University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders



GENRE DISPOSITIONS IN CRIME FILMS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

By

GABRIEL THUKU KIMANI

23027127

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Arts and Social Sciences

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
Thohoyandou, Limpopo
South Africa

© University of Venda

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, SOCIAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

This thesis was defended on

(DD-MM-YY)

and approved by

external examiners

Internal Evaluators

Supervisors

Prof. Geoff Madimabe Mapaya

Prof. Mellitus Wanyama

© University of Venda

1 DECLARATION

I, **Gabriel Thuku Kimani**, declare that this research thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university or institution. The thesis does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.



Signed (Student): …….. Date:17th August 2025

© University of Venda

2 DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family. My wife and our little friends that God has given us.

I dedicate this work to the new blessing in our family! Joy-Marie Murugi ‘Mmapula’ Thuku

This work is also dedicated to all Africans thinking and acting positively for our continent of Africa.

I also dedicate this work to the memory of Geoff Kimani and all victims of crime in Africa. May your cherished memories, remind us to be better custodians of our continent.

© University of Venda

3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work represents a journey of faith and a dive into passions, beliefs and convictions. I could not have walked it alone! I give thanks and praise to God. Gratitude to my dear parents Rev. Michael Kimani and Mary Murugi for fuelling my passions and celebrating my milestones. Asante za dhati to my dear wife Jane Wahu for the support, critique and love during this journey. You indeed made the work easier and worthwhile. To our daughters Maisy, Gabriella, Ayanna and the little one – Joy-Marie, you continue to be beautiful inspirations. I hope this inspires you to keep the energy to succeed and re-elect to be African champions. To my great supporters Michael manus, Annette Wangechi and my sister Gladys Wambui, God bless you!

Thank you to my supervisors Prof. Madimabe Geoff Mapaya and Prof. Mellitus Wanyama taking this journey with me. Bra. Geoff, our debates on African scholarship and its space in global discourse are a bright spot I will always cherish!

To my academic seniors Prof. J. Osogo Ambani, Dr. Rachael Diang'a, Dr. Thulani Zulu, and Dr. Mbuti Moloi, Asanteni sana for the nuggets of wisdom and encouragement! Gratitude to Chepsergon Koech for all the assistance and Kimani Kahuro for being a comrade and brother! Eternal gratitude to Florian Schott, Simiyu Barasa, Kenneth Gyang, Gregory Mbunge Ochieng', Philip Karanja and Fred Wekesa for the refreshing perspectives. Africa Must rise comrades. It must!

To those unnamed supporters that nudged me on and reminded me to keep pushing, Mùrorìma gùkuumia!

© University of Venda

4 ABSTRACT

Cinema as a key discussant of topics within the societal dialogue, is an assertion widely acceded to, by film scholars. The analysis of cinema and its significance within that dialogic matrix is then a vital tool in the review of society. This study is pegged upon the idea of comprehension of the generic concept in film and foregrounding the discourse on African cinematic products as purveyors of discernible aesthetics, and platforms of tightening the gaze and critique on other facets of society. Genre is one of the principal elements of cinema, which, invites a study into this largely unexplored subject within African cinematic exegesis. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the audio-visual aesthetics, narrative aspects, and language aspects, of sampled crime films from sub-Saharan Africa, and to relate their thematic framing to existential realities within the depicted jurisdictions and African societies by extension. To achieve this, qualitative inquiry methods were applied to collect and analyse the data drawn from the films. The primary data was interspersed with secondary data and organized thematically, railed on two theories: Genre theory tenets by Steve Neale and Post-Afrocentric perspectives as advanced by Tejumola Olaniyan. The findings of this study go a long way in advancing the generic concept in African cultural studies, appraising genre within the contemporary practice and relating cinematic storytelling to contemporary realities of the continental African, which serve as a window of understanding crime as an existential challenge to Sub-Saharan Africa.

***Key words*:** African crime films; Audio-visual; Narrative; Language; Messaging; Genre; Societal realities; Ideology; African cinema.

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

5 TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 ABSTRACT v
2 DECLARATION ii
3 DEDICATION iii
4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT iv
5 TABLE OF CONTENTS vi
6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS ix
7 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Background To the Study 1
1.2 Problem Statement 10
1.3 Purpose of the Study 12
1.4 Objectives of the study 12
1.4.1 Specific Objectives of the Study 12
1.4.2 Research Questions 12
1.5 Rationale and significance of the study 13
1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study 14
1.7 Literature Review 15
1.7.1 Genre in Film 15
1.7.2 Main Genres in Word Film 20
1.7.3 Genre in African Cinema and Societies 22
1.7.4 Figuration of Genre Taxonomy and Convention in African Cinema 29
1.8 Theoretical Framework 32
1.8.1 Genre Theory 32
1.8.2 Post-Afrocentricity 35
1.9 Research Methodology 37
1.9.1 Research Study design 37
1.9.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size 38
1.9.3 Data Collection 41
1.9.4 Primary Data 41
1.9.5 Secondary Data 43
1.9.6 Research Instruments and Equipment 43
1.9.7 Trustworthiness 44
1.9.8 Data Analysis 44
1.9.9 Ethical Considerations 45
CHAPTER TWO: NARRATIVE CONFIGURATIONS OF AFRICAN CRIME FILMS 46
2.1 Chapter Overview 46
2.2 Plotting the African Crime Film 46
2.2.1 Bodaboda Thieves 47
2.2.2 King of Boys 49
2.2.3 Òlòtūré 52
2.2.4 Katutura 55
2.2.5 Noem my Skollie 58
2.2.6 Viva Riva 60
2.2.7 Uradi 62
2.2.8 Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema (Jerusalema) 64

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

2.2.9 Click Click Bang 67
2.2.10 Generic Dispositions of the Sampled Film Plots 71
2.3 Characterisation in African Crime Films 79
2.3.1 The Criminal in African Films 82
2.3.1.1 Moral and political agency 83
2.3.1.2 The Gang and the Gangster 93
2.3.1.3 Agent of Violence and Plunder 99
2.3.1.4 A Product of Existential Traumas 102
2.3.2 Figuring the Law Enforcement in African Crime Cinema 106
2.3.3 Figuring the Victims in African Crime Cinema 112
2.3.4 Figuring the Society in African Crime Cinema 114
2.4 Setting in African crime films 130
2.4.1 Slums and Townships 131
2.4.2 Cities 134
2.4.3 Rural Settings 140
2.4.4 Religious and Contemporary settings in African crime Films 142
2.4.5 Historical Setting 145
2.5 Chapter Summary 152
CHAPTER THREE: AUDIO-VISUAL AND LANGUAGE AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS 156
3.1 Chapter Overview 156
3.2 Visual Iconography in African Crime Film 157
3.2.1 Framing the African Bodies 159
3.2.1.1 The Sexualised African Bodies 163
3.2.1.2 The Subdued and Battered African Body 167
3.2.2 Framing the African Landscapes 170
3.2.2.1 Derelict slums 170
3.2.2.2 Composing the Dreamy and Chaotic Cities 173
3.2.2.3 The Nightlife 178
3.3 The Soundscapes in African Crime Films 180
3.3.1 Sonic Disposition of Violence in African Crime Films 181
3.3.2 The soundscapes of the African Locales 185
3.3.3 Musical Iconography in African Crime Films 187
3.3.3.1 Musical Text as Codes of Historical and Cultural Specificities 187
3.3.3.2 Musical Forms and Genres 209
3.4 Linguistic Dispositions of The African Crime Film 214
3.4.1 Language and Politics of Identity in African Crime Films 214
3.4.1.1 Indigenous Languages and the Question of Ethnicity 216
3.4.1.2 African Slang and Urban Languages 220
3.4.2 Stylistic Language 221
3.5 Chapter Summary 224
CHAPTER FOUR: THE NEXUS BETWEEN THEME AND CONTEXTUAL VERISMS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS 225
4.1 Chapter Overview 225
4.2 Parochial nationalism and transnational strife. 226

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

4.3 Crime as a Corollary of Endemic Socio-economic Conditions in Africa 236
4.4 The Crime Paradox 244
4.4.1 Crime and Criminality as The Elixir of The Proletariat 244
4.4.2 Crime as the African Society's Anathema 247
4.4.3 Figurations of Criminality in African Crime Cinema 248
4.4.3.1 Financial Crimes 248
4.4.3.2 Crimes against humanity 252
4.4.3.3 Police Brutality and Excesses 257
4.4.3.4 Courting Injustice in the Courts of Justice and Prisons 264
4.5 African Politics and Governance 268
4.6 Religiosity and Religious Extremism 277
4.7 Drug Use and Abuse 281
4.8 Chapter Summary 285
CHAPTER FIVE: SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL CONCOMITANTS OF AFRICAN CRIME FILM 287
5.1 Chapter Overview 287
5.2 Interstices of Social-cultural Representation and Mediated Identities 287
5.2.1 Centrality of the Society and its Conditions 289
5.2.2 Gendered Identities 300
5.2.3 Religious Identities 306
5.2.4 Ethical and Normative Questions 309
5.2.4.1 Moral Dilemmas 310
5.2.4.2 Notions of Justice and Human Rights 313
5.2.4.3 Post-Independence African Governance 318
5.3 Foundations of African Intellectualism and Theory 324
5.4 Towards a Mode of Reading African Crime Cinema 341
5.5 Chapter Summary 346
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 347
6.1 Chapter Overview 347
6.2 Summary of Findings 348
6.3 Conclusions 359
6.4 Recommendations 361
6.4.1 Film Industry and Policy 362
6.4.2 Policy 362
6.4.3 Scholarship and Research 362
REFERENCES 364
APPENDICES 388
8.1 Appendix 1: Research Ethics Certificate 388
8.2 Appendix 2a: Thematic Concentration Observation Guide 389
8.3 Appendix 2b: Society and Ideologies Observation Guide 389
8.4 Appendix 2c: Aesthetics Observation Guide 389
8.5 Appendix 2d: Narrative Aspects Observation Guide 389
8.6 Appendix 3: Interview Guide 390

© University of Venda

6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

African Cinema/African Film - African cinema is a term with a geographical and generic connotation. It can be used to describe the collective whole of the film industries in African countries. In generic terms, it can be applied to identify with and refer to films produced in African countries encompassing film styles, content, and contextual depictions of Africa.

Crime Film genre - In the context of this study, the crime film genre is a wide generic classification that is composed of films that tackle stories and themes about crime, criminals, law enforcement and generally explore the dichotomy of legal and moral order and disorder in societies.

Genre - Genre in the context of this study is a strategy of classifying, categorizing, grouping, and distinguishing films based on observed characteristics.

Genre Disposition - In the context of this study genre disposition refers to the innate and dynamic nature of crime films in Africa, or their characteristics in form, content, and context.

Hollywood - Hollywood, in general, refers to the studio-based film industry of the United States of America. The term can also be used to refer to the entertainment culture and production norms associated with the Hollywood industry.

Ideology - In this study, ideology is construed to encompass ideas, beliefs, and norms of a particular society, that form the basis of the societal view on good versus bad, right versus wrong, moral versus immoral and influence the specific political, social, and economic tenets of the given society.

Iconography - Iconography in genre studies describes the stylistic “icons” or symbols that carry meanings in a film.

© University of Venda

Societal/Existential Realities - In the context of this study societal/existential realities translated to the social, cultural, political, and economic issues that a given society or community continually faces and deals within its everyday life.

Verisimilitude - This study adopts the meaning of Verisimilitude as the semblance of truth or reality in a fictional piece of work. It can be translated to the "truth-likeness" of what a movie depicts in each context.

© University of Venda

7 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

KFC - Kenya Film Commission

KFCB - Kenya Film Classification Board

VOD - Video on Demand

AMAA - African Movie Academy Awards

AMVCA - Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards

SAFTA - South Africa Film and Television Awards

NFVCB - Nigeria Film and Video Censor Board

SARS – Special Anti-Robbery Squad

DCI – Department of Criminal Investigation

SANDF – South African National Defence Force

SAPS – South African Police Service

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

NIS – National Intelligence Service

IMLU – Independent Medico-Legal Unit

MUHURI – Muslims for Human Rights

KNCHR – Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

ICC – International Criminal Court

© University of Venda

ICTR – International Criminal Tribunal of Rwanda

NAPTIP- Nigerian Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons

© University of Venda

1 CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background To the Study

Genre study in film criticism is a vital platform in any film industry and critical space. Indeed, genre considerations and appraisals are central in the critique of ideological, sociological, and politico-economic issues facing society, which filmmakers address in their works (Grant, 2007). Like any other context, genre in African cinema has the capability of documenting, communicating, and appraising important issues affecting people through filmic dispositions including audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging. Shadoian (2003, p. vii) in the same vein avers that since genre considerations figure so importantly in the production and viewing of so many films, the directions for critical thought that genre supplies are central to the attempt at understanding them.

Genre according to Chandler (2000) is a word imported from literary studies meaning "type" or "class". These film "types" or "classes" are distinguished using various criteria. Nelmes (2012) broadly encodes these genre determinants in three perspectives. First, he points out the taxonomic classification of films imported from various distinguishing factors. The second perspective is that of the genres as a business model primarily deployed in Hollywood, which offers various genre choices in various dimensions of entertainment and preference satisfaction. The third is a cognitive ideal that attempts to draw a familiarity link between a production and its audience. The link is in view of engaging with the audience's expectations. This study was keenly concerned with the

© University of Venda

taxonomic and cognitive determinants. This was in the interest of exploring the link between the form and content in African crime films and audience positioning through societal depictions. Specifically, this study limited itself to the examination of audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language and messaging and their connections to realities in African societies, which fall squarely within the purview of the taxonomic and cognitive factors of genre classification.

Genre disposition therefore as explored in this study describes refers to the systematic arrangement and presence of conventional elements that define crime films within African cinema. It includes formal disposition (the audio-visual conventions, narrative structures, and stylistic patterns) typical of African crime films; cultural disposition (the ways global crime genre conventions are adapted and shaped by African perspectives) and the philosophical disposition encompassing the epistemic, messaging, and socio-political functions these films serve within African contexts.

Genre is not a new or strange phenomenon within African cultural studies. As a working model of analysis and a practical framework in Africa, the study of genre and its place in societal discourses, is widely recognised and valorised within musicology and ethnomusicology, theatre, and literature. Musicology and ethnomusicology studies include among others, Banchs (2022) who covers the heavy metal music identities in post-colonial Africa; Ansell (2004) who reviews the place of Jazz, and Popular music, in politics of South Africa; Steingo (2016) who analyses Kwaito music and the aesthetics of freedom in South Africa; and Mapaya (2010) who explores the history, soundscape, and aspects of contemporary transmission of Sehananwa Culture

© University of Venda

through Music; and the *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World, Volume XII: Genres: Sub-Saharan Africa.* (2019).

Theatre and literature studies concerning themselves in generic ideals include Matzke et al. (2020) who engage in discourses on operatic and musical theatre, which are poignant in Africa; Okagbue (2012) who reviews African theatres and performances; Tengya (2019) who does a comparative analysis between Kenyan and Nigerian drama; and Naidu and Le Roux (2014) who discuss crime fiction in post-apartheid South Africa inter alia. Even in African cinematic analysis where there is a more pronounced conservative philosophy, genre is a part of the discourse, albeit sparsely. This study sought to bring genre analysis in film to the fore, and more specifically, its potency of articulating contemporary issues using its audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging.

In his explication of chosen genres and ideology in African cinema, Bakari (2000) enumerates musical, melodrama and comedy as genres that are evident in African films with subjects mainly drawn from the strains stemming from colonial history. Ukadike (1994) in his interviews with African filmmakers discusses documentary, the African epic, and comedy genres, which is also noted by Haynes (2013), Musa (2019), and Saul and Austen (2010). Other genres including video films in the Kenya National Drama and Film Festival are mentioned by Nyutho (2015). The studies however do not acknowledge or discuss the crime films not only on their genre dispositions but also the contemporary issues the ambient societies grapple with. The genre in its Nollywood

© University of Venda

domicile features briefly in Haynes (2016) without a concentrated appeal to expound its depth of signification and its audio-visual, narrative, and thematic framing.

In a telling admission, Haynes (ibid) reveals that his book does not quantify as a full-scale study of the genres in Africa, and suggests that it is a start that should inspire more investigation into genres and their significance within African cinematic spaces. Shadoian (2003, p. viii) buttresses the importance of studying genres for the appraisal of society and its intrigues when he avers that,

> Genres are cultural metaphors and psychic mirrors; we do not know of what until we study the films that comprise them. In varying degrees, each film genre offers an account of the life we lead, wish to lead, or ought to lead.

Pavlov (2014) in his rumination of the African future in *Shadows of the Past, Visions of the Future in African Literatures and Cultures* decries the reality of many humanities subjects, film in our context, being ineffective in envisioning a future for the African continent. This he relates to the humanities' recognition that 'the dilemmas of emigration, crime, xenophobia' inter alia have left many unsure about the future. This assessment positions the filmmakers and their lenses as the clairvoyant, unblinking eyes that gaze upon Africa, describe Africa and give a prognosis for Africa. In an attempt to provide clarity on his interest in Nollywood, whose films he widely examines, Haynes (2016) postulates that his regard springs from a fascination with Nigeria. He thus alludes with an assertion that "the films are a record and interpretation of contemporary Nigeria, a social and emotional history" (Haynes, 2016, p. xxiv). This brings to focus the relation of specific genres to specific realities that bring them forth.

© University of Venda

This was a specific focus of this study that sought to draw the veil on the societal realities which refer to socio-economic circumstances, and cultural contexts that shape African experiences upon which crime films ruminate. These realities inform both the production and reception of African crime films, serving as the contextual foundation from which thematic, narrative, and aesthetic choices emerge.

Crime film is one of the generic models described by genre theorists and cinema critics like Shadoian (2003), Warshow (1948), Munby (1999), Altman (1981) Ryall (1978), and Crime film is one of the generic models described by genre theorists and cinema critics like Shadoian (2003), Warshow (1948), Munby (1999), Altman (1981), Ryall (1978), and Neale (2000). The crime film genre, which includes various subgenres like spy films and mystery films, primarily tackles issues of crime, stories of criminals and the dynamics of the criminal underworld, contrasted with the efforts at law enforcement and the war on crime. Genre scholarship has largely been skewed towards the gangster subgenre, considered by studies such as Warshow (1948), Munby (1999), Shadoian (2003), Neale (2000) and Grant (2007) to be characteristically American. The crime film traces its beginnings from the silent era with the production of films like *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903 and a follow-up with films like *The Musketeers of Pig Alley* in 1912 by DW Griffith. In tandem with the cinematic medium, the genre has endured and has continued to diffuse and evolve into several subgenres spanning from different filmmakers and sociocultural jurisdictions (Nelmes, 2012).

Crime films are a present and popular feature in African cinema, with a wide range of crime films in number and narrative formats from different countries across the

© University of Venda

continent. The prominence of crime films manifests itself through the wide distribution networks and recognition of the films through critical acclaim and continental awards. Crime films find space within distribution channels like television, theatres, video on demand (VOD) and streaming platforms like Netflix, YouTube, Showmax, DSTV, My Movies Africa and Movie Mtaani inter alia. Crime films have also received acclaim, nominations, and awards on platforms like the Africa Movie Academy Awards (AMAA), Africa Magic Viewer's Choice Awards (AMVCA), SAFTA and the Oscar Academy Awards among other national and global forums.

The semiotics and cultural negotiations of the crime genre stand out among other cinematic genres. As Warshow (1948) observes, cinema is supposed to be a feel-good agency for any society. The crime film on the other hand seems to sharply deviate from this ideal, since in its characteristic form and content, it builds a case around the not-very-pleasant elements of society. The expressions and truths of any society lie within the constant admission of guilt and the ability to retell stories of its chequered past and its coloured present. The crime genre therefore lies at the cusp of the fulcrum upon which societal values oscillate between the everyday confluences of order and disorder, culture and contemporariness, politics, religion, and their representation within popular media, among which film sits aloft. It is on this basis and virtues of the crime film that this study found a need to not only engage in the assessment of the audio-visual, narrative, and language features in selected African crime films but to extol its thematic network of connections with the Sub-Saharan Africa societies. The inquiry was set up to reveal the useful dialogues within the generic corpus that interact

© University of Venda

with the zeitgeist, reflect ambient identities, and propose solutions for perennial African niggles.

Comprehension of the crime genre is therefore a framework for understanding the society of its making. It is from this platform that the study sought to inquire about the audio-visual aesthetics, narrative choices, language particularities, and the connection between messaging and contemporary realities. This serves as an assessment of the everyday intersections of gender dynamics, politics, order and disorder, security, and the overarching ideologies abundant in the African people's existence.

Sub-Saharan Africa (hereafter SSA) is a geographical zone encapsulating Eastern, Western, central and Southern African regions. Home to more than 1 billion inhabitants, the four regions of Africa host diverse cultures, countries, landscapes and histories but feature many shared identities, histories and pursuits of destinies in politics, economy and cultures. In the context of this study, the SSA is considered as it plays host to vibrant cinema industries including Nollywood, Bongowood, Riverwood, South African cinema, Wakaliwood among others. SSA is illustrated in figure 1 below.

© University of Venda



Figure 1: Map of Sub-Saharan Africa
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service (2022)

In addition, the SSA region, argued to be the home of black Africans and contrasted with the North that is associated more with oriental culture and affiliations, is burdened by existential issues that are considerably linked. Due to shared borders, ethnic heritage and other social and economic ties, SSA inhabitants encounter similar political, social and economic issues encompassing education, healthcare, security, and infrastructure. Therefore, SSA goes beyond being a geographical and cultural region to a conceptual and intellectual subject in the quest to understand the conditions of its inhabitants, the economy of continental black Africa and the shared histories of precolonial empires and global interactions including colonialism and its

© University of Venda

consequences. According to Mushanga (2011, p. 102), the potential of SSA people to benefit from their efforts in fighting against poverty, disease and ignorance, and their investments in education, infrastructure and democracy, they must:

> …develop a political system of government that will ensure the rule of law, respect for human rights, the eradication of corruption and, above all, the creation of a socio-economic and political atmosphere, that will minimize the rise to power of self-appointed dictators that have come to characterize this region of Africa since the advent of political independence.

As the SSA plots a way to success into the future, one of the existential challenges her people face is crime. Crime is a central subject in the crime genre, which focuses its attention on the crime situations in SSA countries. According to UNODC (2004), Duncanson and Mcmillan (2011), Hope (2020), ENACT (2021), and Klantschnig et al. (2023), crime is rife in Sub-Saharan Africa featuring crimes such as murder, robbery, drug trafficking, human trafficking, poaching, and economic crimes among others. Specifically, the method identified is through organised crime that is committed through outfits like gangs, vigilante groups, and terror cells within country borders and transnationally. Criminality in SSA according to ENACT (2021), Olawuni (2021), and Sigsworth (2022) is a direct consequence of social conditions such as inadequate governance, unemployment, poverty, lack of education and recurring conflicts. In addition, the consequences of crime affect the societal organs such as families, communities, organisations, nations and the continent, slowing its growth and causing excruciating chronic pain to the very fabric of African existence.

© University of Venda

The reality dimension of the crime film is described by Warshow (1948) as a brutally honest artistic voice that reminds people of the dark sections of society, the darkness of their situations and the dampness of their national psyche. From the foregoing, African filmmakers like their global counterparts have been producing films about crimes and criminals prowling the African lands, haunting Africans with their exploits in robbery, sexual violence, murder, and financial and economic kleptocracy. The Sub-Saharan Africa is constantly under existential threats occasioned by menacing gangs like; Boko Haram, Yahoo boys and Niger Delta Avengers in Nigeria; Mungiki, Gaza and Wakali inter alia in Kenya; the marauding gunslingers and number gangs in South Africa; and the Al-Shabaab in Somalia. It is further established that there is rampant human rights abuse by state organs charged with protecting lives and property. Based on the foregoing, there exists sufficient inspiration for a discourse that not only appraises films but forces Africa to the mirror of truth, to see her reflection of the pimples of poverty, paleness of unsolved murders, jaundice of corruption, bruises of violence, scalds of terrorism and a malignant, metastatic loss of her youth population to crime and ultimate destruction.

1.2 Problem Statement

Crime films form an integral part of the generic repertoire among films from Sub-Saharan Africa. Their presence is compounded by critical acclaim and recognition in awards nationally, regionally, continentally and on international platforms. Crime films, beyond their entertainment value, wield a great potency in the discussion of issues

© University of Venda

within African societies. This is achieved by their coinage of audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and thematic messaging.

The significance of crime films as a rubric of societal critique, and a matrix of understanding the descriptions and depictions of African societies, means that the crime genre films should be key pillars in the scholarship of African film studies. Examining the crime films would be strategic in establishing their particularities in audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, and messaging, as well as asserting their space within the universality of genre concepts, otherwise deemed Euro-American or Hollywood. A discourse on the African crime film, is a means to comprehend African issues and the construction of ideas and identities of Africans. Therefore, appraisal of the crime genre, is a viable way of reviewing how cinema, makes its contribution to contemporary dialogues in Africa.

However, genre as a film critique and analysis model has been sparsely considered in African studies. This phenomenon may be attributed to the connotation of genre discourse and genre films as manifestations of Euro-American or Hollywood in audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, and contextual messaging. Consequently, African crime films have not received critical scholarly attention congruent to their signification, review, and award success, specifically on their audio-visual, narrative, and heuristic-messaging dispositions. This raises some questions: What are the genre characteristics of the African crime film? How do the genre characteristics in African crime films depict the realities in African societies?

© University of Venda

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to appraise audio-visual iconography and conventions, the narrative and language dispositions and the relationship between messaging and societal conditions in the depicted contexts in nine films from Sub-Saharan Africa.

1.4 Objectives of the study

This study sought to analyse the iconographic and conventional characteristics of the African crime film, and how those characteristics engage in the negotiation of issues within Sub-Saharan Africa societies.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the narrative dispositions of African crime films.
2. To investigate the audio-visual and language aesthetics in African crime films.
3. To examine the relationship between the messaging in the sampled African crime films and the existential realities in the depicted contexts.

1.4.2 Research Questions

1. What are the narrative dispositions of African crime films?
2. What are the audio-visual and language aesthetics of African crime films?
3. How does the messaging of the sampled African crime films relate to the existential realities in the depicted contexts?

© University of Venda

1.5 Rationale and significance of the study

This study draws its breath from the need to review the cultural artefacts as a path to understanding society and her people. As social consciousness reawakens in Africa after the traumas of colonialism, postcolonial wars, and economic ravages, it is important to reinforce the consciousness within the framework of creative expressions like crime films. To this end, the study interrogated audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging in nine African crime films.

The findings and conclusions of this study, go a long way in establishing generic analysis and classification of African films as a viable approach to understanding the African cinematic corpus. In addition, this study amplifies cinema as a platform for probing the crime and criminal outfits causing havoc in Africa. This study therefore serves as a reference for researchers interested in the subject of African cinema studies, film genre and the crime film genre in particular. The findings thereof are a resource of information about crime films and can serve as a referential beginning for identifying gaps in the exploration of the genre and film as a societal signifier. Through this study, filmmakers will better understand generic rendering and thus will be more conscious and deliberate in their generic choices for each of their film undertakings to optimize their work for their audience.

The inferences and averments in this study are also a critical link towards debunking the subject of crime not only as a thematic or narrative subject but also, as a societal problem in African societies. To this end, the study drew connections between the fictionalized narrations of crime in the films, and the factual stories of crime and

© University of Venda

criminals in African areas. Further, this inquiry endeavoured to build a case on the possibility of tracking parallels between solutions adduced in the movies, and the plausibility of applying the same in the depicted jurisdictions. As such, researchers and personnel in crime studies could draw from the findings of this study, useful insights on coverage and revalorization of crime in Africa cinema.

1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This investigation set its boundaries within the crime genre. The crime genre in this study refers to films where criminal activity serves as the primary narrative driver, encompassing sub-genres including but not limited to gangster films, heist narratives, police procedurals, and crime thrillers. Within the African context, crime cinema extends beyond entertainment to function as social commentary, addressing systemic issues such as corruption, poverty, and post-colonial challenges while reflecting the lived experiences of African communities. With a keen recognition of the existence of many genres and subgenres in film and interlocking features within and among varying generic products, the study was only interested in probing crime subgenres. The study additionally limited itself to a sample of nine African crime films from Southern, Eastern, Central, and West African regions listed in the sampling section. Any other films that are mentioned or referred to, were for purposes of interspersing the primary data as secondary references. Also, the films under analysis were sampled from among those produced within the post-millennial period (2000-2020). Finally, the data sources, the analysis and discussions thereof were conducted within the bracket of the study

© University of Venda

objectives and were synthesised within the framework of the selected theoretical frameworks.

1.7 Literature Review

In this section, studies within the parameters of genre, crime genre, and film in sub-Saharan Africa are reviewed and the gaps that this present study sought to address pointed out. The discussions taper off to the review of applicable theoretical tenets for the analysis and discussions of collected data.

1.7.1 Genre in Film

Genre in film denotes classes or categories of films pegged to specific iconographic, narrative, or cognitive characteristics. Nelmes (2012) defines genre as, a system or setup of ordering filmmaking, and a collection of filmic works that exhibit "collective and individual significance. Further alluding to the relation of genre to the audience perspective Moine (2008) refers to genre as a model of familiarity that guides the preference, description, identification, characterization and differentiation of a film or a group of films.

These assertions ground the idea of genre as a way of drawing patterns based on likeness and difference, and a platform upon which plausible and poignant descriptions of films can be explicated. This idea is also shared by Grant (2007) who defines generic films as commercial feature films which, tell relatable stories about recognizable characters through repetition and variation. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that genre encapsulates several strands in its definition including, classification,

© University of Venda

identification, style, and societal dialogues. From this, we can define genre as a system of classifying films, an emblem of film identification by the audience, an expression of unique style in production, and a platform for canvassing and advancing societal realities.

Chandler (1997, p. 4) corroborates the assertion of genre significance in his explication that, "Genre in any medium can be seen as embodying certain values and Ideological assumptions", a position reinforced by Grant (2007) who maintains that "Entertainment contains, reflects and promulgates Ideology." Indeed, Genre scholarship lies at the heart of film analysis and description geared towards understanding the cinematic medium and its contextual milieu. The theory of genre is espoused in Neale (2000), as a model encapsulating motifs and discrepancies within a cultural product (film in this case). Genre theory then provides a platform to appreciate the particularity and universality of audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging, that reveals itself in a film or cuts across a corpus of films. This means that with a review of generic dispositions like audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language and messaging, the cultural, social, political, and intellectual dimensions are laid bare in a critical appraisal of the films.

Criticism of film genres has largely been concerned with systematizing what most filmgoers randomly discern, and classification of films based on the evidence of descriptive definition. In discussing genres various studies (Grant (2007), Neale (2000), Nelmes (2012), Grant (2000), and Haynes (2016) refer to several ways of categorizing genres including but not limited to; Audience perceptions, spectator

© University of Venda

positioning, the narrative and its subject, audio-visual aesthetics, film industry, the auterist filmmaker. Nelmes (2012, p. 194) condenses the model of genre taxonomy using building blocks from narrative and style as illustrated in Figure 1 below,

Genre	*Defining criteria*	*Differentiating criteria*
Western	**Historical subject**	American West in the second half of the nineteenth century
Gangster film		1920s urban America
Epic		Large-scale productions usually about biblical or ancient history/myths
War film		Specific historical conflicts
Biopic		Story of a historical or significant person's life, or portion of a life
Film noir		Postwar America
Horror	**Intended affect**	Intended to horrify or scare
Thriller		Intended to thrill and excite
Comedy		Generation of laughter
Musical	**Formal criteria**	Presence of diegetic song and dance performances
Action movie		Presence of hyperbolic action set pieces and spectacular visual effects
Pornography		Presence of sex acts
Science fiction	**Subject matter**	Futuristic technologies/future worlds
Fantasy		Impossible worlds/fantastical characters
Disaster		Natural or man-made catastrophe
Crime film		The perpetration and investigation of criminal activities
Melodrama		Domestic drama and heterosexual romance
Road movie		Journey or road-trip, usually across America
Film noir		Crime and institutional corruption
Children's films	**Target audience**	Stories designed for consumption by children
Family movie		Stories designed for consumption by family groups
Blockbuster	**Style**	Narrative organised around spectacular events
Film noir		Chiaroscuro lighting/dark mise-en-scène

Figure 2: Taxonomic Criteria of Genre Categorisation
Source: Nelmes (2012, p. 194)

© University of Venda

Grant (2007) enumerates the components of genre as, Iconography, convention, and setting. He expounds iconography as, themes or concepts expressed by symbolically charged objects and events. He further alludes to iconography components as commonplace symbols in artistic works that wield cultural significance that surpasses the contextual boundaries of the film they are featured in (Ibid). The concept of iconography was central in the unpacking of generic features encapsulated within the audio-visual aesthetics in the sampled films including, the soundtrack, cinematography, lighting, editing, narrative aspects, language, and messaging. It is imperative to note that iconography translates to the "look" and "sound" of the film and thereby the discussions include a trajectory towards the cinematic aesthetic.

Grant (Ibid) describes convention as "frequently used stylistic techniques" or narrative archetypes of certain generic art forms or media. He further explicates the setting as the "space and time" within which the diegetic narrative unfolds. Convention and setting were interspersed in the discussions of the narrative, language and the audio-visual aesthetics observed in the sampled films. The study however was not fully bound to the descriptions thereof but went ahead to try and understand the historical, ideological, and political settings of the films as well as analysing the aesthetics of the sampled films without the boundaries of previous observations imposed.

According to Nelmes (2012), the iconography of a genre can be deconstructed to wield visual icons. The definition does not expressly include aural semiotics, but as formal elements, the cinematic matrix with structural and symbolic significance, as evinced in studies like Kimani (2022) and Bordwell and Thompson (2020), sound and the image

© University of Venda

are linked in, a collaborative signification network whose relationship cannot be negated. The elements of iconographic and conventional identification, as this study unrolled, encapsulate the narrative components of character, story and setting; aesthetic elements like the image, sound and language; and thematic elements interpreted from existential societal issues including the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions.

As in other jurisdictions, the narrative in African crime cinema is a key pillar in the expressions of identity in any genre. According to Thompson and Bordwell (2004), during the early days of Edison and Lumiere's filmmaking, newsreel actualities emerged as a characteristic feature of observational cinema. Examples of these outputs include "the workers leaving the factory" and "the train arriving at the station". The inclusion of filmmaking in the artistic realm prompted a drive to exceed traditional limits, resulting in an abundance of recordings that documented ordinary daily routines. These recordings, in turn, paved the way for the rise of short narratives influenced by vaudeville and slapstick comedy performances commonly seen in theatres.

Consequent to this advancement, there was an integration of enhanced characterisation, complex storylines, and a dedication to depicting unique settings. The Chaplin Tramp and other iconic characters, along with complex narratives like *The Kid* (1920) and numerous settings portrayed in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), all demonstrated the narrative's significance as the driving force behind the film's audio and visual aesthetics. However, these movements also sparked the emergence, definition, and establishment of non-narrative and avant-garde films that disrupted conventional

© University of Venda

storytelling, centering their essence on the experimentation with audio-visual techniques.

Genre scholarship provides for the narrative as one benchmark for defining genre. Nelmes (2012), Shadoian (2003) and Warshow (1948) demonstrate the place of the narrative within the defining frameworks of the genre films. On the other hand, Neale (2000), Miller and Stam (2007) , and Grant (2007) assert that the categorisation of a group of films into a genre requires the comprehensive analysis of narrative elements and other cinematic components. The present study undertook a thorough discussion of the audiovisual iconography and a critical analysis of the thematic framing as markers of the crime genre in addition to narrative, as a way to fully comprehend the genre. By engaging with all the elements within the discourse, a chance presents itself for a more comprehensive and expansive understanding of how the African crime genre exemplifies and underscores distinctive characteristics and shared traits found in other industries across different genres.

1.7.2 Main Genres in Word Film

In the general purview of film genres according to (Nelmes, 2012a), Petrie and Boggs, 2012), and (Bordwell, Thompson and Smith, 2020), the classification can be categorized widely into Fiction genres, Non-fiction genres and Hybrid genres.

- **Fiction -** films based on imagined situations, characters, places, and circumstances. Fiction includes categories like drama, crime, horror, comedy, and thriller.

© University of Venda

- **Non-fiction -** films that detail information and tackle various dimensions of reality. Nonfiction genres include various styles of documentary and newsreel video formats.
- **Hybrid genres -** these are a class that exudes the blended characteristics of fiction and nonfiction stories and formats.

The breakdown of the genres and subgenres is illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Film Genres and Subgenres Breakdown
Source: Researcher (2024)

GENRE CATEGORY	GENRE	SUBGENRES
NON- FICTION	Documentary	Expository, poetic, Reflexive, Participatory, Observational
FICTION	Action	Disaster, chase films, superhero
	Comedy	Romantic, Screwball, Stand-up, Sitcom, Slapstick, satire
	Crime	Detective, Gangster, Mafia, Mob films, Noir, gang films, war films
	Drama	Biopics, family, adventure, political, legal, melodrama, epic, courtroom
	Fantasy	
	Horror	Slasher, Supernatural, psychological, serial killers, occult, zombies, monsters etc.
	Science Fiction	Dystopia, post-apocalyptic, medical, futuristic
	Thriller	Mystery, Political,
	Western	Spaghetti Western,
HYBRID	Docudrama	
	Docufiction	
	Mockumentary	

Generic taxonomy, however, is not a simple business of sifting and separating what we consider the films that fit in a genre or those that do not fit within the genre in question. Contemporary genre theorists look at genre as a myth(Nelmes, 2012a).

