Monkey to refer to his children. He selfishly demands for beer while he knows how difficult it is to put food on the table. He is always drunk and behaves like a zombie. The filmmaker has employed dialogue to bring out this.

Sarafina's uncle: How many times do I have to tell you the same thing?

One of these days am going to hit one of you with a brick.

Sarafina: What is it now uncle?

Sarafina's uncle: Look at this Monkey washing his face with our morning beer jug!

Sarafina: That jug is not for your beer, that jug is for our morning tea.

Sarafina's uncle: And your mixing it, I don't drink tea, I drink beer am a man

Sarafina's aunt: That is no way to talk to children!

Sarafina's uncle: These children are all full of shit! You should stop spoiling them

And you Sarafina you are getting too big for your boots.

Sarafina queen of Soweto....

Sarafina's uncle is depicted to be a victim of oppression who is projecting his experience to his family. He feels entitled to his beer at the expense of others. He uses abusive language such as Monkey to belittle others but refers to himself as a man and justifies his action of being drunk. He rubbishes the dreams Sarafina has of becoming a star one day simply to hurt her. He enjoys making other people feel small. He prefers being drunk all through because it hides the pain and suffering that they can face when he is sober. From these we conclude that Sarafina's uncle is a victim of oppression.

3.0 Conclusion

From the findings, victimhood is depicted by static, dynamic and round characters. The characters were able to represent victimhood through confession, accepting oppression as the norm, desire for security, respect and recognition and through projection of their pain and suffering on others. The study concluded that liberation is a process that is achieved through growth. Filmmakers depict liberation through use of characters. They do so by mapping abstract ideas of oppression, victimhood and resistance on the characters. The white supremacists in the film *Sarafina* oppress the blacks by denying them resources while they allocate themselves all the resources, they create fear on the blacks by brutally beating them, they enforce laws that favour them at the expense of the blacks. They craft school syllabus that paints blacks as weak while they are painted as mighty. As a result, the blacks fear the white supremacists, they do as they are dictated, and they suffer in silence by employing respectability. Some blacks are psychologically affected and turn to drinking while others project the pain and suffering on their fellow blacks.

References

- Alvano, P. A. (2019). *Gender and Victimization in Margret Atwood's surfacing*. Universidad de Jaen
- Amir, H. (2016). *Ibsen's Treatment of Women, Journal of social economics*. University of Bangladesh.
- Ayu, B. (2020). *The Impact of Gender In equality on Women as Reflected in George Gissing's The Odd Women*. Diponegoro University.
- Bazin, A. (1976). "In the Major Film Theories", *An Introduction By J. Dudley Andrew* Pp134-178. New York Oxford University Press.
- Beeler, K. (2006). *Tattoos, Desire and Violence; Marks of Resistance in Literature, Film and Television*. McFarland & Company, Inc., publisher.
- Brooks, O. (2016). *Approved for All Audience: A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Portrayal of Women in Movie Trailers*. Western Michigan University
- Bulbul, A. (2011). *Gender, Sexuality & Nationhood in Cinematic Representation of Liberation*. International Institute of Social Studies.
- Butler, J. (2015). *Female Liberation and Autonomy in the Films of Federico Fellin*. Retrieved from DOI: 10.18193/Sab.vlil.17.
- Claire, H. (2017). "She brought it on herself"; *A discourse analysis of Sexual assault in Teen Comedy film*. DePauw University.
- Claudia, C. (2015). *Sex Trafficking Captivity, and Narrative: Constructing Victimhood with The Goal of Salvation*. *Dialectical Anthropology* 39 (2), 183-194
- Carlo, C. (2011). *Metaphor and Ideology in Film*, University of Brimighan
- Cherop, C. (2015). *Liberating the Potential of Kenyan Women in Margret Ogola's Novels* University of Kwazulu-Natal, Pietermaritzbeing.
- Conley, D. (2000). *Being Black, Living in the Red*. PS Rothenberg.
- Duff, R. (2014). *Behind The Curtain: Women's Representations in Contemporary Hollywood*. London School of Economics and political Science
- Eder, J. (2010). *Understanding Characters*. <https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2010.04010>
- Elam, D. (2019). *Post-Colonial Theory*. 10.1093/obo/9780190221911-0069
- Fanon, F (1952). *Black Skin White Masks*. Editions du seulil (France) Grove Press (US)
- Forceville, C (2018). *Multimodality, Film and cinematic Metaphor: an evaluation of Muller and Kappelhoff*. punctum
- Grotzke, R. (2018). *The Systematic Subjugation of Women and Environment in Hunger Games and The Wind up Girl*. <https://doi.org/10.31274/etd-180810-3991>
- Nish, J., & Shubha, R, (2016). *From Victimhood to Survivor-hood; Reflections on Women's Agency in popular films on sex trafficking in India*. <https://doi.org/10.10007/s12646-015-0344-4>
- O'Shea, L. (2016). *Why Capitalism Causes Oppression*. Red Flag Newspaper.

- Raleigh, B. (2015). *The portrayal of prostitution in major motion pictures*. University of South Florida
- Roth, M. (2006). *The Lion King, A Short History of Disney Fascism*.
<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive.onli...//lionking.html>
- Rygiel, R., Camaraza, G., Wargo, D., Lim, M., & Mcwatter, T. (2012) *Formalist Film Theory*. Entertainment & Humour.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books
- Sanga, I. (2017). *Education as a Tool For Liberation: Seeking Nyerere's Understanding*. African Research Journal of Education and Social Sciences.
- Szaflarski, M., & Bauldry, S. (2019). *The Effects of Perceived Discrimination on Immigrant and Refugee Physical and Mental Health*. Emerald Publishing
- Tseng, C. (2013). *Analysing Characters Interactions in Filmic Text: a Functional Semiotic approach*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2012.752158>.
- XI, L. (2018). *Edgar Allan Poe and Female Victimization*. University of Dayton