

NJHS

Nairobi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

ISSN 2523-0948 (Online) ISSN 2520-4009 (Print) <http://www.nairobijournal.org>

THE PARADOX OF PAIN IN TOSH GITONGA'S *NAIROBI HALF LIFE*

LENCER ACHIENG' NDEDE

*Department of Literature
University of Nairobi*

ABSTRACT

The paper aims at finding out what makes crime fiction enchanting and overwhelming thereby arresting the audience and how the filmmakers manage to re-dramatize pain and still maintain pleasure making it possible for audiences to feel pleasure while watching atrocities of crime and objects of distress which would be unpleasant or even horrific if set before them in real life. The paper focuses closely on the narrative and cinematic techniques used by the film producers as well as analyzing the responses from selected respondents to determine if the crime film under study; *Nairobi Half Life* entertain the audience or not. The question guiding the methodology is “how do film producers in *Nairobi Half Life* incorporate cinematic techniques to transform imaginations of crime and violence into a pleasurable discourse engaging viewers while influencing the understanding of the society. The study’s response to these demands will take two significant pertinent dimensions. First of all it will interrogate the techniques film producers use to paint the crime and violence in the films positively, the study will then interview selected respondents and analyze their responses to determine the effects of the techniques used in the films on the audience.

Keywords: Film, paradox, painful

To view paper, scan this code



© Nairobi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

Online ISSN 2523-0948, Print ISSN 2520-4009

Volume 1, Issue 4, June 2017

Published: July 15th, 2017



Introduction

For a considerable period of time, audiences have turned to films featuring intense human suffering for entertainment. Smuts Aaron (2007) wonders if there is a fundamental difference between the kinds of emotional responses people seek from art and those sought from life. He writes:

Many of the most popular genres of narrative art are designed to elicit negative emotions: emotions that are experienced as painful or involving some degree of pain, which we generally avoid in our daily lives. Melodramas make us cry. Tragedies bring forth pity and fear. Conspiratorial thrillers arouse feelings of hopelessness and dread, and devotional religious art can make the believer weep in sorrow. Not only do audiences know what these artworks are supposed to do, they seek them out in pursuit of *prima facie* painful reactions (59).

Most films produced today have often been described by both reviewers and viewers as utterly depressing or heart wrenching. These works often have a negative emotional affect, which is frequently painful. Though heart wrenching, depressing, disgusting, terrifying, and dread-inspiring, audiences not only watch them but repeatedly return to the same artworks even after they have had these painful experiences. Aaron Smuts gives an example of this weird behaviour of turning to a negative experience not accidentally but knowingly in a skit featuring a family who sat down to dinner around a large table. A boy at the end of the table takes a sip of milk from his glass and spits it out, saying "Ugh! This is rotten." The person to his left replies, "Let me try," and has the same response. This is repeated until everyone at the table has confirmed first hand how bad the rotten milk tastes. The skit is a good example of paradox of pain since instead of the family avoiding the disgusting experience of the taste of rotten milk, they each desire a first hand experience of how the rotten milk tastes. This shows that people do desire painful emotional responses knowing just too well that the responses are negative.

Contrary to the assumption that people only desire things which bring them pleasure, studies have shown that people more often desire experiences which elicit painful emotions generally and especially from films. This is what this research refers to as the "paradox of painful art." Why people watch a movie full of criminal activities, and which elicits pain when they avoid such situations in real life is the concern of this study. It set to find out: what makes crime fiction enchanting and overwhelming thereby arresting the audience; how crime fiction filmmakers re-dramatize pain and still maintain narrative pleasure making it possible for audiences to feel pleasure while watching a painful movie, how film makers manipulate images, combining visual pleasure and narrative tension to represent criminal activities in a manner that arrests the audience while also addressing and re-constructing the society in their films, and what narrative and cinematic devices the film makers employ to communicate representations of the society and construct subjectivity within a context of violence. This paper addressed these concerns through an analysis of the effects of film rhetoric, arguing that conflict and tension in these films is calculated to attract the audience and to subject them to emotional and psychological influence drawing them to react in par-

tical ways.

Worth noting is that many of the most popular crime thrillers portray pain or instances involving some degree of pain, which people generally avoid in daily lives. At the centre of this paper is how and why these pain and fear evoking instances become pleasurable. According to Smuts (2007), the question of why people seek out such experiences of painful art has been presented as the paradox of tragedy. This paper interrogates this paradox in crime films.

Results and Discussions

Why people desire painful art has been a discussion in the academic arena for a considerable period. Theorists have come up with two major types of answers to this question. The first group of theorists argues that the answer is pleasure with the second group asserting that people turn to painful art for something other than pleasure. The first group of theorists advance two arguments; one, that these works of art are 'not painful' because the pain in these works of art are converted to pleasure and two, that pain is controlled in art works and as such does not reach a certain threshold that can hurt audiences. The second group argues that the pain is compensated for by either a self-congratulatory meta-response, intellectual pleasure, or the dispelling of worries. This chapter interrogates these issues arguing that it is how crime narratives are presented that makes them attract the audience or not.

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

Message attributes are understood according to the mindset of the observer. How viewers interpret images of violence is not just a function of gun shots heard, amount of blood seen or number of screams heard. The same image may have very different meanings within different narrative genres and contexts of reception. While murder, for instance, may be 'painful' on news or reality show, it may be a source of entertainment in a film. This seeks to show that *Nairobi Half Life* producers have used cinematic codes and conventions which transform violence and criminal activities in to a captivating story by transforming the unpleasant emotions the audience may have into pleasurable ones. The violence in the film has been aestheticized by codes such as invite hypotheses, identification with a character, mixing pathos and farce, cinematography, eloquence of the narrative, cast, music and sound tracks among other techniques making the audience to interpret the violence differently.

Invite Hypothesis

Films "invite" the audience to view them by introducing techniques, or, codes which create fascination and cue the audiences' expectations throughout the film. One way through which films invite the audience is by use of codes that solicit hypotheses by viewers about what will happen next or what prompts a given action. One of the codes used by film makers to prompt hypothesis formation is 'effect in search for cause'.

Search for Cause

Human beings exhibit an adaptative behaviour of directing their own attention to the target of the other human's attention upon an encounter. This tendency of looking at what other people are looking at as a natural means of information gathering is said to take hold in infancy and is generally a natural innate human perceptual behaviour. George Butterworth observed the relation of children to their mothers' in rooms full of objects and wrote that 'invariably, children follow the trajectory of their mother's glance to its target object' (20). It is almost natural that when a person looks toward a given object the others looking at him/her will follow his glance to the object. This perceptual practice, readily represented in films, is elaborately used in *Nairobi Half Life*. The film uses point of view editing to invite the audience to follow the characters' gazes in search of causes of actions. Point-of-view editing is an automatization via editing of our own natural perceptual reaction to track a glance to its target. It succeeds in making the audience glued to the screen by the camera movement between the character's gaze and the target being deleted hence inviting the audience's curiosity to want to find out what the character is looking at. The film makers in *Nairobi Half Life* tend to present the audience with a person looking off screen as an invite technique. When the audience is presented with a character looking off the screen, they will want to find out what the character is looking at. In the first scene shot in *Nairobi Half Life*, for example, the camera focuses and lingers on Mwas as he acts the 'five step scene' from one of the films he is selling. Mwas suddenly stops acting and intently gazes downward towards the road. The audience is presented with Mwas gazing off the screen but the object of his gaze is not given. In a natural perceptual behaviour, the audience will tend to follow Mwas' gaze to find out what has caught his attention. This will keep the audience watching as well as set a stage for curiosity which will cue the audiences' expectations throughout the film. Once the audience discovers the object of Mwas gaze; a road show truck advertising the vultures, the audience will remain fixed to the screen to want to find out the outcome of the actions.