© University of Venda

Myths, especially in the African context, are a particularly important way of communicating certain deep-sited issues about society. So, regarded from that perspective, genre then becomes something more than just a way of categorizing films and gets to the realm of a modus of expression. Genre is then, as so regarded, a way of expressing ideas, and ideals. Genre films are therefore packaged in such a way that the corpus engaging certain ideas, ideals and perspectives are categorized uniformly. For instance, the crime genre, in question herein, is not just based on a certain formulaic aesthetics. From the concept mooting, and before the apparatus (thus technique) is introduced, a film should snugly fit in the crime genre through its thematic choice, narrative, and linguistic aspects. The subject of crime in the genre transcends theme and dabbles into the realm of a society speaking to itself, about the existential issues that it is compounded with. This resonates with Mwangi (2009) who fathoms the concept of “Africa writing back to self”.

1.7.3 Genre in African Cinema and Societies

Genre as a concept of analysing and understanding cinema industries and cinematic products is yet to be fully acknowledged and embraced. The discussion thereof has been drawn on the negotiation and edification of differences in the films with little or no recognition of the remarkably undeniable threads of similarities that are projected by the films and that characterize film sectors in disparate African jurisdictions.

The discussions on genres in African cinema are tied to the discourse of African culture, the understanding of concepts on Africa, and the position of Africa as a social-cultural space among the league of cultures (Haynes, 2016). African scholarship in

© University of Venda

studies such as Thiong'o (1986), Mbembe (2001), and Fanon (1963) projecting various Africanist schools of thought, including Pan-Africanism, Postcolonialism, third cinema inter alia, attempt to assert the centrality of Africa by decrying scholarship perspectives on Africa from the West. It is not a surprise, hence, that genre is not widely studied among African cinema studies if its Euro-American roots are a disposition to go by. The subtle rejection thereof comes with the edification of a historical connotation, is recommended as the expected way of making and reviewing film. In advancing this idea, Thiong'o, p. (2013, p. 78) avers that,

> The danger of young Africa filmmakers who do not come from a tradition of resistance may well lie in their being seduced into thinking that the entertainment value is everything; that to succeed they must abandon social themes and reach out of abstract internationalism.

That genre film is largely regarded as a thread in the commercial entertainment fabric is not in doubt. Indeed, the generic concept, as defined by Grant (2007) underscores that genre cannot be separated from the industry, and Africa and the countries within it, continually seek to find a space within the global commercial order, from which film cannot be divorced. The rejection of commercialism, consequential to the eschewal of genre at the scholarly level, points out, not only a problem in accepting genre but a gap in defining and contextualizing it within the discourses around African cinematic corpus. This study, buoyed by the presence and essence of crime films in Africa, departs from this belief and assertion and proceeds from the explication by Chandler (1997) who notes that even with the abound challenges of genre definition, coupled with an

© University of Venda

abandonment of its conceptual critique, people would continue with the textual categorisation in their routine consumption of films.

Earlier studies on African Cinema questioned the rationale of the genre in African cinema and saw its generic engagement to be a dilution of its authenticity. In his explication of genre Boughedir (2019) characterises African cinema as purely artisanal, meaning that it is still rudimentary with each effort only reflecting the creative genius of the artisan as opposed to following a common thread within a particular geopolitical or socio-cultural or economic district. Terming African cinema as artisanal is to pigeonhole a continental cultural expression within the limited margins of individual knowledge, skills, and convictions bracket. Further, the artisanal definitions portray African cinema as an elitist artefact whose expression is exclusive to the knowing. This idea lacks the acknowledgement of the wide and liberal practice demonstrated in the democracy of cinema. Indeed, with the proliferation of new technologies cinematic expression has widened in quality and quantity characterised by traditional cinematic expression and other para-cinematic expressions, some christened as just content creation. A classical view of an artisan filmmaker also ignores the collaborative practice of cinema. Limiting the thematic expression and the best cinematic style to the views and perspectives of one person controverts the recognition of efforts by the many other artists and technicians involved in the making of the film. Chandler (1997, p.10) repudiates the artisanal notion position in his negotiation of advantages of generic analysis, stating that,

© University of Venda

> As well as locating texts within specific cultural contexts, genre analysis also serves to situate them in a historical perspective. It can help to counter the Romantic ideology of authorial 'originality' and creative individualism.

Teshome Gabriel takes a contrasting view in the foreword of Ukadike (2003, p. xi) where he attempts to deconstruct the connections of African cinema to African culture. He disputes this idea of the solo filmmaking genius, about assertions of belief and practice by the filmmakers interviewed in the volume, when he postulates that, despite the possibility to regard African filmmakers as "auteurs" it is important for critics to avoid the pitfall of perceiving African films as products of individual ingenuity and while acknowledging African filmmaking as a collective activity, Teshome explicates that,

> African cinema, in this sense, projects itself beyond individual films and filmmakers, beyond even the boundaries of languages and nations.

This assertion, used in reference to genre, provides an accurate reflection of how the generic concept works. Genre dispositions are arrived at, by not only seeking comprehension of a film within its textual structure, but also within comparative and differentiation principles whereby different films are appraised on their similarities and differences. This is the point, from which I picked a cue to appreciate the generic concepts of similarity and differences, that would collectively define African crime films.

On this same subject, Manthia Diawara in Givanni (2019) asserts his disbelief in the existence of an authentic film language arising. He rejects any possibility of an African film language stemming from commonalities in the independence struggle, questions of identity and Afrocentricity. This study does not seek to establish or develop a native

© University of Venda

film language, but to place African cinema on the global discourse based on its generic context. This not only found how African films spell, and articulate the film language, but how they translate it and add customized accents and neologisms to it through audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and the connections between messaging and contextual societal realities.

From the foregoing, it is notable that the early scholarship on African cultural studies, regard Africa as a place of purity and puritanical ideals and prescribe a strategy of approaching African cinema-making that is devoid of the microbes of the west associated with colonialism and its attendants. In a related attitude, Tsikhungu (2015) a study on identities espoused by German films in Africa denotes the binarisms of Eurocentric perspective and African attitudes on the spatial, body, and language. The study unveils the generic class of German films in Africa and goes ahead to valorise their visual and performative imagery. It however centrally concerns itself with the attitudes of otherness and racial perspective in the formation of filmic senses in the movies under scrutiny. Akin to the attitudes of the German filmmakers revealed in the films studied in Tsikhungu (2015), a lot of concepts considered foreign are largely regarded as impure or toxic to African cultural production and critique. Hence, the adoption of the ways of the metropolis including entertainment value, is then regarded as miscegenation of African culture and cultural products as suggested by Thiong'o (2013).

The attempt to straitjacket cinema by explicitly defining the thematic scope and chastising critique, and to make it a metanarrative response to the masters of yore

© University of Venda

reflects asphyxiation of perspective. This is an archetypical tool in the body politic of the colonialist or the neo-colonial ideal to which many critical a salvo, has been fired. Cinema is an import to Africa and a colonial heritage as it traces its inventive beginnings to Europe and America (Thompson & Bordwell, 2003), and its diffusion to other continents including Africa. Therefore, the paradox of accepting the body and rejecting the soul looms when there is a rejection of aspects of cinema like genre. Thus, it flies in the face of any adoption of useful ideas or concepts that are originally from the West but have become endemic in African spaces. In essence, the rejection of the film concept of genre is rejecting that which came packaged with what we already accepted – film- which in and of itself, is a foreign concept in technological, innovative and diffusion characteristics. This is a glaring contradiction, because the deployment of film to tell African stories, comes with the adoption of the ideas and language that is attendant.

Recent studies on cinemas of Africa have not been shy in tackling the question of genre in African cinema. Shapaya (2013), for instance, attempts to demarcate the space of experimentalism and locate the qualities of the Avant-Garde film genre in Kenyan film, an important instalment in the corpus of African cinema. Seeking to draw parallels among sampled films, Shapaya (2013) finds that indeed a thread can be drawn, and commonalities and peculiarities fit to define the genre found. The current investigation sought to go further with the crime genre by investigating the points of negotiation between the genre and the realities of the society that makes it through its audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging aspects.

© University of Venda

The question of genre in African cinema is further tackled in Haynes (2016) a study by Jonathan Haynes a Nollywood enthusiast a professor of English at Long Island University in Brooklyn. From the preface of his study, Haynes (2016) admits that there has been little scholarly interest towards African film genres and alludes to the need to study the generic component of Nollywood films. This he emphasizes by arguing that a lot has been written about Nollywood, but there is almost no effort towards conducting a full-scale survey of its genres. Demonstrating the gap that this inquiry sought to address, he further notes that,

> There are simply too many films and too many kinds of films. Other writers naturally will draw lines, name things and place emphasis differently. At least I have made a start. (ibid).

This assertion opens wide the space to engage in discourse about genre in African film and his lucidly posited parallelism between genre and realities of the Nigerian population, politically, socially, economically, and culturally is a strand that is very vital in the quest to find the societal parallels with the film narratives and the societal and individual ideologies canvassed in the making of African cinematic products. The relation between cinema and the African society has been spelt out in various studies Diang'a (2013) finds didacticism as a strategy of films responding to the situations of the time in her analysis of periodical films in Kenya. Her study on message films, delineates the movies as important thematic communicators of the African struggle to decolonize and assert its social-cultural space with the film apparatus. Njoroge (2019) discusses Kikuyu comedies as signifiers of important cultural information. His study

© University of Venda

reinforces the idea about film as an important megaphone within the area of cultural dissemination and cultural discourse.

1.7.4 Figuration of Genre Taxonomy and Convention in African Cinema

Film genres are not static. They are always in a sustained state of change, in form and cultural significance. Stemming from this dynamism, it consequently follows that generic readership should mirror and keep to the thump of the transformations. As each movie produced introduces new generic dimensions in its rendering of a narrative, its audience gains new insights in their appreciation of the genre. This, hence, weighs on the critics and scholars to expand their descriptions and revise their boundaries of understanding the classes. This keeps the genre and its attendant discourse alive, and its significance in the scheme of societal self-reflexivity is adequately probed and asserted.

Owing to its poignancy as a descriptive and remotely prescriptive concept of discussion, generic discourse in African cinema will lead to not only finding the space of African film in the universal discussions - not in the ubiquitous third world or coloniality terms - but also seeking its identity outside Hollywood jargon and national and exotic cinema tags. The dynamism of genre will then gain new intellectual energy as new variations of genres and subgenres emerge. This is a key pillar of the current study which sought to engage in genre discussions on African films.

Genre as a Hollywood ideal can be forgiven on the pretext of its discussions at the classic and contemporary contexts being largely centered around Hollywood with

© University of Venda

studies on other industries either following its taxonomic cues or being generalised into national or regional cinemas like Asian, Chinese, Bollywood, Nigerian, South African, Mexican, or French (Neale, 2000; Grant, 2007; Moine, 2008). It is imperative, therefore, to enthrone a discourse of genre in African art forms, eschewing the rigid boundaries of Hollywood definitions.

The discussions on genre in African cinema herald an epoch and discourse leading to contemporary ideas reflecting the eclecticism of neo-African intellectual space characterised as a crucible where a diversity of perspectives and influences are canvassed, stemming from continental and diasporic heritages. (Haynes, 2016) delineates specific genres in Nollywood and describes them with specific titles including family films, auteur films, crime, vigilante, village films, campus films, comedies, political films inter alia. To reinforce his discoveries, he expounds that “in naming genres, I have followed common usages of the film industry and fans...these usages are not altogether consistent or systematic” (Ibid, p. xxv)

Genre at the industry and cognitive level is shown in premieres, festivals, and awards, with categorizations of submitted films loosely or explicitly following Hollywood genres. In their listings of African films, festivals, and awards like AMAA, KALASHA, DURBAN, AMAKULA, AMVCA and African film databases like inter-alia, AMDB, AFD and Movie Mtaani; and Film Online and VOB platforms including Netflix, Showmax, AfroLandTV, Amazon Prime Video, and My Movies Africa categorise films in the generic classes illustrated in table 2 below.

© University of Venda

Table 2: Genres and Subgenres Listed in African Movie Streaming Platforms
Source: Researcher (2024)

PLATFORMS	GENRES LISTED
1. **My Movies Africa** 2. **Showmax** 3. **Amazon prime video** 4. **AfroLandTV** 5. **Movie Mtaani** 6. **Netflix**	Documentary, Drama, Comedy, True story, Thriller, Action, Political, Crime and mystery, Suspense, Supernatural, Adventure, Animation, Biography, Horror, History, and war, Fantasy, Mystery and thriller, Historical movies, Foreign movies, Science fiction, Family and kids, Romance, Western, Crime, Military movies, Nollywood movies, Bollywood, Hindi films, South African Films, Kenyan Films etc.

The listing of genres as demonstrated in Table 2 fortifies the argument that the taxonomy oscillates within similar parameters. The categorisation however is generalist and may not consider the genre difference, genre-bending, blending and the uniqueness that each of the films and corpus portends within the framework of Africanness. The investigations set forth are a continuum in the inquiry of popular culture in African societies and an effort at understanding how popular Media, crime film, in this case, attempts to valorise society in its everyday spaces and realities. Looking at crime from a filmic point of view and attempting to engage with realities of the society depicted in the films under study, therefore occupies the spatiotemporal section in the dialogues of order and disorder, civic duty, law enforcement, and governance. It also asserts the role of the griot, that filmmakers undertake in bringing to the consciental fore, the existential social, cultural, political, and economic issues Africa must deal with. The study, therefore, begins with a recognition of what film does, which is to diagnose the issues within society and give a prognosis for the various

© University of Venda

societal and ideological malaise. By priming the discussion of film genre, specifically crime genres in African jurisdictions, the current investigation then continues the discussion about the interstices within which the nexus of film and society nestles.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The present study engaged in an inquiry leading to the comprehension and analytical synthesis of generic archetypes in African crime movies. To facilitate this, two theories were deployed to uncover the conceptual dispositions of the analysed data. Genre theory and post-Afrocentricity were used to contextualise the discussions. The proceeding subsections expound the theoretical tenets thereof applied.

1.8.1 Genre Theory

The genre theory is a school of thought articulating the categorisation of films based on a variety of taxonomic, cognitive and industry parameters. The theory (or arguably cluster of theories) draws its ideals from literary theories and has been advanced in film studies by scholars and theorists including inter alia Steve Neale, Rick Altman, Allan Williams, Barry Keith Grant, Thomas Schatz, and Robert Warshaw.

Contemporary developments in genre theory have been further enriched by Langford (2005) who explores genre hybridity in world cinema, and Mittell (2004) who examines the cultural construction of television genres, providing additional frameworks for understanding how genres operate across different media contexts. This study confined itself to the theoretical strands posited by Steve Neale and therefore ordered

© University of Venda

its data and analysed the genre ideals as espoused in the study objectives within the following tenets of the theory:

Neale (2000) explicates the idea of genre as a system of repetition and difference. This means that a generic reading is concerned with regular patterns and variations within a generic corpus. Commenting on the process of genre growth, Neale regards each film as an instalment to an existing compilation, wielding within it, dispositions congruent with those of a similar form and content. This concept finds support in Turner (2006) who argues that genres are not static categories but dynamic cultural forms that evolve through constant negotiation between industry practices and audience expectations. Neale (2000) also adds that the generic abstract is an independent bank of ideas that challenges and adds to the dominant codes and notions of a genre, bringing forth unique ideas, characteristically divergent from the idealised silhouettes. While affirming this genre transformation argument, Chandler (1997) rejects the essentialist approach to genre studies and asserts that the cycles and transformations of genres can, with certainty, be viewed as a response to political, social, and economic conditions.

The above-stated theoretical tenet was instrumental in the establishment of the recurring motifs among the sampled films as well as the notable divergences in audio-visual, narrative, language, and messaging dispositions that define the crime genre in African cinema. This study's raison d'être therefore not only spun from a place of positioning African films within the genre discourse but careered in the demonstration of how these films individually and collectively transcend the already defined generic

© University of Venda

taxonomies theorized upon Hollywood cinema. To neatly slot and compartmentalise the sampled films into generic characteristics would seem like the writ large of critical actions to take. However, the analysis of the audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging in the sampled films imported inbound contextualities, that may result in re-definition or recasting of genre, a feature anticipated by the foregoing tenet of genre theory.

Neale (2000) also discusses the concept of cultural verisimilitude. Verisimilitude is in this context defined by Neale and supported by other studies including Haynes (2016), Shadoian (2003), and Grant (2007) as the "likeness" or 'plausibility" to sociocultural, political, ideological, and economic circumstances that an audience relates to in the diegetic world. This understanding is further developed by Stam (2000) who explores how genre films function as cultural texts that both reflect and shape social realities, particularly in non-Western cinematic contexts. Although Neale (2000) and the other studies take caution by distinguishing and alienating the concept of verisimilitude from realism, the definition does not fully repudiate the location of the film within the ambient situations, events, and narratives of the depicted settings. This tenet ties to the social contract of a film to speak of and back to its society. Neale (2000, p.157) underscores that:

> The concept of verisimilitude is central to an understanding of genre, as is the question of the social-cultural functions that genres perform.

© University of Venda

This tenet provides an adequate platform to engage in the discussion of the sampled crime genre films in the context of their diegetic "authenticity" by relating the messaging to the contextual realities in African countries.

Genre theory in view of the postulations herein appropriated, is characteristically Hollywood in definition. Neale (2000) avers as such. This limitation has been acknowledged by recent scholarship including Vitali and Willemen (2006) who argue for the need to decolonize film studies methodologies when analyzing non-Western cinema, and Shohat and Stam (1994) who critique the Eurocentric assumptions embedded in traditional genre theory frameworks. This stands out as a drawback in canvassing "Africanness" in the sampled films in situ observation, which further points to the theory's inadequacy to operate within the scope of the current study and locate all the objectives within its conceptual panorama. For a full appreciation of the contextual African realities and ideals, the study deployed a second theory - post-Afrocentricity.

1.8.2 Post-Afrocentricity

Post-Afrocentricity is a school of thought championed by Tejumola Olaniyan in his 1995 treatise *Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance*. The theory distinctly examines African art and its roots and further inspires self-reflection on the situations the Africans have independently put themselves in.

The main tenets of this school of thought relevant to the present investigation include its centralist view of the discourses on Africa eschews the sectarian, hard-line positions

© University of Venda

taken by the feuding binarist perspectives founded on Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. On this, Olaniyan (1995), notes that the unique print and the strength of post-Afrocentricity is its defiance of what he calls "excessive Manichaeism" of the Eurocentric and Afrocentric discourses. In its stead, he avers, there should be provision of a more stable (but difficult platform) based on overlapping of histories and ambivalence of view. This centralism consequently fosters an appreciation of cultural products based on a blended perspective. That blended perspective, as Mwangi (2009) notes, provides ample critique to established industry views without valorising Africa as the place of puritanical perfection that Western discourses have soiled. This approach resonates with Mbembe (2001) who advocates for a critical engagement with African cultural production that moves beyond essentialist categorizations while maintaining cultural specificity.

This tenet was important in the description of African films under the genre matrix, which is expressed as a 'Hollywood' concept, in the foregoing discourse. The "Hollywood" ideology is propagated as alien to the explication and comprehension of African cinema. Through this lens, generic descriptions were interspersed within the manifest dispositions including audio-visual aesthetics, narrative, language, and messaging which are evident in the sampled African films as envisioned in all the study objectives. The discussions thereof were firmly grounded in the ideals of shared histories, ideals, and concepts, without frowning upon any perceived alienness in the rudiments and details.

© University of Venda

The discourse is also railed on a post-Afrocentric assertion that grounds the importance and centrality of history and ambient realities in theorising about Africa and her cultural products. Olaniyan (1997) thus pinpoints, the emphasis of post-Afrocentricity on "historical specificity" as a central consideration in the analysis. This acknowledges the differences and particular shortcomings among, and within discourses in defining specifics of history or a people. This pillar of post-Afrocentricity was ideal in grounding the discourse towards a chronicle of contextual historicity in the reading of African films, which translates to propping the context of the film, like influences on its making and makers, to understand its generic framework.

1.9 Research Methodology

This section expounds the choices of research methods deployed to sample, collect date, analyse the data and the application of research ethics.

1.9.1 Research Study design

To adequately deconstruct data from films and the attendant data from informants regarding the filmic texts and their ambient dynamics, this study deployed qualitative research methods. The qualitative research method informed the sampling procedure, collection of data, and the management and analysis of the collected details. Qualitative research according to Leavy (2014) is a way of learning about social reality. This, therefore, means that qualitative research enables a researcher to conduct an inquiry on phenomena, events, and subjects to deduce meaning and to provide a deeper understanding thereof of the social contexts. Leavy further underscores that

© University of Venda

qualitative approaches attempt to illuminate connections between individuals – groups, and institutional and/or cultural contexts. This poses significant meaning in the quest to probe the building blocks of the crime genre and locate its variations within the context of African aesthetic and normative contexts.

1.9.2 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The The examination of crime genre films within the African context focused on a population comprising African crime films, alongside participants who were experts and enthusiasts of African cinema. Accordingly, the sampling procedure was executed in two stages. The initial stage involved quota sampling, which divided Sub-Saharan Africa into four distinct regions: Southern, Eastern, Central, and Western Africa. The subsequent stage employed purposive sampling for the selection of individual films and interview participants.

A comprehensive database of African crime films was unavailable, stemming from the unavailability of a singular organized establishment of film distribution and inconsistent labelling of films which translated to the lack of a sample frame. The study sample comprised nine films: Kenneth Gyang's *Òlòtūré*, Kemi Adetiba's *The King of Boys*, Ralph Ziman's *Jerusalema: Gangsters Paradise*, Florian Schott's *Katutura*, Daryne Joshua's *Noem My Skollie*, Djo Tunda Wa Munga's *Viva Riva*, Philip Karanja's *Click Click Bang*, Kang'ethe Mungai's *Uradi* and Donald Mugisha's *Bodaboda Thieves*.

© University of Venda

1.9.2.1 Film Selection Justification

The sample of nine films was derived purposively with respect to them fulfilling the following characteristics:

a) Geographic Representation

The sample of nine films were derived from leading industries and countries using a quota of four regions of Sub-Saharan Africa: Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, Central Africa, and West Africa. This is represented in the table below.

No.	Region	Films	Rationale
1.	West Africa	*Òlòtūré*, *The King of Boys*	representing Nollywood's significant contribution to African crime cinema
2.	East Africa	*Click Click Bang*, *Uradi, Bodaboda Thieves*	representing Riverwood's emerging crime film productions
3.	Southern Africa	South Africa (*Jerusalema*, *Noem My Skollie*) and Namibia (*Katutura*)	representing the region's established film industry and East African diversity
4.	Central Africa	*Viva Riva*	representing Central African cinema

b) Selection Criteria

The sample of nine films were derived purposively with respect to them fulfilling the following characteristics.

i. Films primarily tackling various subjects and types of crime.

© University of Venda

ii. Crime films that have received critical acclaim, won awards, nominated to prestigious awards, or had notable box office success.

iii. Indigenous films, which are scripted, directed, acted, and based on local stories, the funding entities notwithstanding.

iv. To further narrow down on the specifications, the elements of the sample were checked for variety and depth in crime subject coverage and availability in standard playback quality.

c) Temporal Scope

The films were sampled from the post-millennial period (2000-2020) to ensure contemporary relevance and digital accessibility for analysis.

The sampled films were derived from a population among catalogued and available titles from movie distribution shops on DVD, online repositories like **YouTube** channels, VOD platforms like, inter alia, **Movie Mtaani**, and **My Movies Africa**; and streaming services including **Showmax** and **Netflix**. The long list of films from which the sample was drawn is herein attached as Appendix 4.

1.9.2.2 Key Person Interviews (KPIs)

The study engaged ten interview respondents through Key Person Interviews (KPIs), selected based on their expertise and direct relevance to African crime film production, analysis, and contextualisation. KPIs were chosen to ensure data quality from individuals with specialized knowledge and experience in the field. The selection criteria considered their direct involvement in African crime film production, distribution,

© University of Venda

or criticism, scholarly expertise in African cinema, genre studies, related cultural fields and legal issues. The KPI participants included four film directors/film producers, two film critics and two ethnomusicologists, one crime researcher, and one human rights and legal expert. The KPIs employed semi-structured interview protocols lasting 45-60 minutes each, covering the thematic areas drawn from the objectives including, audiovisual aesthetics, narrative choices and the connections between film narratives and societal realities

The saturation principle was applied to determine the final tally of interview respondents as no new information was forthcoming beyond the number stated. Saturation is described in Leavy (2014, p. 184) as “the point at which new interviews yield little additional information”.

1.9.3 Data Collection

Primary as well as secondary data was collected and as such deployed in the study’s arguments. Primary data mainly consisted of observation of the sampled films in a closed reading guided by a carefully crafted observation guide, and interviews conducted on the sampled respondents. Secondary data from, books, journals, news reports, videos and online publications were used to signpost and locate the primary data within previous findings of the same subject and contemporary theories.

1.9.4 Primary Data

Since the study was centred on the analysis of filmic content, concept and context, primary data included observed material from the films and perspectives from various

© University of Venda

respondents within the filmmaking sector and legal/crime sector. Two primary data collection methods were employed: systematic film observation and Key Person Interviews (KPIs).

The observation data was collected through systematic analysis using structured direct observation protocols. Each film was watched multiple times during which specific objective-based elements were observed, documented, and recorded according to a comprehensive observation guide. The watching sessions were divided into three broad segments.

i. Preliminary observations - The films were watched for familiarity and to make a general observation on the story, setting, characters and context.
ii. Specific Observations - The researcher watched the films, picking out specific details about the various narrative, language, and aesthetic nuances.
iii. Interpretive observation - The films were watched to make connections, and inferences to fit specific details to thesis conclusions.

In-depth Interviews covering various issues encapsulated within the study objectives were conducted on ten respondents including, film producers/directors, screenwriters, film critics, musicologists and legal/crime experts. who offered corroborative information on the various subjects under scrutiny on film content and contextual matters as per the research questions.

© University of Venda

1.9.5 Secondary Data

Secondary data was sourced from news reports in newspaper publications both online and in hard copies. The specific information sought included headlines and news reports on crime and criminals. This information was interspersed with observed data on relevant scenes from the sampled films. The data thereof was very vital in addressing the second objective, which encompasses the analysis of the narrative and thematic elements of the sampled films and their impression of the realities in depicted settings. In addition, other secondary data was sourced from books, academic journals published online and on hardcover, video documentaries on African Film industries and the making of the sampled films, government agency reports, conference papers, theses, and dissertations. These data sources were accessed from physical libraries and numerous repositories online.

1.9.6 Research Instruments and Equipment

To gather raw, research objectives-based data from the films, and the interviews, the researcher deployed research Instruments including, an observation guide herein annexed as Appendix 2, and an interview guide in Appendix 3 among the annexures.

To enhance the collection of data, audio-visual recording of interviews the researcher used audio recorders, zoom video recording feature and cameras which were transcribed with the aid of AI tools and a research assistant. Notebooks and pens were used for notetaking during interviews and observation.

© University of Venda

1.9.7 Trustworthiness

Mugenda and Mugenda (2019) refer to qualitative concept of trustworthiness as the qualitative equivalent of quantitative validity and reliability citing criteria such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The present research therefore anchored itself on trustworthiness concept since the data, tools and methods were anchored on qualitative framework.

To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher employed triangulation of data sources from observation, interviews, and secondary sources in the discussion of specific themes, to crosscheck the accuracy of the information and give different perspectives. Thick description was also be applied by using contextual and historical inferences interspersed with the collected data in the discussion of findings to enhance validity. Qualitative reliability was ensured by maintaining consistency of data coding based on the research objectives and checking data transcripts for any mistakes and inconsistencies.

1.9.8 Data Analysis

Since the data collected was qualitative, content analysis was used as a strategy for decoding the transcribed interviews and the observational notes. According to Krippendorff (2004), the content analyst views data as a rendition of texts, images, and expressions that are created to be read and synthesised for their meanings. The data from the sampled films was therefore analysed for meanings through, coding in clusters as per the objectives and presented thematically and in subthemes, interspersed with

© University of Venda

the secondary data to discuss the findings within the existing theory and form thesis inferences.

1.9.9 Ethical Considerations

Leavy (2014) identifies three important principles of research ethics including diminishing potential harm, respect of peoples' independence and placing high regard for respondents' privacy. The researcher adhered to the crosscutting "voluntary and informed consent" principle as averred by Leavy (2014), by seeking participation of respondents based on full disclosure of the research purpose and necessary guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity where applicable at the point of engaging respondents. In the interest of respecting the intellectual property rights of the filmmakers whose films were analysed, the researcher acquired original DVDs by purchase or directly from the filmmakers and paid for platform subscriptions where applicable. Appropriate permissions were also duly sought for the facilities that were used during the study and other necessary ethical compliances with relevant research regulation authorities including the university ethics committee were sought and acquired.

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

2 CHAPTER TWO:

NARRATIVE CONFIGURATIONS OF AFRICAN CRIME FILMS

2.1 Chapter Overview

The preceding chapter inquired into the exposition of the generic framework for reading films and the diffusion of the genre concept in African cinema. In addition, the chapter distilled the knowledge gap and the theoretical and methodological aspects of this study. This chapter entails a discussion of the storytelling elements and techniques evident in the sampled African crime films, anchored on the third research question. The chapter therefore sets out from an appreciation of the space of the audiovisual in delivering narratives and the place of narrative in building coherence for audiovisual aesthetics. The discussions are therefore demarcated into the analysis of plots, characterisation, and settings identified in the sampled African crime films. The chapter proceeds from the narration of film synopses to expose the reader to the storytelling milestones, characters, events, and settings to help them decipher the anecdotes thereof adduced in this and the following chapters.

2.2 Plotting the African Crime Film

This section is geared towards recounting the narrative plots of the sampled films, contextualising their milestones within the aegis of storytelling qualities in the African crime films, and linking to the discussions on thematic rendering and characterisation. The section ends with an analysis of the generic dispositions of the film plots, contextualising them within dominant styles as well as reviewing their unique features.

© University of Venda

2.2.1 Bodaboda Thieves

Bodaboda Thieves is a 2015 eponymously titled Ugandan film directed by Donald Mogisha that tells the story of Abel (Hassan Isingoma), a young man seeking a good life through *bodaboda* robbery amid the encumbrances of poverty. Living with his peasant parents in the sprawling slums on the outskirts of Kampala, Abel is compelled to seek employment to supplement the meagre income from his father, a *bodaboda* operator riding a rented motorcycle, and the earnings of his mother from the backbreaking labour of crushing rocks to ballast in the gaping quarries of Kampala. This socioeconomic condition depicted aligns with the economic data of Uganda that indicates people living in squalid conditions in the slum areas of urban Uganda (Development Initiatives, 2020). *Bodaboda*, on the other hand, is an economic mainstay for a large population who supplement the overly stretched public transport system in Kampala and other urban centres (Amone, 2021).

The film opens at Abel's family home, revealing a humble home, a prayerful mother, and an ordinary family with expectations for their son. Abel rides out with his father through the buzzing streets of Kampala and is dropped at the central business district to seek employment. This paints a picture of the high unemployment rates in Uganda and, by extension, Kenya, South Africa, and Nigeria as captured by Baah-Boateng (2016). On arrival at the Kampala central business district, Abel instead sheds the "good boy" jobseeker look by removing the rosary given to him by his prayerful mother and untucking his shirt, then meets up with Lex (Sam Mwesigwa), a street thug with whom he goes to a betting club where Abel wagers his measly coins. This scene

© University of Venda

provides a window through which the betting culture that is rife in African countries can be viewed. The betting behaviour is a compounded addiction to drug abuse, which demonstrates itself when Abel and Lex join other friends with whom they engage in drinking and smoking at a local joint. Abel's lies to his parents are reinforced through the dramatic irony deployed when he later returns to his father's station and lies about his job search and reddened eyes. This specific anecdote is vital in the story as it shows the propensity and temerity of the young man in fooling his parents about his character.

With his quest unsuccessful, Abel has to join his mother working in a quarry to do manual labour of breaking rocks for ballast. After some pep talk and grumbling on his side, Abel begins helping at the quarry, carrying and crushing rocks. He is tired and dirty at the end of it, only to be woken from his restful doze by a child calling out to him that his dad is in the hospital. Back home, the heavily bandaged father Abel is brought home, and a heated discussion ensues on the motorbike business.

With his father indisposed from his everyday labour, Abel with renewed determination cleans the motorbike, emblazes it with stickers of his favourite team Chelsea, and rides out to work. His first day is frustrating because of the hostility of fellow riders, undercutting by traders, extortion by police, and botched opportunities. A reunion with Lex leads to a montage of Abel and Lex using the *bodaboda* to rob unsuspecting people and sharing the loot. They engage in handbag snatching, phone snatching, and using the bike to get away and later pawning the stolen items to smugglers. With the windfall in earnings, Abel buys a TV set, bread, and chicken, to the chagrin of his father who wonders about his spending ways.

© University of Venda

Now better funded, Abel continues his habit of gambling and drinking. The debauchery is cut short when Abel loses the motorbike to Lex. Together with his mother, they embark on a search, first reporting to the police who nonchalantly ask for a bribe. At Katwe, mother and son scour the place looking for their motorbike in the garages and parking bays with zero success. Abel finally spots Lex with his bike and pursues him through the streets.

Unable to find the motorcycle, the owner instigates his father's arrest, and a tired mother Abel goes to the police to request for Abel to be arrested in place of his father. Finally, after a long night search in the city and gambling spots, Abel finds Lex and secures the motorbike, which he rides into the night. In the morning, Abel is taken in and his father released. Father and son exchange tense stares as the bike is parked away among tens in the police compound as the film fades out.

2.2.2 King of Boys

King of Boys is a 2021 Nigerian film directed by Kemi Adetiba, unfolding a story about Alhaji Eniola Salami (Sola Sobowale), a businesswoman, a mother to Kitan (Ademola Adedoyin) and foster daughter Kemi (Adesua Etomi), and a leader in the Lagos criminal underworld who harbours an ambition and determination to become a senior politician in Lagos. This she tries to achieve through crooked businessmen like Aare Akinwande (Akin Lewis), who provide her with the linkage to senior politicians, including the governor Onikoyi (Rotimi Adelagan) and the senator Rewane Ebele (Alex Ayalogu). To gain their trust and foothold within their political circles, Eniola engages in their dirty work by forcing and bribing the populace for votes and funding their campaigns through

© University of Venda

her ill-gotten wealth, gained from bullying other criminals, racketeering, murder, torture, and kidnapping. She achieves this through the close help of Kemi and henchmen led by Ade Tiger (Titi Kuti).

Her journey to becoming *oba* is narrated through flashbacks that show Eniola as a child running away from her abusive home and her tribulations as a young woman until she lands in the lap of the Lagos crime lord Alhaji Salami, from whom she takes over after instigating his death. Besides being the *oba* or king of the underworld, Eniola is also a philanthropist and a mother who serves her community by assisting them financially and offering protection. In one instance, Eniola is approached by *Iyaloja* (Lanre Hassan), an old woman about a disrespectful young man who impregnated her daughter. Eniola's solution involves two options on how to use force to get the young man to marry the old woman's daughter. Despite the ruthless view, her "woman of the people" demeanour is also demonstrated when she assists market women and commands utmost respect from the young men manning roadblocks in the slums of Lagos who call her *mama* and *oba*. This is compounded by her ability to straddle interactions from the lower cadre of society to the highest.

Eniola's dealings and growth ambitions are however threatened by a variety of people, including other gangsters in Lagos like Odogwu Malay (Tobechukwu Ejiofor) and Akorede Makanaki (Remilekun Khalid Safaru), who compete for the turf and express discomfort about their 40% "tax" remittance from their crime proceeds. Her palpable antagonism is deepened by the arrival of the new NCCC detective Nurudeen Gobir (Paul Sambo), an incorruptible law enforcer determined to crack the rampant cases of

© University of Venda

corruption within the political and business circles in Nigeria but carrying the burden of a sick wife admitted to the hospital.

With her political ambitions unfulfilled, she gets into a disagreement with Aare and the politicians, which raises vengeful feelings in them. Gobir's investigative attention toward her is exacerbated when Senator Rewane's and Aare's houses are raided by Odogwu and Makanaki and substantial amounts of money are stolen. The investigation of corruption and state capture that is conducted by Nurudeen Gobir is further influenced by Inspector Shehu (Sani Mu), who conspires with the senior politicians to frame her as the main suspect in all the crimes as the main conspirator. Eniola soon finds herself isolated, fighting a battle of her lifetime in court and outside, as her family stays at risk. Circumstances get worse for Eniola when Justice Nwachukwu's (Nobert Young) family is kidnapped and killed, and the murder is framed on her. The once powerful *oba* or king of boys in Lagos is arrested and finds herself in a space of vulnerability and a place she cannot get out of. During this period of incarceration, her foster daughter Kemi is shot dead, and her son Kitan commits suicide. Left alone and vulnerable, she completely loses hope and her vulnerability in the police cells is exploited by Makanaki, who attempts to kill her by burning the cells.

Meanwhile, more revelations occur to Gobir in the case against Eniola. He discovers the role of his boss, Inspector Shehu, and his collusion with the politicians and corrupt businesspeople and confronts him. His wife's sickness is used to try and corrupt him to drop the cases. As the film ends, Gobir rescues Eniola from harm and the law, affording her a second chance, and finds himself questioning his beliefs, government,

© University of Venda

and systems that he works for. As the film fades out, Aare Akinwande and his co-conspirators are taken into custody and Inspector Shehu commits suicide as Gobir finds himself questioning his beliefs, government, and the integrity of the whole Nigerian society.

2.2.3 Òlòtūré

Òlòtūré is a 2019 Nigerian film directed by Kenneth Gyang, telling a story about Òlòtūré/Ehi (Sharon Ooja), a journalist who takes an undercover role as a prostitute to uncover details about a human trafficking ring in Lagos, Nigeria. The film opens with a sequence that introduces us to the prostitution business in Lagos, acquainting us with a skimpily dressed Ehi going to a club in a red-light street. This scene also introduces us to Chuks (Ikechukwu Onunaku), a pimp whose knack for harassing his remaining girl Blessing (Kemi Akindoju) is revealed when her comrades in the business confront him. The role of Chuks is used to demonstrate the existing hierarchies in the business and further posit that the place of traditional pimps in the prostitution business is under threat from a new order of online hookups and sex traffickers who portend a "more lucrative" outlook for the girls. The club hosts revellers dancing to loud music, pays homage to the party scene in Lagos, and reveals the underground prostitution rings camouflaged in the club scene highlighted by the sex lodging business within the premises.

Ehi soon gains a customer who buys a sexual enhancement pill and proceeds to the lodging room with her in tow. In panic, Ehi bolts out through the washroom window and leaves the agitated man shouting as she runs through the streets back to the pimp

© University of Venda

house with a bruised elbow from the ordeal. This scene provides an ample introduction to reading the perilous nature of commercial sex work in various African domains as well as the discovery that Ehi is not an ordinary prostitute. Ehi and the other call girls live in a common rental household hosted by a madam who owns the house that is also home to Chuks the pimp. It is in this house that Ehi meets and pursues a friendship with Linda (Omowumi Dada), one of the call girls who connects her to Alero (Omoni Oboli), a woman who helps local girls pursue their sex work in Europe. This scene sets out the later encounters with sex traffickers in the film.

Òlòtūré's undercover job is further revealed through a scene where she gets a customer who turns out to be her colleague and boyfriend, Emeka (Blossom Chukwujekwu). A police siren on the street sends the girls scampering for safety, exposing the adversarial relations between the twilight girls and the police. Prostitution is illegal in many African countries including Nigeria, and therefore the business is characterised by conflicts between sex workers and law enforcers, signalled by arrests, incarcerations, and violence (Robinson, Karofi and Usman, 2019). This explains the reactions of the women to the approaching police. The criminalisation of the business has however not prevented women and men from engaging in the business, whose growth has continually been reflected by sex tourism and trafficking, which are the palpable dangers of sex work. The perils of prostitution on women are further revealed in the scene where Ehi arrives at the pimp house and finds an injured Blessing crying after a brutal beating by Chuks. Blessing, the last girl under the grip of Chuks, expresses fear he will kill her if she goes away from him.

© University of Venda

Ehi gets to the next level of her investigation of the sex trafficking ring when she meets Alero after sneaking behind Linda during her visit to Alero in a garment market. Linda seeks to facilitate herself and her sister Beauty to travel to Europe for sex work. This chance encounter sets out the next part of the narrative in which Ehi is recruited into Alero's fold with her first assignment being the party at politician Sir Phillip Ondaje's (Patrick Doyle) suburban house, where she is drugged and raped by the host. The rape ordeal, a first scar from her investigation, deepens the resolve for her quest and she decides to explore the chances for the European trip by paying the required fees of $1,200 to facilitate the trip. Later, Alero meets Tony (Etim Effiong), another trafficker who affirms the order of delivering fifteen girls to Europe for the syndicate he likens to the Mafia.

Òlòtūré's stubborn zeal for the quest irks her colleague Emeka, who fails to understand her obvious flight into the fire even though she had met and collected details about Alero. Emeka tries once more to dissuade Ehi from travelling and mulls shutting down the investigation, but she refuses and leaves him her diary to keep, insisting that she wants to complete the mission.

Her payment triggers the next section of the story where the girls are taken by bus to a halfway house where they are forced to engage in various sexual activities and trained to act as prostitutes in European cities. The girls are brutalised, threatened, and insulted because of not following rules like giving a proper lap dance. Their phones are taken away to deny them communication with anyone outside the halfway house. They are also taken to a *juju* man in a forest who performs rituals to the naked and scared

© University of Venda

girls, chanting incantations and applying chicken blood on them and forcing them to swear allegiance on their lives, lying in a coffin.

It is in this halfway house that Linda is murdered after she is caught making a phone call to her mother, informing her of their current predicament. Linda's death sets out the next part of the story where the girls are now transported toward the border. Meanwhile, Emeka, after reading Ehi's diary, realises the danger in which Òlòtūré is in and he involves the police. At dawn, the police drive out to conduct the operation. Emeka trails them. They find the compound empty and Linda's dead body by the swimming pool.

In the final scene, the traffickers' bus continues its journey with the girls from Lagos through the border traffic to Benin. Victor (Sambasa Nzeribe), one of the traffickers, bribes immigration officials for safe passage. Òlòtūré takes advantage of the thugs alighting to leave the bus with Beauty, with an excuse of going for a long call. Emeka meanwhile approaches the immigration traffic and tries to talk to officials as Òlòtūré and Beauty try to run off from their handler. Òlòtūré is captured but Beauty makes a spirited run and bumps into Emeka as she runs to freedom back to Nigeria. As the film fades out, the bus crosses over the border disguised as a missionary bus.

2.2.4 Katutura

Katutura is a 2015 Namibian crime film directed by Florian Schott, set in the eponymous Katutura township in Windhoek. The film explores the lives of various characters led by Dangi (Chops Tshoopara), an ex-convict who seeks penance and a

© University of Venda

new life within the township while bringing to light the history of the settlement and its inhabitants' feeling of temporality.

The film sets out with the gruesome murder of Pele (Paulus Alugongo), Dangi's younger brother, brutally killed in the streets of Windhoek and a cache of diamonds stolen from him. Fresh from prison, Dangi arrives at the funeral of his brother and faces toxic pressure for vengeance from his mother. His arrival is also confronted by the reality of a new criminal mastermind in town, his old comrade Shivago (Obed Emvula), who has turned Katutura into a drug-induced township. Among the drug-hooked population is Esme (Odile Müller), Dangi's former lover and mother to his son Redemption (Shane Smith). Esme struggles to start a music career and must make do with a job at a pharmacy, where she is abused by the owner.

Dangi's anticipated peace after prison with his wife Foibe (Tjuna Kuapirura), who is diagnosed as barren, is haunted by his past, with suspicion from the police (Josef his neighbour), old rivalries (Shivago), and family secrets (past relationship with Esme and Redemption their son) as he tries to battle for the soul of Katutura to save Kondja (Gift Uzera), a bright, creative boy living with a physical disability, a promise he makes to Foibe's father, pastor (Bonnie Pereko).

His return to Katutura however awakens a conflict about the stolen diamonds, making enemies even among his former gang. Meanwhile, Shivago and his goons seek to expand their empire by forcing residents to either be users or peddlers of his drugs. Kondja, a physically challenged schoolboy with an undying love for Katutura, attracts

© University of Venda

the attention of Shivago and his gang, who threaten to harm Isola (Prisca Anyolo), his love interest, to coerce him to peddle drugs for them. Dangi's effort to rescue Kondja cascades into a full-blown war with Shivago, culminating in a physical fight that escalates to his family getting kidnapped and arson at Kondja's house to force him to produce the lost diamonds, which he finds hidden in the oil pan of his dead brother's car.

Circumstances get worse as Dangi's mother is killed and the police arrest Dangi for the murder and detain him in his mother's house. They however release him to go and rescue his family and deal with the Shivago menace as they deal with the reported fire in the slums. This indicates how overwhelmed the police system is and the need for the community as a character to intervene in fighting crime. In the plot, this point represents the blurred lines between the rebirth story of Katutura and the tragic end of the gangster generation.

In the final sequence, Dangi and his comrade are captured by Shivago and, as they are tortured, Gary (Jacobs Shivute), one of Dangi's henchmen, arrives and kills Shivago and subsequently reveals himself as the antagonist in the shadows behind Pele's, Dangi's mother's, and Mouton's murders. His objective is to get the diamonds for himself. A shootout that is triggered by a smoke bomb thrown in the room sees Foibe and Redemption rescued but leaves Dangi, Shivago, Gary, and other criminals dead. As the film fades out, Foibe and Esme unite for Redemption, while Kondja and Isola his girlfriend get cosy at the lakeside, signalling a new beginning for Katutura.

© University of Venda

2.2.5 Noem my Skollie

Noem My Skollie is a 2016 South African film directed by Daryne Joshua, retelling a true story about John Fredericks the screenwriter. The movie depicts the story about Abraham Lonzi (AB), a young man who traverses the world of crime and then finds himself back as a creative writer. The story is set in the Cape Flats in the 1960s during the apartheid period in South Africa. The film opens with a young AB (Austin Rose) growing up within a tightly knit family, his father Mr. Philip Lonzi (Charlton George), mother and siblings and friends Gimba (Ethan Pattern), Shorty (Valentino De Klerk), and Gif/Tyrone (Joshua Vraagom). Mr. Lonzi works in the city of Cape Town, delivering the trash that he collects to the sprawling dumping site within the Cape Flats slums. It is in the same place that he finds entertainment through gambling with fellow men including Mr. Ballie, who lives near the dump site.

As the story unfolds, the hazards of the Cape Flats slums are revealed when Abraham is sexually assaulted by Mr. Ballie in the sprawling dump site. Helpless, he walks home in pain and bleeding. This comes after AB and his friends Gimba, Shorty, and Gif are attacked by a group of young men who take away their sausages and beat them up brutally. In light of the perilous nature of their surroundings, the four friends decide to form a gang to protect themselves and make a pact to protect one another and work together.

The story then transitions to years later when the now grown-up AB (Dan-Jacques Mouton) and his friends Gimba (Gantane Kusch), Shorty (Gershwin Mias), and Gif (Christian Bennett) are fiercely independent and do their bidding as "The Young Ones"

© University of Venda

gang. The group is now transformed into ferocious fighters and petty criminals. In one specific instance, the gang clashes with another group that tries to attack Kettie's (AB's sister) friend. In the resulting fight, AB violently stabs the attacker in the head and leaves him bleeding. Later, feeling like expert robbers, the group tries to rob an antiques store, and a silent alarm triggers the arrival of police, who arrest AB and Gimba. The two are arraigned in court and taken to prison.

The prison becomes another formative stage for AB, where they encounter the prison gangs, the 26, 27, and 28. To protect himself from the attacks by prison gangs or being made a concubine by Gums (David Manuel), one of the 28 leaders, AB becomes a storyteller and a source of entertainment for his prison cell. His talent and skill endear him, make him independent from gangs, and protect him from attacks by the other prisoners, gaining him respect as a non-gang member. Gimba, on the other hand, becomes Gums' concubine.

After their jail term, the two are released and they continue living their lives, but AB's life is changed when he falls in love with Jenny (Tarryn Wyngaard), a girl from the Cape Flats, which draws him away from his gang and crime despite their continued friendship. During a robbery that turns the story, AB goes back to meet his girlfriend when his gang proceeds to the criminal mission, which ends in a murder. The crime leads to the arrest and arraignment of the gang in court for murder. After investigations and the court case, AB is acquitted whilst Gimba, Gif, and Tyrone are sentenced to death and thereafter executed by hanging. In the aftermath, a changed and reformed AB becomes a writer. The film, written by John Fredericks, is based on his true story

© University of Venda

that took place in the 1960s in the Cape Flats and recounts real events and real situations that he encountered as a young man growing up in the Cape.

2.2.6 Viva Riva

Viva Riva is a 2011 Congolese film directed by Djo Tunda wa Munga. The film details the story of Riva (Patsha Bay), a young fellow who steals and smuggles fuel from Angola into a fuel-starved Kinshasa. His arrival in Kinshasa pits him against local hoodlum Azor (Diplomé Amekindra) and a relentless bloodthirsty hunt party from Angola led by César (Hoji Fortuna), the owner of the fuel.

Riva, a young man estranged from his family, arrives in Kinshasa and first goes to meet his friend JM (Alex Herabo), who receives him at home. Immediately the duo goes out and engages in a party mode. Riva, a consumer of partying in the vibrant Kinshasa nightlife, leaves with his friend and goes on a spree of eating and drinking where they meet Anto (Jordan N'Tunga), a young, street-savvy juvenile merchant. A power blackout attracts them to a local club where traditional percussive music is being played, where Riva encounters Azor and Nora (Manie Malone), his girlfriend, the senior-most gangster in Kinshasa. Their party mission leads them to Mére Edo's brothel where they engage in sexual debauchery.

Meanwhile, César arrives with his henchmen in Congo and is directed to the Mariana crossing point where he tracks down the driver of the truck that delivered the fuel from Riva's barge with the help of an army commander. In the hunt, they kill the driver of the truck and immigration officials as they attempt to extract a bribe from them. On the

© University of Venda

other side of town, an enchanted Riva starts following Nora and manages to get her attention using her prized earring that was earlier pawned by Azor because of his cash issues in a club. After a sensual night with Nora, he is captured and attacked by Azor and his gang, who take away his money and spare his life in exchange for a part of the stolen fuel.

As the story proceeds, César continues hunting Riva down and, in the process, he manages to capture Azor and ends up killing him, which brings him closer to Riva as he gets information through Malou (Angelique Mbumb), a prostitute who works in Mére Edo's brothel. After the ordeal with Azor, Riva goes to his parents, where a very bitter fight ensues with his parents, revealing his family background as one that is characterised by unresolved anger, which prompts him to go back to Mére Edo's brothel, a place he is considered family. It is here that he is found by César and his crew, triggering a shootout which ends up with César and his gang down, giving Riva a chance to escape.

In the aftermath, assuming the death of Riva and the Angolan gang, JM, Malou, and the commander go and try to sell the fuel to a corrupt local priest. It is here that they are caught by César and his gang. After killing Malou and the priest, the gang forces JM and the commander to lead them to the fuel storage. Meanwhile, Riva and GO (Romain Ndomba) arm themselves to go and fight for the fuel and send away Anto to protect him from the ensuing danger.

© University of Venda

The final sequence, a bloody carnage, starts with GO being gunned down and JM stabbed to death. In her final adrenaline after suffering gunshots and killing Jorge, César's henchman, the commander crawls to a vantage point and shoots the fuel barrels, blowing up the truck and killing César in a fiery explosion. As the chaos dies down, Anto the young merchant enters the compound and witnesses the destruction. He climbs into a parked SUV where he finds a wad of cash which he holds briefly in relish. He then puts the money down and playfully mimics an engine roar, playing with the steering wheel. The film fades out with the mellow "*Le Bucheron*" (The Lumberjack) by Franklin Boukaka.

2.2.7 Uradi

Uradi is a 2021 Kenyan film directed by Kangethe Mungai about Komu (Mwaura Nga'ng'a), a village boy from a rural poor family who gains admission to the university to study architectural engineering. At the university, he meets Jemo (Manasseh Nyanga), a roommate who introduces him to a mysterious job to boost his income after humiliation through Karen (Violet Bijura), his new love interest in the university. After passing a loyalty test administered through torture, Komu begins running errands for the mysterious outfit, collecting architectural information on specific buildings. His skills attract reward and soon he is rewarded with a palatial home, a car, and large sums of money that enable him to bring Kirigo (Nancy Wanjiku), his village girlfriend, to live with him.

Komu eventually discovers the perils of his job when a building he spies on is bombed, claiming 200 lives. His realisation jolts him back to consciousness and he decides to

© University of Venda

leave the job, sacrificing the lucrative perks despite coaxing and threats by Jemo and Rashid, the head of the terrorist cell. As he ponders a life back to penury, he discovers that his girlfriend Kirigo is pregnant and realises that he needs to get more money to fend for the new child. Convinced by Jemo, he agrees to take a trip to the jungle for combat training by the terrorist outfit. At the jungle training camp, he is incorporated into the intelligence stream trainees who map out targeted attack sites. Among the recruits, he meets Issah (Robert Agengo), a gentleman who is determined to foil the planned attack as it targets his mother's home area. The attempt to foil that attack is again unravelled and ends up with Juma (Kokoro Kazungu), one of the co-conspirators, being shot dead.

As the day of the attack approaches, the terrorist cell goes back to Kenya in preparation, using a school bus as a disguise. Boarding in a school, Komu is sent on an errand to prepare for the attack during which he is captured by Jomba (Innocent Njuguna), an undercover investigative officer. Jomba extracts information from Komu about the planned attack in a low-income area and a foreign embassy and the arrival of Omar (Keith Chuaga), the most wanted terrorist leader. Afterwards, as he is meeting Rashid, Komu is discovered to have divulged information to the police through a tracking device that is found in his phone. Rashid orders his henchman to torture and kill him.

Meanwhile, as Omar arrives in Rashid's house, the police led by Jomba and the intelligence team raid Rashid's compound, arrest the terrorist leaders, and rescue the injured Komu. The film closes with a montage of a peaceful city, with Komu and Kirigo

© University of Venda

watching a news bulletin showing the arrest of all the terrorist leaders. The couple embraces as the film fades out.

2.2.8 Gangster's Paradise: Jerusalema (Jerusalema)

Jerusalema is a 2008 South African crime film directed by Ralph Ziman. The story follows Lucky, a young man who aims to attain higher education but turns to crime after failing to secure a scholarship and being unable to make a living through legitimate business. In his adulthood, he gets into the illegal enterprise of building hijacking, a phenomenon associated with real characters in Hillbrow, Johannesburg in the 1990s (Mututa, 2020).

The film opens with a bloodied Lucky Kunene lying on a bed as a major police and army contingent raids the Hillbrow flats, arresting criminals and confiscating contraband like weapons and drugs. The officers breach Kunene's house and he is arrested after surrendering. Later in custody, as a journalist approaches him to tell his story, his narration sets off a flashback.

The narrative begins from Lucky as a teenager (Jafta Mambolo) as a schoolboy, fending for a living by selling small merchandise in a township train with his childhood friend Zakes Mbolelo (Motlatsi Mahloko). His dreams for higher education are dashed when his admission to Joburg Tech arrives without a scholarship offer. Life at the township in between school and hawking is characterised by street gambling and idling.

The story transitions to the next act when Lucky and Zakes meet comrade Nazareth, a former freedom veteran, now a well-to-do gangster living the quintessential township

© University of Venda

life of cars and women. Nazareth recruits Lucky and Zakes into a carjacking business, where they earn some income, and with time, they become experienced carjackers. With every payday, the circumstances at home improve, beginning with food rations, furniture, school items for the kids, and a television set.

However, after several life-threatening run-ins with police and a daring daylight cash-in-transit heist, Lucky decides to quit the carjacking business and becomes a service station attendant. Later, Nazareth convinces him to join a final high-stakes job which ends up in a bloody carnage in a police force versus gangsters' shootout, where Lucky is injured and Nazareth is arrested. Afraid of arrest, Lucky and Zakes leave the township for the city.

The film transitions to ten years later, where Lucky and Zakes live in a rundown apartment in Hillbrow and run a taxi in Johannesburg. In the course of their work, they encounter territorial taxi compatriots who interrupt the taxi business, ruthlessly carjacking Lucky after a day of work and taking away the taxi. After a close shave with bullets from the territorial taximen, Lucky decides to put together a new plan. To achieve this, he brings together a gang and collaborators including a recently released Nazareth, Zakes, and corrupt lawyer Lucas Sithole (Kenneth Nkosi) to register a company which he names Hillbrow Peoples Housing Trust. With the power of the trust and a kempt look, Lucky convinces tenants to pay rent to his trust and begins a clean-up of the buildings by ejecting drug dealers, prostitutes, and rent defaulters. Resistance is met with violence and death, executed by Nazareth.

© University of Venda

Buoyed by advice from Lucas Sithole, Lucky approaches Mr. Ribeiro, the landlord to Dunvista Mansions, and lays his plan of collecting rent and holding it in trust. Lucky and his gang use this strategy to hijack by colluding with corrupt officials at the municipality and company registrar Anna-marie van Rensburg (Louise Saint-Claire). At the height of the building hijacking business, Lucky considers himself a legitimate innocent businessman and sells the same lie to the media. Dubbed the hoodlum of Hillbrow, Lucky attracts the attention of Detective Blacky Swart (Robert Hobbs), a white police officer.

During this successful period, Nazareth falls into hard drug abuse. Meanwhile, Lucky meets Leah Friedlander (Shelley Meskin), who is trying to rescue her brother Josh (Daniel Buckland) from Nigerian drug runner Tony Ngu (Malusi Skenjana). Meanwhile, the conflict with building owners reaches a crescendo when representatives of one landlord are shot dead in cold blood by Nazareth when attempting to serve papers to Lucky. This attracts the police officers to Lucky's zone of operation and the two adversaries (Lucky and Swart) lock eyes for the first time. A successful Lucky goes back home to the township and is treated as an important guest, which is an indictment of how African societies sanitise corrupt politicians and criminals for handouts. This does not, however, deter Detective Blacky, who keeps trailing Lucky.

To cement his ascent to new levels of importance, Lucky breaks his relationship with Nomsa and begins exploring a new relationship with Leah. His dominance also motivates Ngu to try and convince him through Nazareth to join hands in the drug and

© University of Venda

pimping business, which Lucky rejects. Lucky completes his upgrade with a house in the suburbs and a luxury convertible Mercedes Benz vehicle.

Lucky is finally arrested during an attempted takeover of an abandoned building in the business district. He is then released on a cash bond by the court, and he uses his freedom to corrupt his way from justice, enjoying support from demonstrating civilians outside court. Now plagued by trouble, Lucky finds himself in Swart's way again when Ngu sets Nazareth up with a drug cache that leads to arrests, evictions, and condemnation of buildings, a great loss to the now profitable business. Ngu pushes Lucky to the edge of their conflict when he lures Josh to a death by overdose and kills Zakes in a drive-by shooting. Lucky immediately summons his crew, and they attack Ngu's club in a blood-flowing carnage. The scene ends with Lucky killing Ngu in cold blood.

The film then morphs back to the present time when Kunene gets arrested and detained in a cell. During the detention, Lucky is visited by his mother, and he offers her money; she offers him the Bible in return. Meanwhile, Josh is buried, after which Lucky speaks to Leah, who helps him escape from custody.

2.2.9 Click Click Bang

Click Click Bang is a 2022 Kenyan crime film directed by Phillip Karanja, inspired by real characters and events, set during the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya. The film details a story about talented footballer and budding star Kevin "Kev" Motego (Basil Mungai), an orphan with only his ailing sister Mokeira (Jackie Vike) as a relation

© University of Venda

and a community that adores him. The movie begins with Kev awaiting a verdict by football scouts from Norway. Everyone around him including his sister Mokeira, neighbourhood hoodlum Kasisi (Nyakundi Isaboke), his team, and his coach (Patrick Oketch) share his hope. This is juxtaposed with a chilling image of a murder most foul, of Askofu, a neighbourhood gangster, with his body tied to a pole and posters calling him a wanted criminal stuck on his body. The milling crowd includes a small boy on a bicycle, who is quickly shoved away from the gory scene. Kasisi watches from a distance.

Motego's hopes are dashed when the chance is instead given to Sidi Kamara, the nephew to a member of parliament. Dejected by the loss of the opportunity to shine and a chance to earn enough to pay for Mokeira's dialysis treatment and kidney transplant, Kev approaches Kasisi with a proposition to join up with him in crime, quoting his natural athleticism as an advantage. Kasisi, a self-righteous thug who dedicates himself to protecting the hood and his son Karl Max (Liam Loshami), rejects Kev's pleas, encouraging him to look for legitimate work. Kev tries several jobs including working in a flour mill, hawking apparel, an acting job, and construction work, drawing no success from any. His quest culminates in a vicious attack from territorial construction workers who strip him of his clothes, a notable similarity to the territorial taximen in *Jerusalema*.

Mokeira's admission to hospital after skipping dialysis several times triggers Kasisi's acceptance to work with Kev, ushering him into the world of crime. It is at this point he meets Kadesa (Amina Hussein), who becomes a love interest. After a first smash and

© University of Venda

grab robbery, the new partners share the loot equally. Kasisi proceeds to pay ten thousand shillings (10,000) to the police for protection through Mathe, a disguised vegetable vendor, which reveals his collusion with corrupt police officers. Kevin uses his share and subsequent ones to improve circumstances at home, buying food to eat, Christmas decorations, and other luxuries, which leads Mokeira to question his source of funds. This is a motif that recurs in the sampled African crime films. The proceeds of crime become the pillar for solving the lack of basic needs like food, healthcare, and education. This creates an existentialist view of morality as the criminal uses their victimhood of circumstances to anchor their crime as a righteous venture geared toward solving family and communal issues. This aligns with Onyango's (2024, personal communication) assertion on the reasons adduced for gangs in Nakuru and Kisumu, who identify the poverty of basic needs as a justified entry behaviour for hardcore criminals.

As time progresses, the needs at home increase, coupled with the depressed economy occasioned by post-election violence. Energised by his new partnership, Kasisi mulls over an idea to grow their income by conducting more gainful robberies by robbing *matatus*. The duo acquires a gun from OG (Brian Ouko), an illegal arms dealer within the neighbourhood, in readiness for their next-level robberies. After an abortive attempt to rob *matatu* passengers, the duo prowls the neighbourhood and the attempt to steal a laptop ends up with Olivia (Idah Wanyoike), Mokeira's friend, gunned down by Kasisi. It is at this point in the story that Mokeira discovers what her brother has gotten himself

© University of Venda

into and tries to dissuade him. She however gets into another bout of sickness and is rushed to hospital.

Kasisi the Robin Hood is further cemented when he talks to the doctor and offers to donate a kidney to Mokeira. The doctor informs Kev about a possible donor without revealing their identity, prompting him to hatch a more practical idea of *matatu* robbery. Kasisi ropes in Rewind (Anne Kemuma) and Selecta (Marcus Ochieng'), deejays by day and robbers by night. The expanded gang hijacks a *matatu* and commandeers it. Among the hijacked passengers is retired inspector Dan (Stephen Katingima), who memorises the gun serial number. The heist crew ransacks all the passengers and gets away to share their loot. Kasisi insists on taking a smaller share so Kev can have enough for his sister's transplant – another signal to his selfless character.

While the robbery is taking place, Kadesa, who is among the passengers, spots Kev and shares a brief, knowing glance that Kasisi observes. Later, Kasisi finds the photos of Kev and Kadesa posted on social media and confronts Kev about it. Kev denies knowing Kadesa, which prompts Kasisi to set out to Kadesa's residence with the obvious intention of silencing her. Kev trails him to Kadesa's place as she, on the other hand, reports to the police and gives all the details of Kevin, hoping to win him some leniency.

Back at Kadesa's estate, Kevin finds Kasisi waylaying Kadesa and convinces him to go to a more secluded spot where he draws a gun and threatens to shoot Kasisi if he does not drop his intention to kill Kadesa. Kasisi remains defiant and gets the gun out

© University of Venda

of Kevin's hands, and a fierce fistfight ensues which ends with Kasisi passed out from multiple abdomen stabs. Kevin runs home and meets Mamushka at the entrance to his home. She informs him that Kasisi was planning to donate his kidney to Mokeira. He realises his mistake and runs back to the darkness to find Kasisi. As he walks, rogue cops hijack him and drive him to a shooting field in a forest and kill him. Retired inspector Dan witnesses all this. As news of Kev's death trickles in the television news, Kasisi also dies in hospital, leaving a distraught Mamushka and tearful Mokeira. Kev's killers, Constable Chacha (Brian Kibochi) and the OCS (Teresia Nungari), are arrested and arraigned in court as the film closes.

2.2.10 Generic Dispositions of the Sampled Film Plots

Storytelling in African crime films can be generically viewed from various perspectives, including African orature, literary theory, and the plot types as recorded by Booker (2005) and Reagan et al. (2016). A more deliberate theoretical positioning, however, reveals that these African narratives do not merely fit into pre-existing genre models but actively challenge and redefine them.

According to Okpewho (1977), African storytelling draws its thrust from traditional storytelling, most associated with oral literature. Okpewho (1977) identifies the narrative, witticisms, songs, and chants in musical and dramatic forms, and further underscores the ubiquitous disposition of the “social role” of African storytelling, which Finnegan (2012) accedes to. Finnegan, however, includes a caution that the “use” of the stories does not negate their aesthetic features. The assumption of the primacy of their use, she argues, has in err been adduced to evince the warped logic asserting a

© University of Venda

primitive nature in African storytelling. This cautionary note is crucial, as the social and communal function of African narratives—their capacity to moralise, warn, and reinforce communal bonds—is not a sign of a “primitive” form but rather a core tenet of African epistemologies that must be centered in analysis, a point also passionately argued by Chinua Achebe in his essays (Achebe 1975).

While American gangster genre models, as described by Warshow (1948), Shadoian (2003) and Leitch (2004), converge on the character arc of the gangster as the main thread of storytelling, their applicability to African crime films is limited. Applying Western critical theories to African literature is a fundamentally flawed exercise, as they are not equipped to handle the unique aesthetic and socio-cultural dimensions of African narratives (Iyasere 1975). These Eurocentric models often focus on the individualistic journey of the “tragic hero” contending with an urban environment and law enforcement. While African films may adopt these tropes—such as the “tragic hero” concept—they often repurpose them to serve a different narrative purpose. The primary focus of the generic perspective in these African films lies less in the individual character arc and more in the development and fate of the community or the “hood” itself. Sanfo (2007) similarly argues that African filmmakers often borrow from Western cinematic conventions but subvert them to tell distinctly African stories, a process that is evident in the narratives of these crime films.

This is evident when we apply Booker’s (2005) seven basic plots; overcoming the monster, rags to riches, the quest, voyage and return, comedy, tragedy and rebirth. While these archetypes provide a useful framework, a deeper analysis reveals that

© University of Venda

they are often filtered through African narrative traditions. The oral literature genre and plot types are interspersed to better understand the proceeding narrative summaries of the nine sampled films as a window to understanding narrational structure and formulae in African crime films. This is an addition to other discoveries that the analysis reveals.

The plots of the sampled films present a kaleidoscope of storytelling techniques in linear and nonlinear forms exuding a variety of techniques like montages, flashbacks, in media res, voiceover, and dramatic irony. In view of plot types, the stories largely oscillate among tragedies, voyage and return, rebirth and overcoming the monster, while adopting some American gangster tropes like the “tragic hero” concept and the moral of the story as espoused in oral literature.

For example, the *Noem My Skollie* plot exudes characteristics of a voyage and return or rebirth plot. The story is centred on AB who is forced to enter a dark place of crime influenced by the perilous circumstances of growing up in the Cape Flats. Characterised by debilitating poverty and violence, life at the slum dehumanises the residents in childhood and draws families apart, leaving the young boys to painfully learn how to manoeuvre the dangerous streets. AB cheating death in the end, true story notwithstanding is an important icon of the African crime film, that gives the gangster a new lease of life, to live and tell the story. This is notably inspired by the need to spare the character for misdeeds not advertently borne. The punishment for AB in *Noem My Skollie* becomes the traumatic memories of pain and losing friends, as the character reinvents himself and gets reborn in love albeit with little to show.

© University of Venda

Another instance is evident in *Uradi* which follows the rebirth/voyage and return plot motif. The previously innocent protagonist in their quest to escape from their bleak beginnings, meets crooked mentors that channel them to the world of crime and after bruising encounters, escape unscathed with a past full of dead and incarcerated loved ones, friends and comrades. Komu the protagonist is presented as an ambivalent person who not only contends with interpersonal conflicts but has to surmount intrapersonal duels with self, as his conscience and traumas are awakened by the events in the stories. His compulsions to commit evil are propelled by personal ambitions as well as their commitments to change the lives of their loved ones. The story ending presents him with a gift of a second chance or rebirth to replenish himself and seek a path of virtue.

The pattern repeats itself in the *Jerusalema* story that is characteristically, a voyage and return or rebirth plot for Lucky and Hillbrow. His attempts to renew Hillbrow in what Mututa (2020) calls gentrification, is a rebirth for the previously emancipated black Africans, a deeply ingrained concept in the South African imaginary. Straddling the political landscape, the affirmative acquisition idea expressed in the film resonates with the “expropriation of land without compensation” rallying call by political actors. This concept resonates with the Jerusalema ideal, explored by the film, tapping the Judeo-Christian city of Jerusalem to reflect renewal and an aspirational utopia that they deserve. The other odyssey that signals rebirth is Lucky’s arc that takes him from innocence as a visionary schoolboy into the depths of crime and jaws of death, and imprisonment into the warm comfort of a beach and a view, inspiring another future of

© University of Venda

taking over. His rebirth or return is not one of penance, but one premised on the continuance of the perilous search of fairness and equality in the post-apartheid era. One that can be captured in the rallying call by Mozambique and freedom stalwart Samora Machel. Aluta continua!

The rebirth story is also employed in *King of Boys* through Eniola's story. Rising from an oppressive childhood and innocence, Eniola grows to become the overlord of crime in Lagos, a journey that takes her through the worst experiences to her conscience and threatening her life. After a gruelling voyage and battles with formidable adversaries, Eniola manages to survive through and forge her return but with immense traumatic losses akin to those of Lucky, AB and Komu, who have to live with indelible scars of the perilous journeys they took.

The African crime films also present very compelling cases of tragedy. *Noem My Skollie, Jerusalema,* and *King of Boys* also bake-in palpable aspects of tragedy. In tragic plots the tragic hero faces a series of events that lead to their eventual downfall due to a character flaw or unavoidable fate. AB's loss of his friends the young ones, Lucky's painful loss of Zakes, and Eniola's loss of her children, are great loses that characterise their returns and represent tragic turns in their stories signalling significant downfalls from the trajectories of success. This reveals itself very lucidly in the story endings. For example, as *King of Boys* ends Nurudeen Gobir shares a very dark, disillusioned thought with his sister, predicting that the jailed criminals will come back and be cleaned by the system, ready to vie for presidency and the gullible populace

© University of Venda

will occasion their win. This worrying prediction presents a tragic future for the Nigerian society and Africa by extension.

Tragedy plotting is further repeated in the *Òlòtūré* ending. The victory of the traffickers as their bus cruises into the Benin border, provides a double-edged outlook of hopelessness and a slight glimmer of hope as Beauty, the innocent and inexperienced one gets to escape and the other girls including Òlòtūré fade into danger. Even as the quest for truth and information that Òlòtūré sets out for, remains alive and well, the dangers swell, hope diminishes, and death beckons. Òlòtūré loses control of the situation as she and other proceed to the unknown. Gyang (2023, personal communication) accedes that it is a narrative aesthetic he pursues, as he uses film to ponder on the unending fodder for disillusion that Africa serves with its socio-economic and governance missteps.

The *Viva Riva* story blends the element of tragedy and the hood story where the hero goes too deep in the darkness and ends up extinguished. This relates with the American gangster arc where the tragic hero ends up destroyed with no recourse or way back. Akin to the hood story identified in *Katutura*, *Viva Riva* in this case primes Kinshasa by destroying the criminal ilk and generation, ridding itself of the toxic and destructive elements in an effort of renewal. The worrying element discernible in the two tragic films is the writ large absence of responsible law enforcement both in the commission and the aftermath of both events. Each of the characters from the gangster to the corrupt government officials and rogue priest die, leaving the young honest merchant Anto, a knower of his city to engage in honest enterprise. So, the tragedy in

© University of Venda

this case converges with the concept of rebirth not of the character but of the hood or city.

The *Click Click Bang* story intertwines various narrative perspectives and encompasses the acts of criminals, victims, and law enforcement. Set on the backdrop of the worst flare-up of violence after a disputed election in Kenya in 2007/2008, the story wields the elements of a tragedy plot through the downfall of the main protagonists. Kev in *Click Click Bang* represents a hopeful, promising and talented demographic determined to change their lives using talent and skills. His circumstances at home, compounded by an uncaring system and leaders unfortunately leads him to crime as a catholicon to his tribulations. His entry into crime is shortlived. Not because he reforms. But because he falls, extinguished by guns that should have been used to protect him. The death of Kasisi, a soul generous to his deathbed, is tragic despite his choice of career. A caring husband, and protective father, Kasisi, represents a criminal ilk led not by greed but need and still value humanity despite their choices. Therefore, the loss of talented youth like Kevin and generous souls like Kasisi is a devastating injury to a neighbourhood that had bestowed hope on them. This reinforces the tragedy element but, in the converse, offers a rebirth element to a neighbourhood choked by criminal gangs, begetting a chance to nurture a more virtuous population.by extinguishing the criminal elements in the Nairobi estates and sustaining the lives of well-meaning members of society. Karl Marx like Anto in *Viva Riva* and Redemption in *Katutura* who outlive their Kasisi, Riva and Dangi, present a future population in Africa untainted by the sins of their fathers and benefactors.