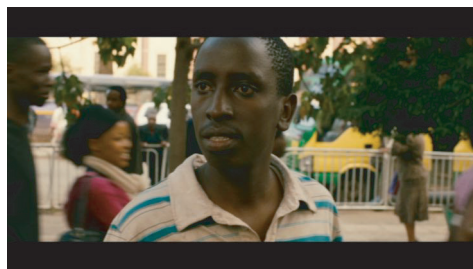


Fig 1.0 Image of Mwas in a point glance shot.

In another scene after Mwas is robbed of his luggage, he tries to overcome his affliction gradually by pacing along the streets. Suddenly, his face, shown in a point/glance shot, is gripped by shock. He gets rooted to the spot and stares. The shock gradually fades and is taken over by a smile. The recognition on the viewer's part comes with the expectation that whatever is eliciting that emotion could be exciting or reassuring, rousing the audiences curiosity to want to know the object of Mwas' emotion. The camera then cuts to a point/object shot of the street with several boys stealing side mirrors, head lights and indicators from

parked cars. With the knowledge of the emotion on Mwas face the audience can surmise this as the object of Mwas concern. Point of view editing thus functions to create suspense drawing the audience to want to find out more. The audience finds it hard to resist following the character's gaze, since it is readily picked up and applied, virtually by reflex. This is because point of view editing is keyed in intimate ways to humans' perceptual makeup; always curious to find out what lurks beneath the surface. It invites the audience by structurally, delivering the glance to the target, while functionally supplying information about the agent whose gaze concerns the audience; what is the character gazing at and what will be the result of the emotion. The correspondence between this cinematic device and ordinary perceptual behaviour is what makes the audience to be glued to the screen. It is the audience's appreciation of the natural human perception that a glance will be followed to its target and a move followed by an outcome and the audiences' fascination with the unknown that makes such a conventionally abnormal exercises as the audience being glued to crime film possible.

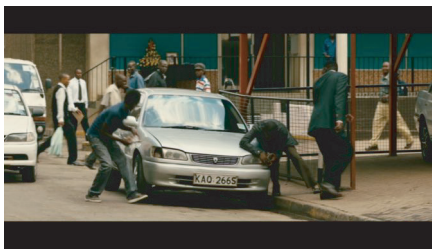


Fig 1.1 A point object shot of boys stealing head lights and side mirrors.

Identification with a character

How audiences interpret violence varies according to their own position vis-à-vis the narrative characters. It will be interpreted differently if the violence is perpetrated on or by a character constructed in the narrative as close to the audience. Psychological investigation into the expression of emotion has amassed a compelling amount of data to the effect that, interacting with people closest to one intensifies emotions. Naturally people would do anything to protect the ones close to them. The actor/observer bias tells us that the more you know about a character you are watching, the more you are likely to trust them, even if they are not moral. *Nairobi Half Life* has made use of this psychological phenomenon to entice the audience by shooting or editing in a certain way to ensure that the audience identifies with or supports the main character even when he does some morally questionable things. The audience will thus keep on watching to follow and support him despite the violence and will celebrate if the person against him is killed even if he is the one perpetuating the violence. The act of violence is thus viewed positively, welcomed, anticipated and cheered when it comes. The violence will thus give the audience pleasure by giving the 'bad guy' his comeuppance with the murdered or the mutilated body turned into an object of fascination.

Film makers use certain cinematic devices to engage the audiences' innate capacity to identify with the main character hence trusting the character. The close up shot is a device designed to activate the audiences' closeness to the character in such a way that they identify with the character and support him/her. *Nairobi Half Life* opens with a close up shot; the diegetic narrator keeps the camera

focused on Mwas and slowly zooms out to a medium shot, then wide shot of Mwas acting out a scene in one of the movies he is selling. The audience identifies Mwas as the main character, starring. Throughout the first scene the camera remains static and lingers on Mwas, simply observing his actions, and zooms rather than cuts in its transitions. Though the opening shot has other characters; they are shot in a medium long and medium shots indicating that they will feature less prominently in the film, which distances them from the audience. The close-up singles out Mwas in most of the scenes he is involved in. By having the camera focus on him, it positions the audience with him and thus helps in mediating the relationship between Mwas and the audience. Within the first few seconds of *Nairobi Half Life* the audience do not only get to know the main character but are also drawn to him as a lively and focused character. He humorously acts out scenes in the movies he is selling, first 'the five step scene', and then 'the spattern boy'. Other than being creative he is focused and determined. The audience is drawn to like Mwas such that when he later on becomes a robber, the audience is unlikely to question his character, instead they will likely see him as a victim of circumstances, blame others for his actions and celebrate his achievement even if it is a robbery or a violent act of killing. By the time he becomes a robber, audience have taken Mwas side enough to welcome anything that he will do to succeed. There's the pleasure of Mwas winning in the long run regardless of what he does to win and the pleasure of the villain not having a happy end. Besides the experiences of violence are represented from the point of view of the victim portraying the criminals as victims of circumstances. As such the audiences do not judge them when they commit violent acts.

Casting

"Not only do we judge books by their covers, we read the ones with beautiful covers much closer than others," says Jeremy Biesanz. A study, published in *Psychological Science*, by Biesanz and Lorenzo (6454) suggests that people pay closer attention to people they find attractive (p 1780). Day to day language proves that people adore beauty. Phrases such as someone 'looks good', 'looks divine', or is 'divinely beautiful equate beauty to goodness, and God. Conversely, the phrases 'as ugly as sin' or 'looks like hell' equally equate ugliness, evil and the devil. To be attractive is, by definition, to attract. The cast in *Nairobi Half Life* consists of beautiful celebrities adored by many Kenyans. Nini Wacera for example, is a renowned Kenyan actress and director whose beauty has been the talk in the social media for a long time. Nini has acted in many films and television series. She is notable for the role she played in the 2005 television series 'Wingu la Moto'. She has featured in other films such as *Project Daddy*, and *The white Maasai* among others. In 6459 she was casted as one of the protagonists in African version of hit series *Desperate House wives*.



Fig1.3 Nini Wacera

Fig 1.3 Nini Wacera

Nancy Wanjiku Karanja AKA 'Shiks Kapyenga', who plays Amina in *Nairobi Half Life*, is another celebrity whose beauty has dominated the social media for a considerable period. The strikingly beautiful Hot 96 Radio presenter has acted in many films among them *Nairobi Half Life* and *Shuga*. She is one of Churchil Raw (a popular Kenyan comedy) comedian and has also acted in 'Beba Beba'. The audience love her husky voice.



Fig 1.5 Nancy Wanjiku

Fig 1.5 Nancy Wanjiku Karanja (Shiks Kapyenga)

Jacky Vike has acted in *Simiyu Samurai*, NTV's *Wash and Set* and in citizen TV series *Papa Shirandura* as Awinja. She is a professional dancer and a yoga trainer.