© University of Venda

The sampled plots also reveal other ideals like the **hood story** which is a plot primed on the setting and its soul as opposed to character arcs. This hood story reveals the motive to exalt the role of the setting in the story and the community ideology that is wrapped around the social, political, cultural, and economic view of the setting. The hood story therefore can be referred to as the **community story or plot**. The *Katutura* story with its galaxy of complex characters, centres its story on Katutura the place, and thus introduces us to a plot about the space as a character. *Katutura* from this anthropomorphic perspective is a rebirth story which recounts a tale of a hamlet in need of shedding its old skin (crime and hopelessness) into a new age of hope, forgiveness, and unity. The tragic ending characterised by the death of protagonists and wide destruction of the slum houses, nevertheless, provides for rebuilding of the physical infrastructure and a recalibration of the temporality ideology about Katutura as a transitional place to a place the residents can call home with a sense of ownership, permanence, and pride. *Katutura* also provides an aesthetic window through which the historical injustice of forceful relocation of Africans in the colonial Namibia can be viewed. The past atrocity notwithstanding, the story inspires the concept of setting down, dealing with the traumas of the present and taking responsibility for the future of Africa, eschewing the cyclic ideology of victimhood to the aggression of days gone by. The plot is therefore eclectic, exuding the tragedy, rebirth and hood story dispositions.

Another important element that is revealed within the plots is that of the origin and end story. The origin story is set up as a justification for each of the gangsters' decision to join crime and subsist for themselves their families and their communities using the

© University of Venda

proceeds accrued from crime. The end story provides a cosmic view of the tragic heroes giving them either a soft landing away from law enforcement and accountability to society or using instruments of justice and extrajudicial means to extinguish the criminal population therefore giving society a rebirth. Additionally, there is evidence of a **"moral of the story"** an oral literature device that embodies the social role of storytelling in African crime films. Each of the film wields a cautionary message to desist from crime through the punishment of crime and subsistence of virtuous characters.

The next section in this chapter reviews character as a narrative element that defines the universality and particularities in African crime films.

2.3 Characterisation in African Crime Films

Characters in African crime films transcend the three-dimensional delineation of victim criminal and law enforcer. Prominently featured in the characterisation matrix is the ambient society embodied by families, religious formations, government, institutions, school system, ordinary citizens leading lives and geographically encapsulated communities with shared histories circumstances and identities. The characterization of African crime films, with its prominent fourth dimension of ambient society, offers a powerful counter-narrative to the individualistic focus of Western crime genres. This deliberate choice, as articulated by film scholars like Diawara (1992) and Ukadike (1994), is a key feature of African cinema's aesthetics, which often prioritise the collective over the individual. The society is a prime character in the films, disturbed by the dynamics of contemporary living – crime included - and enmeshed in the errancy

© University of Venda

of her children, and contrarily trying to provide a bulwark against crime and human rights abuses. The characters in the African crime films therefore present a four-dimensional perspective, which remains fluid in its composition and interrelationships. By foregrounding society as a primary character, African crime films shift the narrative focus from an individualistic struggle to a communal one. The characterisation is also an important cog in formatting the point of view aesthetic which serves as the enduring message that each crime film instalment seeks to articulate. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

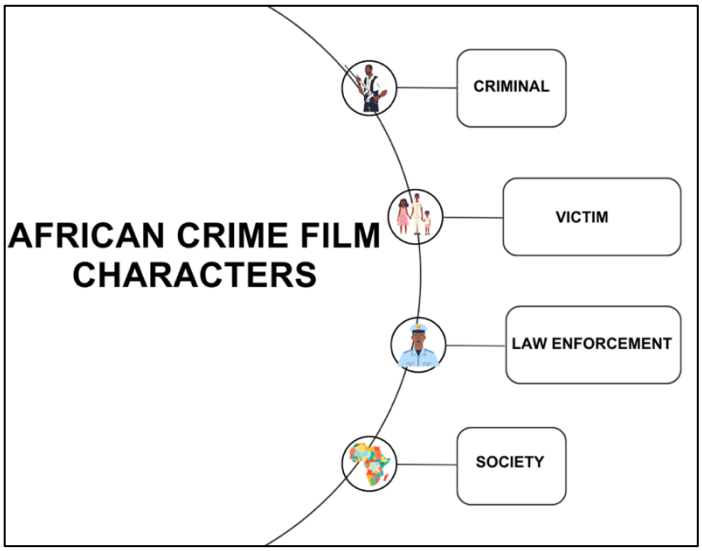


Figure **3**: Delineation of characters in African Crime Films matrix
Source: Researcher (2024)

The four-dimensional characterization differs from the classical Hollywood character archetypes featured in American gangster films which take a three-dimensional outlook of criminal versus law enforcement with the victims receiving minimal emphasis. The criminal protagonist (gangster) is portrayed to be in a smouldering conflict with the law enforcer. The film then oscillates between the anarchic manoeuvres of the gangster

© University of Venda

and the heroic crime-fighting exploits of the often-disadvantaged law enforcement, whose arc involves their quest to debunk the ways of the gangster to bring him/her down. Their showdown leads to a climactic clash that ends the criminal on their tracks, via death, penance or flight. The victim in gangster films is a silent feature, only pronounced in the unique situation of a victim who transforms into a crime fighter or perpetrator. According to Munby (2009), Hollywood eschews the typical defeated victim and chooses to either blank them out or empower them to become vigilantes or vengeful antagonists. However, this model is culturally specific and, as argued by Iyasere (1975), fails to capture the intricate, communal dynamics of African narratives. The African crime film character matrix also varies from the British spy films which prominently feature a detective (law enforcement) as the main protagonist fighting against criminal antagonists with the role of the victim fluctuating in prominence as it serves the role of catalysing the conflict between the detective and the criminal.

The African crime film varies the character matrix by priming the criminal and juxtaposing their actions with the view of society. By bringing society close to the criminals, the films portray the victims as collateral damage within a conflict that pits criminals and law enforcement or criminals against fellow criminals. The society, therefore, becomes an important player in the matrix, fostering an opportunity to redress for victims through the punishment of the criminal or remain complicit in the victim's suffering as abettors of crime and criminality. Chinua Achebe (1975) would argue that this is a key function of African art; to teach and engage the community. The

© University of Venda

films, therefore, function as a mirror to society, allowing it to confront its own complicity and resilience.

2.3.1 The Criminal in African Films

> *"I had two heroes, Karl Max and Al Capone. Al Capone said if you are going to steal, steal big and hope like hell you get away with it. Karl Max said all property is theft. I think they'd both be proud of me…"*
>
> *Lucky Kunene - Jerusalema*

The preceding narrative introduces a profile and perspective of the African criminal as presented in *Jerusalema*. The choice of Lucky's heroes as articulated in the narration provides a window through which his notoriety as a criminal can be viewed and his politics appraised. His choice of Al Capone reveals his desire to dominate, albeit singularly, headlines, history, and societal consciousness as an unrepentant antihero whose legend inspires awe and admiration while translating to nightmares to law enforcement. His subsequent hero Karl Marx is a political semiotic to unveil his socialist thinking and his belief, albeit in error, that his crimes constitute a societal responsibility to seek restitution for the balkanised in society through his affirmative acquisition creed. The heroes also posit a historical perspective that is patterned across the African crime films, providing a storytelling, characterisation, and thematic backdrop through which the fictional accounts find linkage to contemporary societies, source credence for the dramatic action, and contextualise their settings.

The African criminal, as profiled in the sampled African films, finds space within the social and historical contexts through the depiction of their moral and political agency,

© University of Venda

collective disposition, and their origins as products of circumstantial traumas. This section therefore discusses the African criminal characters and how their representation helps to define the universalities and particularities of the African crime genre. It serves as an instalment in reviewing characterisation as a building block of generic qualities.

2.3.1.1 Moral and political agency

African crime films package their messaging in characters that easily straddle good and evil, blending into behavioural allotropes that morph among innocent civilians while conducting crimes most foul. This section codifies them as morally ambivalent, considering that the films attempt to humanise them amidst their plunder. The phenomenon at hand showcases instances of righteous rage, rebels with a cause, justified vendetta, and the Machiavellian creed of "the end justifies the means." Additionally, it also reveals a multitude of capitalist mandarins whose intentions are camouflaged in the cloak of the public good. Furthermore, this section delves into the political intricacies that are examined through criminal characterisation and attendant commentaries, which is viewed as political agency of the African crime film character.

The sampled films feature characters that build into this narrative. The first instance of the moral agency is evident in *Viva Riva*, where Riva is consistently depicted as a non-violent criminal. He is instead portrayed as a fun-loving, sex-crazed, friendly fellow out to enjoy his big bucks from his successful fuel heist in Angola. His dalliance with dangerous criminals is contrasted with his charming, kind spirit, which he displays

© University of Venda

through his generosity to other characters, including his estranged parents. This trait is also displayed by Abel in *Bodaboda Thieves* and ties in with Komu's disposition in *Uradi* as a brilliant and innocent university student whose architectural observation and analysis skills provide - unknown to him initially - important intelligence fodder for a terrorist organisation. When he learns of the implications of his actions, he gets emotional and moots leaving the outfit. It is only the discovery of his girlfriend's pregnancy that leads him back, a nod to the idea that he is doing it to cater for her needs. Together with Issah, a fellow recruit, Komu attempts to unravel the terrorist attack plan. Komu's desire to do his last job and make a life for his new family is compounded by an internal conflict that leads him to betray the cause, which almost lands him in the jaws of death when his double agency is revealed to Rashid the local terrorist cell leader. His actions, however, lead to the arrest of Omar, the international terrorist mastermind who has been on the police radar for a long time. As the network of terror cells is mopped up by law enforcers, Komu enjoys a blissful aftermath with Kirigo his girlfriend. His contribution to the illegal activities notwithstanding, the story in this case presents him as a portrait of heroism. One that has saved many from tragedy and destruction.

Komu's fate is parallel with Lucky and his leisurely beach walk in the last scene of *Jerusalema*, having escaped poverty, death, and prison. This thread ropes in Abraham Lonzi 'AB' in *Noem My Skollie*. AB is an innocent son of a gambling, drinking dustman in the 1960s Cape Flats, gradually thrust into the throws of drugs and crime, together with his childhood friends; Shorty, Gif and Gimba as a way of shielding themselves

© University of Venda

from the ever-prowling predators like Ballie, the dustman that sexually assaults AB within the sprawling dump site. The four boys that christen their gang as "the young ones," inspired by a movie, grow within the brutal streets of the Cape Flats protecting themselves in a place where protection is guaranteed in the context of number gangs. Unlike Gimba, a son to Mr. Carelse, a Number 26 drug dealer, or Gif, a disturbed orphan thrown out by Celia, his aunt, AB grows up in an ordinary family, with his mother, father, and sister. He develops an interest and skill in storytelling that wins him a space among his peers and adversaries in prison. AB, as a person, displays various personalities, including being a peaceful and loving fellow as a doting boyfriend to Jenny, as well as a viciously violent character when he stabs Mr. Faraway and a reveller's head with a knife.

Comrade Nazareth is a typical case of hero turned villain in the *Jerusalema* story. A gallant soldier fighting for his country's liberation against the oppressive apartheid regime, Nazareth is a Russian-trained combatant regarded as a hero of the struggle by society who turns to be a violent gangster. In the post-apartheid period, Nazareth becomes a colossus, towering in the minds of people but mysteriously amassing wealth and women, unlike many heroes of the struggle. What is his secret to wealth? Nazareth divulges boisterously to young Lucky and Zakes that he is in the business of "affirmative acquisition," a moniker he brands his business of carjacking and robbery with violence. The moniker attempts to characterise the illicit thuggery as not only legal but also a moral action of creating structural equalisation of taking from the rich and mainstreaming to the poor, akin to the mythical Robin Hood. Nonetheless, a

© University of Venda

discrepancy arises in the comparison, as Nazareth commits the robbery solely for his advantage, while the community bears the weight of substantial suspicion, incidents of police brutality, and the tragic loss of young lives due to his persistent recruitment of them for his illicit activities. Additionally, there is no evidence to suggest that he does not engage in theft targeting black people and individuals with lower socioeconomic status.

A typically violent, murderous character, Nazareth speaks the AK47 language with impunity until it is spoken back to him in a cacophonous din, and he falls to his death under a hail of bullets. His brand of crime reveals a moral ambivalence demonstrated by the juxtaposition of his name and trade. Nazareth, the peaceful biblical Jesus's home is the name given to the hallowed guerrilla veteran in the South African struggle for freedom from the shackles of apartheid. The depiction of his character is a conflicting view of a patriotic South African who is engaged in the enterprise of terrorising his countrymen. His revered position as a freedom fighter is brought under scrutiny as he (justifiably in his perspective) uses his rage to take by force what he believes is his rightful reparation after the betrayal by the Mandela regime that chose reconciliation, instead of alienation to former oppressors. The moral pendulum of Nazareth continuously oscillates between good and evil, as his current actions usurp the domain once occupied by his valiant struggle for freedom, all the while swinging back and forth.

However, Lucky exemplifies the archetype of a previously virtuous individual who has transformed into a criminal. Sanitised by being assigned victimhood of circumstances,

© University of Venda

Lucky and by extension Zakes who is in his shadow, imports to the *Jerusalema* story a brand of characterisation kilned and glazed in victim play. The film *in media res* beginning introduces us to a hapless-looking, bloodied Lucky, lying on a bed as police officers and soldiers stage a raid to arrest him. He is painted to be in mortal danger until he is arrested, and charges pronounced for him. Before the story furthers his guilt, a flashback draws us back to his poverty-ridden childhood and his dashed hopes for furthering his education because of lack of means. His family, consisting of his religious mother, siblings and the ever-present Zakes his best friend, only presents a burden of providence to him, which he attempts to cover with the meagre earnings from sales of merchandise on the train on his way back from school, which he refers to as "selling peanuts for peanuts."

With a new unforeseen burden presenting itself in the shape of college fees at Joburg Tech, and no scholarship on offer, Lucky must find ways to significantly increase his income. He shows grit and forthrightness in his attempt at a car wash business with Zakes, but the earnings are inordinately low despite his protestations. Gambling is an option that gets him and Zakes cleaned off their little cash and it is at this point that his story gets to a turning point! Meeting comrade Nazareth who inducts them into his ways of "affirmative acquisition." In his first and subsequent payouts from carjacking, Lucky just expands his horizons in providing for the family in food, furniture, and school supplies. As the windfall persists, a television set! At this point, the singular most significant objective of engaging in crime to get college fees is relegated. However, Lucky's conscience keeps pricking at him and he shows his disdain for violence when

© University of Venda

he quits Nazareth's gang due to the wanton gun-slinging he witnesses during the cash-in-transit heist. The bloody scenes make him take his cue to join the legitimate workforce as a filling station attendant. It takes a lot of convincing for him to accept another job from Nazareth, which ends in fatalities, Nazareth in prison and police officers swarming Soweto in search of the gang. Lucky and Zakes eventually board an evening train to the city where their past criminal ways take a lull for ten years, grinding in the deafening risky business of taxi operation.

His near-fatal ordeal in the hands of rough rival taxi operators, and crippled by the loss of the taxi, Lucky gets to another segue into the housing trust, a legal front to another level of "affirmative acquisition" of buildings in Hillbrow. Corrupt city officials fuel the takeover of buildings, crooked lawyers, scared hapless landlords and the forceful hand of his loyal henchmen led by the trigger-happy Nazareth. As he transits to his newfound wealth borne out of his white-collar crime, Lucky also acquires a new taste of white suburbs, the attendant bliss of sleek cars, and a doting white lady in tow. Lucky's white knighthood is evident as he expresses disdain for petty thieves like his girlfriend Nomsa and her brother Bull, the prostitutes, and drug dealers, whom he purges from Hillbrow buildings. Lucky commandeers himself as the neighbourhood vigilante dealing with those vices, a ploy to diminish his dirt on crime. After the conflict with Tony Ngu the Nigerian drug dealer intensifies, Lucky with an option of guns to attack Tony Ngu, Lucky picks a *rungu* (club) showing his aversion to gun violence. Later, while contemplating what to do with the bothersome Ngu, Zakes decisively without hesitation suggests that "…then we kill Ngu." Lucky's non-violent character shines through when he responds

© University of Venda

"A war is not good. We have a lot to lose." This demonstrates his firm view that his Machiavellian pursuit can be achieved without violence which he views as a recipe for loss, cementing his moral ambivalence on violence, even as he terrorises innocent Hillbrow landlords.

Kasisi is a pivotal character in *Click Click Bang*. A local, small-time thief, Kasisi sits at the cusp of a network of organised criminals led by corrupt police. At the beginning of the film, Kasisi is presented as a loved, connected and generous supporter of Kev, a local talented footballer. Kasisi believes that Kev's success will translate to the success of many in the community. This assertion cements him as a believer in community and sharing, which likens him to Lucky Kunene in his Robin Hood philosophy. Kasisi, originally a thief who worked alone in his missions, refuses to include Motego in his escapades and forms a gang, threatening to discipline him personally if he finds him involved in any crimes. In this instance, he exhibits his inhibition of crime and his aversion to moulding another criminal. This is reinforced by his averments to his wife Mamushka that he wants their child to live comfortably and away from the temptations and compulsions of crime. His sense of community is exhibited by his generous action to donate his organs to Mokeira, Kevin's sister, a fact that is unknown to Kev at the point of death.

Unlike other gang leaders, Kasisi neither manifests raw ambition to rise to the apex of criminal fiefdom, nor does he exhibit greed to take more from his victims or a larger share of the loot compared to his fellow criminals. Instead, Kasisi is portrayed as one stuck in a cyclic rut of petty crime with no plans to expand his enterprise, until Kev

© University of Venda

begins pushing him into bigger ambitions that lead to the *matatu* carjacking that delivers them to their fatal Waterloo. Kasisi's principles oscillate between his safety and survival. For instance, Kasisi is completely inebriated with the criminal creed of not letting a witness walk away with information. This he exhibits with the brutal killing of Olivia, Mokeira's friend, despite the spirited grovelling from Kev to spare her life after she recognises the duo in their robbery spree. Even with Kev's protestations, Kasisi remains stoic that rules are rules. The one time the rule is broken, the duo meets their fatal end. This reinforces Kasisi's beliefs and principles.

The foregoing character anecdotes set up the criminal characters in African crime films to be agents of a contentious temporality. Their characters oscillate from extreme ends of the moral spectrum (good and evil) defying the opposing Manichaeism of criminals and law enforcement. The criminal protagonist presents instead a dual personality enhanced by the contrasting views of society that sees the criminal as an errant but good and generous son and law enforcement who perceive the criminals as a threat to law and order and hence a candidate for their enforcement and discipline measures. This moral ambivalence is threaded through origin stories that present the criminal's less fortunate beginnings and embroidered by the depiction of empathy, collective consciousness and generosity, albeit fuelled by the proceeds of crime.

In view of politics, the African criminal reflects a political outlook of the African society through his dalliance with politicians, political commentary and reflection of political consciousness. In both *King of Boys* and *Jerusalema*, Eniola and Lucky respectively showcase their political aspirations, engage in political critique, and establish a platform

© University of Venda

for the analysis and assessment of African politics. Eniola, a crime lord and business magnate, aspires to be a political leader in Lagos, participates in political activity, funding political parties, soliciting for votes in state elections campaigns. This characterisation leads her to hobnob with politicians and their cronies, including senators, governor and political intermediaries like Aare Akinwande. Her collusion and collision with the political elite leads to an exposé of the rot in the governance and democratic infrastructure, revealing instances of voter bribery, intimidation, and cronyism in allocation of positions of responsibility. When she is denied a position in the new government in view of her space in the world of criminality, Eniola reacts in a fit of rage to Aare asking that, "Is this the same world that has financed more than 30 elections in this country since 1999? Or the world you call upon when you need muscle?" Her stance not only shows her contribution to the current political crop but also unveils her desperation to join politics. What is in politics for her? One would ask. This is answered later in the film by a distraught Detective Nurudeen Gobir who avers that, "In one month they will drop all the charges, and everyone will forget this ever happened. In two years, he will contest for the presidency, and he will win. What a wasted job!" Gobir's prediction indicates that politics is the panacea for wrongdoers, since it provides an ample chance to not only escape justice but to also sanitise themselves in the court of public opinion through bribing voters and engaging in populist politics.

Populism is a stratagem that Lucky employs in his building hijacking business, angling himself as a rights czar in the post-apartheid housing crisis in Hillbrow. Lucky disguises

© University of Venda

his crimes within a capsule of providing a solution to a black South African population disenfranchised by apartheid and post-apartheid regimes. Reinforcing this rhetoric, Lucas Sithole his lawyer avers that,

> Well, it is convenient for the government to blame Kunene. The government has failed dismally to provide the housing that they promised the people. Look at downtown Jo'burg! It is full of empty buildings and the landlords won't let them out to the poor people and the black people. Those buildings make up a part of Kunene's housing project…. This is what I call land redistribution through the back door.

Sithole's thinking is largely anchored on Lucky's politics, which are inclined towards racial activism. Like a typical politician wrought in rhetoric, Lucky easily takes a tangent towards the politics of race, anchored on the apartheid experience. In a conversation with Leah Friedlander, his Jewish girlfriend from the suburbs, Lucky asks, "What's with you white people? You have nice houses, smart cars, and fancy clothes, and you still come here. Why?" This thread continues during one altercation with Detective Black Swart, whom he asks, "What is this? Apartheid policing? You think just because you are a white cop, and I am a black man you can lay your hand on me?" Compounded by his interactions with Santos Ribeiro, Lucky argues passionately about housing for his people, even as he savours the adulation of residents when he is released from prison, indicating a desire for a following like a politician would. Kasisi and Kevin, in their portrayal in *Click Click Bang*, exhibit their political agency by articulating profound discontent towards politicians they hold accountable for the insufficient delivery of services and unequal opportunities within the community. The likening of politicians to terrorists by Jemo in *Uradi* further cements the resentment expressed in *Click Click*

© University of Venda

Bang, revealing the rivalry and resentment harboured between politicians and criminals.

Criminals in African crime films, as demonstrated in the foregoing, therefore serve as collaborators to politicians, aspire to be politicians or represent the bane of politicians who use them as political rhetoric to *wananchi* victims and unscrupulous individuals exploiting the vulnerability of populations to forge their selfish ends. By these portrayals, the criminal attains political agency, functioning as a politician, political subject, or a critic and adversary of politicians.

2.3.1.2 The Gang and the Gangster

The African criminals are organised in gangs[1] which, like a typical African community, operate on the sense of family, and the sense of Ubuntu, and exude characteristics that are specific to an African community. African communities are inherently socialist and the history of communities from the precolonial period reveals a collective approach to pursuing causes and ambitions (Badawi, 2024). The gang also adopts particular names that evince their collective nature, including “mob” “gang” “mafia”, “crime family” (Albanese, 2015). They adopt jurisdictional nomenclature variants like *mbogi, rende, kikosi, kikoto,* (Sheng), *isikwata* (Zulu), *bendes* (Afrikaans), and so on. Organised crime in Africa makes up a large part of the criminal network in Africa, propagating crimes such as murder, racketeering, robbery, sexual assault, human

[1] ENACT (2023, p. 32)

© University of Venda

trafficking, drug trade, piracy and hijacking. ENACT (2023, p. 16) in line with Section 2(a) of UNODC (2004) defines organised crime as,

> Illegal activities, conducted by groups or networks acting in concert, by engaging in violence, corruption or related activities in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit. Such activities may be carried out both within a country and transnationally.

The sampled African crime films feature organised *Òlòtūré* crime through the characterisation of gangs and crime networks like the number gangs in *Noem My Skollie,* the terrorist organisation in *Uradi,* the sex trafficking ring in, the criminal syndicate in *King of Boys,* the coalition of police and thugs in *Click Click Bang,* the carjacking syndicate and Lucky's gang in *Jerusalema* and the marauding Angolan gunslingers in *Viva Riva.* This portrayal largely signals a distinguishing feature of the African crime film from the American gangster, which centres its gaze on a singular criminal mind running an empire. According to Warshow (1948) and Munby (2009), the gangster is a driving force that can terrorise populations and stretch police resources solely in his/her pursuit. Armed with wit, strength, charisma and firepower, the gangster, even as a lone ranger, manages to outwit, outgun or outrun the karmic consequences until his/her time arrives. In contrast, African criminals are organised in groups, where every individual is an important cog in the operations and sustainability of the group, bringing in individual expertise, brains or brute force to keep it running. As Albanese (2015) avers, the forage for the group and its ultimate goal is common advancement, which overrides every individual ambition and objective.

© University of Venda

As organised outfits, the African gangs have fluid but well-established hierarchies with leaders, enforcers, loyal assistants and unfortunate gambit members who get sacrificed to turn the wheels of the story in a different direction. This does not, however, mean that the leader suffices to operate solo. The gangs are based on collective identity and are anchored on specific beliefs and creeds, which vary from political, religious, socioeconomic, and generational. The leaders, however, do not own a gang but only offer particular control and leadership on specific activities or sections of the gang. The gangs operate in an egalitarian structure and an assembly system through which it can get a subsistence of loyalty from its members. To achieve its goal of collectivism, members must sacrifice their personal dreams, morals, independence, and personal families to go into a gang and adopt its collective membership traits.

The collectivist agency of the criminal in Africa is demonstrated by the gangs in *Noem My Skollie*. Each character is tied to a particular gang. In the in prison, the protection and the subsistence of each criminal is based on their affiliation to gangs, namely the #26, #27 and #28 gangs. These gangs are associated with crimes, including con artistry, robbery, and sexual violence. Their identities and the identity of the individual criminal are tied to the gang and therefore it becomes a story-worthy situation when AB must survive in prison without a number or a membership to a gang. His solitary approach to crime in this situation and his affiliation with an unknown gang, “the Young Ones” (which constitutes his friends for purposes of protectionism) is unrecognised within the landscape of gang crime and violence within the South African situation. Every criminal in the film, including Gums, Mr Carelse, Mr Faraway, among others, is

© University of Venda

associated with gangs with which they get protection and empowerment, and from which they can draw identity and a sense of family.

The collectivist situation is also evident in the other films, including *Jerusalema,* in which Nazareth and Lucky are the main criminal leaders in the movie. They rely on other individuals to form a gang to achieve their desired ends for their crimes. Therefore, the gang not only provides a sense of family but can expand the scope of the crime by providing a variety of skills and other value chain knowledge required to commit the crime and get away with it. *Uradi* like *Òlòtūré* also projects the gang situation, whereby it portends organised crime that is perpetuated by individuals who are connected to others in arbitrary and interconnected ways, for example, the trafficking crime as shown in *Òlòtūré* brings together individuals within the brothels, connected individuals like Alero, traffickers like Tony, and agents in other countries, including Italy, where the girls are supposed to be trafficked. This kind of organised crime is also indicated in *Uradi* where terrorists come together to attack various installations in Kenya. These transnational crimes further indicate that there is no sole criminal that can conjure up, plan, execute and get away from a crime. It shows that each step of the crime, each element of the crime, depends on the collection of ideas, strength, and energies by different individuals who come together as a team that can execute the crime. This particular situation renders law enforcement and the solution of crime to be a very complex situation because the leadership of these gangs is stratified at different levels, with different hierarchies. So, to capture a central leader, they have to dismantle a large network of leaders. This is demonstrated in Uradi and

© University of Venda

Òlòtūré. Òlòtūré, a journalist conducting an investigative piece, tries to debunk the sex trafficking ring in Nigeria where she encounters various players within that realm. She encounters brothel owners, pimps like Chuks, low-level traffickers like Alero, and as she proceeds, she encounters murderers, enforcers like Victor, ritualists, transporters and politicians like Sir. Phillips. Her encounters involve individuals who come together to form a collective entity that is responsible for committing those crimes and evading arrest.

Uradi, on the other hand, proceeds to reveal the structure of the terrorist organisations that are prowling the African landscapes, including ISIS, Al Shabaab, *Al Muhajiroun, Boko Haram,* and the Islamic insurgents in Mozambique. The terrorist cells are structured and composed of innocent people who have no idea that they are working for these organisations, recruiters, enforcers, military, and intelligence wings which are webbed in esoteric and arcane infrastructure. The characterisation of the gang conceptually portends a cyclic and perpetual situation of crime that is difficult to solve. That means that at the end of one Gang then comes the next one. The gang also means that to end the crime, there have to be so many deaths which increase the body count in the films.

In summation, the criminal character in the African crime film also draws its kind of idiosyncrasy as it aligns with the African collectivist ideology. Contrarian to the classic Hollywood gangster that singularly embodies the criminal outfit with all others in tow or tethered around their ideas, actions and fate, the African criminals are largely organized in a gang that Is egalitarian and that features different players who bring a

© University of Venda

variety of Temperaments and play a variety of roles within the gang and its Commission of crime. If the gangster dies, he takes with him information that would have otherwise threatened the foundations and pillars of the network of crime... One pawn goes and the crime chess game is revitalized, thus as Oti in *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) observes.

> "Hii crime ni genji. Ukishawachokesha wanawachukua mnamadwa mnakuwa exbinje ya kufight crime ati mliangushwa mkinyambishiana" (This life of crime is perilous. The day they will get tired of you, they will execute you and use your body as an exhibit, claiming you died exchanging gunfire.)

Oti's words exemplify the fear of the known that the gangsters have... That a time for them to pay for their crimes cometh, and it only leads to one direction, that of ultimate destruction. The certainty of death leads them to invest in fickle connections socially and economically save for the singular soul in the gang that gets a lifeline to live another day. This is the reality for many a criminal whose identity is solely tied to the gang. Zakes, Nazareth and the other members of Lucky's gang only draw their identity and sense of family from the dalliance with the outfit, their stories and lives outside that bracket being blurred into concealment. The obscurity of other connections they have reveals the loss of roots and family ties and its effect within the Africanscapes.

Africa is replete with armed groups fighting for economic and political liberation, not from the colonisers of yore but from their oppressive governments. The street gangs, slum vigilantes, terrorists and insurgents express a variety of convictions and causes that catalyse their existence and plunder, which include resource marginalisation, environmental degradation and debilitating poverty. In their fights they commit

© University of Venda

economic sabotage, piracy, robbery and murder with the intention to feed their communities as well as get the government to listen to their demands. Among the armed groups are those that seek secession from their national boundaries and the autonomy to exploit their resources and plough them back into their communities. Some of the large organised criminal armed groups include, Mungiki, Gaza, Wakali, Alshabaab, Boko Haram, Cape town gangs (The Hard Livings, Americans), The number gangs (26,27,28), and the armed groups in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria (MEND, Niger Delta Avengers, Okioma Ikpangi etc.) that prowl the African landscapes with impunity. The reign of the criminal armed groups is occasioned by the lacunae created by failed states and corrupt governments that disenfranchise their people and subject them to dehumanising living conditions. This however should not be construed as an excuse for criminals or an apology for their reign of terror. Viewed from the perspectives of the victims, the criminals hurt their people and take away their lives and hurt livelihoods.

2.3.1.3 Agent of Violence and Plunder

The African criminal is also portrayed as a lawless character, in whose wake there is occasion for violence, robbery and destruction of property. This disposition accentuates the associational vice and raw terror wreaked on innocent African citizens. The sampled films characterise the criminal violence embodying it in a variety of individual gangsters and gangs. *Katutura* paints Shivago as a ruthless criminal determined to be the drug lord of Katutura. His methods of subduing his victims include using violence and threats, coercing them to be his drug runners. He for instance forces

© University of Venda

a local vehicle mechanic to be his peddler using violence and death threats, and further threatens Kondja that he would harm Isola, his girlfriend. His actions include committing arson at Kondja's house when Kondja leaves his drug supply operation, and later kidnapping Phoebe and Redemption in order to punish Dangi and draw him into a trap.

Katutura also features Gary (Dangi's henchman) as a crime mastermind lurking in the shadows until his last monologue. Playing faithful sidekick to Dangi, Gary yearns for the top seat in the crime world of Katutura. After Dangi is imprisoned for the diamond heist, Gary is taken aback when Shivago then arrogates himself the seat of power in the Katutura crime matrix. He then sets out to dismantle the syndicate from the shadows. Playing middleman, he kills Pele and escapes with the diamonds which he then realises are fake. He then joins up into the Dangi fold as a henchman and sidekick until his instincts kick in and he throws up a fight about his share of the diamonds. Gary in the final scenes of *Katutura* kills Shivago and confesses about his role in the murder of Dangi's mother. Dangi, Mouton, Gary and Shivago represent a traumatic criminal-ridden, violent, hateful and chaotic past whose embers Katutura needs to extinguish, to herald a future promise held by characters like Kondja, Isola, Pastor, Foibe and Redemption and offer new paths to repentant characters like Esme.

In *Jerusalema*, Nazareth demonstrates the conspicuous feature of an alarming propensity for violence. His character's scenes are characterised by their catalytic role in inciting and enacting violence. When Lucky innocently asks about Nazareth's acquisition of the Russian language during his stay in the country, he receives a two-part response: Bra Cai, the driver, humorously remarks that vodka is the only Russian

© University of Venda

Nazareth knows, suggesting tendencies toward alcohol consumption, and hints to the drug dependency that follows. The second answer comes from Nazareth who insists that the dialect of Russian he speaks is AK-47.

The second answer is an apt perspective into his character and the violence he so fluently exudes. Indeed, Nazareth is the character leitmotif of gunshots in *Jerusalema*. The sound of cocking guns, and rapping submachine guns, that occasion death in heaps, is characterised by his presence or lurking presence. Indeed, he introduces Lucky and Zakes to guns which they tot like shepherd sticks during their robberies, and whose sound they first encounter with utmost shock during the cash-in-transit heist by the highway led by Nazareth.

Nazareth's motif is characterised by the carnage of take all, kill all. He leads in bank and jewellery store robberies, unfazed by danger even when his gang suffers fatalities, and casualties, culminating to his imprisonment. In a later scene, weather-beaten by prison, humbled by working for his former protégés and sunk in drug abuse, Nazareth shoots lawyers serving papers in broad daylight and becomes the physical force among the henchmen and enforcers in Lucky's white collar real estate robberies. Among the sampled films, Nazareth finds company as a violent character in Victor and Chuks *(Òlòtūré),* Lieutenant *(Uradi),* Shivago, *(Katutura),* Odogwu and Eniola *(King of Boys)* and Kasisi *(Click Click Bang).*

© University of Venda

2.3.1.4 A Product of Existential Traumas

Nazareth's contact started us off gently. And we figured how hard could it be?" "If there were risks weren't concerned.
Lucky Kunene - Jerusalema

The foregoing dialogue introduces us to the age of crime for Lucky Kunene and his childhood friend Zakes. The narration plays as they acquire guns for the first time and set off on a prowl for their first carjacking. The narration reveals the naiveté and the fact that the two are not criminals by nature but just good fellows who learn to commit crime on the job. Criminality lessons continue until the law catches up with them. Typically, their dabbling into criminality is a product of their circumstantial victimhood and an effort to escape the traumas of poverty, insecurity, family strife, and political marginalisation.

The African criminal is moulded and kilned in socio-economic, political, and historical traumas. The formative conditions of the criminal are etched in their experiences of debilitating poverty, violence, family strife and political upheavals. The recurrent theme found in the sampled films serves as an indicator that the circumstances shaping the characters are a result of poverty, limited educational opportunities, the absence of a supportive family structure, unemployment, and the presence of brutal and apathetic law enforcement.

The examples presented in Cucu's song in *Killer Necklace* as referenced in Kimani (2022, p.142); the warning about Nairobi's darkness given by Mwas' father in *Nairobi Half Life* (2012); along with concerns shared by Lucky's mother, Linda's mother, and

© University of Venda

Emeka in *Òlòtūré*, as well as Abel's mother in *Bodaboda Thieves*, collectively encapsulate the reality of the African criminal within society. The reality portends the economic desperation the criminals attempt to solve, the effeteness of the societal ethos in such dire circumstances and the ever-lurking danger from the police, whose ways of dealing with crime are settling scores with the criminals that eclipse their power. Their answer lies in getting to kill them. Not to end crime, but to prolong its life for another day.

Lucky like Alero, Eniola, AB, Riva, Kev and Nazareth's harbours past traumas stemming from the poverty that hampers his pursuits of education which cascades to career failures that taper into the world of crime. In the opening montage of *Jerusalema,* Lucky narrates that,

> The beginning. Soweto. 1994. Freedom. The new South Africa. A new dawn. A new day. A fresh start. A clean page. A new beginning and I had dreams. The trains were the circulatory system of the black urban economy. My best friend Zakes and I were sucking that blood. Selling peanuts for peanuts. However, free enterprise was never encouraged.

Lucky in the narration unveils the circumstances of poverty at home and in his neighbourhood in what was supposed to be a glorious era. The post-apartheid South Africa was a hopeful one but was encumbered by unfulfilled hopes of equality, success, economic mainstreaming and absolute freedom. The foregoing averments by Lucky reveal the underbelly of the era and its ramifications at the micro and macro levels of the black South African people. Nazareth his benefactor, is an ex-MK veteran who buckles to the pressure of a post-apartheid ennui occasioned by a stoic new South

© University of Venda

Africa that moved on and left her veterans reeling in the disappointment of non-recognition. Battle-hardened Nazareth turns into crime to provide for himself and drugs to bury his traumas, regrets, and anger. Lucky and Nazareth are situated within the post-apartheid milieu and the disparate realities it portends for the black South Africans that won political freedom but remained economically emasculated. Eniola, Alero, AB and Riva, emanate from oppressive beginnings, characterised by violence and disturbed families that could not sustain a stable support system for them. Eniola for instance grows up in a violent environment watching her father brutalise her mother. This becomes a traumatic catalyst in her 'righteous rage' and desire to clamp on men and violently rule them as their *oba*. The cocking guns, threats of death, gunshots, hacking sounds and violent sounds add layers of shock and hence emphasise the trauma as a fundamental trait in the African crime film's *scenes a faire* criminal and victim.

Another instance of the character as an emblem of trauma is the dozens of black bodies displayed in the films. The bodies (whose resting place remains the streets and bushes) represent the ongoing physical and psychological traumas that continue to haunt the African peoples and land. Death looms large in Africa. Fuelled by hunger, natural calamity, homicide, suicide, war, crime and trigger-happy police, the black body is harangued by the rude voice of death, leaving an enduring trauma.

Another lasting trauma for the criminal in African crime films emanates from the politics of gang leadership. The system of the gang is notably hierarchical and transient with many moving pieces that shift the balance of power constantly. In *Jerusalema* power

© University of Venda

is devolved and zoned based on specific crimes and crime bases. Drug dealers have their zones; petty street thieves have their space and the hoodlum of Hillbrow has his space. Lucky Kunene seems to straddle Hillbrow like a colossus, but he does not have an absolute grip on every corner of the chaos. He is constantly looking behind his back and walking on eggshells evading the police as detective Blackie Swart edges closer to bursting Lucky's criminal regime with Detective Modisane at hand to provide the much-needed violent hand to subdue the obstinate Lucky. Lucky also must contend with Ngu the Nigerian drug dealer, ready to protect his territory characterised by a zombified population hooked to drugs and prostitution. Lucky's grip on his gang is also loose and slippery as loyalties shift and competition rises. He loses Nazareth his henchman to drugs and the conniving hands of Tony Ngu. Nazareth descends from a trusted lieutenant to a liability, ready to share secrets for smokes and hard drugs.

Riva, like Lucky, also steers his crime world with a liquifying wheel, in and out of grip. Eponymous to the film title *(Viva Riva),* Riva clouds the film like his personal space. He is the *de facto* king of Kinshasa. His arrival with vast quantities of a commodity so scarce that even rich crime lords have to use it in rations, puts him right at the apex of the daylight commerce and twilight debauchery of the megacity. He, however, does not fail to attract creepers and challengers to the throne, including the *de jure* king, Azor, famed for his wealth and brutality. An exposure to his life shows a giant who scours the city with impunity and rules with fear. This is evidenced by the entrance of Riva, who, in characteristic fashion and wielding the power of his loot, arrogates himself a warm place in the dancing space of the queen of Kinshasa Nora, the girlfriend to

© University of Venda

Azor. As Riva eyes her, grinds with her and swears to pursue her, he receives a warning that he is straddling the territory of Azor, a dangerous feat to attempt. Meanwhile, as he tempts fate with Nora, a hunting party from Angola led by César, with murderous rage is combing the city looking for him as he carelessly cruises around, his friend JM in tow.

In Summation it is clear that the criminals in African crime films largely attribute their life of crime to dire origin stories characterised by poverty, marginalisation, disease and diminished opportunities. Their entry into criminality is "justified" by the socio-economic and traumatic encumbrances they deal with in their formative years. This ties together with their propensity for violence, moral ambivalence, political convictions and their choices to approach crime in a communal perspective in gangs or as societal Robin Hoods. Even as they run their riot, they remain in the dangerous paths of more powerful or more resourced criminals. The next section builds an argument about law enforcers as second character in the four-dimensional matrix.

2.3.2 Figuring the Law Enforcement in African Crime Cinema

To uphold social equilibrium, law enforcers must occupy a position that is completely opposite and distinctly divergent from individuals who engage in criminal behaviour. Law enforcers including the police, the army, reservists and other uniformed forces are tasked with the responsibility of proactively deterring lawlessness, enforcing the law, countering criminal operations, and ensuring the safety of the populace. In an ideal situation, the line that separates the law enforcers and criminals, is thick and poignant, providing a lucid and prohibitive boundary that ensures that the only interaction

© University of Venda

between two sides can only be conflict. One of apocalyptic magnitude, spelling doom to crime. The law enforcers depicted in the sampled films however constantly and deliberately so, tread the line in collaboration with criminals blurring the line, reducing its opacity, and thus blending the two sides in a mingling dance of societal doom. When the policemen engage in a tango with criminals, society suffers, crimes thrive, and their solutions become the proverbial symbol of implausibility. Crime films expose this subterranean underbelly of flawed African law enforcement organs.

The collaboration between law enforcement and criminals is portrayed in *King of Boys*, *Jerusalema* and *Click Click Bang*. Encumbered by meagre salaries, poor working conditions, and led by greed, law enforcement officers like inspector Shehu in *King of Boys* collaborates and becomes a gun for hire for criminal lords like Aare Akinwande and senior government officials. The task involves abbeting their crimes, and protecting them from investigation and arrest , in addition to using the authority bestowed on him as a policeman to clamp on rival gangs led by Eniola Salami. Through the dalliance, inspector Shehu is able to afford luxuries. To facilitate his success, he recruits members of the force, except one significant individual - Nurudeen Gobir. His failure to recruit Gobir exposes him to suffer the fate of his criminal comrades - ignominy and death in the face of the law.

Another instance of the unholy criminal-law enforcement partnership is provided in *Click Click Bang*. Set in a crime ridden Nairobi estate, the film depicts a corrupted police force perpetuating crime by hiring guns to criminals, sparing them from arrest after being paid. Whenever there is suspicion or disagreement between the unholy partners,

© University of Venda

the police summarily executing the criminals to cover themselves. The OCS and her crew in *Click Click Bang* execute Askofu when he refuses to share his loot and it is then that Kasisi steps in, and has to pay the police to keep himself and fellow criminals safe from arrest and execution. To affirm this fact, Kasisi explains to Kevin thus,

> **Kasisi:** But the hood still has thugs, right?
> **Kevin:** Yes
> **Kasisi:** Have you asked yourself why they are not gunned down?
> **Kevin:** Do you have Cops on your payroll?
> **Kasisi:** you must have Cops on your payroll. When you we on the other side of the law you have to do what it takes. Askofu had one major problem. His arrogance was putting everyone in danger including small fish like us. But I am here to change things. Intel is crucial. Whenever cops come around, I am always aware. I know who they are coming for and what time, so I tip them off. I am the reason most criminals are still alive in this hood.
> **Kevin:** So, you give them 10,000 shillings daily?
> **Kasisi:** Let me put it this way. With every sunrise, I am indebted by 10,000.

Kasisi''s revelation points to a trend of the police selling intelligence to criminals they target as well as hiring guns to commit crime with to them. This unlawful dalliance has been reported to take place in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, where the police form part of the central infrastructure of organised crime syndicates collaborating with criminals to terrorise innocent civilians. Among the reasons cited are poor working conditions, and chief among them, meagre salaries. Bra Cai in *Jerusalema* explains his reason of leaving police work to join crime is that "police work pays chicken shit". The low wages, compounded with the risks inherent in policing crime ridden areas heightens the vulnerability of the officers to succumb to the temptation of corrupting

© University of Venda

their operation just to make an extra coin. Further indictment of law enforcement is reflected in *Jerusalema* where Lucky Kunene is able to infiltrate a police precinct, steal his criminal file, absolving himself from an ongoing criminal court case. His access to police records in a protected precinct is an indicator of a corrupt police system that abets, and facilitates crime by looking the other way, which is a clear vacation of their legal and moral obligation to society.

By aiding the criminal to escape justice by way of graft, the law enforcement catalyses more crime, and in even more temerity in its commission. This is deepened by the depictions in *Òlòtūré* and *Viva Riva*, where police, the army, and border officers collude with criminals to facilitate entry, access, passage, and criminal acts to be committed under their watch. In *Òlòtūré* the army and police allow a bus full of trafficked women to cross the border undisturbed and remain unperturbed when one girl escapes from the bus pursued by the criminal traffickers. *Viva Riva* on the other hand mirrors a subdued army commander escorting Angolan criminals around Kinshasa to hunt down Riva, a Congolese national. During the chase, the army officer bails the criminals out of jail when they are arrested and witnesses as they commit gruesome murders and assaults.

This behaviour is reminiscent of the flying squad officers in *Nairobi Half Life* who tell the criminals "*Fanya Bidii"* (work harder). To what end does a criminal's hard work go? What form does the hard work take? The findings suggest a surge in illicit acquisition, a flamboyant exhibition of criminal strategies, sheer boldness among wrongdoers, and a collapse of legal and societal order. This is demonstrated by Nazareth and Lucky

© University of Venda

whose confidence grows to the point that their criminal exploits grow from mundane township robberies to highway robbery, brazen bank heists and to building hijacking and murder. This transformation sees lucky transcend his fear of police enabling him to face the fearsome detective Blackie Swart.

Besides the collusion with criminals, African crime films depict the police as violent, rogue elements with the propensity and culture of using excessive force when dealing with criminals and the collateral damage of innocent citizens. The police in African countries stand accused of committing illegalities including forced disappearances, torture, and extra judicial executions. In Africa, reports of summarily executing criminals, and innocent civilians, leading to a piling body count reveals a service cultured in force, outside the confines of the law. Lucky in *Jerusalema* narrates that, “Cops frustrated by rising crime rates and a legal system that couldn't keep criminals behind bars took law to their own hands” This narrative plays alongside images of bloody scenes of deaths, a product of police violence. Emblemised by *Kwekwe* squad, flying squad in Kenya, Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of Nigeria, South African Police Service (SAPS) inter alia, the police and armies of Africa have been associated with brutality against her citizens leading to online campaigns like the #endSARS, #EndPoliceBrutalityKE. The campaigns, advocating for disarmament and disbandment of the killer units came in the wake of brazen violations of human rights and freedoms.

Some of the instances of brutality include the brutal force meted on peaceful youth protesters in Kenya in June 2024. The young Kenyans, christened Gen-z took to the streets to picket against the punitive new tax law (the finance bill 2024). Inspired by a

© University of Venda

rallying call #RejectFinaceBill2024 the youthful protestors occupied the city of Nairobi and other towns and marched into the national parliament building. The aftermath of the 25th of June 2024 march was akin to a dystopic scene of death and destruction. Overwhelmed by surging relentless crowds, the police in addition to watercannons and teargas opened fire with live rounds killing tens of young people outside the house of representatives.

Another profile of the police characterised in the films is the nonchalant, slow, and inept force that is unable to offer strategic and timely solutions to crime. The police in *Òlòtūré* and *Katutura* are exposed as incompetent security agents who only arrive after the fact. The police despite early reports, arrive after the fatal shootout that takes out Shivago, Dangi and Mouton. This is after another late arrival after Dangi's mother is killed. This motif is mirrored in *Òlòtūré* where the police arrive at the halfway house after the traffickers drive away with the trafficked girls. This is despite Emeka making a timely report to a senior officer. The incompetence also reveals itself through hapless police characters overwhelmed by crime and unable to cover the ground adequately. Josef in *Katutura* requests Dangi to handle Shivago's mess as his team is overwhelmed by the arson and crime in the township. This is despite the lingering suspicion revealed through the police's unfriendliness to the community based on how Josef treats Dangi at home, and how fast people scatter when a police cruiser shows up in a public fist fight between Dangi and Shivago. In a world requiring cooperation between police and communities to solve a crime, the suspicion only propagates binarism and further cements crime as a tough code for the law enforcer. In *Uradi*

© University of Venda

however, the efforts of the police to solve the terrorism issue are demonstrated through Jomba and his intelligence gathering. His efforts and the eventual collaboration by Komu lead to the arrest of the terrorists and a respite for the targeted population.

2.3.3 Figuring the Victims in African Crime Cinema

The victims of crime in African crime films are presented in a variety of ways including inter alia: collateral damage, criminals suffering karma, innocent hardworking members of society, direct targets of criminals, criminal rivals, and law enforcers. The victim is one of the major characters in the African crime film, beset amidst the conflict between criminals and the law enforcers or located on the receiving end of the crime committed by the criminal or, in some cases, the criminal suffering the brunt of circumstances or oppression from opposing characters. The victim is hence a character who suffers the illegal actions of the criminal directly or as the collateral damage from the conflict between the criminal and the law enforcer. Victimhood, therefore, becomes a rotating title and phenomenon adopted by any of the characters within the matrix of the crime film, including the society, a criminal, and even the law enforcer. Inside the value chain of the crime film, the victim does not get a lot of prominence unless they are central in the two-dimensional conflict with the criminal. The victim is also a denotation and representative face and voice of society, in which case, then, the victim straddles the roles of society by trying to get rid of crime and as a sufferer of the criminal's activities.

The sampled films depict the victims from different perspectives; *Katutura* depicts the victims as innocent members of society coexisting in the same environment as criminals and law enforcers. Embodied by characters like Kondja, the victim in the

© University of Venda

African crime film hence becomes a symbol of a society that is struggling to accommodate or to get rid of crime and criminals within its system. Remaining defiant even in the face of absolute danger from armed thugs like Shivago, Kondja remains stoic amidst fearsome situations as he tries to teach another generation of *Katutura*'s population on the virtues of their place and why they should love it. This motif of a societal victim also recurs in *Òlòtūré*, where there is a depiction of characters like Linda, Beauty, Òlòtūré, and others who find themselves encumbered as products in the illicit trade of sex and human trafficking. These characters not only portray the victimhood to the illicit trade and the cruelty attendant to it but are also victims of errant, unequal societies and economies that destabilise and debilitate the livelihoods of its populations. Seeding from unfortunate socioeconomic conditions, the girls easily fall victim to the sex traffickers, which they see as an opportunity to change the situations at home.

To underscore the features, the films portray them as former aggressors whose fortunes have turned by a stroke of nature. A particular case is notable in *Jerusalema*, which depicts former criminals who spend their lives and energy terrorising innocent members of the public as victims of police brutality. It also represents the white landlords, the victims of building hijacking, as the aggressors who forcefully took what belonged to the black South Africans and arrogated it to themselves during Apartheid, which they used to further diminish the socioeconomic situation of the black South Africans. When they fall victim to Lucky Kunene's schemes of building hijacking, their victimhood becomes poetic justice for their previous victims, now taking back what

© University of Venda

belonged to them in what Comrade Nazareth calls affirmative acquisition. Their suffering is therefore not presented as a case of major concern and is seen as a necessary evil so that other populations can receive reparations.

King of Boys presents a chequered portrait of the victims. Societal victims are depicted through the innocent couple that is carjacked by Makanaki's Gang and the innocent child that is taken away from them. The criminals assault the affluent, young family, seize their vehicle, and abduct their infant. This portrait provides a glimpse into the innocent and defenceless victim who has to coexist in the same society as the evildoers and the nonchalant and corrupt law enforcement. *King of Boys* also portrays the criminal as a victim of circumstances, origins, and beginnings. As a child, Eniola is the victim of the circumstance of a broken family and violence, which culminates in her victimhood in the hands of rogue police and corrupt politicians at the end of the film.

2.3.4 Figuring the Society in African Crime Cinema

Society functions as a fundamental character within the narrative matrix of African crime films, positioned either as an active participant in filmic events or as a covert operative lurking in the background of narrative developments. The commentary provided by the societal perspective in these films oscillates between abettor of crime/supporter of criminals and opponent of crime or victim of criminals. In some cases, society eschews extreme Manichaean positions and adopts a centralist, ambivalent stance as it grapples with the dilemma of suffering under criminals while simultaneously supporting its errant children. Under this amorphous encapsulation, society in this study entails its constituent sections and the sum of its parts, including

© University of Venda

the family, religious institutions, ethnic groups, and neighbourhood communities. These groups are bound together by shared ties, spaces, beliefs, and heritage. In the sampled films, they include the characterized families; African ethnic groups (Gikuyu, Yoruba, Bini, Zulu, Afrikaner, Coloureds, Somali, Buganda, Herero, Nama, Congolese, among others); religions (Christian, Islamic, African traditionalist); and community locales such as Soweto, Hillbrow, Nairobi, Kampala, Kinshasa, Lagos, Cape Flats, and Pollsmoor prison.

2.3.4.1 Broken Families and Criminal Genesis

At the nucleus of African crime cinema lies the family. The family, as the smallest unit within the film's cosmos, is depicted as the mould upon which characters are shaped before being hardened and glazed in the flaming furnace of the societal kiln. As Nukunya (2003) observes in his examination of African social structures, the family serves as the primary socializing agent responsible for moral development. The family is thus entrusted with fostering individual development and upbringing. When an individual exhibits evil behaviour, it indicates the family's inability to fulfil its sacred responsibility of moral guidance.

Paradoxically, the family in African crime films becomes an unrepentant abettor and catalyst of crime; hence, criminals locate convincing explanations for their illegal exploits within family dynamics. As Macionis and Plummer (2012) note in their sociological analysis, families under economic strain often rationalize deviant behaviour when it provides material benefits. As a source of livelihood, crime by a

© University of Venda

family member becomes the forage of their economic mainstay. A family that previously struggled to feed itself can then enjoy buttered bread and afford new clothes to complement well-fed stomachs. The family now transcends satisfaction of basic needs and can fulfil their wants, including entertainment in the form of television sets and hi-fi systems. Within their means, therefore, emerges a new way to dream, pathways to new places (imaginary and real), opportunities to encounter new people, and novel methods of connecting with the world. This source of new aspirations also serves as the conduit for news of their kin's exploits, unfortunate arrests, or public deaths.

In such circumstances, the family, being the main beneficiary of crime proceeds, must play the role of defending and protecting the breadwinner. Even when families condemn criminal acts, their opposition follows as a corollary born of fear of losing the loved one rather than genuine condemnation of criminal acts and rejection of benefits derived from crime. The criminals' families extend generosity to neighbours and attract neighbourhood sympathy, elevating their successful "son/daughter" to mythological status while the entire community actively protects them. With this additional buffer of protection, solving crimes remains a formidable task for detectives. This dynamic is lucidly depicted in a dialogue between two detectives in *Jerusalema* after Nazareth brutally guns down two lawyers sent by an aggrieved building owner to serve court papers to Lucky. The aver thus,

> **Cop:** They shot them like dogs.
> **Blackie:** I guess no one saw anything.
> **Cop:** Well, welcome to Hillbrow.

© University of Venda

This conversation indicts the Hillbrow community as a societal player complicit in crime, suggesting that the freedom of their kin and kith holds more value than a stranger's life. As Oduya (2019) argues in his analysis of community complicity in Nigerian crime narratives, communities would rather protect their compatriots than adopt moral and collective responsibility to bring criminals to account and serve justice to victims. This paradox reveals that African crime films image society as an active abettor of crime, creating a polarizing view from other players opposed to crime, such as law enforcers. Society thus positions itself as a bulwark between criminals and law enforcers rather than as an objective player in the duel between criminals and crime fighters. Society accepts shouldering guilt to protect its benefactors and breadwinners.

This manifestation appears clearly in *Jerusalema* and *Click Click Bang*, where Lucky and Kasisi represent criminal breadwinners, whose families benefit from their crime proceeds. Lucky's carjacking payments improve home circumstances: food, furniture, school supplies, and a television set that the family appreciates. The wider neighbourhood celebrates him, protects and hides him when police pursue him, celebrates his acquittal outside the courtroom, and invites him to schools as a dignitary. Kasisi also functions as a celebrated philanthropist in his neighbourhood, demonstrated by his creed that "Tukipata lazima mbogi ipone" (When we earn, our people must benefit), further reinforced by his choice to hand over all proceeds to Mamushka and pay for Mokeira's hospitalisation. Lucky's and Kasisi's investment of loot in family life consequently invites inferred guilt to their families, who become involuntary collaborators and bulwarks for criminals against law and law enforcers.

© University of Venda

2.3.4.2 Broken Families and Criminal Genesis

The family also manifests in crime as inspiration. Stemming from broken families and family strife, criminals manifest their disappointment and express their revolt. In such instances, films make crime a tragic affair that brings families back together, creates new families in which criminals thrive, or builds new generations of perfect families in their stead. If criminals die, crime lives on through the new generation created.

Main characters in examined African crime films predominantly stem from inadequate or flawed parental upbringing. The greater portion of these protagonists are raised by mothers while their fathers are either absent, flawed, or neglectful. As Chodorow (1978) argues in her psychoanalytic examination of mothering, absent or inadequate fathers create psychological voids that children may fill through compensatory behaviors, including criminal activity. Komu's father, like AB's father, is depicted as a drunk with no positive influence on his son. In one introductory scene, he arrives home intoxicated and finds a heated argument between Komu and his pregnant elder sister Njeri. His intervention attempt proceeds into a piercing argument that goes thus,

> **Komu's Dad:** *Ĩĩ gĩkĩ nĩ kĩĩ wanjiarĩire gũkũ? Ĩno kaĩ atarĩ ng'ombe. Cow dung! Ngo'mbe ya bĩũ. Atĩ ndũngĩrĩithia nĩguo ũgathome? Guthoma guthoma. Yaani twendirie ng'ombe tũthomithie ĩrĩa ĩngĩ?* (What is this thing you gave birth to? This is just a cow. Cow dung! He refuses to herd cattle just to read.

© University of Venda

Reading! You mean we sold a cow, just to educate another?)

Komus Mum: *We tigana na mwana! Ng'ombe yendio yarĩ yaku?* (Leave the child alone. Was the cow that was sold yours?)

Komu's Dad: *ĩno nĩ njohi yaitĩkire.* (This is spilt alcohol)

This conversation reveals that from his father's perspective, Komu is comparable to a cow, indicating perceived lack of intelligence and primitive thought processes. The words betray regret in educating him, which, as the father voices, has skewed priorities—choosing to read instead of tending livestock. Even after his wife's sarcastic defense of their son, Komu's father concludes by declaring that his son's birth was equivalent to spilt alcohol in his estimation. From his perspective as a serial drunk, this represents absolute loss and regression, betraying his resentment toward his son. This explains why Komu does not relate to his family even after moving to Nairobi during the period depicted in the film.

Komu's attitude toward his father reveals itself in another scene when he makes promises of uplifting his family upon achieving success in Nairobi. He promises cars and motorbikes for his girlfriend Kirigo and his mother, prompting Kirigo to ask, "Ii baba wanyu?" (How about your father?), to which Komu responds, "Ati Muthee? Ucio ni gutee!" (My father? That one is useless!). From this dialogue, it is evident that Komu does not consider his father a functioning or useful part of his life, unveiling subterranean resentment, disappointment, and dashed hopes. His father's role in modeling Komu's character and standing as a man and professional becomes implausible, since the example already set is anchored on the quicksand of irresponsibility and drunkenness.

© University of Venda

2.3.4.3 Maternal Religion and Failed Guidance

In the absence or weakness of fathers, motherhood resorts to religion to nurture children. The mothers of Lucky, Abel, AB, and Komu demonstrate deep commitment to spiritual practices of scripture reading and prayer, ensuring their children actively participate in these rituals. Following custom, they condemn and disapprove of their sons' misdemeanours, offering guidance rooted in biblical scripture to encourage embracing scriptural teachings. Specifically, Abel's mother leads him in reciting the Hail Mary prayer in Luganda, while AB's and Lucky's mothers lead their sons in Bible reading.

Christianity serves as a moral compass for mothers in their efforts to parent wayward sons, particularly in fathers' absence. When fathers project abject weakness, mothers employ religion as a guiding principle and commanding word. However, this approach is rebuffed and ignored by sons, indicating flawed parenting unable to discipline and adequately guide children. As Mbiti (1991) observes in his study of African religions and philosophy, the breakdown of traditional patriarchal structures often leads to ineffective religious substitution. This pattern appears evident in *Bodaboda Thieves*, where the mother gives Abel a rosary to wear and prays for him as he embarks on seeking employment. Abel removes the rosary upon reaching the city, essentially removing the guidance and protection his mother provided. This recurs in *Jerusalema*, where Lucky's mother imparts Bible knowledge and guidance. A deeply religious woman, mama Lucky questions his choice of books and suggests he should read the

© University of Venda

Bible instead. During his incarceration, she raises the subject again as captured in the following dialogue.

> **Lucky's Mother:** I'm ashamed of you
> **Lucky:** Don't be. I'm not ashamed.
> **Lucky's Mother:** You promised me to live a Christian life. I brought a Bible. The priest marked Psalm 137. Read it I want to hear it.
> **Lucky's Mother:** I do not want your dirty money.
> **Lucky:** Then take it for Isaac and Sipho and Winfred and Thandie (Robin Hood)

2.3.4.4 Complete Parental Absence and Societal Neglect

Complete parental absence presents another case in these films, resulting from natural attrition and nonchalant society. Orphaned at a young age, Kevin in *Click Click Bang* must contend with parenting offered by his elder sister, Mokeira. This proves an arduous task for Mokeira, compounded by her suffering from terminal renal disease, which makes Kevin feel responsible for her, thereby shifting the parenting burden to him. Despite their situation, no elder relative assumes their care or shows concern for their welfare. This contradicts the ubuntu creed touted as a disposition of African living, which also occurs in *Noem My Skollie* when Auntie Celia chases Tyrone from her home, leaving him to the devices of the chaotic neighborhood.

Flawed parenting in African crime films also imports failed marriages and enduring conflict between erstwhile lovers, spouses, and siblings. As a corollary to crime and unruliness, Mkhize, Shangase, and Cinini (2023) aver that although the African parenting context does not contribute to crime, single-parent upbringing correlates highly with children ending up in crime. This argument receives reinforcement from

© University of Venda

Mkhize, Shangase, and Cinini (2023), who also identify flawed parenting as a catalyst for criminality.

Katutura elucidates strained parent-child relationships through Dangi, whose absent father becomes an object of hatred and vilification from his mother. Dangi's hostile relationship with his mother is characterized by passionate vitriol drawn from issues between his mother and father, occasioning a deep and wide chasm between Dangi and his mother. This tension reveals itself after Pele's funeral when his mother voices, "You should have died instead of him." This brutal wish manifests resentment between mother and son, further illustrating absence of parental involvement in guiding the character toward proper moral compass leading away from crime. The same predicament is adumbrated by the relationship between Riva and his estranged parents in *Viva Riva*.

Riva's arrival in Kinshasa, his hometown, comes with danger's irony. Kinshasa's streets portend looming threats to Riva: hunting gangs from Angola, wounded Kinshasa crime boss Azor, and a past he would rather not face. The only safe place would be his parents' home. However, as the narrative unveils, Riva's past is fraught with family strife and broken relationships with his parents. Amidst his weekend of debauchery and flight from hunters, he goes home, sneaks in, and leaves a wad of dollars on the table. His later visit while injured, with Anto in tow, is characterized by an acrimonious exchange with his father that nearly turns violent, leading to an unresolved fallout. Ironically, therefore, Riva finds family sense in Kinshasa's violent streets and M'ere Edo's brothel's deceptive corridors. His warped family sense leads him to inadvertently

© University of Venda

break his friend's family. Taking JM on drinking and sex escapades, Riva erodes his friend's duty to family, attracting the ire of JM's scorned wife, who roars at Riva in rage: "Look what you brought us. Do you know what family is? Do you know what children are?" These rhetorical questions signal Riva's family disposition and his friend's family commitment. His attitude toward women—exploring fickle, sexual relationships—contributes to understanding his family aversion and thus his stoic, indifferent stance on JM's family and his wife's curses. Preferring to buy JM alcohol and pay prostitutes for him instead of acquiescing to requests for money to buy medication for his sick child reinforces this attitude.

Another societal section depicted in African crime films is religion. Portrayed through Islamic characters, Christian characters, and African traditionalists—including priests, nuns, church ministers, and unidentified Muslim believers—religion's character is probed, revealing an underbelly of fundamentalism, capitalism, nonchalance toward members' suffering, and participation in criminal conduct. As Gifford (1998) argues in his analysis of African Christianity, the continent's religious landscape often reflects broader socio-political contradictions and corruption. Church ministers are depicted as central crime figures in *King of Boys* and *Viva Riva*. Among Eniola's crime syndicate members in *King of Boys* is a pastor who actively and willingly participates in Lagos's criminal network. Likewise, among black-market fuel traders in Kinshasa is a Catholic priest who trades within church precincts, fully robed in his vestments!

These characters are silhouettes of the African men of cloth that have used the vestments to camouflage their illegal dealings or have openly used the gospel to

© University of Venda

swindle unsuspecting members of the public in the guise of selling hope, healing and salvation[2]. In their quest the pastors employ theatrics to enact miracles. Africa is replete with examples of the conmen of cloth and Armageddon pastors that have caused death and destruction[3]. This is in addition to Rashid, and Omar in *Uradi* who represent fundamentalist sects in Islam that use the teachings of the Quran to radicalise the ummah to committing acts of terrorism and pogroms. This ilk is representative of clerics and senior believers that have led organised criminal outfits like Al Shabaab in East Africa, Boko Haram in Nigeria, ISIS and the Islamic insurgents in Mozambique.

Religion However, religion is also portrayed as a safe haven where believers find solace and peace. During their tribulations, Eniola, Makanaki, and Òlòtūré seek divine intervention by engaging in prayer rituals, supplicating for victory and pouring out emotions. Religious solace also manifests in *Katutura*, where the pastor actively protects vulnerable people like Kondja, counsels errant ones like Dangi, and reconciles those fighting. This character serves as a pivotal element in Katutura's healing and an active agent in setting its history right. Therefore, one can conclude that while religion serves as a crime contributor, it also constitutes the voice of reason and levelheadedness in a world inundated with chaos and cyclic conflict. Churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and shrines have historically served as safe havens

[2] There are many examples, with prominent examples in Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria among others.

[3] An example is Paul Nthenge Mackenzie a Kenyan pastor accused of killing hundreds of believers and burying their remains in his Shakahola farm in Malindi, Kilifi County. The court case is ongoing.

© University of Venda

during upheavals in African countries and have played significant parts in reconciling warring parties while caring for vulnerable populations.

2.3.4.5 Societal Complicity and Redemptive Potential

From From the foregoing, society's fallibility and its family and religious institutions' failures, along with structural breakdowns, can be cited as anathema to virtuous growth and thereby catalysts to criminality. A family with failed or absent fatherhood and motherhood tethered to religion is viewed in films as a failed system guilty of setting up children to swoon to criminality's allure and deceptive rewards. The adduced instances reflect a pattern of failures as more generations take to illegal business as means of coping and thriving. Religion additionally does not provide, as depicted, stable grounds for crime deterrence and solutions. In fact, family and religion are tainted with complicity with criminals or serve as crime propagators. However, both institutions and their functioning also provide important spaces for solace, peace, reconciliation, and counselling while serving as identity signposts and asserting African societies' cultural and historical agency in daily living.

Society is also represented by hosts of innocent characters—unspoiled and possessing propensity to change the future for the better. Characters like the boy on the bicycle and Karl Max (Kasisi's son) in *Click Click Bang*, Kirigo and her unborn child in *Uradi*, Sipho and Isaac (Lucky's siblings) in *Jerusalema*, Konja, Redemption, and Isola in *Katutura*, Anto in *Viva Riva*, and Beauty in *Òlòtūré* embody this innocence. Their innocence faces threats from exposure to crime, drugs, and proximity to

© University of Venda

criminals. However, these characters subsist even facing Armageddon inspired by criminals and live beyond criminals' looming shadows to chart their own paths. This points toward society's redemption and revitalization to self-aware and accountable character in the cosmos.

2.3.4.6 Character Archetypes and Political Commentary

In summation, characters in African crime films portend various characteristics buttressing their disposition within the genre matrix. First, characters are ethnically, culturally, and socially African. Second, characters exude traits such as origin story traumas, propensity for violence and plunder, moral ambivalence, political agency, and reflect community sense in their formation as gangs and crime families. This includes their responsibility to family and friends, for whom they fight and to whom they share ill-gotten wealth.

Notably, characters suffer from vagaries of poverty, hunger, disease, and violence from police forces and political systems cultured in dealing with crime through violence. African criminals' deaths attract exposure's indignity, with only one funeral portrayed—that of Josh, a white drug abuser who dies after an overdose in *Jerusalema*. The white privilege posited by South Africana is dispensed through depicting Josh's advantage of a resting place, even as dead black bodies, including Zakes's, find their final screen resting place on the street. This ties with white righteousness and credibility attracted by Leah Friedlander and Marie the banker, who seem not to attract law enforcers despite their complicity with Kunene in crime commission.

© University of Venda

Characterization in crime films further reveals that criminals' spirits (and in some cases bodies) never die - only those around them do. Law enforcement, conversely, ends in shambles, disgraced and exposed. Criminals thereafter are sanitized, run for high office, and continue their rigmarole in elective high office comfort. This represents post-independence Africa's bane, where leaders have shown average knacks for greed, kleptocracy, state capture, nepotism, wheeler-dealing, and corrupt exploitation of national resources. As Bayart (1993) argues in his seminal work on African political economies, the criminalisation of the state has become a defining characteristic of postcolonial governance. In *King of Boys*, Gobir's assessment of Aare's situation and his prediction indicate moral and leadership dystopia in store for Africa if the unholy alliance between politics and criminal enterprise is not halted.

This explains why Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema* survives, why Komu in *Uradi* gets to live on illegally acquired property, why Sir Phillips in *Òlòtūré* gains immunity from prosecution, why Mr. Carelse in *Noem My Skollie* is untouchable, and the writ large explanation why Africa has continuously hoisted political strongmen with dubious pasts who proceeded to plunder their countries' resources and stash them in European and Middle Eastern tax havens. For Eniola, Komu, AB, and Lucky, the story never ends. They get to reinvent themselves and return, good as new, albeit through proxy, just like African presidents who have extended their rule through selected protégés and family members.

Lucky and other characters occupy pole positions in filmmakers' political megaphones, delivering main opinions and judgments on all and sundry, including rich whites,

© University of Venda

criminals, police, and politicians. His character wades through crime's murk and the justice system, emerging clean after escaping detention through collaborative subterfuge with his lawyer and banker, driving to the beach in a scene reminiscent of Andy Dufresne on Zihuantanejo beach in Frank Darabont's *Shawshank Redemption* (1994). His extra-legal triumph is suspicious, though—deeply political and absolving him from all guilt he snowballs throughout the movie in one stroke. Lucky survives not because of propagating gangsterism but because of underlying political and racial ideology. The ideology spells: "Good or bad, the black man must survive and outmanoeuvre the white man's systems to fight another day." AB in *Noem My Skollie* evades the hangman's noose by a whisker through a last-ditch decision to return home. Mwas in *Nairobi Half Life* runs for his life to find salvation in the theatre hall, while Lucky escapes prison with help from a white girl in a union of convenience in the rainbow nation. Komu in *Uradi* also gets to enjoy ill-gotten wealth after orchestrating the terrorist outfit's fall.

Character analysis extends to victims, law enforcers, and society. These three complete the four-dimensional characterization matrix in crime films and provide platforms upon which criminals commit crimes, receive assistance and facilitation for crime commission, and are judged, hunted, and countered in their plunder. Victims oscillate between the three characterizations, taking forms of societal members, criminal rivals, and law enforcers. Law enforcers, including police and army, play roles in countering crime and criminals, gallantly fighting vices but also sometimes becoming abettors, collaborators, and crime and criminal facilitators. In their complicity, law

© University of Venda

enforcers pay for guilt with ignominy, jail terms, and death, taking consequences they seek to hand criminals.

Society, on the other hand, plays catalyst, victim, and voice of reason roles in crime by protecting criminals, suffering crime's brunt, and countering criminals in community policing and admonishment. However, they take blame through disturbed families and broken value systems in politics, religion, and education systems. Society members also constitute innocence loss as innocent lovers of peace, knowers of their cities, try to make the best of their situations and are disrupted by dabbling in criminal spaces, activities, and actors. Their innocence becomes miscegenated by unplanned entry and engagement in criminal events.

As chroniclers of gendered temporalities and spectacles, women form important parts of African crime film characterization. Characterised as criminals, criminal sidekicks, law enforcers, victims, and societal operatives like parents, spouses, children, and siblings, women bring gendered views of films to the fore, highlighting their plight and asserting women's place in society. However, although women take central roles in crime enterprises depicted in African crime films, characters seem highly dependent on paternal infrastructure in criminal matrices. If not answering to more senior men, then obstacles to their power quests seem to be other ambitious men who don't seem to entertain beliefs that women can lead criminal enterprises. This gendered view is further discussed in chapter five.

© University of Venda

The analysis reveals that African crime cinema presents society as a complex, contradictory character that simultaneously enables and suffers from criminal activity. Through dysfunctional families marked by absent or inadequate fathers and religiously dependent mothers, broken religious institutions that both corrupt and redeem, and communities that protect criminals while suffering their consequences, these films construct a multidimensional portrait of postcolonial African society. The characterisation patterns ranging from traumatised protagonists to complicit communities to corrupted institutions, reflect broader political and social critiques about post-independence African governance, where the boundaries between criminality and legitimate authority have become increasingly blurred. Ultimately, these films suggest that while society bears responsibility for creating conditions that foster criminality, it also retains redemptive potential through innocent characters who represent hope for future transformation, pointing toward the possibility of societal renewal and moral accountability within the African context.

2.4 Setting in African crime films

Setting is defined as the place, time, and phenomenon within which a film's story is located. Setting consists of physical setting, which includes the geographical locale of the action, and the situational setting that denotes the cultural and historical ambience of the story. For the purposes of the proceeding discourse, these two components shall form the analytical framework for this section.

The African crime films under investigation are sourced from six countries located south of the Sahara: Kenya, Uganda, Congo, Namibia, South Africa, and Nigeria,

© University of Venda

situated within the larger catchment regions of east, west, central, and southern Africa. This may be subsumed as the first level of geographical setting. However, for the benefit of this study, the concentration is on the specific locations depicted in the diegesis of the films. The contextual historicity surrounding the fictional stories recounted in the films forms the discourse on historical setting discussed in this section.