Fig 1.7 Jacky Vike

Fig 1.7 Jacky Vike

Since time immemorial, to be lovely has always been considered to be lovable and, by implication, to be loved. This beauty mystique is rooted in literary heritage too. Fairy stories imbue children with the belief that beauty is adorable. In Grimm's story, 'Cinderella', the remarkably beautiful and amazingly good Cinderella wins the heart of the prince. In 'Beauty and the Beast', Beauty, who is both good and intelligent enough to see through ugliness, breaks the spell over the beast, who promptly turns into a handsome prince. The moral of the stories is not only that virtue triumphs, but so does beauty. Hans Andersen's story, 'The Ugly Duckling', tells how the poor duckling was loathed and persecuted by his brothers and sisters, and everyone else. Even his mother wished he had never been born. His problems are only resolved when he becomes a beautiful swan. All these three stories exemplify the beauty mystique, and socialize children into the cosmic value and practical utility of beauty. Adult literature too emphasizes the same themes. In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1817), the monster was so monstrous that even his creator rejected him and fled; yet he was intrinsically 'benevolent and good', in accord with Rousseau's view of humanity. This implies that people abhor ugliness and are attracted to beauty. African oral narratives too advance this argument. In many of the narratives, the beautiful girl is envied by her friends who end up tricking her in to danger. She falls in their trap and gets lost in the forest and lands in hands of some monster as the other unkind and ugly girls go home. In the end the beauty and the kindness of the captured girl ends up appealing to either the monster or an attendant who ends up

assisting the girl to escape, implying that beauty and kindness will always triumph over evil.

Though beauty mystique may be discussed in children's stories, literary essays and philosophical treatises; they are most apparent in films since films are visual. Films cast beautiful celebrities as a technique to attract the audience. Casting is thus central to the construction of films. The cast conditions the reception of the film, since the audience's perception of a character depends to a large extent, on their view of the actor or actress who plays the part. Casting thus is not only a powerful tool in the definition of character, but also an effective means of enticing the audience to watch the film. In *Nairobi half Life*, the actions that take place at the brothel are both cruel and repulsive; the film tones this down by using very beautiful characters at the brothel. This applies to the robbery scenes too. The actors are handsome, smart, eloquent and cool, drawing the audience to want to watch them despite their actions.

Joining Farce and Pathos

Often, when the pleasure had from something outweighs the pain, it downplays the painful emotions one would have gotten from it. The negative emotions audiences may feel in response to a film, for example, may be compensated by the joy experienced in realizing that it has a happy ending. Relief may often play a role as well, for example when the audiences are relieved that the main character is not going to die after all, something the audiences were probably afraid would happen throughout the film. Noël Carroll in her compensatory theory argues that pleasure derived from art works can compensate for the pain these same works may embody. Patricia Greenspan defends this view saying "it is not the release of fear that is pleasurable, at least in immediate terms, but the fact that one is soon released *from* it." (1988, 32) *Nairobi Half Life* is both rich and complex enough to produce more emotional interpretations than just anger and outrage. The films comfortably accommodate a combination of sorrow and humour, moving the audience to tears and laughter with the laughter making the tears bearable. Aesthetic pleasure is enhanced when one emotion serves as a foil to the other and allows the audience some relief before or after the film plunges deep into a negative emotion. The juxtaposition of humour and sorrow is seen in several instances in the films. Before Mwas is robbed of his luggage upon arrival in Nairobi, the audience is given a humorous, almost ridiculous picture of Mwas; a shoddy villager in town, with a ridiculously big bag ridiculously smiling at his 'achievement' of getting to Nairobi. The picture sends the viewers into laughter before exposing them to the pain of Mwas losing his luggage to robbers.

As the bus moves to Nairobi, a song plays in the background welcoming the audience to share in Mwas joy and excitement of going to Nairobi; the first step to achieving his dream of being an actor. The camera zooms out to give the viewer a glimpse of Nairobi. The camera's movement is slow and composed, imitating a graceful and beautiful entrance into Nairobi. As Mwas alights from the bus, a song plays as though to welcome him into the city. The whole entrance is artistic and beautiful eliciting a positive reaction in the viewers just before the film plunges in to the pain of Mwas being robbed. Almost every robbery scene is preceded by humorous incident or followed by one. When Mwas and his gang car

jacks a lady at the garage, the whole scene is brought out so humorously that the audience are relieved from the harshness of the robbery by the humor. The lady's desperate attempt at saving her car is ridiculous. The gang is canny and smart; a car pulls in front of the lady and blocks her way, she stops and gets out of her car to find out what the 'idiot of a driver' is up to, from behind her, the boys quickly get into her car and start off. Just when she hears her car starts, the 'idiot of a driver' moves creating a barrier between her and her car. She beats the car using her fists for blocking her way and tries to push it out of her way using her hands to the amusement of the audience. As her car speeds off she desperately tries to wave it to a stop and chases after it on foot. The gang's prowess is amazing and captivating. The audience is drawn to the grace of the robbers' actions in the process forgetting the pain of the robbery.

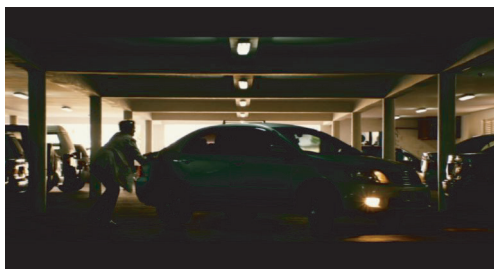


Fig 1.10 A lady beating a car for blocking her way.

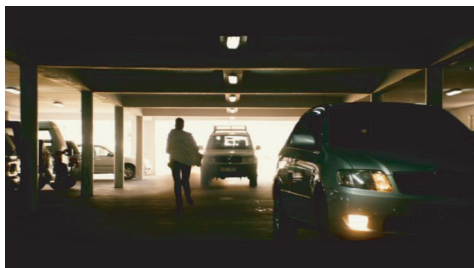


Fig 1.11 The lady chasing after her car on foot

Nairobi Half Life further accomplishes the melding of humor and sorrow by the incongruity of comic language in a melodramatic situation. The film uses comic language and jokes which relieve the audiences from the pain elicited by the violence. Mwas' frustration after losing everything to robbers and his attempt to start up in a strange land is clothed in humorous sheng. The conversation between Ndingo and Mwas and later on between Mwas and Oti makes the viewers to forget Mwas frustration as they concentrate on the street smart Sheng. They go:

Mwas: Mi ni Mwas, nimetumwa hapa na Oti niangalie Ndingo. Oti tulikuwa nayeye Central.

(My name is Mwas, I was with Oti in Central Police Station and he sent me here to look for Dingo)

Ndingo: Sema nikusikie (puffing a cigarette and lifting his head to face Mwas)

(Talk to me)

Mwas: Natafuta ka life. (The whole gang laughs at Mwas' statement)

(I need a life)

Ndingo: Hatukindi life hapa (makes a move on the draught board)

(We don't sell life here)

Mwas: Unaeza niorganaizia ka works?

(could you hook me up with a job?)

Ndingo: Wafikiri hii ni ofisi ya labour nini?

(What do you think this is? Labour office?)

Mwas: Si hivyo natafuta kitu inaweza kuniletea doo. Unaeza niorganaizia ka works?

(I'm just looking for something that can keep me going for a while)

Ndingo: (to one of the gang members) Mzeiya si umpeleke kwa mama Kiz adunge works kiasi

(Dude, take him to work for mama Akinyi)

While the rest continue playing, one of the gang members accompany Mwas to Mama Akinyi and he is hired on the spot. During the day at Mama Akinyi Mwas cleans a huge heap of utensils and serves customers, at night he spends the cold rainy nights on the hotel tables with neither a mattress nor a blanket until one morning Oti arrives as he goes about his duties.

They converse:

Mwas: Oti! Gota jo mtu wangu.

(Oti! Give me a high five my man –an informal greating)

Oti: (disgusted) Na hii ni job gani unadunga? Si nilikushow uchapilie Ndingo?

(What are you doing? I told you to talk to Dingo)

Mwas: (smiling enthusiastically) Eeee na akanirushia hii works.