2.4.1 Slums and Townships

One of the most poignant settings in African crime films is the slum or township. Largely located in urban centres, the films manifest repetition in this setting. For instance, the first half of *Jerusalema* is set in the sprawling sum of Soweto. Established in the 1930s, the **So**uth-**We**stern **To**wnships are estimated to host a population of 1,271,628 as per the 2011 census[4] and is considered one of the largest slums in Africa. The archetype of the African slum presented in *Jerusalema* is a geographical location characterized by poverty, lack of basic amenities, shanty towns of semi-permanent habitats, a downtrodden population, disease, and crime. Indeed, statistics rate Soweto as a crime hotspot with one of the highest crime rates globally (South African Police Service, 2020). The didactic narrative in *Jerusalema* re-members familiar stories of violence and dire want. In the film, Lucky, Zakes, and their family provide a window through which to view the daily life and fate of an average Soweto family, which is presented as a substantive causative factor in crime.

[4] This is published in the Department of Statistics, South Africa. This can be accessed through https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=4286&id=11317

© University of Venda

This pattern is also mirrored in *Katutura*, which is set in Katutura - "the place no one wanted" (Pendleton, 1996) - a slum established as a transitional settlement for Africans in Windhoek who were evicted from the old location to create space for building a new suburb for the colonial elite. Disenfranchised, the African population populated the landscape with semi-permanent buildings, creating another shanty town similar to Soweto, Mathare, Kibera (Kenya), and Makoko, the floating slum in Lagos, Nigeria. *Viva Riva*, *Noem My Skollie*, and *Boda Boda Thieves* are additionally set in sprawling urban slums in Kinshasa, the Cape Flats (South Africa), and Kampala, respectively. *King of Boys* represents the Lagos slums, and by way of mention, *Uradi* presents Kayole, a large mixed socio-economic estate largely associated with poor neighbourhoods and peri-urban hamlets ridden with criminal gangs like Gaza and Portmore—home to the fallen "prettiest gangster," Cleah Adi Vibes, a 17-year-old girl who was alleged to be a senior member of the Gaza gang and who was killed in action.

The low-income areas depicted are accurately portrayed or so presented. Director Florian Schott (personal communication, 2023) avers that the low-income areas where the movies are set indeed host the crime situations and criminals as presented. By citing his film, named after the Katutura region in Namibia, Schott posits that the portrayal is grounded in reality. This assertion is based on the film's utilization of genuine settings and narratives derived from actual circumstances. The corrugated iron sheet houses with polythene fixtures represent real locations or are depicted from reality. This feature grounds setting as a vital schema in comprehending African crime films and establishes the genre's commitment to verisimilitude.

© University of Venda

The significance of these slum settings extends beyond mere backdrop. Katutura, the eponymous setting in *Katutura*, like Kinshasa in *Viva Riva*, Hillbrow in *Jerusalema*, and Lagos in *King of Boys*, transcends being merely a space where bodies transform through time; it embodies a character in its own right. Introduced by Kondja, who locates Katutura within history as "the place we do not belong," the film exposes Katutura as a character who has found no acceptance within the galaxy of characters. Though omnipresent and quite inevitable, Katutura suffers from the trauma of her people and serves as a constant reminder of the injustice they suffered.

Katutura, a large slum in Namibian capital Windhoek, is a settlement scheme where native Africans were resettled after being evicted from their land in the old Location in the 1950s by the South African government and South West Africa colonial administration (Carstens & Pendleton, 1997; Melber, 2023). The resettlement sparked opposition that resulted in a protest led by Herero women in 1959, characterized by sit-ins and boycotts, and reached fever pitch with a confrontation with police at the old location that resulted in 11 civilian deaths, 43 injuries, and thousands of displacements of fleeing residents. The old location was closed in 1968 and to the present is now an affluent suburb called Hochland Park (Wallace, 2014; Melber, 2023).

Katutura therefore remains a scar of historical injustice and a constant reminder of the brutal apartheid past in Namibia. The Katutura characterized in the movie, however, is not limited to the scars of yesteryear. It takes on a new dimension as a character gaining acceptance from a new generation of Namibians who only know it as home. The embodiment of this ideal and spirit is wielded by Kondja, who believes in Katutura.

© University of Venda

His explication of this feeling is manifest in the video shows he projects for children, to which he provides a live voice-over to explain the history and the multifaceted dimensions of life in Katutura. Being a local boy, he attends a local school where he gains popularity, which attracts local thug Shivago. In tandem with Kondja, Isola, Josef the policeman, Pastor, Foibe, and Redemption, Katutura seeks rebirth and a sense of permanence for her children.

This personification of place represents a significant departure from traditional Western crime film conventions, where urban settings typically function as neutral backdrops or symbols of moral decay. In African crime cinema, the slum becomes an active participant in the narrative, bearing witness to historical trauma while simultaneously nurturing hopes for redemption and transformation.

2.4.2 Cities

The city streets are the second most common physical setting in African crime films. Warshow (1948, p. 585) avers that,

> The gangster is the man of the city, with the city's language and knowledge, with its queer and dishonest skills and its terrible daring, carrying his life in his hands like a placard, like a club.

Warshow characterises the city as the place of “anonymity and death” to the gangster and a place of success and destruction for the criminal as it towers in stature and teems with adversaries all in pursuit of success as the principle dictates that “one must emerge from the crowd or else one is nothing.” This characterisation of the city is bolstered by Bouwer (2019, p. 75) who avers that “as the characters move through

© University of Venda

the streets of the city, they live by their wits, trying to resist the forces of inertia and attempting to create opportunities of flow." The city therefore adopts the role of a towering adversary where the criminal seeks success much to his/her peril.

Following the trope, the selected African crime films indicate the city as an important feature in the genre-spanning the streets of Nairobi in *Click Click Bang* and *Uradi,* the Lagos twilight city district in *Òlòtūré*, the lively Kinshasa streets, in *Viva Riva*, the 1960s cape town streets in *Noem my Skollie*, the bustling streets of Kampala in boda-boda thieves and the city skyline of Johannesburg in *Jerusalema*. The city either presents a contrast to the informal settlement in a rich vs poor basis or represents the aspirations of characters manifesting the centre of criminality or to locate the film into a wider cosmos. The urban setting according to Bouwer (2019) is an important space in *Viva Riva* and *Nairobi Half Life* a feature that enmeshes itself to other African films. For instance, in the opening scenes of *Katutura* we are introduced to the bustling streets of Windhoek, where Pele is fatally shot, and the killers get away in an awaiting car that speeds off untracked. The city though not featured again in the film, plays a particularly important role in setting up the story. As the venue of the murder that catalyses the main conflict in the story, the streets of Windhoek which are deceptively calm indicate the level of insecurity, the nonchalance of the population and most importantly the aloof of stoutness of the law enforcements. A murder in a central business district would writ large be expected to arouse an immediate and heightened sense of activity to try save a life or catch the killers, none of which happens cementing the idea of an indifferent populace and the police. This is reminiscent of high-profile murder that has happened

© University of Venda

in African cities including that of Tom Mboya[5] and George Muchai[6] in Kenya, Lucky Dube and Kiernan Jarryd Forbes alias AKA brutally gunned down in Johannesburg and Durban[7].

In *Jerusalema*, the film opens with majestic skyline establishing shots of the city of Johannesburg. As the film proceeds, the view of the city is contextualized through the streets of Hillbrow: the deplorable buildings, the filthy neighbourhood populated with drug peddlers, users, and prostitutes. The established view of the imposing city at the beginning of the film is revised by the physiognomy of the urban cosmos in Hillbrow, which signals what perspectives of the city the filmmaker deliberately chooses to offer. The contrasting views paint a picture of a "good from far but far from good" concept, whereby a suggestion that the city is much more than the serene and affluent canopy the skyline shots seem to show suffices. The skyline quickly gives way to images of police and army battalions on foot and in air raids targeting Lucky Kunene in Hillbrow, thereby only providing a perfunctory perspective of the business district before immersing the audience in the lawless chaos of Hillbrow.

---

[5] Thomas Joseph mboya was an independence Kenyan minister and trade unionist that was assassinated in 1969. His assassination story is expounded in a news article contained in https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2023-07-05-its-54-years-since-assassins-bullet-felled-tom-mboya

[6] George Muchai was a Kenyan member of parliament and trade unionist, who was bruttaly gunned down within the Nairobi central business district in 2015. One among many news stories is contained in https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/kenya/article/2000150850/in-pictures-shocking-murder-of-kabete-mp-george-muchai

[7] The two prominent musicians were gunned down in gangland style at the height of their success. The murders are captured in the following links; https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/19/world/africa/19iht-safrica.4.7965473.html and https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-64660840

© University of Venda

The city, then, as the skylines suggest, and its tranquillity remain a distant, imagined utopia. At close range, the city is a dangerous venue of destruction and death, populated with callous inhabitants who serve as comrades in the streets. *Katutura* brutally demonstrates this idea, with the city only playing host to the daylight murder of Pele and the robbery of the diamonds in his possession. The murder in a busy area of the city does not seem to arouse any panic, police action, or efforts to help or apprehend the escaping criminals—only the stillness of death and nonchalant humanity focused on their daily activities. This presents a sad indictment of the city as an uncaring witness and host to all manner of crimes and suffering while maintaining an unmoved, deadpan gaze at the chaos.

This assessment draws credence from *Jerusalema*, *Click Click Bang*, and *Viva Riva*. To Kev and Kasisi in *Click Click Bang*, "Tao" (the city) is a potent hunting ground—a good venue to find unsuspecting suburbanites and rob them of their valuables. It is a stoic place where everyone minds their own business, even when a fellow human groans in distress. A victim must singularly fight back to protect their valuables; however, if he or she recognizes the thugs, an immediate death warrant is executed—get rid of the evidence and the witness, so the rule goes. Deplorable in morality and edifice seems to be the definition of the city in African crime films.

This thread of a deplorable city also runs through *Viva Riva*, which depicts the run-down, densely populated sections of Kinshasa, choked with filth. The film, however, does not provide contrasting views of the city. The film dwells within the potholed

© University of Venda

streets, dingy brothels, and seedy bars and hotels, acquiescing to the "Kin la Poubelle" (Kinshasa the Dustbin) assessment.

Òlòtūré dwells in the city of Lagos, in the exteriors of the red-light district, clubs, brothels, and affluent neighbourhoods hosting illicit parties, or suburban out-of-town houses that host contraband. This is also the case in *King of Boys*, which takes place in various locations including Eniola's house and Aare's house, where nefarious plans are made. Such in-town and out-of-town houses are also featured as secret locations for stashing looted money and goods; Senator Rewane's house and Aare's out-of-town houses are raided by Odogwu and Makanaki.

The bars (including strip clubs and restaurants) in *Òlòtūré* are venues of debauchery and prostitution, which provide safe spaces for traffickers like Tony and Alero to meet and plan their business. There is a parallel in *Viva Riva*, where spaces like Saisai Club, Hotel Orange, and Mere Edo's Club serve as brothels, hence becoming arenas of illicit drug abuse and sexual delinquency. In addition, the clubs in *Viva Riva* serve as the bane for Riva. As a party enthusiast, Riva club-hops, which gives his enemies like César clear coordinates on where to find him, drawing him to his final cul-de-sac.

The clubs also serve as zones of conflict in the film, as this is where Riva and Azor first meet and draw their battle lines because of Nora. Their egotistical battle and territorialism are established and exacerbated in the club. When their conflict reaches fever pitch and the two engage in physical confrontation, Riva escalates his challenge to Azor by unleashing his currency of power—money—one that Azor is clearly

© University of Venda

struggling with, outwitting Azor's raw muscle power enhanced by his ever-present bodyguards.

The suburbs, as depicted in the films, host safe spaces for senior criminals, with their high and thick fences concealing their unlawful activities. This idea is further reinforced by the setting in *Uradi*. As the foot soldiers toil in the forest and scour the slums for attacks, their leaders enjoy the largesse provided by the leafy suburbs. The senior leaders of the terrorist plots live luxuriously in protected mansions in Kileleshwa, an affluent neighbourhood in Nairobi inhabited by the rich, including politicians, business magnates, foreign diplomats, and top expatriates. Such gated communities enjoy round-the-clock protection from state and private security, with high-tech installations like surveillance technology, audio-visual security equipment, and uniformed and plainclothes personnel equipped with weapons and communication equipment. Such suburbia enjoys immunity from criminal attacks. In *Uradi*, the place only becomes penetrable to satisfy the story's resolution of arresting the terrorist mastermind. It takes high-level intelligence and considerable force to access the compound, a reflection noted in *King of Boys*, where it takes a high-level decoy to subdue the security officers deployed in the two townhouses to access the loot.

Azor's house does not fit snugly into this category. As a reigning gangster in Kinshasa, with an unestablished police presence in *Viva Riva*, Azor's security is provided by his gang, which patrols his abode and serves as round-the-clock bodyguards for his protection. The Kinshasa suburb does not seem to enjoy the benefits of the suburbs inhabited by characters in the other movies.

© University of Venda

Jerusalema takes us to Sandton, a white-inhabited suburb. The first instance occurs when Lucky visits Mr. Ribeiro, one of the Hillbrow landlords. Lucky's visit is met with suspicion and scorn, even from the African maid and the dog! The second instance occurs when Lucky, now a wealthy criminal, is welcomed to a warm, sumptuous dinner by the Jewish family, and finally as a resident of the suburb. Why does the same character receive varied receptions in the same place at separate times? His socioeconomic status is the most telling factor. Money seems, according to the film's connotations, to blur the other objects of repulsion. His blackness is rendered inconsequential, his criminal ways sanitized to unnoticeable levels as he warms his way into the suburb and the loving arms of a white woman and her family!

This suburban dynamic reveals the complex intersection of race, class, and criminality in post-apartheid South Africa, where economic capital can temporarily suspend racial prejudices while masking criminal origins. The film's treatment of suburban spaces thus becomes a commentary on the malleability of social acceptance when mediated by wealth.

2.4.3 Rural Settings

In *Òlòtūré*, rural settings are shown only once and later hinted at. The only instance where we encounter rural settings is when Linda speaks to her mother and sister Beauty over the phone. The brief scene affords us a view of a spacious compound with a homestead made of a mud-walled house, a three-stone firewood kitchen, and a space surrounded by unkempt greenery. This is also notable in *Uradi*, which begins in a rural area. Komu, a village boy, passes time on a lush meadow by the stream,

© University of Venda

enjoying quiet, loving moments with his girlfriend. His sister rudely interrupts their sugarcane-fueled romantic moments to report that their cows had strayed into a neighbour's farm. The scenery, anecdotes, and dialogues reveal an exoticized depiction of rural areas. The quiet, beguiling bliss also indicates purity, innocence, and the beginnings of pure souls later swooned by the evils of the city.

This "village-is-pure" notion is employed to contrast the "city-is-corrupt" philosophy adduced by the worrisome advice of parents in crime films—which unfortunately proves true, validating the dystopian view of the city. This contrasts with Bouwer's (2019) reflection on the hope and ingenuity of African city dwellers and youth as components of Afrofuturism. From this perspective, therefore, the rural areas depicted in the films are used to represent the "origin story" for wayward or victimized city-dwellers. This serves as a backdrop that is signature to African crime films, as demonstrated in the section discussing the plot structure of African crime films.

The rural-urban dichotomy presented in these films reflects broader postcolonial anxieties about modernization, urbanization, and cultural displacement. The pastoral ideal of rural life serves not merely as nostalgic romanticism but as a moral compass against which urban corruption is measured. This binary construction, while potentially reductive, captures real tensions experienced by African societies navigating rapid social and economic transformation in the postcolonial era.

© University of Venda

2.4.4 Religious and Contemporary settings in African crime Films

Educational institutions, which include schools, universities, churches, and sports academies, occupy a unique space in African crime films. Examples include Lucky's school and his mother's church in *Jerusalema*, Komu's university in *Uradi*, Kondja's school in *Katutura*, the church convent in *Viva Riva*, the church visited by Ehi in *Òlòtūré*, and the church in *King of Boys*. These institutions play integral roles, such as serving the "origin story" principle and providing emotional safe havens or moral compasses for characters.

Specifically, the school in *Jerusalema* and the university in *Uradi* serve as pivotal environments from which criminals Lucky and Komu derive their motivations. At the university, the village-bred and naive Komu encounters his wealthy friend Jemo and his catalyst into crime, Karen. His aspiration to win over Karen leads him to pursue money through criminal means. Conversely, Lucky is a bright student struggling with basic needs at home. His education becomes the catalyst for his criminal path after being denied a scholarship. Similarly, the sports academy in *Click Click Bang* acts as the disappointing nudge that drives Kev towards crime, as he struggles to balance basic needs with affording Mokeira's expensive medication. Instead of fostering success through talent, the soccer academy propels Kev towards crime.

These narratives raise significant questions: Are educational institutions breeding grounds for criminal activities? Does disappointment in the education system lead to crime? Can criminals infiltrate learning institutions? How do educational institutions address crime among students? The films suggest that rather than serving as

© University of Venda

pathways to legitimate success, educational institutions often become sites of frustration and disillusionment, particularly for economically disadvantaged students who encounter class disparities that highlight their exclusion from conventional routes to prosperity.

Religious institutions, on the other hand, add another layer of poignancy to the African crime genre. Ranging from the open-air church in *Jerusalema* frequented by Lucky's mother to the church visited by Ehi after her ordeal at the hands of Sir Philip Ondaje, and the church and cult shrines visited by Eniola and Makanaki in *King of Boys*, religious spaces offer various narrative and generic connotations.

Lucky's mother's church is a typical village Pentecostal church drawing membership from the inhabitants of the slums. Their worship services take place in makeshift spaces like the open area near the township, where a mix of other businesses, both legal and illegal, operate. For instance, Lucky and Zakes open a car wash business in the same space and dump their getaway car after a robbery gone wrong in the same location. This contrasts with the well-manicured sanctuary that Eniola visits to meet Senator Ado and the church that Ehi visits in her moments of distress. Therefore, beyond its service as a safe space for both the innocent and guilty, the religious space also serves as a reflection of the class or socio-economic profile of characters. This aligns with the social setup of a film and how crime is explained in the context of the origin story.

© University of Venda

The juxtaposition of sacred and profane spaces within the same geographical locations reflects the complex moral landscape these characters navigate. Religious institutions function simultaneously as refuges from and witnesses to criminal activity, embodying the tension between spiritual aspiration and material desperation that characterizes these narratives.

Hospitals and other medical facilities have been depicted in diverse ways in the sampled African crime films as physical settings. Medical facilities are depicted in *Katutura* (a pharmacy where Esme works), *Jerusalema* (the hospital where Lucky is admitted from prison), and *King of Boys* (where Gobir's wife is admitted). The hospital in *Jerusalema* plays a particularly significant role in the narrative; it serves as the venue for the final chess move played by Lucky to checkmate the justice system. In cahoots with his lawyer and financial representative, Lucky fools and drugs the security guard stationed by his bedside and stages a bold escape, adorned in a police uniform stripped from the drunk and unconscious prison officer.

The hospital in *King of Boys*, though sparsely seen, is an important space in catalyzing Gobir's actions and those around him. With a terminally ill wife and compounded by limited resources to pay for bills, the hospital for Gobir is a place of stress and vulnerability that he prefers to relegate from his thoughts and conversations. Seen as a place of weakness by other characters, including his boss Inspector Shehu, Gobir manages to shake off the weakness by refusing help from his sister, rejecting a bribe from Shehu, and resisting the temptation to give up on his case, even after his wife passes away in the hospital. As a venue of suffering for his wife, the hospital for Gobir

© University of Venda

becomes a place of reflection and confronting his demons, which constitutes a major source of antagonism for him as a character.

The pharmacy in *Katutura*, on the other hand, serves as a witness to the suffering of women, beginning with Esme, who is sexually abused by her superior, and the young girl seeking emergency contraception pills. The pharmacy is an especially important element in revealing the plight of young girls - in this case, their burden to avoid pregnancies from irresponsible men and their struggle with sexual abuse from misguided, entitled males.

These medical spaces function as liminal zones where life and death, healing and suffering, legal and illegal activities intersect. They represent both the failure of social systems to protect the vulnerable and the desperate measures individuals take to survive within these failing systems.

2.4.5 Historical Setting

History denotes the temporal factor in the diegetic milieu. The temporal factor locates the story within a specified epoch or period. Historical settings in films are therefore relevant and potent features in the storytelling exercise because they can enrich our understanding of the past, as well as provide valuable insights into contemporary society and culture. Incorporating a film story within a specific historical era serves to immerse the audience in a distinct time and place, enhancing the authenticity and relatability of the narrative. This contextualization also sets the stage for examining contemporary ideas and societal issues within the thematic elements of the film.

© University of Venda

Furthermore, it provides a framework for exploring and understanding specific historical events, figures, and cultures.

The historical settings in African crime films range from cultural, colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary historicity in different African societies. According to Okpewho (1983), the infusion of historical periods, events, and figures affords an opportunity for the heightening of creativity. This is reinforced by genre theorists like Neale (2000), Grant (2007), and Haynes (2016), who recognize verisimilitude as an important component of storytelling, also codified by Mwangi (2009) and Olaniyan (1995) as historical specificity in post-Afrocentric discourse. In this view, the treatise in this section recognizes the contextual histories as settings for the fictional stories recounted by the films.

Set in Nigeria in the early 2010s, the film *Òlòtūré* follows a journalist who goes undercover to expose human trafficking and prostitution in Lagos. It reveals how government officials and law enforcement are complicit in these crimes, emphasizing widespread corruption. The film underscores the deep-rooted issues prevalent during this era and calls for urgent action to combat them. Additionally, the film's setting in Nigeria provides a lens through which to examine broader issues related to globalization, migration, and human rights. The characters in the film come from different regions of Nigeria, highlighting the interconnectedness of communities. Although it is a disputed matter, the *Òlòtūré* story has parallels with the true story of Tobore Ovuorie, a Nigerian journalist who set out to investigate the sex trafficking syndicate, much to her peril. Her perilous sojourns, documented in Ovuorie (2014),

© University of Venda

provide a realistic backdrop for the *Òlòtūré* narrative, characters, and settings, further emphasizing the seriousness of the matter the film tackles.

King of Boys is a Nigerian crime thriller film set in contemporary times, with the story taking place in Lagos. The events in the story capture the political scenarios in contemporary Nigeria under democratic rule. This grounds the film in the period following the Nigerian Fourth Republic that ended military rule. The story also captures the cultural context of the Yoruba through the use of language and expression of culture. In particular, by portraying a woman as Oba (albeit in criminal circles), the film reminisces about the era of *Alaafin* Orompoto, when a woman became the leader of the Yoruba Oyo empire, cementing a period of victory for women (Nnaemeka, 1997). This particular historical aspect leads to a homage to African women who have surmounted patriarchal bulwarks to lead their communities, countries, and empires, including Queen Nzinga of the Kongo, Mama Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela in South Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia, Joyce Banda in Malawi, and Samia Suluhu Hassan in Tanzania.

Jerusalema is set in contemporary Johannesburg and does not feature explicit historical settings. However, the film is loosely based on real-life events and criminal activity in South Africa during the 1990s and 2000s. The post-apartheid era was characterized by high levels of poverty, inequality, unemployment, and an influx of foreign nationals seeking opportunities, which fuelled a rise in crime and gang violence in urban areas. In particular, the film focuses on the rise of hijacking syndicates that targeted commercial vehicles, such as trucks and vans, to steal their goods and sell

© University of Venda

them on the black market. The film also touches on issues of corruption, police brutality, and the exploitation of marginalized communities. It portrays the complex social and political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, where the legacy of racial segregation and discrimination continues to shape the lives of many people. Overall, *Jerusalema* reflects the broader social and political context of South Africa during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, serving as a cinematic meditation on the unfulfilled promises of liberation.

Noem My Skollie is a film based on the true life-story of John Fredericks, set in Cape Town during the late 1960s and early 1970s, depicting the lives of young men entangled in crime and gangsterism. The film unfolds against the backdrop of a tumultuous period in South African history, characterized by apartheid, racial segregation, and social unrest. The government's policy of apartheid profoundly impacted people of colour, subjecting them to discriminatory laws and severely limiting their opportunities for education and employment. Amidst these challenging circumstances, the film's characters struggle to find their place in society, often resorting to crime for survival.

Through the intertwining stories of AB, Gimba, Gif, and Shorty, the narrative captures the harsh realities of life in Cape Town's townships during this era, marked by widespread poverty, violence, and social inequality. Notwithstanding the adversity, the characters display remarkable resilience and hope. The protagonist, Abraham "AB" Lonzi, aspires to become a writer and finds solace in storytelling. His dream is, however, hampered by the rampant violence, poverty, and drug use surrounding him,

© University of Venda

and his talent is ironically harnessed in prison, where he uses his storytelling skills to protect himself from gang recruitment and its attendant violence. The depiction of the number gangs, grounds *Noem My Skollie* within the historical context of the Cape Flats and prisons, which is an important footnote in the crime narrative of South Africa.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the film is its linguistic diversity, with characters engaging in conversations that blend Afrikaans and English. This choice effectively captures the linguistic tapestry of the Cape Flats and the intricate history of language in South Africa. *Noem My Skollie* powerfully depicts the historical backdrop of life under apartheid, emphasizing the struggle for basic human rights and freedoms during this period. Furthermore, the film delves deeply into the damaging impact of imprisonment on individuals, highlighting the dehumanizing nature of the prison system and its role in perpetuating violence and trauma.

Viva Riva is set in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a country in Central Africa, and the main action takes place in the capital city, Kinshasa. The narrative depicts the violence and corruption in Congolese society. The deplorable amenities, derelict roads, and buildings in the film reflect the lasting effects of the cyclical civil wars and conflicts in the DRC and the repeated assaults on the capital since independence, as captured by Lawal (2024). Since the 1990s, the country has experienced multiple violent conflicts, including two Congo Wars. These conflicts have resulted in the deaths and displacement of millions of people. The film depicts the impact of this violence on ordinary Congolese people, many of whom are struggling to survive in the face of poverty and insecurity. While *Viva Riva* is set in contemporary times, its narrative is

© University of Venda

heavily influenced by the DRC's complex and difficult history. The film offers a powerful commentary on the impact of colonialism, resource exploitation, and violence on the people of the DRC, and it shines a light on the country's ongoing struggles to achieve stability and security.

Bodaboda Thieves is a 2015 Ugandan film co-directed by Donald Mugisha and James Tayler. The narrative is set in the contemporary postmillennial era and focuses on the *bodaboda* culture in Uganda. Mukwaya et al. (2022) describe *bodabodas* as motorcycle taxis, tracing their emergence to the mid-1990s, driven by the inadequacy of the country's public transportation systems. *bodabodas* provide a cost-effective and efficient mode of transportation, particularly in urban locales (Amone, 2021). In addition to offering last-mile transport solutions, *bodabodas* serve extra-legal roles such as espionage activities and as escape vehicles for criminals (Opondo & Kiprop, 2018; Amone, 2021; Mukwaya et al., 2022). These aspects are among the subjects explored in the film, which also tackles prevalent issues like poverty and inequality—persistent challenges in Uganda since gaining independence in 1962 (Mukwaya et al., 2022). *Bodaboda Thieves* further illuminates the struggles faced by urban youth striving to secure a livelihood in an adverse economic environment. Although the film does not situate itself within a specific historical context, it offers insights into the social and economic dynamics that have shaped Uganda's recent history.

The historical contexts of these films reveal a pattern of postcolonial disillusionment, where the promises of independence have given way to new forms of exploitation, corruption, and violence. The crime genre becomes a vehicle for examining the failures

© University of Venda

of postcolonial states to deliver on their founding ideals, while also capturing the resilience and adaptability of individuals navigating these challenging circumstances. The temporal settings thus function not merely as backdrops but as active forces shaping character motivations and narrative trajectories, grounding the films' contemporary relevance in historical specificity.

The examination of setting in African crime films reveals a sophisticated cinematic geography that transcends mere backdrop functionality. These films construct a complex spatial politics where geographical locations become active participants in narrative development, bearing witness to historical trauma while simultaneously nurturing possibilities for transformation and redemption. The recurring motifs of slums, cities, rural areas, and institutional spaces create a coherent visual vocabulary that speaks to shared experiences across the African continent while remaining sensitive to local specificities.

The genre's commitment to authentic representation, as evidenced by directors like Florian Schott's emphasis on genuine locations and real circumstances, establishes African crime cinema as a form of social documentation that captures the lived realities of contemporary African urban experience. This verisimilitude serves not only aesthetic purposes but also political ones, creating counter-narratives to dominant Western representations of African spaces and experiences.

Furthermore, the historical specificity embedded within these settings provides crucial context for understanding how colonial legacies, postcolonial governance failures, and

© University of Venda

global economic pressures continue to shape African societies. The films' temporal frameworks reveal patterns of continuity and change, demonstrating how historical injustices manifest in contemporary social problems while also highlighting the agency and resilience of individuals and communities in navigating these challenges.

The spatial dynamics analysed in this section ranging from the personification of Katutura to the moral geography of rural-urban migration, from the class-coded religious spaces to the liminal zones of medical facilities, collectively construct a nuanced portrait of African modernity that resists both romanticization and victimization. Instead, these settings provide the foundation for complex narratives that acknowledge structural constraints while celebrating human agency, creating a distinctly African contribution to the global crime film genre.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter set out to analyse the place of narrative in the figuration of the African crime film genre. To achieve this objective, the discussions were woven around the framework of storytelling elements, including plot, character, and setting. From these discussions, it is evident that the films wield both narrative universalities and particularities, encompassing tragedies, voyage and return narratives, hood stories, origin stories, end-story character arcs, rebirth and overcoming-the-monster motifs, and American gangster tropes such as the "tragic hero" concept and the moral imperatives espoused in oral literature traditions.

© University of Venda

The character as a narrative element reveals poignant idiosyncrasies of the African criminal figure, including regressed trauma, political agency, propensities towards violence, and adherence to socialist ideologies. Concurrently, the analysis exposes the complacency and systemic difficulties faced by law enforcement, alongside the moral dilemmas confronting a complicit society and the inexorable certainty of victim suffering. These character dynamics establish a distinctive constellation of moral and political tensions that differentiate African crime cinema from its global counterparts.

The chapter further examines physical and historical settings as emblematic devices for locating and grounding the cinematic genre within African locales, historicity, and cultural frameworks. The spatial politics revealed through slums, townships, cities, rural areas, and institutional spaces demonstrate how geographical locations transcend mere backdrop functionality to become active narrative participants. The historical contexts, spanning colonial, postcolonial, and contemporary periods, provide crucial frameworks for understanding how temporal specificity shapes character motivations and narrative trajectories.

The narratives analysed reveal idiomorphic silhouettes formed through repeated and variated conventions, with historical specificity deeply embossed in the grain of their cinematic stories. These films construct a coherent visual vocabulary that speaks to shared continental experiences while remaining sensitive to local particularities. The genre's commitment to verisimilitude, evidenced through authentic locations and circumstances derived from lived realities, establishes African crime cinema as a form

© University of Venda

of social documentation that creates counter-narratives to dominant Western representations of African spaces and experiences.

Moreover, the analysis demonstrates how these films navigate the tension between universal crime genre conventions and indigenous storytelling traditions, creating hybrid narrative forms that reflect the complexities of postcolonial African modernity. The recurring motifs of rural-urban migration, institutional failure, and individual agency within structural constraints reveal patterns of continuity and change that illuminate broader questions about governance, development, and social transformation across the continent.

This chapter forms the bedrock of further discourse on filmic audiovisual aesthetics and thematic explorations that the proceeding chapters will grapple with in the quest to explicate the genre forms and content of African crime films within the conceptual framework of genre theory and endemic contexts. The narrative foundations established here provide the analytical infrastructure for examining how visual style, sound design, and thematic preoccupations work in concert to construct a distinctly African contribution to global crime cinema.

The findings suggest that African crime films do not merely replicate Western genre conventions but actively transform them through culturally specific narrative strategies, creating new forms of cinematic expression that reflect the particular historical, social, and political circumstances of contemporary Africa. This transformation process reveals the genre's capacity for cultural translation and adaptation, demonstrating how

© University of Venda

global film forms can be indigenised to serve local expressive needs whilst maintaining international accessibility and relevance.

© University of Venda

3 CHAPTER THREE:

AUDIO-VISUAL AND LANGUAGE AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter is a continuum of the foregoing chapter that discusses the elements of the narrative and codifies them as significant components of repetition and differences that define the African crime films. The discussion in this chapter constitutes the analyses the audio-visual characteristics of African crime films including the music, sound effects, cinematography, and costume, and attempts to draw patterns of repetition among the films and indicate nuances of difference in the individual films. The study sets out three objectives of which the second was discussed in this current chapter. Specifically, this chapter will concern itself with the iconography and conventions of African crime films adumbrated by audio-visual aesthetics encapsulating cinematography (shot types, camera angles, visual continuity, camera movement, and visual metaphor), mise' en scene, (costume, makeup, and scene design), sound design (voice, sound effects and music).

Analysis of the voice element in the soundtrack will be interspersed in the discussions across the chapters. The dialogue, voice over and narration are cited in evidentiary form within varied chapters. To bolster the stylistic discussion of the voice element, and in specific the verbal components including dialogue and voice over, this chapter also engages in a discussion of language as a stylistic disposition of the films, delving further into the specific linguistic analysis and the space of the language within the

© University of Venda

context that the film is made, revealing iconic genericity and identities, reflected off the specific countries, regions and the portrayed African people.

3.2 Visual Iconography in African Crime Film

Cinematography is the technique or craft of making images and developing the film story visually (Brown, 2018). Cinematography in the context of this study is the filmic visuals in the movies. To aptly deconstruct cinematography in the sampled crime films from Africa, this chapter discussed the visual iconography based on elements of cinematography. (Mascelli, 2005) crystallises the elements of cinematography into the five Cs of cinema include camera movement, camera angles, close-ups, continuity and cutting. Brown (2012, p.4) condenses the cinematography component of cinema to include seven conceptual tools, namely the frame, light and colour, the lens movement texture, establishing and point of view. Wheeler (2005) elaborates exposure, focus and composition as elements of cinematography. Drawing from the foregoing breakdown, this study codifies the elements of cinematography to include, exposure, camera angle, shot framing and composition and camera movements.

Exposure is defined by Mascelli, (2005) as the amount of light in a recorded image. (Brown, 2012) defines exposure as the level of brightness in an image composition. From the two definitions, the important components of exposure deduced include the amount of light distribution in the frame. Therefore, exposure can be defined as the amount of light and its distribution among the objects composed in a film frame. Colour in cinematography is also described by Mascelli (2005) as a technical and ‘esthetic’ element of light used as a building block of tone, balance, and contrast. It is lucid

© University of Venda

therefore colour is a component of cinematography, drawn from the lighting component and it exudes elements such as colour temperature, image tint, and object colours in a filmic, mise en scene. Exposure and colour are products of lighting in film and include aesthetics, techniques, and effects such as silhouette lighting, practical lighting, high-key lighting, and low-key lighting.

Silhouette lighting involves placing the subject against a bright background, resulting in a dark, featureless outline which creates dramatic and mysterious visuals. Silhouette shots convey a sense of anonymity or mystery through emphasis of shape and form of the subject and diminishing intricate details. This technique is used poignantly in *Jerusalema, King of Boys and Katutura.*

Practical lighting refers to the use of existing light sources within a scene, such as lamps, candles, or natural sunlight, to illuminate the environment naturally, to create a realistic and believable setting. This is a very potent technique of imaging used in films to enhance realism and therefore heighten the authenticity of the setting in the films. This technique is widely used in *Òlòtūré* and *Viva Riva*. The two techniques are congruent with low-key lighting, which is the partial lighting of a scene where only a few necessary elements in a frame are lit.

High-key lighting is a lighting setup characterized by an abundance of bright and even illumination, minimizing shadows and creating a predominantly bright scene, which is commonly associated with genres such as comedies and musicals, as it imparts a light-hearted and cheerful atmosphere. High-key lighting accords a film with a dramatic aesthetic and hence reduces the ubiquitous dark theme associated with horror films,

© University of Venda

noir films, thrillers, and some subgenres of crime as characterised by (Petrie and Boggs, 2012).

Camera angles play a crucial role in shaping the visual narrative of a film or video. The point of view (POV) angle places the audience in the perspective of a character, offering a direct view of what they see. Subjective angles are more interpretative, expressing the character's emotions or mental state through the camera's placement and objective angles maintain a neutral observer stance, providing an unbiased view of the scene. The selected African crime films deploy a range of these angles, providing varying perspectives for the audience.

Framing involves the arrangement and composition of visual elements within the camera frame. Shot size, encompassing close-ups, medium shots, and wide shots, determines the amount of subject detail visible. Depth of field manipulates focus, emphasizing specific elements while blurring others. A variety of shot types are used in the films in their singularity or staged using various camera movements as explained by Gyang (2023, Personal communication). Various types of movements, such as pan, tilt, dolly, and zoom, offer distinct visual effects. Camera movements function in tracking action, revealing new information, and contributing to storytelling by directing attention, creating emphasis, and enhancing the overall cinematic rhythm.

3.2.1 Framing the African Bodies

African bodies, also referred to as “black bodies” by Shikuku (2017) is a reference to the African persons depicted in the films. The African crime film frames the African

© University of Venda

bodies in a variety of ways that depict the realism and situations that the characters deal with. *Noem My Skollie*, for instance, employs the use of natural lighting to illuminate the characters, faithfully portraying their authentic skin tones without any artificial enhancement or desaturation. This aesthetic permeates *Jerusalema*, *Bodaboda Thieves*, *Òlòtūré, Uradi, Katutura* and *Clickclick Bang*. This disposition serves to create a characterization that is objectively African. This contrasts with other depictions including German films in Africa discussed by Shikuku (2017), in which he finds that the image of the African body is contrasted with a white body through exaggeration of the melanin and use of warm tones as opposed to cool tones used for white skins. Ranging from portrayals of striking visual beauty, to elevated views of the Africans as dominant elements in the visual frames and the characterization of Africans as professionals, students, religious clergy and prisoners, the African crime films use the elements of cinematography and mise en scene to portray Africans within their space.

Mr. Carelse frequently appears in solitary frames or those that highlight him prominently in the foreground, often juxtaposed with others in the background engaged in various activities. This is also used with Inspector Blackie who is featured in extreme close-up shots, emphasizing his significant role in the narrative alongside Lucky. Shots and angles portraying Lucky are intentionally framed to afford him prominence and establish an intimate connection with the audience. This intimacy is also reflected through incorporation of close-ups and medium shots to capture visuals of AB, Gimba, Gif and Shorty engaging in smoking activities, offering a closer look at their actions.

© University of Venda

The prominence they gain helps in centering the narrative around them providing an illumination of their journeys as they transform in the story.

Viva Riva elevates Riva using intimate close-ups. His stoic face in the situation of assured imminent danger is given prominence using medium shots and close-ups and so are his cut-ins as he counts his money, enjoys his sumptuous meal and when having sex with Norah. His elevated physiognomy by the close-ups creates an aura of presence and as his power diminishes, the shots get wider and the angle above his eye level. However, he is not juxtaposed to the city and his circumstances are not reflected in Manichaean imagery of establishing shots.

Costume is another very significant element in the visual expression of African crime films and forms an important bedrock of displaying identity and endemic socio-cultures within the depicted jurisdictions. The exploration of dress cultures is evident in the depiction of the *La Sape* culture in Kinshasa, exemplified by the elaborate and elegant evening attire worn by characters such as JM, Azor, Norah, and Riva. This not only reveals the culture in Kinshasa but further manifests the elegance and beauty of Africans. This also recurs with Eniola and other characters in *King of Boys,* who don ubiquitous Nigerian garbs, including kaftans and agbada, Fila, Isiagu, Gele and English suits that showcase a sense of class, and reflecting the cultural diversity among the characters.

The African crime films enhance realism through the depiction of characters donned in various professional or specialised garbs which indicates a modern society that has a

© University of Venda

vibrant contemporary environment in which people dress not only in tandem with global cultures but also reflect the various facets of society including educational, professional, and social. In this case school uniforms as costumes in the films, serve as tools of characterisation, providing insights into school cultures in African countries through distinctive attire worn by the student characters. Most countries in the Sub-Saharan regions prescribe school uniforms for basic education levels (primary and secondary). School uniform is depicted in *Katutura* and *Jerusalema*. *Uradi* depicts university students without uniforms, which is an accurate depiction of the situation in many African countries. Religious garments equally play a significant role, as evidenced in *Viva Riva, Katutura and Uradi* by the army commander in nun uniforms, the priest adorned in liturgical vestments, the Pastor in a clerical collar, and Rashid in Islamic religious attire. In addition, the films, employ prison uniforms to reveal the identities of prisoners, distinguish them from civilians, and convey a visual representation of subjugation and submission to law enforcement. Prison uniforms are used in *Jerusalema* and *Noem My Skollie,* contrasting with police uniforms used in all the selected films. The uniforms convey an image of an imprisoned African body, which provides the twin meaning of subjugation and atonement for crimes committed by confining the body within a rehabilitation uniform.

Makeup in its beauty, characters and special effects form is used to enhance the beauty of the characters, enhance their character look to create injuries, and enhance the death scenes and accentuate their injuries. The prostitutes in *Òlòtūré* including Ehi, the undercover journalist adopt heavy beauty makeup to enhance their looks to attract

© University of Venda

male customers, in turn generating believable looks and images of call girls for the audience. *Jerusalema* on the other hand applies special effects makeup to enhance the bloody scenes that accompany the violence in the film, including the dead gangster scenes and when Lucky is injured.

3.2.1.1 The Sexualised African Bodies

African crime films also project the African body as a site of sexual desire and sexual freedom. Contrasted with the erotic exotism discussed by Shikuku (2017) the sexuality disposition projected by the characters in the African crime film is twofold. The first is sexuality as an expression of freedom and free will and the second is the articulation of gendered oppression. In the first instance the projection of Norah's physique as an erotic and captivating object of desire of men in *Viva Riva*. The film depicts her elevated sexuality, leading to physical altercations between the main characters, Riva and Azor. Norah's exposed nudity and intimate scenes with Riva, including an oral sex scene and a bathtub sex sequence, further emphasize her role as a source of inspiration and contention.

From the onset of the film, Norah is shown dancing erotically freely with men and then goes for a short call outside the club in a dimly hit backyard, where Riva sneakily peeps at her. The sexual connotation of a mundane action like urinating is a curious cue that provides a window through which the power wielded the sexual persona that Norah takes. Indeed, the conversation that follows underscores this. After catching Riva playing peeping tom, Norah pins him to the wall holding him by his neck and in the

© University of Venda

conversation that ensues Norah threatens thus “with a snap of my finger you disappear”. The veiled threat of harm demonstrates the power that Norah holds. Although she cites her husband Azor and his guards as her protection, her sexuality is the real power as she straddles the worlds of both protagonists with colossal impunity subduing them with her charms and switching sides at a whim. Even after the threat Riva remains enchanted and swooned and hunts her with reckless abandon, his safety and sense of security taking a secondary space in his pursuits of sexual attention. This concept of sex and power matrix also plays in Jerusalema through Lucky who has Nomsa as an object of sexual interest. His first sexual encounter with her is revealing and exciting as he grows into crime but becomes a distraction for him as he aims for bigger things in Hillbrow. As he ascends the social ladder her black body is traded for Leah Friedlander's white body whose sex elevates Lucky to his destined status.

This black versus white sexual body in *Jerusalema* subtly indicates that the black sexual body including that of Nomsa and the prostitutes is distractive and an agent of stagnation. This stasis in a progressive world makes the men including Riva have evolving desires that pit them to find new women attractive and slander their previous encounters. This is demonstrated when he meets Norah and tells her “I just had village women for ten years. Horrible with sagging breasts”, He follows this up later when he arrives at Mére Edo’s brothel and insists to her that he wants a woman with firmer breasts. This pattern continues with Komu, who quickly wants Karen his city-bred classmate forgetting his village girlfriend Kirigo whom he earnestly spruces to a city body when he gets money, and she then fits his desire.

© University of Venda

Òlòtūré furthers this dialectic of the sexual body with the categorization thus referred to by Alero. Based on her beauty, Ehi is quickly categorized as "Forza Speciale" or special forces, a high-class prostitute, contrasted with other girls, who are earmarked for street hawking of sexual services, christened "Forza Strada" or road forces in Ovuorie (2014). Her fair skin and mesomorph body attract the "Forza Speciale" tag, which, introduces a colourist bias in the narrative. This compounded by Lucky's Choice is a pointer toward the diminished view of the black body sexually. The other view of the sexual black body is the objectification for subjugation and oppression. *Òlòtūré, Viva Riva, Noem My Skollie Jerusalema* portrays the black body as a site where evisceration of freedom, values and choice takes place on account of the socio-economic condition. This theme extends to *Òlòtūré* and *Viva Riva*, where commercial sex work takes centre stage among the characters.

Depicted through the many girls forced into prostitution by the biting poverty at home in *Òlòtūré* and *Jerusalema*, the incidences of sexual abuse and rape in *Òlòtūré and Noem My Skollie* and sex trafficking, the black body is evinced to live and relieve traumas through its sexual indulges. In the poison sequence in *Noem My Skollie* Gimba falls into the brutal hands of Gums a serial prison rapist who takes him as a cell concubine diminishing his stature and his object of sexual use and further curtailing his voice in any matter under discussion. This is a motif that begins with the Ballie raping AB in the sprawling dumpsite, underscoring his earlier scorn by AB's father's assertion of hope that his son will become someone bigger than a dustman in life. The results of the rape ordeal see AB join a gang and lead a life of crime, proving Ballie's diabolical

© University of Venda

view of his life. This perspective of the African body is further anchored on the depiction of sex workers in *Jerusalema, Òlòtūré and Viva Riva*. Bereft of their free will, they oblige to sex with any person and have no voice in the matter, only tethered to the instructions of their pimp (Chuks, Tony and Ngu) or their madam, (Alero and Mére Edo) their voice on their bodies is asphyxiated and their opinion muzzled with violence (Linda and Ehi in *Òlòtūré*) ritualism and promises of unrealistic grandeur like the ill-fated Euro trips documented by Ovuorie (2014).

The black girls are on top of the ill-treatment matrix, labelled as products (Ovuorie 2014) and termed as the unwanted scum of the earth as Lucky narrates in *Jerusalema.* The image of sexiness and beauty is thus transformed into an egregious monstrosity laden with ugliness, malaise, and trouble, as Tony and Alero in *Òlòtūré* posit. The image of the African body, therefore, takes the contrasting visual form of a sexy attractive visual imaginary as well as the site of exploitation, violence, and illicit business coerced for the physical satisfaction and enterprise of the elite.

Both male and female nudity are displayed in African crime films, with characters such as Norah, Riva, Tietie and the brothel women in *Viva Riva* appearing nude in various scenes. The inclusion of nudity adds to the film's exploration of sexuality and relationships without creating an aura of obscenity despite the intense scenes, Norah's nudity is a partial exposition, eschewing the writ large full frontal or rear nudity that such scenes would portend in American gangster films. Tietie's nudity however is displayed significantly with the display of her rear nudity and breasts in full view. The other instance of nudity is in *Òlòtūré* where the captive girls are forced to bear their all for a

© University of Venda

ritual. Unlike the other films, the nude exposure in *Òlòtūré* is displayed in an unsexy way, laying more emphasis on the ritual as opposed to the sexual signification that nudity in the other films indicate. Additionally, African Crime films incorporate the display of pornography as exemplified by Azor watching it in Viva Riva. This element further underscores the exploration of explicit content within the cinematic narrative.

3.2.1.2 The Subdued and Battered African Body

African crime films portray a visual narrative that evokes the image of battered and subdued African bodies, capturing the harsh realities faced by the characters. The film narratives employ a deliberate and impactful cinematographic approach, in scenes and images that convey the physical and emotional traumas suffered by the protagonists within the context of crime and violence.

The opening sequence of *Noem My Skollie*, confronts the audience with a haunting image of a hooded figure on the noose. The subsequent shot focuses on the shackled feet of the condemned individual, highlighting the helplessness and finality of their fate. The scene intensifies the grim atmosphere, accentuated by the sounds of panting, clinking chains, mumbled prayers, and the creaking of a prison door. This introduction sets the tone for the film, emphasizing the vulnerability and brutality that unfolds in the narrative. The assault on young AB, Gif, Gimba, and Shorty in a later scene in the film is depicted with a medium close-up, specifically emphasizing the agony etched on the faces of AB and the bloodied Gif. This visual choice brings the audience into direct

© University of Venda

proximity with the pain experienced by the characters, intensifying the impact of the violent encounter.

Following a traumatic rape ordeal scene, AB's departure is marked by a close-up shot capturing the trickle of blood down his leg. This visual detail serves as a visceral reminder of the physical violation he suffers which is deepened by the subsequent close-ups of AB sweating and panting during a nightmare and offers an intimate glimpse into his wounded psyche in the emotional aftermath of the brutal attack. In a later scene, an injured man with a knife to his head, following a street brawl with AB, exemplifies the brutal consequences of a conflict born of a hardboiled character with a killer instinct within the depicted world. The graphic portrayal is vivid imagery of the dangers lurking threateningly to destroy the African body and the vulnerability thereof. The frenzied shouts of “My head!” “My head!” by the injured man, laughed off by AB and his gang, is a pointer to the callousness in the face of an African battered body.

Lucky Kunene's bloodied body enhanced using realistic special effects makeup, an *in medias res* motif in *Jerusalema*, serves as a powerful symbol at both the film's beginning and end. The recurring portrayal of Kunene's battered body wraps the narrative, emphasizing the cyclical nature of violence and its enduring impact on the individual. The lifeless bodies of Zakes, Tony Ngu, Nazareth, and the stooped bodies of gangsters, torn by bullets in *Jerusalema* further contribute to the film's portrayal of the harsh realities of crime and serve as a stark visual representation of the violent and unforgiving world depicted in the film. In *Òlòtūré*, the lifeless body of Linda, sprawled on the ground and covered in banana leaves, poignantly conveys the tragedy and

© University of Venda

isolation experienced by victims of crime. The deliberate placement away from loved ones underscores the societal indifference to the suffering of these individuals. This imagery recurs in *Katutura* in a gruesome sequence of Pele's dead body slumped in the car seat amid a busy street, after being shot. The distressing staging serves as a haunting image of the abrupt and violent ends met by characters within the crime-ridden narratives. The juxtaposition of death against the backdrop of urban life reinforces the pervasive nature of violence in these environments.

The films capture the vulnerability of its characters through scenes such as Ehi's limp body in *Òlòtūré*, dragged to a car after being drugged and raped. The helplessness and unconsciousness depicted in this moment emphasise the brutality and lack of agency experienced by the character. On the other hand, Komu in *Uradi* gasps for breath after brutal torture by Rashid's henchmen in response to his collaboration with security authorities, which further illustrates the debilitating pain suffered by victims of torture. The visible distress serves as a testament to the brute consequences faced by those who attempt to defy criminal elements. *Bodaboda Thieves* portrays a limping Baba Alex after a motorcycle accident. The visible physical impairment serves as a representation of the vagaries and maladies suffered by an African body in everyday circumstances.

The stark imagery that the battered African body pictured in African crime films unfurls, is the disrespect and perpetual torture it endures. It is important to note that in most of the selected films besides *Katutura* none accords a dead African body a decent interment. The tens of bodies in *Jerusalema, Òlòtūré* and *Uradi* including those

© University of Venda

principal characters like Linda, Kevin, Ngu, Nazareth and Zakes, are left to the elements as Josh's' white body in *Jerusalema* is mourned and interred respectfully in Jewish traditions. Even the all-powerful Eniola in *King of Boys* and the honourable Judge Nwachukwu do not get the chance to bury their kin!

From the foregoing, it is notable that visual choices made in African crime films communicate the harsh realities faced by characters within these narratives. Through the depiction of battered, sick, injured, and subdued African bodies, the films provide a nuanced exploration of the physical and emotional price paid by African bodies in the face of crime and violence. The recurring cinematographic motifs of bloodied, injured, tortured and dead African bodies, serve to underline the profound impact of these experiences on the individuals within the stories, creating a compelling and evocative cinematic portrayal, which is a lucid trope of the African crime films.

3.2.2 Framing the African Landscapes

The concept of space is a vital component in the investigation of the visual aesthetic in the African crime films. As such this section examines such spatial definitions present in African crime films including derelict slums, dreamy and chaotic cities and the visual portrayal of nightlife as a disposition of African crime films.

3.2.2.1 Derelict slums

The post-millennial African city is beleaguered by staggering populations inspired by the unending rural-to-urban migration. The city almost busts at its seams as the growing population seeks to find more space as a habitat within the already

© University of Venda

overpopulated areas. This influx has led to the development of uncontrolled settlements which are largely informal and therefore lack the basic sanitary amenities and infrastructure requisite to serve the populations. The pressure on the land, the few available schools and the few or non-existent sanitary amenities like water and sewerage systems have become a catalyst to the creation of barely liveable spaces within African cities. Painting a stark contrast with the leafy suburbs within the city, these informal settlements represent a low-cadre socioeconomic population of workers who cannot afford to live where they work. Working as domestic workers in the suburbs and subordinate officers in the offices domiciled within the towering corporate mansions these workers must take a train, a bodaboda a matatu or a taxi to their humble abode.

Slums, shanty towns, squatter camps, and townships find a potent space within the discussion of African histories as they represent physical manifestations of the disenfranchisement that accompanied the colonial and post-colonial enterprise (Roy, 2011; Smit *et al.*, 2017; Forjaz and Lage, 2019). As the colonisers took up the productive land and the leafy suburbs for themselves as places to live, Africans were crammed up in barren spaces with major spatial limitations. To discourage an influx of more Africans within the cities, Africans were not empowered to build permanent liveable houses and could only construct temporary and semi-permanent houses, mostly made of iron sheets and wood off-cuts. Basic amenities like water, electricity and sanitation systems were not sufficiently provided, further compounded by the lack

© University of Venda

of provision of other supportive amenities, like schools, hospitals, and spaces to build their places of worship.

The African crime films through cinematography, explore this situation of temporality with the depiction of the dilapidated temporary houses built on dusty plains, in unplanned urbanisation. The images of slums, shot as extreme long shots, long shots, and medium long shots from the vantage of low angle, eye level and aerial angles reveal the lack of sufficient space, the rusty dilapidation of the houses, the compressed spaces, and the contrast with the suburbs. The use of deep earth colours and warm tones enhance the dust and draw a village look associated with wilderness and undisturbed nature. The shot sizes combine to create a montage of depravity as they get closer to the physical settings in the slum.

Noem My Skollie tells its story within the setting of a sprawling slum within the Cape Flats in South Africa. The Township is portrayed as a cramped up scorched piece of earth used as a dumping site that the wretched of the earth use as a habitat. The spatial dimensions of the slum which are largely framed in the narrow field of view and eye level height are consequently depicted as small inadequate under pressure and dwarfed by the surging populations that live on it. The acres of trash dumped in the slum backyard play the role of an economic mainstay for the population of the Township including Abraham 's father an entertainment zone for the residents of the slum and a security liability for the same inhabitants of the slum. This image is drawn by the shot of a deserted home at the end of the sprawling dump site which is the home of Mr. Balie. It is at this home that Abraham’s father and other men from the Township

© University of Venda

come to entertain themselves with a drink of moonshine and gambling. It is also within the towering hills of the dumped trash that to Mr. Ballie accosts captures and sexually assaults Abraham. The drug-ridden streets within the slums Where the young boys play their card games and roast their sausages are portrayed cinematographically as narrow earthen and dusty pathways with rusted iron sheets and wood offcuts as walls.

3.2.2.2 Composing the Dreamy and Chaotic Cities

The city is an adversary that looms large in the life of the criminal. In their quest for conquest, the city serves as the towering antagonist, dwarfing their machismo and chutzpah. The city operational infrastructure is constituted by dreamy, mysterious, and intimidating skyscrapers, a nonchalant sea of people unperturbed by the criminals, unfazed by the sheer violence around the city and the suffering of the victims. The criminal slithers among the thronging crowds fully aware of the dangers that the city portends including the reactive force of the city through law enforcement and the surging wounded mobs.

The criminal and the city and juxtaposed cinematographically in a binary opposition. *Uradi* uses high angle extreme wide shots to depict Komu in the city. From his perspective, the city traffic, buildings, and crowds are shot from a low angle. The opposing angles articulate the edification of the city at the diminished expense of Komu who was forewarned by his mother and father about unknown dangers of the city of Nairobi.

© University of Venda

Jerusalema draws this power play by using skyline silhouettes of the city, showing its majestic landmarks like the Hillbrow Tower, the Pend Tower and the downtown concrete jungle of Johannesburg. The city is shot as an imposing background to a diminished foreground of the Soweto township and the surrounding areas. This juxtaposes the majestic city as a distant dream, and aspiration, so near yet so far. When Lucky and Zakes get to the city, after straddling Soweto like giants, get swallowed in the dizzying traffic of Johannesburg, tucked in a taxi that is sandwiched among thousands. Captured in extremely wide, high-angle shots. When the angle comes to eye level, cutting to medium shots the images reveal Lucky still trying to figure out the secrets of the big city by maximizing on limited time reading while driving a taxi, while getting threatened by aggrieved taxi men keen on ejecting him and zakes from the route. This leads to a montage of moving shots as he is kidnapped and attacked and as he flees and hides from his aggressors bent on killing him. This contrasts with his elevated posture in Soweto where he is shot at eye level and low angles to enhance his stature within the frame.

Noem My Skollie, Katutura, King of Boys and Òlòtūré only have brief depictions of the city viewed from an eye level, a feature that humanizes the cities and makes them accessible to the characters. Although the city of Kampala in *Bodaboda Thieves* can be accorded to this feature of a humanistic city based on its framing it is also seen from the intimidating angle when Abel arrives aboard his father's motorbike. The difference with the depiction of Johannesburg Nairobi and Kinshasa is that we get to see Abel his father and many other characters operating within the city as the montages cut from

© University of Venda

the wide establishments of Kampala to the wide shots of the surging multitudes and the medium shots of Abel as a city operator in the city streets and the unimposing buildings of the city.

African crime films aptly capture the chaos in the African cityscapes. The sampled films largely adopt a slow narrative pace, drawing establishments using wide shots and building conversational, emotional, and transitional montages with a minimalist investment in quick movements and high-octane actions. This is mostly achieved through the use of static camera shots, which indicates a stable perspective and point of view in the canvassing of crime issues and a view of the city. The element of chaos within the ensuing stasis is captured using the images of surging crowds, uncontrollable and threatening to the contrasting minimal spatial dimensions. The images of large surging disorganized populations of people engaging in trade or finding their way in the narrow streets and manoeuvring the raging human and motor traffic create a sense of disorder and absolute chaos.

In addition, the element of chaos in African crime films is captured through the visually loud action sequences during police raids as captured in the opening scene of *Jerusalema*, on the numerous high-energy highway chases in *Jerusalema*, the bustling city streets of Johannesburg from the taxi rank to Hillbrow. The marketplace in *King of Boys* and the city streets of Lagos captured at night in *Òlòtūré* where the twilight girls engage in prostitution provide a glimpse into their busy populations engaged in their daily households and bustles in Nigeria's largest city. The chaos in Hillbrow, downtown Johannesburg and Soweto, contrasts with the serene quietude and undisturbed streets

© University of Venda

in the leafy suburbs of sandstone a motif that is also reflected in the affluent estate in *Uradi.* The chaotic city streets can also be contrasted with the serene sleepy rural villages and peri-urban areas depicted in the African crime films. The bustling city streets of Nairobi are in stark contrast with the lush quiet village of Nyahururu where Komu hails from. Equally, the chaotic streets of Lagos sharply contrast with the serene quiet beautiful village well Linda and Beauty come from. This village is depicted in the film in the scene where Linda and her mother speak in a phone call. They're sleepy villages and the leafy suburbs provide a view of their undisturbed, puritanical, and snobbish dispositions.

These images are replete in the films including the images of Kampala with a surging human population and an uncountable number of bodabodas, Private and public service vehicles manoeuvring the dangerous narrow city roads as each tries to find their way in and out of the city. This motif recurs in *Viva Riva* in the opening scenes The busting population of Kinshasa cram themselves full and dangerously hung on the ledges of an old rickety train. That same population surges into the city and further depresses the already overwhelmed city taxis which are mostly grounded by the biting fuel shortage that the film narrative begins with.

In the realm of cinematic storytelling, the visual portrayal of chaos serves as a powerful narrative device, particularly in the context of crime films. Aerial skyline shots are used in the scene where police choppers descend upon Lucky's room, creating a dramatic and tense atmosphere that symbolizes the overpowering reach of law enforcement. The wide shot, capturing an expansive view of multitudes of police vehicles and

© University of Venda

choppers converging on the scene, conveys chaos, as the might of law enforcement is generously applied to apprehend Lucky. This visual spectacle reinforces the binary tension inherent in crime films, exuding the perpetual conflict between criminals and enforcers of law and order.

The portrayal of chaos extends beyond specific crime scenes to broader realities in urban landscapes. In Nairobi, the aftermath of a terrorist bomb attack is depicted through implied chaos in the streets revealed by a news bulletin and the dialogue between Komu and Jemo. The implicit pandemonium and panic among the attacked public serve as a reflection of the societal upheaval caused by criminal acts, emphasizing the far-reaching consequences of illicit activities. These implied images provide a mental flashback of the traumatic images from past terrorist carnage in African cities. Similarly, in the streets of Katutura and Windhoek, chaos takes the form of drug peddlers and drug lords running rampant. The visual narrative illustrated by Dangi chasing Kondja through the streets of the Katutura township paints a grim picture of urban environments overrun by criminals, demonstrating the plight of communities in the grip of drug-related chaos.

This motif of real and perceived chaos also permeates Cape Town and Lagos depicted in *Noem My Skollie, Òlòtūré* and *King of Boys* highlighted by various criminal players such as prison gangs, ex-convicts, crime families, drug runners, and young gangsters. The intricate interplay of these factions contributes to the overall disorder, portraying a city struggling to maintain order amidst the complexities of criminal influence.

© University of Venda

The chaos in crime films transcends geographical boundaries. The marauding crime syndicates of the Lagos underworld, led by characters like Eniola, Aare, Odogwu, and Makanaki, illustrate globalized chaos. The visual depiction of their criminal enterprises emphasizes the interconnected nature of crime, transcending regional constraints and manifesting as a pervasive force on an international scale, an assertion supported by similar goings-on portrayed in *Uradi, Jerusalema, Katutura* and *Noem My Skollie* characterized by gangs and egomaniacal gangsters and multitudes of innocent hardworking Africans whose Holy Grail is a decent livelihood and the constantly elusive luxury. In essence, the visual portrayal of chaos in crime films serves as a cinematic tool to not only captivate audiences but also to underscore the societal implications of criminal activities. It is through these visuals that filmmakers mirror the significance of the cyclic tussle pitting order and disorder, providing a perspective into the complex and turbulent world of crime, in African cities.

3.2.2.3 The Nightlife

The sampled African crime films deploy a variety of exposure or lighting styles to portray nightlife. Lowkey lighting is a broadly used technique to achieve the nightlife scenes in the selected films. The technique is used in Òlòtūré scenes that largely take place during the night. The low-key lighting involves exposing selected parts of their frame and leaving others unlit or underexposed(Brown, 2008). As a technique, low-key lighting is used in the red-light district, where the twilight girls ply their trade. This technique is deployed to create a sense of mystery and to indicate the dark business being conducted. The low-key lighting also extends to the clubs, a reproduction of

© University of Venda

reality, whereby lighting is used to conceal rather than reveal subjects in the frame. This is a way of diminishing the exposure of the revellers in the pubs, partaking in the debauchery. Low-key lighting technique is also used in the halfway house, when Òlòtūré is concealed in darkness and sneaks out to make a call to Emeka, and when Linda, makes a call to her mother. This is used deliberately to conceal her and create a sense of mystery as she goes against her captor's instruction and underscores the dangers she faces if caught. The technique is further used in the scene where Linda is killed after being caught with the phone.

Low key lighting is also deployed In *King of Boys*, when Eniola kills a man during the party in the film's opening scene and in the prison cell where she is held in custody. The technique is further used during the brazen robbery by Odogwu and Makanaki with their gangs in tow, ransacking Senator Rewane's and Aare's houses where they steal money from a septic tank and a mausoleum. *Noem, my Skollie*, applies low-key lighting in several instances, including the scene where AB and his friends Gif, Shorty, and Gimba are attacked by older boys and their sausages taken. Other scenes include the burglary scene in the town store that sends AB and Gimba to prison and when young Tyrone waylays Tietie after he is thrown out by his aunty Celia. In another scene, the technique is used in the prison scene where Gums tries to sexually assault AB, and in the subsequent cell storytelling scenes. *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema* integrates low-key lighting in a variety of scenes, including the night heist scene where the police foil the looting of a departmental store, where Nazareth is arrested after a bullet-ridden carnage. Another scene is the bedroom scene, where Young Lucky is reading a book,

© University of Venda

and the mother offers him a Bible. The dim light is only provided by practical lighting from a hurricane lamp.

These foregoing instances and anecdotes in the selected films demonstrate the application of lowkey lighting and practical lighting techniques to realise an important aspect of nightlife, a ubiquitous disposition of crime genres. With the commission of criminal acts, darkness is a useful concealing feature and an important allegorical adhesive for the illegality and its perpetuation - a common feature in noir, neo-noir and gangster films according to Nelmes (2016) Bordwell and Thompson (2018) and Monaco (2005). The technique as demonstrated in the foregoing forms a vital trope in the African crime films, reflected in the selected corpus.

3.3 The Soundscapes in African Crime Films

Kimani (2022) demarcates the film soundtrack, as constituting elements such as voice, sound effects, music, ambience, and silence. He further delineates their roles and canonizes their narrative dispositions to include plotting, thematic rendition, locating the diegesis and mood setting. To understand the sound of the soundtrack as a trope to the particularity of the African crime film genre, this section critically analyses the sound elements in the films, drawing the universalistic characters across the generic corpus and specificities the sound imports into the individual films. Kimani (2022) codes the soundtrack components as illustrated in the figure 4 below.

© University of Venda

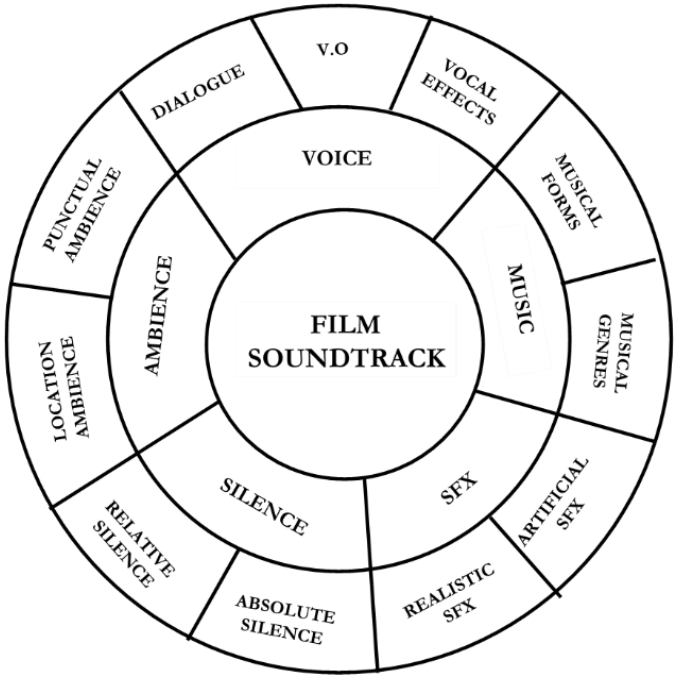


Figure 4: A matrix of sound elements in a cinematic soundtrack.
Source: Kimani (2022)

3.3.1 Sonic Disposition of Violence in African Crime Films

Violence is an integral disposition of African crime films characterised by violent encounters, attacks, and fights. As such, sound can be used to realise the aesthetic of violence in film through the direct depiction of violence using sound or the connotation of violence via a model of signification drawn from the semiotic language as discussed by Kimani (2022). Violence in the African crime film selected for this study is expressed through the verbal and nonverbal elements of sound Including dialogue, sound effects, music, and silence.

Verbal and dialogic sounds express violence by the application of threatening and insulting language as the characters engage in a duel of words and as others seek to

© University of Venda

subdue their fellow characters. In addition, dialogue is used to predict violence, suggest violence, and precipitate violent actions by the characters in the films.

Sound effects on the other hand express violence through onomatopoeic expression of those sounds. For instance, the sound of a fight or hand-to-hand combat is easily conveyed by the sounds of fists and slaps which are further enhanced by wincing, groaning, and moaning from the pain that results from the violent actions. This also applies to gunshot sounds whenever there is an exchange of gunfire between the criminals, or between them and law enforcers. As an incidental expression of the violent actions, the sound of gunfire not only reveals the specific dramatic action in the scenes but also reinforces the emotional context, and marks important parts in the plot.

In African crime films soundtracks, the meticulous use of ambience and sound effects plays a pivotal role in amplifying the portrayal of violence. These auditory elements not only set the tone for intense sequences but also serve as a powerful narrative tool, offering insights into the characters' experiences and the unfolding of critical plot points.

The dreadful sounds of gun violence are prominent throughout the narrative, each instance weaving a tapestry of brutality and escalating tension. Gunshots ring out in brutal finality as Nazareth ruthlessly murders landlords' lawyers attempting to serve papers on Lucky, capturing the attention of Detective Blakkie Swart. More sounds of guns being cocked, and magazines loaded accompany scenes Lucky and Zakes familiarize themselves with firearms. This initiation into the world of weaponry marks a crucial juncture, as they receive their first order for a pickup truck, setting the stage for a series of violent encounters and gunshots therefore cocking guns become a recurring

© University of Venda

motif, symbolizing the imminent threat of danger. As Lucky and his team take over a building, the police arrive, and the ominous sound of guns being cocked reverberates, signaling a standoff and in a moment of surrender, Lucky finds himself at the mercy of law enforcement, hands in the air as the tension builds with the anticipation of gunfire.

Gun cocking becomes a foreboding sound in *Jerusalema* as a policeman readies his weapon during a high-speed chase on the highway and into the township. This act reinforces the notion of a trigger-happy police force, a theme alluded to by Lucky in his narration. The distinct sound of the gun being cocked signifies a readiness to use lethal force, even in situations where there is no immediate threat to life. Notably, he does this as the chase enters the dusty streets of the sprawling township.

Gunfire sounds punctuate a pivotal scene where a car speeds by, raining, bullets which leave Zakes lying dead a pool of blood. This tragic event becomes a turning point for Lucky, pushing him towards a path where violence and gunfire become integral elements of his criminal pursuits. The attack on Ngu's club is marked by a trail of bodies, and Lucky finally confronts Ngu through a hail of bullets, a stark manifestation of the genre’s aural leitmotifs of violence and its consequences. This is reflected in the first sequence of Katutura where Pele is shot dead. The sound of gunfire is accompanied by the image of Pele’s body. Springing and full of life as the film opens, Pele walks through the streets of Windhoek listening to music. When he gets to the car, he is ambushed and shot dead. The gunfire sounds therefore becomes an important point source motif in drawing out the story pattern, which also reflects in the gunshot that kills Makanaki in *Òlòtūré* creating a turning point in the developing story.

© University of Venda

In a later scene, gunshots echo through the streets of the slum as assailants hunt down Lucky, who escapes from a taxi van. This incident becomes a tipping point for Lucky, revealing the inherent dangers of the taxi business and thus beckoning the “less risky” building hijacking business. Fierce gunfire, breaking glass, and police sirens shatter the air as security forces engage Nazareth's gang in a chaotic battle. Lucky and Zakes find refuge in a shop, their survival uncertain as gunshots intensify. Lucky sustains an injury to his leg, underscoring the price of the violent world he inhabits. The soundscape of violence continues in he ensuing gunfire during the cash-in-transit heist marking a significant moment, as Nazareth and his gang wreak havoc, leaving chaos in their wake. The detonation of a grenade during a bank robbery adds explosive intensity to the soundscape, stunning both the characters and the unsuspecting public.

In some of the selected films, gunfire takes place sparingly, and only in the high-octane scenes involving violent actions. *Bodaboda thieves, Noem My Skollie, Uradi,* and *Òlòtūré* see out their narrations without the roaring of gun sounds. The injurious crimes are perpetuated using knives, machetes, and physical combat. Even though gun sounds constitute the punctual ambience in their cinematic expression the other films including *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema, King of Boys, Katutura* and *Viva Riva* do not exaggerate access to illegal firearms. This infers that realistic depiction of the gun violence would be on the minimal.

African crime films are also characterized by sounds of physical violence. For instance, slapping sounds punctuate the interrogation scene, revealing a pretentious contempt as Blakkie Swat's assistant repeatedly assaults Lucky. This use of sound not only

© University of Venda

reinforces the power dynamic but also serves as an allegory on the racial complexities at play. Detective Modisane in this case propagates black-to-black violence for the amusement of the white man, whose violence would be regarded as racially motivated and politically incorrect in line with apartheid traumas. In another case of sounds of physical violence blows and kicks resonate in a violent encounter outside a beer shop, depicting the ruthless assault on Lucky by his assailants. The grim reality of Lucky's world is further underscored as he is shoved onto the floor of a taxi, battered and bruised as the attackers drive into the township.

In the complex matrix of crime and violence depicted in the film, each sound serves as a warp and weft, weaving together a complex visceral tapestry of a world inundated in peril, where the reverberation of gun and physical violence echoe long after the triggers and punches are pulled.

3.3.2 The soundscapes of the African Locales

The incorporation of ambient sounds and sound effects in the African Crime film serves as a pivotal element in conveying narrative depth and emotional resonance. In the context of the presented scenes, various auditory elements are employed to enhance the cinematic experience.

In *Jerusalema,* the wailing sirens of police cars reverberate throughout the taxi ranks and the Hillbrow neighbourhood, and during a high-speed chase on the highway. The piercing siren sounds form a backdrop of adrenaline a sense of urgency and tension.

© University of Venda

Emanating from police cars and ambulances, the sounds signal crime fighting or a fight for life which is a reality in the African spaces.

The thudding sound of soil hitting the casket resonates during Josh's burial, symbolizing the finality and mundane nature of a life lived in the fast lane. This sombre auditory cue also alludes to the equalizing force of humanity, transcending racial boundaries, as a white individual becomes entwined in a broader struggle.