(Eeeee and he got me this job)

Oti: (disgusted) Eiiish! Hii ni uchokosh, tuingie hivi (he starts off)

(This is like dampstar diving. Let's go)

Mwas: Na works? **(What about the work?)**

Oti: Si huiachanga ki mangoto. (Mwas leaves the utensils and follows Oti)
(We live for the day)

The streetwise snappiness and informality of Sheng fascinates the audience. The overall effect is that of evoking a uniquely Nairobi street identity, evoking pleasure in the audience.

Beauty is known to fascinate the audience. The films have used glamorous backgrounds as their settings. Some scenes in *Nairobi Half Life* are set against the background of the beautiful Nairobi's CBD with its beautiful cityscape. Immediately after Mwas is robbed upon his arrival in Nairobi, the film cuts to a scene with Mwas walking along the streets, frustrated. The telephoto lens is used to give the audience a glance into the beautiful city with tall glamorous buildings. The beauty of the city distracts the audience from Mwas frustration by directing the audience's focus to the cityscape thereby, inviting the audience to respond to the picturesque and not the sorrow, in the process suspending their response to Mwas frustrations. The audience's responses to the cityscape affect their interpretations of the violent acts in the film giving them a relief from the harshness of the violence.

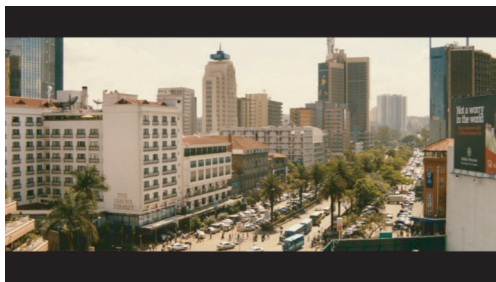


Fig 1.12 The beautiful Nairobi cityscape

Cinematography

The aestheticization of suffering in the two films is achieved through visual and linguistic complex that eliminates the aspect of suffering, making the audience to take a pro-crime side in the film. The films presents violence as a form of expressive art in which the violence is so physically graceful, visually dazzling and meticulously executed that the audiences' instinctual, emotional responses undermine any rational objections they may have. These effects are achieved by manipulation of camera or lens or by editing techniques; such as use of slow motion, telephoto lens, zoom lens, quick-cutting and montage, close up, long shot among others, conditioning the audiences' response to the violence transforming an object of moral outrage into one of aesthetic beauty. The combination of a graphic representation of robbery with an aesthetic representation of violence produces contradictory effects which disorients the spectator who forgets the pain of the violence as they concentrate on the beauty of the presentation. This positive influence makes the spectator to forget himself making the violent acts to be seen as bearable, providing a peek into the realm of human evil without the horror that goes along with the real thing.

In *Nairobi Half Life* the standard realist modes of editing and cinematography are violated in order to spectacularize the violent scenes. When Mwas and the gang steal side mirrors from parked cars, the camera work is abrupt and shaky, imitating the gestures of violence. The actions during these scenes move very fast thereby arresting the viewers (what is commonly called "action-packed"). The robberies are edited to a fairly high pace compared to the other less violent scenes. The robbery scenes are set outside time and space and outside language. There is no clear spatial orientation. All that the viewers see and hear are shaky images, sound tracks, metals banging, hooting, darkness and running footsteps which creates a captivating imagery attracting the audience despite the violence. The scene in which Mwas is robbed upon arrival in Nairobi is filmed in a montage of close-ups, the camera positioned at a low angle, moving along with Mwas' struggling body. As the men take off with Mwas' bag the camera moves along and gives a close up of Mwa's anguished face. The close up employed in this scene has a synecdochic effect; the images of the part expressing the whole. The camera zooms in on Mwas' anguished face making it the subject and representing the frustration he is subjected to by the robbery. The use of these techniques emphasizes suddenness and frequency in shot change. The effects of quick cutting draws the audiences' attention to the suddenness of change of actions and the change in tempo of action, signaling the audience that there is something taking place. This draws the audience to watch despite the violence. Since quick cutting

and montage is a change in the rate of progression, it makes the change pronounced and more noticeable. The more noticeable the change, generally, the more pronounced the effect; the viewer is reminded that something significant is happening, whetting the viewers' curiosity to want to watch to find out what is happening. Quick cutting is a resultant sense of suddenness. The audience will forget the pain of the violence as they get excited at the prowess with which the thugs can dislodge and take off with the head lights and side mirrors.

Music

Film music is an integral part of a film experience. Films that use music involve the audience completely and expose the inner feelings and thoughts of characters and can shape the way that viewers feel about what's happening on the screen. Music works side by side with cinematography to encourage viewers to appreciate a film. Music in conjunction with the other channels of information helps to create the narrative and control the way the audience interprets a film.

Film music carries away the audience making them less questioning, and more accepting, of what is happening on the screen. In her book *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*, Claudia Gorbman (1987) argues that film music "functions to lull the spectator into being an *untroublesome* (less critical, less wary) *viewing subject*." music accomplishes this by helping the audience make the "correct" interpretations of the words and actions of characters, especially when other channels of information might be hard to understand. Gorbman further argues that "the classical film score encourages identification: emotional proximity through the use of culturally familiar musical language and through a matching, an identity of sound and image. (pg 40) Mwas' journey to Nairobi is shot against the background of music and sound tracks. As the bus moves, soft music is played on the background inviting the audience to share in Mwas' joy. The camera zooms out to the landscape and buildings creating a feeling of beauty and excitement. As Mwas alights from the bus, in Nairobi, the soft music is replaced by hard rap music which functions to change the mood. As the rap plays, a gang descends on Mwas robbing him of everything. Immediately after Mwas is robbed the rap music is taken over by a slow melancholic tune as Mwas tries to recover from his attack and robbery. The slow motion editing combined with the music function to convey Mwas' emotion to the audience. Without words spoken the audience can feel Mwas pain and loneliness. One of music's advantages over other channels of information (such as image, dialogue, text, and sound) is that it has the power of suggestion concerning what a character may be thinking about or considering. Larry Timm (2003) writes that "music is used to create 'unspoken' thoughts of a character or unseen implications of a situation. Music thus gets the audiences to identify with what the character is going through which automatically affects how viewers interpret what is happening" (60). By working with other channels of information, music moves beyond the role of simply reflecting or filling the background to the role of affecting how viewers interpret meaning in a film.

Another important function of film music is its ability to suspend reality for the audience. Many films use opening music to situate the story in a time, place, or context that will help the audience to readily accept the film. In the

book *Movie Music: The Film Reader*, Gorbman (1987) states that despite the fact that music is not actually part of the fictional world, “The returns on the investment of a musical score are enormous, considering that the film normally ‘gets it forgotten.’ (p. 108). Music helps the audience to locate themselves in scenes or events that may be unusual, exotic, or even far-fetched in the context of their lives. Instead of judging every action or conversation in the film in terms of real life experience, music helps the audience to suspend reality and skepticism by creating a sense of unity and unreality. The audience is reminded that this is art and not life, often a comforting reminder. Since these offenses are fictional, the violent acts are seen as bearable. Just like opening formulas in Folk tales create an imaginary time and imaginary space that transport the audience in to the imagination of a world of infinite possibilities, Music creates a gap between reality and fantasy calling the audience to experience a world removed from reality. It helps the audience to set aside their demands for reality and accept the fictional world of the film. Gorbman (1987) writes that “Music lessens defenses against the fantasy structures to which narrative provides access. It increases the spectator’s susceptibility to suggestion (108).

Eloquence of the Narrative

Beneath every film is a narrative (the story). The narrative provides the basic structure by which a film is understood. It consists of the story and the plot. The story consists of all of the information conveyed by the film assembled in chronological order to communicate the overall sense of what occurs in the film. Plot provides the cause and effect relations that cue the audience and create suspense, surprise, and fulfill expectations. It arranges actions of a story logically and orders them naturally from actions that precede them creating a flow which captures the audience. Plot flows and develops logically from the exposition of characters and introduction of conflicts, to the rising of conflict and heightening of tension, to the climax and eventually the falling of events. Human beings are naturally fascinated by the unknown. Audiences always want to follow up a story to find out what is beneath the surface. Script writers design the plot of a story in a way that fulfills this psychological need. The events/elements in *Nairobi Half Life* interact in such a way that they create a complete story with complexity, intrigue, surprise and suspense, captivating the audience.

Nairobi Half Life chronicles Mwas journey from an innocent boy selling compact discs in a remote village to an armed robber in Nairobi. Obsessed by his desire to become an actor, he sets out to Nairobi to fulfill his dream. The story begins with Mwas selling compact discs in a remote village to earn a living. He dramatically acts and portrays most of the action figures in the films he sells in order to entice his customers until he comes across the Vultures; a theatre group from Nairobi who came to perform in his village. Jose, one member of the vultures, promises to help Mwas jump start an acting career if he relocates to Nairobi and pays 1,000 shillings. Upon a down payment of Ksh. 500, with a balance of another Ksh 500 to be paid when he arrives in Nairobi Mwas sets off. Mwas is robbed of everything he had including an expensive radio system that he was given by his cousin Daddy M; a gang leader to take to Khan electronic shop in Nairobi. Confused and distraught, he paces aimlessly along the streets and unfortu-

nately lands in the hands of Nairobi City council officers who mistake him for a hawker and throws him in the cells where he spends the night and meets Oti; a gang member who initiates him into his gang upon leaving the police cell. When Mwas finally manages to find Jose who promised to help him jump start a career in acting, he realizes that there was no slot for him in the vultures group and that he was played and conned by Jose. As Mwas continues living with Oti (a gang member) and his gang, he becomes part of his snatch and grab gang with motor vehicle parts being their favorite, until he meets his cousin; Daddy M, who ends up forcing him to steal a car in order to pay for his expensive radio that he lost to robbers the same day he arrived in Nairobi. Mwas convinces his gang to move up from stealing motor vehicle parts to stealing cars in order to make more money. Meanwhile Mwas had auditioned and successfully landed a part in a local play set up by Phoenix players. Mwas juggles between two worlds; an actor at Phoenix during the day and an armed robber at night. The film reaches the highest point when Mwas gang is rounded and locked up by rogue police the same day Mwas group is to present a play at Phoenix. The audience is further brought to the realization that Mwas' chance of survival is close to zero as Oti reveals that the police plans to kill them, one at a time and use their bodies to deceive the public that they are hard core criminals and that they were killed during a fierce fire exchange between the police and the gang. Mwas manages to convince his gang that they can escape. As they attempt to escape all the gang members except Mwas get killed in a fire exchange between the police and the gang. As the audience journeys with Mwas through his journey of becoming when: Mwas is robbed, Mwas swimming in feces as he washes the filthy cell toilet, Mwas and his gang carjacking unsuspecting drivers at gun point, prostitutes being abused to their clients pleasure, the entire Mwas gang being shot dead, among other painful scenes in the film.

CRIME FILMS AS ENTERTAINMENT

The second dimension of this research was an interview of selected respondents and an analysis of their responses to determine the effects of the techniques used in the films on the audience.

Presentation

The responses from the questionnaires and oral interviews showed that several factors motivated the respondents to keep on watching the film despite the violence; however, the main reason was seen to be how the films are presented. Almost all the respondents argued that although the film feature instances of violence which evoke painful emotions, beyond the horrific aspects, the films are stylistically presented creating a beautiful spectacle which captivates the audience. The audiences argued that the films are so beautifully presented that even a violent act like killing becomes beautiful and enjoyable to watch. When asked what exactly they find 'beautiful and enjoyable' in the said violent actions, they gave several reasons among them being that the criminals are so smart that you even wish you were like them. That the prowess with which the robberies are done makes one want to watch them over and over.

A big percentage of the respondents reported that they loved the way the vio-

lent scenes are embedded within a mixture of actions; sound tracks, quick movements, light and darkness, which sends the heart pounding and eyes widening. These techniques, they said, create a very beautiful picture which captivates the audiences. Gathered from the responses, these techniques send the audience to a world of fantasy where the impossibilities like 'flying' over tall buildings is made possible; a kind of day dream that is so arresting and captivating that you can't just avoid watching. This finding concurs with Sigmund Freud's argument that being present as an interested spectator at a spectacle or play does for adults what play does for children, whose hesitant hopes of being able to do what grown-up people do are in that way gratified. (Freud, 1942, p. 305) It reflects the compensationist theorists' argument that the pain in art works is compensated for by the pleasure involved in the same. They argue that the best answer to the question of why people seek to watch crime films is that such works provide certain compensatory pleasures that audiences expect to be greater than any feelings of pain. It can therefore be concluded that the beauty with which *Nairobi Half Life* is, as reported by the respondents, compensate for the pain elicited by the violent actions in the film.

Cast/Characterization

A good number of the respondents indicated that they would watch a film acted by their favorite actors and those they consider good despite the violence. When asked how they determine their favorite actors most of the respondents reported that when one watches a movie and someone acts well, the next time one hears they have acted something they will want to watch it. Most actors in *Nairobi Half Life*, the audiences said, are beautiful celebrities well adored in the Kenyan entertainment scene. Such, they said, included, Nancy Wanjiku (Shiks Kapyenga), Jacky Vike, Nini Wacera, and Jimmy Gathu, all who have acted in different films, comedies and popular TV shows. That audiences are drawn to films with a 'beautiful' cast concurs with a study, published in *Psychological Science*, by Biesanz and Lorenzo(2010) suggesting that people pay closer attention to people they find attractive (p 1780).

Others argued that good actors are ones who are perfect and will not let you down; perfect in the sense that if it is a hero, he is so heroic that you just want to be like him, if he is a robber, he is so good at it that you just marvel at how he does it, and if he is a villain, he is so evil that if he is not tamed the world would stop going round. One respondent even went further to give an example of a film he once watched in which the main actor was blind. The blind man, he says, was throwing such thorough kicks that for a moment he admired blindness. Audiences further said that the gang in *Nairobi Half Life* is so swift in carjacking that you almost think it is so easy to point a gun at someone and own a Toyota VX in a flash. Their prowess is so amazing that you just want to watch them over and over. The policemen on the other hand are so corrupt that they make you want to cry.

The responses above have clearly shown that actors or actresses influence the audiences' reception of films. This concurs with E. M. Forster's (1927) argument on the importance of characterization when he says that it is through characters that the writer is able to appeal to the intelligence and imagination of the audience, as the latter seeks to find out, to whom the action happened. Forster's

observation underscores the importance of actors/ actresses in arousing the viewers' interest as seen from the interview responses. Actors can appeal to an audience, "invite" them to watch, create fascination and cue their expectations throughout the film.

The findings imply that viewers will get involved in a story more if they identify with the characters and if they find them smart, interesting, real and credible, implying that how characters are constructed in a story can contribute to viewers watching the film or not. Though *Nairobi Half Life* is a crime film, the actors casted draw the audience to watch it despite the violence. Film producers manage to arrest the audiences to the screen by constructing the characters in such a way that the audiences would want to follow them however evil, proving that casting is central to the construction of films. The cast conditions the reception of the story since, as seen from the responses, the audience's perception of a character depends to a large extent, on their view of the actor or actress who plays the part. Casting is thus not only a powerful tool in the definition of character, but also an effective means of enticing the audience to watch the film. This finding concurs with J. Hawthorne's argument that "...characters can be used to tell a story; to exemplify a belief; to contribute to a symbolic pattern in a work, or to facilitate a particular plot development." (1985:40). Hawthorne's observation reveals that characterization plays a multi-faceted role in a story. Furthermore, for viewers to be fully involved in a story, they normally look for characters in the story with whom to identify. Audiences want to closely accompany their favorite characters through the story, overcoming obstacles with them.

Crime film as a Literary Text

A good number of the respondents said that the crime films watched are not just a collection of robberies, fighting and violence. Beneath these films are stories which the audience can follow from the start to the end. In the process of following the stories to find out what happens to the characters, one gets glued to the film. Some of the respondents who had earlier indicated that they do not like watching violent scenes reported that sometimes they find themselves watching these crime films to the end as they try to follow the story. The responses indicated that most of the respondents interviewed were glued to the screen in an attempt to find out what would happen Mwas eventually. The story is structured in such a way that it involves intrigue and suspense, cueing the audiences' expectations as he /she journeys with Mwas through his dream of becoming an actor.

Thrills and Chills

Most respondents reported that they like how the crime films play on their emotions. They argued that the violent scenes keep one at the edge of the seat, especially when 'your guy' is close to danger, or a victim is about to be caught. Film makers seem have a way of making your heart beat even faster during the tense scenes. An atmosphere of suspense, anticipation, terror and a sense of panic is created by the sound tracks, songs or music employed at the background which are deliberately manipulated to induce frightening fantasies. One respondent

added that these 'terror' scenes allow one to live and overcome life-threatening events without actually experiencing the real experiences. These findings imply that audiences do not only watch these films because they evoke pleasure but because they evoke fear and sorrow. The major motivation behind this desire to watch violence, according to the respondents, is that by experiencing negative emotions, the audiences are in turn able to expel them (by letting them go away), which somehow provides them with a pleasurable state. The respondents argued that it is not the negative emotions that are pleasurable, but the fact that, after having been experienced, they are purged; sort of like taking a bitter medicine to stop having a headache or a painful extraction to stop having a toothache. The result compensates for the unpleasantness of the state one was initially in.

These findings concur with Aristotle's argument that tragedy offers a way for people to purge their negative emotions. Aristotle uses the term catharsis in his *Poetics*, where he notes that after people listen to music that elicits pity and fear, they "are liable to become possessed" by these negative emotions. However, afterwards, Aristotle points out that these people return to "a normal condition as if they had been medically treated and undergone a purge [catharsis] ... They experience a certain purge [catharsis] and pleasant relief. In the same manner cathartic melodies give innocent joy to men" (from *Poetics* VIII:7; 1341b 35-1342a 8).

Aristotle's views are further reflected in Freud's arguments. Freud uses the terms 'unconscious' and 'error'. He contends that it is by means of 'fear and pity' that art allows people to experience emotions and to purify themselves, as by activating and representing the repressed unconscious wishes in the audiences. In order for catharsis to take effect, Freud, like Aristotle, identifies the criteria which enable the spectator to be able to enjoy negative emotions. He says that to move the audience to a state of pity, firstly the hero should not be psychopathic, but only becomes psychopathic in the course of the action of the play. Secondly, the repressed impulse should be one of those which are similarly repressed in all of us, and the repression of which is part and parcel of the foundations of our personal evolution. It is this repression which is shaken up by the situation of the play. He contends that these two characteristics are what make the audience to reorganize themselves in the characters making the audience to see that they are susceptible to the same conflict as the character in the play is. Thirdly that the impulse struggling into consciousness, however clearly it is recognizable, is never given a definite name; so that in the audience too the process is carried through with his attention averted making the audience to have a grip of his emotions instead of taking stock of what is happening.. (Freud, 1942[1905-6] [1905-06], p. 309)

Nairobi Half Life meet the conditions of possibility for catharsis in that the hero/main actor in the film is neither perfect nor fundamentally evil; he is a person the audience can identify with. He moves from a position of happiness when the story begins to unhappiness due to some mistakes of judgment that he commits. These mistakes; unconscious/error in Freudian terms and tragic flaws in Aristotle terms, are mistakes the audience can identify with as common to man. The sorrow the character goes through, together with his faults, which the audiences can identify with, are calculated to manifest the fallibility of the hero leading directly to catharsis purging the audiences of unpleasant emotions through evoking fear, pity and terror. In *Nairobi Half Life* the main character Mwas, is a

person the audience can identify with; a young boy who moves from his rural home to Nairobi in search of a better life as most people do. He sets out to Nairobi to fulfill his dream of becoming an actor having been promised a place in 'the Vultures' by Jose; a member of the Vultures. Mwas lands in the hands of thugs and is robbed off everything that he had. On top of this misfortune he is mistakenly arrested by the city council and thrown in the police cell where he spends a night. In the police cell he is mishandled by the seasoned hard-core criminals he finds in the cell. He is made to clean the filthy cell toilets. As he tries to clean, he slides on the slimy floor and falls, swimming in the mixture of filthy smelly feces, urine and his own vomit. When Mwas leaves the police cell the following morning he gets stranded in Nairobi with no relative, no friend, no money and nowhere to start from. He goes to Ndingo who organizes for a job for him at a local food Kiosk. In the food kiosk, the job is overwhelming. At night, being homeless, he spends the cold rainy night on top of the hotel tables, with nothing to cover himself. When Mwas later finds Jose, the man who promised to help him start up a carrier as an actor in Nairobi, Mwas realizes that Jose conned him and that there is no slot for him as an actor in the theatre group. By the time he comes to this realization he is already in Nairobi, jobless, penniless and homeless. Mwas goes through events that evoke pity in the minds of the audiences. The recognition in the minds of the audiences that such misfortunes can befall anyone including them is what evokes pity for Mwas in them and the fear that they too can fall victim of such circumstances. The more the characters go through these terrifying situations the more the audience is gripped with fear and sorrow and the more the audience is arrested to film. The conditions for pity and fear reside in the fact that the hero, who is neither perfect nor fundamentally evil, and who is a person like us, a person we see in the society everyday and can therefore identify with, passes from a state of happiness to unhappiness on account of a certain misfortunes that can befall anyone. The misfortune functions to manifest the fallibility of the hero and leads directly to catharsis.

Film mirrors the society

The respondents reported that *Nairobi Half Life* reflects the society and voice the concerns of the people. They argued that crime films are not just a collection of robberies and fights; they contain complete stories which reflect what goes on in their societies and that though works of fiction, the characters are credible and appealing with believable heroes and villains who the audience can identify with. Most of these stories, the audiences say, follow the exact same trend that we see when we look at our society; corrupt system, oppressed down trodden youths who are not involved in development, criminals struggling to make it in a cruel world among other themes. Most of the respondents reported that they enjoyed watching the film because they could identify with the events and the characters almost at every level. They argue that these films represent people we see in real life every day; people such as Mwas, in *Nairobi Half Life*, who are not privileged in life and end up falling victims of crime. People like Amina, girls who 'sell' their bodies for a living. People like Mr. Graham who sleeps with his best friend's wife. One of the respondents argued that "There are times, in these films when you see a normal person who falls victim of circumstances that scares you. The findings underscore the fact that the film not only entertain the audience, they also reflect

the various societies they represent. *Nairobi Half Life* represent forces in post-colonial and shows how social and economic conditions can make criminals out of innocent men, women and children.

Law breakers

Another reason why people enjoy watching crime films is because they identify with evil. The audiences argued that human beings naturally have evil in their system of thinking and that they always think of doing bad things, or wanting to get away with evil. Some respondents argued that while watching these crime films, people tend to identify with the criminals and not the 'so good' guys because it offers a comfortable consolation that 'I can also get away with some of the small 'sins' I commit'.

The respondents' argument about identifying with evil concurs with Sigmund Freud's argument about human's psychology. Freud argues that the human mind is divided into the conscious and the unconscious. The unconscious is the storehouse of the painful experiences: fears, guilt desires and unresolved conflicts which we would not wish to remember. These experiences are hidden from our consciousness through the process of repression. However, by repressing them, we do not eliminate them. Instead they become powerful organizers of our current experience and continue to influence our thinking at all times. The suppressed wishes in our unconscious Freud says, are actively striving for expression. Human beings, he says, for example, are violent. They would always want to be involved in violence but the society does not allow it. These feelings are suppressed and enter the subconscious layer of the mind seeking to be fulfilled in one way or another. These suppressed wishes in the subconscious achieve fulfillment in a modified and disguised manner. For example, since the society does not allow us to express our violent nature, we get satisfaction by watching and cheering violence. It accords us the satisfaction that the society denies us. We watch crime films and want the criminal to get away with their evil deeds because inwardly we are evil, we always want to take advantage of others, or get things done our way even if we do not deserve it.

Fascination with unknown

Almost all the respondents indicated that one of the reasons they remained glued to the screen throughout was because they wanted to find out what was going to happen next or eventually. They argued that most people hear about crime but rarely see it, or have the roughest idea of how it happens. Some of the respondents asserted that whenever they hear it's a crime film or a detective film, they will always want to watch to see how it happened and how it was solved. One respondent gave an example of 'a naked man' saying that 'when people hear that someone has gone crazy and has stripped off his clothes, people run to the scene to see 'how naked' the naked man is. The respondent argued that you will often realize that these people do not run to the scene with clothes to cover the naked man but strain their necks to get a glimpse of the nakedness.' This respondent continued that 'the same applies to accident scenes, people know too well that a scene of accident is a painful site likely to cause pain but you will often see drivers slowing down to get a good look at an accident, hoping to catch a

glimpse of the gruesome scene' Another respondent said 'There's something about the unknown that we are fascinated with, we are always worried about crime; something we don't know and don't understand.

Most of the respondents reported that they liked *Nairobi Half Life* a lot more because it is about the crime culture in the Kenya's capital city. Something most people who have not lived in Nairobi hear so much of and are always interested in knowing more about. One respondent said "Every day we hear about car-jacking, pick pocketing, and police who eat with criminals in Nairobi among other ills and we wonder: How do these criminals do it? How do they manage to escape the law? Is this likely to stop, and who will stop it? He adds that watching *Nairobi Half Life* really gave him a glimpse of criminal activities in Nairobi. These findings imply that how a story is told would entice the audience to watch a film. When a story is constructed in such a way that it raises the audiences' curiosity and expectations of finding out about the unknown or unraveling the hidden, viewers will stay glued to the film.

These findings, that curiosity and fascination can motivate us to watch crime films, concur with Noel Carroll's arguments. Carroll (1990) writes that monsters, such as vampires and wolves, often violate our categorial schemes. In doing so, they unsurprisingly can look threatening, scary, and disgusting, explaining in turn why we can experience emotions such as fear and disgust towards them. She adds that however, in challenging our categorial schemes, monsters can also trigger our curiosity since monsters are indeed things that fascinate us. According to Carroll, the pleasure that is derived from our getting to know more about them can compensate for the unpleasant states we may initially experience, particularly when the narration is such as to arouse our curiosity. The pain is for Carroll "the price to be paid for the pleasure of [the monsters'] disclosure" (1990, 184).

Someone to blame

A number of the respondents argued that they enjoyed watching the two films because these films give them someone to blame. They argued that everyone at one point in life has lied, gotten something fraudulently, cheated their parents to extra pocket money, dodged authority, among other sins. According to the respondents people are always guilty of crime and want to cover up by getting someone to blame. People always know that they have contributed to the modern world being the way it is because of something they did or something they did not do to stop things from going wrong and don't want to accept it. When people watch crime films, argues some of the respondents, they easily find the person to blame for it. People always want someone to take the 'criminal' label or to compare their good fortune of 'not being' a criminal to.

Hope and solace

Some of the respondents said that since most crime films end with the criminal being apprehended, they get some solace that there is justice in the world and that the evil will pay for their evil deeds. In *Nairobi half Life*, by the time the film ends, all the criminals and corrupt police officers are killed in the exchange of fire between the criminal gang and the police. The good guys on the other hand are

rewarded. Mwas for example is a good guy who fall victim of circumstances. Being a good guy he is not destroyed together with the bad guys. The films accord some sort of justice which is not always seen in the real world. It is comforting to know that there is justice in the world after all and there's an end to evil.

Crime Films Teach

Some of the respondents argued that crime films teach the audiences about how our criminal justice system works, and how it doesn't. They reported that *Nairobi Half Life* for example, shows how a failed system can result in to disaster for its citizens. It also shows how criminals work to execute crime and how the corrupt police help the criminals get away with crime. One respondent argued that there is so much that we can learn from watching crime films. We can correct erroneous ways of thinking such as 'rapists lurk in the bushes or in darkness'. From crime films like *Nairobi Half Life* you can learn that these rapists could be people you know and even trust; people close to you. Some are even relatives who attack their victims in broad day light when you least expect it. Amina, for example, in *Nairobi Half Life* is abused by her client whom she invited to the room. Rapes committed by strangers do happen, but not quite often. It makes you not fear that a stranger will break your door and abuse you but fear who of your friends or relatives you invite into your room.

Some interviewees responded that the film is worth watching since it helps one to know the psychology of a criminal in an effort to anticipate their next move before they strike again. Some respondents argued that criminals have their own personal agendas, and they're all different. Watching crime films can make one to understand the mind of a criminal and hence spot one at a distance and avoid falling a victim.

Others argued that these films can make one understand a lot about crime culture as well as to erase misconceptions people have about crime and criminals such as: The police will find finger prints on a gun used by a criminal, criminals will get caught, among others. These crime films enable us to know that it is not easy to catch a criminal; let alone get finger prints from a gun used by a criminal since they always have their way out either through collaboration with the police or wiping the guns clean. Watching *Nairobi Half Life* for example, one learns that that the criminals are not caught because the police who are supposed to apprehend them protect them.

These respondents further argue that the sex scenes in a film teach us about our society. *Nairobi Half Life* for example dares the field of sex and foregrounds the stories of women's predicaments in the face of poverty. The girls sell themselves in the brothel for as low as twenty shillings. It further shows us how in our societies women fall victims of male oppression physically, sexually, emotionally and psychologically. Amina is whipped to her clients' satisfaction. It gives the girls who want to dare the brothel something to ponder over and teaches those who do not know about brothels a lot about it. The sex scenes in the two films, the respondents say, handles messages often marginalized by other writers such as sex and young girls in the face of poverty, pointing to the problems that continue to tear our society apart today.

Not Real Life

The study sought to find out why people are attracted to violence in films when they fear them in real life. All the respondents responded that they are aware that the violence they are watching is not real life and therefore does not hurt and that the people involved in the films are just acting. Though there appears to be violence, the people involved are not hurt in any way. This makes the violent acts to be seen as bearable, providing a peek into the realm of human evil without the horror that goes along with the real thing. This finding concurs with John Morrell's argument that fictional experiences are far less painful than those in real life because in regards to fictions, our powers of control are far greater than in real life. This is because our control over fictions comes from our choosing whether or not to have these responses and our ability to walk away if we cannot take them anymore.

The finding that crime films do not hurt because they are not reality concurs with the assumptions of pleasure theorists whose basic assumption is that there is a fundamental dis-similarity between the kinds of events we are willing to encounter via representations and those that we welcome in our daily lives. An experiment on pain thresholds carried out by pleasure theorists revealed that when subjects were able to say when the pressure on their finger should stop, they could take far more pressure and pain than if the experimenter does not give them the option. Their study reported that subjects reported feeling greater amounts of pain when they were unable to control the experiment. Likewise, experiences of art are less painful since the audiences can usually control whether or not they happen or when they should stop. The audience can decide to leave a theater or stop the film whenever it gets to be too much to handle. It is the awareness that they possess this power that makes watching of violence bearable. Robert Yanal (1999) argues that according to the control account, if a spectator is trapped in a theatre then the fiction should seem more painful. He gives an example of taking a roller coaster ride at an amusement park in which after the train pulls into the docking station, it immediately begins again, without letting anyone off. Over the loud speaker, you hear that something is wrong and the operators cannot stop the ride, or, even worse, you discover that the ride has been taken over by a gang of sadists who say that they will release the passengers "as soon as we feel like it and not a moment sooner." After hearing such news, it is hard to imagine that the ride would remain very fun for much longer.

Roger Callois (1961) in *Man, Play, and Games* argues that play must be voluntary; that is, one must be able to step out of the game whenever one wishes, or the activity will cease to be playful. In so far as experiencing a fiction is analogous to play, the control theory suggests that the control we have over our fictional engagements makes them less painful, or at least that if we lose control the nature of the experience may become far more painful. Our experiences of negative emotions in response to fictional events may be less painful or more tolerable because we have some degree of control over their occurrence, but this does not mean that they are not painful at all. Although film audiences have a higher tolerance for pain because they are in control, they still feel pain. Art provides a certain degree of safety not present in situations that arouse extreme distress, disgust, anger, fear, horror, misery, paranoia, and a host of other responses. Simply put, most of these reactions cannot be had in real life without incurring significant risks to ourselves and our loved ones, risks that we typically do not take because

they far outweigh the rewards.

Aristotle too concurs that catharsis is only possible because a play is not reality. In (Chapter 4, 48b 9–13) Aristotle argues that the affect felt during catharsis is purified because the spectator recognizes the forms of the frightening and the pitiable, but from the position of one who has been cleansed. He gives an example that a spectator would be horrified at seeing a mother massacre her children, but he is able to listen, without moving from his seat, to the account given of this murder in a tragedy because the account is not reality but a representation. Aristotle here argues that the negative emotions are transformed by the art of mimesis, into pleasure; since, for Aristotle, catharsis substitutes pleasure for sorrow. He says ‘the poet must procure an experience of pleasure stemming from pity and fear, and he achieves this by putting them through the sieve of representation.’ The pleasure had from watching violent films is thus linked to ‘representative action’– an ‘act of representation’ Aristotle says of tragedy that a perfect tragedy should, imitate [‘represent’] actions which excite pity and fear.

The arguments imply that despite the violence involved, audiences still watched and enjoyed crime films because they are not reality but mere representations of reality.

Conclusion

From the responses from the respondents there is a strong indication that the audiences are aware that crime films are designed to elicit negative emotions and in fact make them shiver. Despite knowing this, they still love watching them and always seek them out in pursuit of these painful reactions; they love the negative emotions the films elicit. This finding concurs with Aaron Smuts (2007) observation that ‘Although one may agree with Arnold that painfulness is an aesthetic flaw, one cannot deny that audiences appear to seek out painful art and that many artists attempt to create artworks that are nothing short of painful. In fact, the breadth of painful emotional experiences to which audiences willingly submit themselves is staggering.’ (P.59) Noel Carroll (1990: 272) too in her book ‘The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart’ agrees that the audiences seek painful art knowing too well that the arts elicit negative emotions. She argues that horror is a genre perhaps most familiar through films. The “Nightmare on Elm Street” series, the “Halloween” series, and the more recent “Saw” series scare the living daylight out of viewers, who happily go back for more with every sequel.

The study sums up that the reasons why people desire painful experiences in response to art when they shun them in real life as:

Stylization–Unlike in real life, violence in film is stylized and as such the predominant feelings of beauty derived from the cinematography and narrative eloquence which, are typically absent from real life experiences, compensates for the painful experiences one may have. The beauty of the genre alters the nature of the painful responses, such that the overall response becomes one of pleasure while the pain felt is more or less forgotten.

Representation–Fictional experiences are less painful than those in real life because in regards to fictions, peoples’ powers of control are far greater

than in real life because the audience can choose whether or not to have these responses and to walk away if they cannot take it anymore.

Catharsis-After the audience experience the painful emotions evoked by the film they return to a normal condition and feel a pleasant relief that does not happen after experiencing tragedies in reality.

Curiosity and Fascination with the unknown- Human beings are naturally fascinated by the unknown; whatever the emotion. The pleasure that is derived from our getting to know more about the unknown can compensate for the unpleasant experiences involved in the process of knowing. For instance, people would endure getting scared by aliens in a film just to get to know how aliens look like.

REFERENCES

- Aristotle (2006). *Poetics*. ReadHowYouWant. com
- Bullen, K.A. (2010). "Book Review: The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart. By Noel Carroll. New York: Routledge, 1990. 272 pp. ISBN 0-415-90145-6."
- Caillois, R. & Meyer, B. (1961). *Man, play, and games*. University of Illinois Press.
- Carpenter, M., Nagell, K., Tomasello, M., Butterworth, G., & Moore, C. (1998). Social cognition, joint attention, and communicative competence from 9 to 15 months of age. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, i-174.
- Carroll, N. (1990). *The Philosophy of Horror*. New York: Routledge.
- Feagin, S. (1992). "The Pleasures of Tragedy, "Monsters, Disgust and Fascination," *Philosophical Studies* 65: 75-84. 7.
- Freud, S. (1953). "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage (1942 [1905 or 1906])." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII (1901-1905): A Case of Hysteria, Three Essays on Sexuality and Other Works*. 303-310.
- Giannetti, L. (2008). *Understanding movies*. (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Gitonga, T., Wairimu, J., Olwenya, W., & Waniku, N. (2012). Nairobi half life: have we chosen to be the way we are?
- Gorbman, C. (1987). *Unheard melodies: narrative film music*. Indiana University Press.
- Greenspan, P. S. (2014). *Emotions and reasons: An inquiry into emotional justification*. Routledge.
- Halliwell, S. (1986). *Aristotle's poetics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Leonard, M. (2013). Freud and tragedy: Oedipus and the gender of the universal. *Classical Receptions Journal*, 5(5), 07-83.
- Lorenzo, G. L., Biesanz, J. C., & Human, L. J. (2010). What is beautiful is good and more accurately understood: Physical attractiveness and accuracy in first impressions of personality. *Psychological Science*, 21(56), 5111-1782.
- Morreall, J. (1990). "Enjoying Negative Emotions in Fictions," *Philosophy and Literature* 9, no. 1 (1985): 95-103.
- Noel Carroll. *The Philosophy of Horror, or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge). 8.
- Smuts, A. (2007). *The Paradox of Painful Art*: Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 59-76: University of Illinois Press Stable.
- Timm, L. M. (2003). *The soul of cinema: An appreciation of film music*. Pearson.
- Yanal, R.J. (1999). *Paradoxes of emotion and fiction*. Penn State Press.