The authoritative sound of a gavel echoes in the courtroom in *Jerusalema* and *Noem My Skollie* as Lucky, AB, Gimba, Gif, and Shorty face legal proceedings, marking the involvement of the criminal justice system in the intricate web of crime. The gavels effeteness is reflected in acquittals and firmness reigns in convictions. The sounds stand as a stoic arbiter within the crime matrix an essential component in the pursuit of justice.

Clinking chains and metallic sounds accompany Lucky's takeover of a new building in the city. The auditory landscape transitions through clicking chains, squealing doors, footsteps, crashing sounds, walla, sirens, and breaking glass as robbers ransack a shop and load their loot into awaiting vans. This symphony of sounds encapsulates the orchestrated chaos of criminal activities.

Dogs barking and growling accompany Lucky and Zakes as they visit Mr. Santos Ribeiros' home, emphasizing the tension and resistance surrounding discussions about the Danvista mansions and Hillbrow Trust. The aggressive presence of watchdogs serves as a metaphor for levels of security and protection that the affected

© University of Venda

have provided themselves against the constant looming threat of crime. An instinctive animal dog identifies Lucky and Zakes not only as strangers but a threat to Mr. Ribeiro, which proves itself over time, through the building hijacking.

The ghetto ambience, featuring a cacophony of sounds such as walla, children crying, shouting, sirens, and roadway sounds, accompanies a montage of Lucky and Zakes arriving at their Hillbrow residence. These sounds provide an aural picture of Hillbrow as a residential area within a busy commercial district.

Car sounds including screeches, skidding, hooting, taxi rank ambience, revving engines and crashing noises heighten the intensity of scenes involving the taxi ranks, traffic, car hijacking, drifting and cash in transit heist in various scenes. These sounds serve as a reflection of a bustling megacity characterized by heavy traffic and highway chases a disposition of the crime films reflected in *Jerusalema, Bodaboda Thieves, Uradi, Click Click Bang, Katutura* and *King of Boys.*

3.3.3 Musical Iconography in African Crime Films

This section analyses the film music in the sampled African crime films. To achieve this, the discussions revolve around musical text as codes of historical and cultural specificities and musical forms and genres deployed in the film genre.

3.3.3.1 Musical Text as Codes of Historical and Cultural Specificities

Among the roles assigned to music in film include poetic and social, cultural signification Kimani (2022). To realize these functions, music analysis in film centres,

© University of Venda

its gaze on the generic and textual components which relay verbal idiomatic nuances that unroll the messages in the songs and the cultural connections inferred by the deployed music. Mbugua (2019) finds a sociocultural connection in the music deployed in Gikuyu comedies and further identify a linked between its cultural code and the generic inkling of the films offering that some of the sounds and musical tracks including sounds of animals are deployed for comic effect and humoristic purposes. Musical lyrics and generification. Kimani (2022, 143), in his explication of *Killer Necklace* cites *Mombire Ngai Cia Mihianano* elaborate thus;

> The music, therefore, takes the characteristic of a storyteller in the film's turning point, when Mbugua the forthright fellow, cognizant of the fruits of crime, downs all guilt and personal conviction and takes Jonah's offer only to impress a girl.

Kimani's argument apportions music the roles of reflecting, explaining, and predicting a character's arc and the story's development. His analysis of the lyrics is not only literal. but also based on the heuristic cross-analysis of the biblical context of the hymn which he uses to interpret the filmmaker's semiotic intention and the inherent concept that the film builds for itself. This train of thought is what this chapter employs to review music, lyrics, music genres and social-cultural context of the music as generic idiosyncrasies of the African crime film. Lucid examples used in Jerusalem include, Vulindlela by Brenda Fassie. The lyrics proceed thus;

LYRICS	**TRANSLATION**
Vulindlela we Mamgobhozi	*Open the path/ way, Magobozi*[8]

[8] Mamgobhozi is the name of a person

© University of Venda

Hhe unyana wami helele Uyashada namhlanje	*Hhe my son helele*[9] *Is getting married today*
Vulindlela wena Manyawuza Sukuba nomona unyana wami uthathile	*Open the path/ way, you Manyawuza*[10] *Stop being jealous my son has taken a wife*
Bengingazi ngiyombona umakoti	I never knew I was going to see my daughter in law
Unyana wami he ujongile MaRadebe susa ezo spex Uze emshadweni Ngiyashadisa namhlanje Bebesithi unyana wami lixhoki Bebesithi angeke ashade	*However, my son was looking* *MaRadebe*[11] *take out those spectacles* *Come to the wedding* *There is a wedding today* *They were saying my son is a liar* *They were saying He would never get married*
Kodwa wena Mangobese Hee unomona ngoba awuna nyana	*But you Mangobese*[12] *Hee you are jealous because you don't have a son*
Unentombi zondwa Ayoyoyo Mangobese Hee unomona hee awunabo nana	*You have daughters only* *Ayoyoyo Mangobese*[13] *Hee you are jealous because you have no son*
Bengingazi ngiyombona umakoti	*I never knew that I will see my daughter in law*
Unyana wami he ujongile MaRadebe susa ezo spex Uze emshadweni Ngiyashadisa namhlanje Bebesithi unyana wami lixhoki Bebesithi angeke ashade	*However my son was looking* *Maradebe take out those spectacles* *And come to the wedding* *There is a wedding today* *They were saying my son is a liar* *They were saying he will never get married*

[9] hhe and helele are exclamations

[10] Manyawuza is the name of a person

[11] MaRadebe is the name of a person

[12] Mangobese is the name of a person

[13] ayoyoyo is an exclamation

© University of Venda

Vulindlela is deployed non-diegetically as Lucky and Zakes conduct a smooth carjacking of the Mercedes Benz. *Vulindlela* (make way) is a wedding song sung by a groom's mother to celebrate her son's new marriage (Moloi 2023 personal communication). The song translates to a proud parent speaking about her pride for her son, who has achieved several things, including marriage. *Vulindlela* by Brenda Fassie is used in a montage of robberies by Lucky and Zakes. The scenes show their brazen robbery instincts as they hijack cars and carelessly, tot semi-automatic rifles, and drive expertly in their getaway, a major shift from their naïve and armature days. The montage also includes Lucky sleeping with Nomsa for the first time on screen, a far cry from the innocent pecks and kisses in the school corridors, sometimes rudely interrupted by Nomsa's brother.

The song also plays along a series of scenes showing Lucky and Zakes going back home bearing gifts for the family including food, school supplies, clothes, shoes and snacks for the children. With each of these instances, Lucky's mother looks on stoically betraying some suspicion and worry but remains mum and watches as the children delight in the newly found windfall for the family. As the windfall persists, Lucky buys furniture for the house and entertainment devices like a Hi-fi and Television set, yanking the family from the lack of basics and launching them into a place of global dreaming, interacting with strange characters from far-flung foreign lands in Television programs and movies. The television inspires their next chutzpah-laden robbery of a cash-in-transit truck, with the technique albeit rudimentarily deployed is borrowed from a movie. The boys become popular figures in the township as they splash cash to

© University of Venda

revelers swigging beers and participating in dust-raising car drifting sports showcasing their newly found prowess in driving amid deafening cheers.

Vulindlela Adduces, the allegory of a wedding. Weddings and marriage by extension. Is a sign of success and growth of a family in the African context. When a son gets a wife, a fulfilment of a rite of passage, it is a reason to celebrate (Kenyatta, 1978). Marriage, therefore, is considered an advancement in the value of a son who therebefore had not gained the wherewithal and authority. The son is bestowed authority by society by getting married, indicating his growth and intention to contribute to the continuity of the family and clan. This inspires the elaborate and spirited celebrations of weddings that include fanfare, like, the slaughtering of cows, goats, sheep and inter alia eating, beer drinking, singing, dancing, dressing, and performing rituals. The deployment of *Vulindlela* in the context of Lucky's deep dive into crime brackets likens a move into crime to solemn matrimony. *Vulindlela* therefore serves as an important socio-cultural lighthouse in Jerusalema, grounding the film in African Culture as well as expressing it in isiXhosa a South African language.

Viva Riva delves into this concept of social culture using music questioning the issue of morality and debauchery the characters engage in, *Viva Riva* deploys *Mario* by Franco Luambo Luanzo Makiadi. The lyrics proceed thus,

Lyrics	**Translation**
Oh mario	Oh Mario
Luka ata mwasi yo moko obala	Oh Mario, look for one woman to marry
Mario mosala kolinga ba mama mobokoli-	You tend to go after older women
Basuka yo te?	Will you ever get enough of them?

© University of Venda

Lelo makambo lobi makambo nalembi-	Today problems, tomorrow problems I'm tired
Lelo bitumba lobi koswana nabaye	Today fighting, tomorrow quarrelling, I hate it
Naboyi kobebisa nzoto na manzaka nalembi eh	I don't want you destroying my body with your nails anymore
Mario nalembi e e	Mario I am tired
Mario nabaye e e	Mario, I don't like it
Naboyi kobebisa nzoto na manzaka nalembi eh	I don't want you destroying my body with your nails anymore
Mario nalembi e e	Mario I am tired
Mario nabaye e e	Mario, I don't like it

Mario a popular song by Franco, a social commentator of repute is a critical assessment of the moral decadence observed by the persona embodied by Franco vocally Mario a highly learned individual[14] is an irresponsible gigolo engaged in the dangerous business of courting older, financially endowed women. The persona expresses displeasure and fatigue with Mario's behaviour and warns him of consequences including the risk of malaise like HIV AIDS[15] . The discourse in Mario marries with the narrative in Viva Riva, providing poetic commentary on the bawdy characters exhibited by Riva, JM, Azor and other revelers. The music is deployed in the transition from the flirtatious scene between Riva and Nora to Mere Edo's brothel. Its location serves as a reflective and clairvoyant voice of reason for the amoral *Sapeurs* and *Kinois* by extension characterised in the film.

[14] cited as having five academic degrees.

[15] Franco extensively covered the issue of AIDS in his song *Attention Na SIDA*.

© University of Venda

The critical tone is the song provides a window through which Riva's major flaw - a taste for decadence - is brought to the fore and canvassed as a setup for his eventual downfall. This depiction is a further microcosmic aphorism for the decadence and consequent prevalence and rapid spread of sexually transmitted ailments, including HIV and AIDS, a worrying trend in the public health sector. Like the other musical tracks discussed in this section, Mario is an important revealing feature of African crime films on their deployment of music, which as data reveals, serves as a poetic narrator, and thematic commentator on socio-cultural issues endemic in the depicted diegetic and non-diegetic.

The socio-cultural and political landscape of Africa is further painted by several musical pieces that oscillate on the ***Jerusalema*** title. A title eponymous to the film title *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema,* the word in the collective consciousness of South Africa translates to **Jerusalem** a reference to the Biblical city of Jerusalem, a ubiquitous citation used by the various Christian denominations. Moloi (2023, personal communication) emphasises that the Jerusalema concept is sourced from a religious perspective of the Biblical Jerusalem. The marked interest and reference to Jerusalem is synonymous with Zion an emblem of a paradise or a utopia that the Christians hope to transit to. It would, however, be simplistic to conclude that the lucid pronouncement of the Jerusalema imaginary within the collective South African consciousness is stuck within the definitive parameters of Christianity and encapsulated in the boundaries of the heavenly hope, a fundamental creed among Christians.

© University of Venda

As the ***Jerusalema*** idea diffuses and permeates among South Africans, in turn radiating to the outside world, the concept gains a socio-economic and political connotation akin to the significance of the negro-spirituals to the issues of slavery(Omo-Osagie, 2007). Jerusalema is also emblematic of South Africa and Africa (Moloi, 2023, Personal Communication). A desirous country and continent for a people who have suffered atrocities and had to inculcate a utopian imaginary in their collective consciousness to foment hope for a future characterised by a prosperous, just, and unified society(Tracey, 1954). The Jerusalema concept is wielded in the film *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema* by musical texts including *Jerusalema* by Mandoza et al a Kwaito rendition, *eJerusalema* by a traditional/cathedral rendition by Lusanda Spiritual Group, an acapella rendition sung by the Church women that visit Lucky's mother in the hospital when she falls sick, the school children rendition and *Imfudumalo Yakho* by Alan Lazar. The Mandoza et al, Lusanda and acapella versions have different melodic themes but share the textual main refrain and vary slightly in the verses. Their chorus text is thus,

LYRICS	TRANSLATION
Ngiyakulangazelela ukufika kuwena umuzi omusha *Jerusalema umuzi okhanyayo*	I long to get to you, new city Jerusalem, the brightest city
Jerusalema, Jerusalema, Jerusalema *Izwe lesithembiso* *Umuzi okhanyayo*	Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem The promised land The brightest city

The rendition by the school children is a short chorus that adds some lines to the main refrain. It goes thus,

© University of Venda

LYRICS	TRANSLATION
Jerusalem ena e motsha	New Jerusalem
O ahile mo tabeng	You are built on top of the mountain
Jerusalem	Jerusalem
O motle jwang	How beautiful you are
O wa kganya	How bright you are_
O ahile mo tabeng	You are built on top of the mountain
Jerusalem	Jerusalem

The description of Jerusalem in the foregoing renditions includes desirable and utopian figurations of beauty, brightness, the promised land, and the city on the mountain. The descriptions besides the religious denotation they wield, bring to the fold a concept of the city or the urban imaginary, as a site of beauty, success, freedom, and elevation. The *Jerusalema* traditional acapella plays in the scene where Lucky goes to see his mother in the hospital and quiet prayerful moments are shared. Lucky then goes home empty-handed, to an empty fridge and shares the meagre meal with the children. He tucks them to bed in loving moments. The music marks a major transition, with the music fading into a scene of Lucky working in a fuel station, determined to leave crime and be a law-abiding citizen and worker. During his shift Nazareth and his henchman arrive at the filling station and try to convince him to rejoin crime. He promises to do one last job for them. The connotation of “Jerusalem” in this sequence takes the manifestation of the desired life of honest livelihood for Lucky and his family.

Petrified by the realization of the destruction that way lays him within the labyrinth of criminal life, Lucky aspires for a decent living sourced from legitimate and lawful means, however difficult it may be. The acapella rendition recurs in another scene,

© University of Venda

sung by churchgoers, Lucky's mother among them in the township veld. A limping Lucky and Zakes approach the congregation prompting Lucky's mother to meet them. Lucky announces to his mother that they are leaving the township. His mother admonishes him about his actions and reminds him of the consequences of crime before tearfully embracing him in farewell. Lucky hopes for a new beginning, a safe, lawful, successful relaunch of his adult life and this he sees away from the danger of the gun-toting policemen baying for his blood, and the limited chances of success in the township. The two young South Africans drawn into crime by the struggles and violent influences of the township personified by Nazareth, seek to build new foundations and opportunities in the city, the dreamy, picturesque land of skyscrapers whose silhouette shimmers under the glimmer of sunset.

Jerusalema by Mandoza plays during the sequence where Lucky and Hillbrow Trust henchmen led by Zakes and Nazareth prowl the streets taking over buildings in Hillbrow, displacing some people and subduing others as they forcefully enter the buildings, evicting the unwanted tenants who include prostitutes, drug dealers and rent defaulters. The ***Jerusalema*** concept translated as 'New Jerusalem' and the 'Bright City' tallies with the hostile takeover of buildings by Lucky that represents a new dawn for residents, which Mututa (2020) canonizes as gentrification and customization of Johannesburg from a symbol of "exclusion" to a habitable site of freedom. This aggressive transformation seeks to reconstitute a living space and experience for the black South African from the Apartheid state of the "White Johannesburg", to a "utopian" black neighbourhood in the dreamy city of Johannesburg.

© University of Venda

The Christian song creates a dilemma between the celebration of the new lease of life from colonial oppression to a liberated space, and the brazen crime being committed by Lucky on innocent taxpayers like Santos Ribeiro the owner of Danvista mansions. The attendant creed of “Affirmative repossession” perpetuated by Lucky foments a metaphoric semblance to the “expropriation of land without compensation” rallying call touted by Julius Malema and his EFF party, as a way to pay reparations to the black South Africans that were excluded from the economic matrix by the oppressive apartheid regime (Mubecua and Mlambo, 2021). The Christian ideal of Jerusalem as per the deployment of the music hence gains political and socio-economic dimensions growing into an activism to awaken the national consciousness and psyche to the possibilities of a ‘Jerusalemaesque’ country and continent.

Imfudumalo Yakho lyrics take a different path from the other ubiquitous chorus, to characterize ***Jerusalema*** in a variety of personifications that further anchor the religio-political connotation. The song proceeds thus;

LYRICS	**TRANSLATION**
Imfudumalo yankho	Your warmth
Ithumela imiyalezo yeqiniso	Sends messages of truth
Uma ngicabanga ngawe ngiyaphumula	When I think of you, I rest
Uyohlala ukhululekile	You will forever be free
Jerusalema siyazithoba	Jerusalema we humble ourselves
Khula njalo udlondlobale	Grow and thrive
Uyibekile induku ebandla	You have accomplished
Halala siyakudumisa	Salute, we honour you
Jerusalema entsha	New Jerusalem
Unjengomtwana odinga uthando	You are like a child who longs for love
Ukunakekela kwakho kujabulisa abantwana bakho	Your caring brings joy to your children

© University of Venda

Ziqhenye ukhule njalo	Be proud and always grow
Khumbula abantwana bakho Ngobubele nagothando	Remember your children with empathy and love
Jerusalema	Jerusalem
Izidubedube nezihibe	Chaos and riots
zingaphazamisi imphumelelo yokho	should not obstruct your success
Ziphamandla ungesabi	Give yourself power and don't be afraid
Nqoba njalo Jerusalema	Be victorious always Jerusalem
Kancane kancane kuzolunga	Bit by bit everything will be fine
Ngoba uheha izizwe ngezizwe	Because you attract nations and tribes
Umhlaba wonke uyahlokoma	The whole world is rejoicing
Uyanakekela unozwelo	You are caring and sympathetic

The foregoing lyrics poetically delve into several issues. The first is the personification of ***Jerusalema*** as a mother of many children encumbered by treacherous situations but seeking renewal. The persona in the song expresses his feelings of warmth unveiled by the truthfulness, freedom, growth, and accomplishments of ***Jerusalema***. The persona likens Mother Jerusalem to a child in need of love, encouraging her to stay focused and not to get distracted by the chaos and riots, to stay courageous and continue enjoying victories. The persona in addition insists that Jerusalem is an attraction to nations and a joy to the world. The *Imfudumalo Yakho* lyrics in many ways mirror the metaphor of Africa an idea advanced by Dlamini (2023, Personal communication), who characterizes ***Jerusalema*** as a metaphor of Mother Africa an idea contended by Moloi (2023, personal communication).

The *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema* microcosm specifically addresses the history and the situations of Africa as a continent. Africa has witnessed traumatic and debilitating events occasioned by her children and neighbours. The trauma of the enslavement of her children, the partition and colonization of Her land, ravaging wars,

© University of Venda

and natural disasters that have scarred her landscape, in addition to irresponsible leadership that has left her limping behind all her peers economically and politically. This reinforces the idea of ***Jerusalema*** or Mama Africa as a child that needs love, and reveals that it is the responsibility of her children that she nurtures to love her and take care of her.

During the post-COVID-19 epoch, debates abound on the performance of various countries and jurisdictions within the African continent, from the North to the West, the East, Central and Southern regions. African countries have been experiencing various crippling challenges and breakdown of order within the various facets of the society, specifically within the economic sphere. Countries like Ghana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe among others, have been experiencing extreme debt distress, cash crunches and strangling of their economies leading to the auctioning of their critical national assets as they try to rise from the mountain of debt and external economic shocks (Moyo, 2020; Brautigam, 2022; Abotebuno, 2023).

In another sphere countries like Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Burundi, Angola, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, have in the recent past seen an upsurge in military and civil conflict that has led to deposing of democratically elected leaders, death, and displacement of scores of her population (Taruvinga, 2023). As the Africa rising creed championed largely by the outsiders tries to catch traction within Africa, the internal suspicions, conflicts, metastatic blunders in economic relations and effects of climate change take root in a continent that contributes the least carbon emissions spreading their fibrous roots deep into the African mass. As the

© University of Venda

persona raises the issue of loving mother Africa, the reality portends the opposite. Guided by the parochialism of territorial borders, African countries have enhanced the artificial barriers, hampering the chances of growing trade, education, industrialisation and finance. This has attracted a horde of nations from other continents to enter African countries and exploit their resources, carting them away to their capitals leaving gaping dereliction of the environment, cultures, politics, and economies. After gaining independence the Ghanaian first president Kwame Nkrumah attempted the unity of African nations which to date remains a distant dream as Africans trade with each other using a currency foreign to the continent (Kah, 2012; Corrales *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, drawing from the foregoing, the **Jerusalema** metaphor of Africa reveals the deeply ingrained retelling of the African story through music in the film, thereby cementing this didactic strategy as an important generic iconography of the African crime film. The narration of the African situation in the film music of African film music is also evident in the music deployed in *Viva Riva*.

At the tail end of *Viva Riva*, as the smoke of death and destruction billows, spelling a fatal end to the colossi of Kinshasa including Azor, Riva, the Commander, and the Angolan thugs led by César, *Lé Bucheron* a mellow song with cutting lyrics by Franklin Boukaka fades in and grows to a crescendo as the credits roll. *Lé Bucheron,* translating to The Lumberjack is a song whose history marries very well with its messaging and the context of its deployment within the *Viva Riva* narrative. Franklin Boukaka was a Congolese musician and political activist who never shied away from social commentary, engaging in hardnosed critique of the political class in Congo and Africa

© University of Venda

at large (Stewart, 2000). His eponymous album *Lé Bucheron* arranged by Manu Dibango was largely characterized by the spirit of critique, positive and negative about leaders, regimes, and governance in Africa. Stewart (2000, 163) who dedicates his seminal work to a select list of *Lés Immorteles (The Immortals)* including Franco, Docteur Nico, Vicky Longomba, Franklin Boukaka inter alia, describes Boukaka and his work thus,

> Nowhere in central Africa did music and ideology combine more forcefully than *in* the works of Brazzaville's Franklin Boukaka… a can-do spirit and a breadth of vision to go along with his exceptional musical talent.

Lés Immorteles was a song in the album that was framed as an ode of praise to African independence and post-independence heroes. *Lé Bucheron* on the other hand is a lamentation and a loud expression of wonder. "Oh Africa! Where is your freedom?" Where is your independence?". The *Lé Bucheron* lyrics proceed thus;

LYRICS	TRANSLATION
Ahe Africa	Oh Africa
Eh Africa	Oh Africa
O Lipanda	Where is your independence?
Ahe Africa	Oh Africa
Eh Africa	Oh Africa
O Liberté	Where is your freedom?
Kokata koni pasi	Cutting firewood is hard work
Soki na kati koteka pasi	To sell this wood is another
Na pasi oyo ya boye	With this lot of misfortunes
Ngai na bana mawa, Nakoka te	and children I'm far from getting out
Basusu oyo naponaka	Some to whom I gave my voice
Bawela bokonnzi	Have developed the greed of
Pe na ba-voitures	power and fortune

© University of Venda

Bavoti tango ekomaka *Ngai nakomi moto* *Pona bango*	When the elections arrive I become important then in front of them
Nakomi tuna:Mondele akende *Lipanda tozuwaka o ya nani e?* *Africa e*	I wonder: has the colonizer gone, For whom did we obtain independence? Oh Africa!

The persona in the *Lé Bucheron* lyrics decries the status quo in post-independence Africa, from the perspective of a lumberjack, an ordinary-folk job in the Congolese context. The lumberjack cites the difficulty of his job of harvesting timber, and the attendant strain of engaging in gainful commerce in selling the wood, the result of which is the suffering of his/her children and the bleakness of their future. The lumberjack wonders who was the independence for, as the colonizer still lurks omnipresently, in the form of the post-independence leaders who have invested in furthering their selfish greed, amassing fortunes, and pilfering public resources. The lumberjack points out that they see him/her as important when there is an election, and his vote is needed in the democratic process.

The lilting voice of Boukaka embodies a persona akin to the everyday continental African, engrossed in their daily struggles to make ends meet and make a life for themselves and family, a situation contrasted by politicians charged with the responsibility to shepherd the country and act as trusted custodians of the national cake, turning out to be the anathema of progress. Instead of offering leadership, those charged with responsibility wield the force of their offices to allocate themselves public resources and auction essential services to the highest bidder in cases of brazen graft.

© University of Venda

The army commander, and immigration commissioner in *Viva Riva* are members of the elite leadership of the country trusted to protect the Congolese resources and people by providing a buffer zone at the borders and enforcing the border point incomes. The highway patrol police in *Uradi*, the municipal officers in *Jerusalema*, the traffic police officers in *Bodaboda Thieves,* the immigration officers at the border in *Òlòtūré*,' the named politicians, sports managers and police officers in *Click Click Bang* betray their course of leadership and engage in actions towards self-gain and preservation. They engage in corruption, receiving bribes from illegal immigrants, racketeering, committing, and abetting murders, and sharing of important government information which delivers their compatriots to the lurking dangers of poverty, disease, and death besides edifying their vulnerability to crime and criminals. It is such issues and calibres of people that spark the ire and frustration of the persona in *Lé Bucheron.*

Just like the persona in *Lé Bucheron,* Boukaka the composer and singer expressed his frustrations with the Congolese governments, across the Congo River and decried their inability to shun vices in public sector governance and unite in building a bridge across their adjacent cities of Kinshasa and Brazzaville (White, 2008). His zeal drove him to join the armed struggle against dictatorship and misgovernance, which led to his execution (Stewart, 2000). *Lé Bucheron* in *Viva Riva* relives and rekindles his spirit of critique revealing an important feature of the African crime film – notoriety of political rhetoric – a revelation lucidly present in *Jerusalema's imfudumalo Yakho* and imported to Òlòtūré by *E no Finish,* a musical track by Falorin Folana alias Falz a socially conscious artist, activist and active citizen of Nigeria. The lyrics go thus,

© University of Venda

LYRICS

Corruption and indiscipline
With no regard for the life of a citizen
Mtchew so sickening
I hope you greedy motherfuckers is listening
Ahn shey you dey see the insecurity
Still no regard for the life of a citizen
Ahn it's so sickening
I hope you choke on your dinner this evening
You carry million Dollar keep put for house
When many brother never see food to chop
And many sister come dey prostitute around
Just to make sure they keep something in account
This no be club song I no come to shout
Na real strong matter I wan talk about
I see many thief now dem don dey renounce oo
I wake up from sleep I put song for mouth

Chorus

Baba Fela talk am
But e no finish e no finish e no finish oh oh
When e go finish
Say baba Fela talk am
But e no finish e no finish e no finish oh oh
My brother when e go finish.

Verse 2

Unemployment and nepotism
Ori mi gbono ema do mi si[16]
Ejo e je kin soro ton[17]
Sho li gba ti gbo gbo le gba jo ni si[18]
I no know how long we go dey recession
My cousin tell me university no dey in session
Say get to the house and nothing to chow
Many don kpai go many dey depression
Somebody tell baba Fela say e too talk truth
Say the government still dey shoot on youth
Animal dem still dey put on suit and agbada
Our leader dem still confuse

---

[16] Translates to "My head is very tight."

[17] Translates to "A hundred tons at the edge."

[18] Translates to "If you hear it, you can hear it."

© University of Venda

Nothing wey dem talk dem never talk before
Political robbers all of them be fraud
Big thief talk my people je applaud
Wey dey still dey cause sorrow tears and blood

Verse 3

In Nigeria of today
The irony is there is the people are not conscious
Cost of living is
Nigeria is even recently now like
Where the poorest people are in the world
Sometimes I look and say Fela where you dey oo
Come and see oh

E no Finish is deployed in the club scene at the beginning of the film, as the twilight girls, including Ehi, prowl the redlight district, marking their territories and enticing men thronging the nightclub. Falz and the filmmaker by extension, through the song, articulate many issues and critiques of leadership. Considered an artivist in Nigeria, Falz through his musical album *The Moral Instruction*[19] covers a myriad of current issues while paying tribute to Fela Kuti a foremost Afrobeat musician and political activist who ruffled many a feather in the socio-political cosmos of Nigeria. *E no Finish Like* Chinua Achebe's "angry book"[20] *The Trouble with Nigeria* Falz engages in an open discourse about what is wrong with society. The persona in the song specifically, points out issues of corruption, greed, and inequality. In a further expression of his chagrin about the prevailing situations in Nigerian society, the persona in *E No Finish* Juxtaposes the contrasting conditions of the haves and the have-nots. This Marxist debate provides a contrapuntal platform upon which the rich and greedy swim in

[19] https://open.spotify.com/album/2HKHwN8qqF3G5Rs6VRALHs?autoplay=true

[20] He calls it so in "Africa's tarnished Name" his 2009 publication.

© University of Venda

millions as others prostitute themselves just to fend for a meal. Some stash millions of dollars in their houses, while others have no idea where to get their next meal!

The persona in *E No Finish* continues relating the idea of a gullible proletariat who keeps applauding the greedy political elite that continue to ravage the public coffers to enrich themselves. In palpable ire, the persona decries the high cost of living in Nigeria and the fact that a large population doesn't seem to realise the effects of pawning their lives by electing the same characters that have wrecked the economy and their social-political fabric. The chorus in the song is very telling as the persona keeps referring to Papa Fela, in reference to Fela Kuti the political activist and father of Afrobeat music in Nigeria[21]. This allusion builds a connotative narrative around the deployment of *E No Finish* in the film and how it relates to what Falz attempts to do, and what Fela did in Nigeria. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the son of activist and foremost African feminist Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, challenged the powers that be, through his music which led to multiple arrests and the destruction of his commune in the *Kalakuta Republic* (Olaniyan, 2004). During the melee that happened on 18th February 1977, the contingent of police and army officers attacked everyone in *Kalakuta*, beat up fella to a pulp and threw his mother from the storey of his house, an incident that resulted in her death in 1978.

By utilising this musical track in his movie Kenneth Gyang, the director not only achieves the feat of locating his film within the Nigerian social culture, but he also

© University of Venda

manages to locate it within the historicity of a country whose story he passionately tells through *Òlòtūré.* Like the song, he uses, his film advances into the realm of hard-nosed critique of Nigeria – and Africa at large - and its systems that have allowed human trafficking and sex trafficking to happen within her borders and corrupt its way outside its borders into other countries within Africa and Europe. Like the Ghana of slavery times, Nigerian borders have become the door of no return for modern times sex slaves who are abducted, coerced, and duped into believing that they can have a new and better life in Europe, only to immigrate and undergo sexual exploitation and other atrocious acts. Interpol records indicate that a majority of girls within the European twilight zones originate from Nigeria (Aluko-Daniels, 2015; Hounmenou, 2019). This transnational crime is carried out, through Benin, Mali, Niger, and Libya where halfway houses are located before the girls are finally smuggled out to Europe (Aluko-Daniels, 2015; Hounmenou, 2019).

In a tale of a similar nature, Tobore Ovuorie, an investigative journalist, was in a legal and online conflict with Mo Abudu the executive producer of *Òlòtūré* claiming that the film's story is based on her personal experiences captured in her article published by the Premium Times[22]. She details the pain she went through as an undercover investigator of the sex trafficking syndicate in Nigeria. Like the character Òlòtūré in the film, Ovuorie suffered under the hands of the sex pests and traffickers undergoing and witnessing despicable acts of sexual assault, violence and ritualistic murders and

[22] The article is published online under the url, https://app.premiumtimesng.com

© University of Venda

torture of girls while being trafficked into other territories for sexual work. Her story like the film and the song by Falz deployed in the film, passionately speaks about the rampant issue not only in Nigeria but across many African countries, including Benin, Congo, Eritrea, and Libya (McAlpine, Hossain and Zimmerman, 2016). In a worrisome record NAPTIP recorded in 2023 that more than 15000 girls and women were stranded in Mali attempting to crossover to Europe (Shemang and Takambou, 2023).

Staggering statistics of sex trafficking and prostitution fueled by Western cultures in search for African exoticism rule the landscapes which Ovuorie (2014) attributes to the unholy collaboration of sex traffickers, organ traffickers and prostitution rings. The mention of politicians by Falz, ropes in characters like Sir Philips and other greedy political merchants shamelessly engaged in the enterprise of sex trafficking and exploitation of young girls for their pleasure. It also implies that many women who are involved in the trafficking business, breaking the code of sisterhood, exposing fellow women to the brash realities, and suffering under the menacing hands of insatiable men. Falz in the song insists that Papa Fela spoke, but he did not finish and that is here to complete the sentence and the paragraph that Fela started on political critique and movement of change through artistic expression. This musical deployment and the narrative built upon it achieves the feat of reflecting the hopeless situation and the artistic megaphone of critique wielded by the characters and the makes of *Òlòtūré,* a narrative view held by the Director (Gyang, 2023, personal communication).

© University of Venda

3.3.3.2 Musical Forms and Genres

Besides the didactic messaging, the music deployed in African crime films espouses characteristics of identity through its generic and stylistic disposition. To achieve this feat, music imports into the films, its particularities and universalities that locate it within specific musical and contemporary cultures. The music in the crime film soundtracks therefore is a window through which soundscapes of African cities, towns, townships, and villages come alive, bringing along the significance of cultural specificity and verisimilitude. Throughout history, people from disparate African nation-states and ethnic nations have created, adapted, augmented, and shared musical cultures and practices that can be translated into musical styles and genres (Agawu, 1992). The sampled African crime films deploy a variety of musical forms, genres, and styles to their soundtracks, to further cement their particularity in this regard. Used in acapella, instrumental, and fused forms as defined by Kimani (2022), the genres range from art music to popular and folk pieces of music.

Among the musical genres deployed in the sampled African crime films are musical styles and genres that are endemic and associated with specific African countries where the sampled films depict. These include music from Namibia, Uganda, Kenya, Congo, South Africa, and Nigeria, which provide a platform for viewing the popular and folk genres in African music. According to the film director, the music of *Katutura* is an apt reflection of the everyday sounds of Katutura township and Windhoek by extension (Schott 2023, personal communication). This assertion is reinforced by (Mukaiwa (2015, p. 4) who elaborates that,

© University of Venda

> Featuring over 21 songs and a cache of specially produced music, 'Katutura' boasts a soundtrack that serves to highlight the love and omnipresence of music in a township whose pulse is set to the crackling of sidewalk radios, cellphones, jukeboxes and shebeens.

The genres in *Katutura* include RnB, hip-hop and Namibian Kwaito deployed through musical tracks such as *Oshiponga* by Gazza deployed when Pele strolls the Windhoek city streets before being brutally gunned down in the opening scene. The musical repertoire manifests endemic Namibian music culture through the inclusion of songs by popular artists like Blossom, Tate Buti, Ethnix, Biblos, Cabo Snoop, Gazza, and Damara Dikding.

The kaleidoscope of musical genres in African crime films also includes dancehall, Lugaflow, and folk music endemic to Uganda with tracks by Peter Miles and *Masengo* a folk guitar style drawn from Hugh Tracey's Collection African sound and Music. Ugandan diverse and culturally rich music encompasses various genres, such as traditional music, Afrobeat, reggae, Dancehall Lugaflow, Kadongo Kamu and gospel, among others. *Bodaboda Thieves,* therefore, in its musical feature centres the story and its interpretation within a disposition that can only be associated with Uganda and the East African soundscape. This soundscape also features a diverse range of Kenyan music deployed in *Uradi* and *Click Click Bang* including Afro soul, and Afro-pop. Among the featured tracks are Cool Down, Uliza Kiatu, Lala Toto, and Star which are reggae and Afro-pop tracks by Hart the Band and Chabari featuring Safe Joe.

Congolese music also features in the African crime films, deployed in Viva Riva. The conngolese musical landscape is characterised by notable genres of music including

© University of Venda

inter alia, *Rhumba, Soukous, Ndombolo, Cavacha; Mutwashi* and modern Congolese Rhumba fusions, hip-hop, reggae and electronic music. The classic Congolese rhumba music including Mario by Franco, Regina by Franco and Le T.P OK Jazz and Congolese dance music and French fusions including music by CongopunQ, Papy Mbavu, Jean Koubald Kalala, Flamme Kapaya among others, colour the manifesting Congolese repertoire capturing the Kinshasa soundscape as well as the popular sounds associated with Congolese musical greats like Franklin Boukaka. This deepens the location of the film within the Congolese locale and its endemic cultures, an important disposition associated with African crime films.

Afrobeat, Highlife, Juju music, Fuji Music and Palm wine are the West African genres manifest in *King of Boys* and *Òlòtūré*. Embodied in musical tracks such as Yabomisa and Mr Judge by Victor Olaiya and Uso Ndu by Celestine Ukwu the highlife genre takes the larger share of the soundtrack in *Òlòtūré*. Palmwine musical tracks that take another large portion of the Òlòtūré music repertoire include Igede by Celestine Ukwu, Ewa, and Lafia We Lawani by Victor Olaiya. Juju music a style of Yoruba popular music is deployed in *Òlòtūré* sampling Osondi Owendi by Chief Osita Odebe in its soundtrack. Afrobeat sounds manifested by songs like Lucy, Waka Dey Go and My Matter by Partyboycc and Hypocrite by Falz featuring Demmie Vee, are also deployed in *Òlòtūré* which further exhibits an African musical culture within the movie soundtrack, a recuring theme in the definition of the Africa crime films.

South African musical cultures, genres and styles feature heavily in *Jerusalema*. Reflecting South Africa's multicultural fabric and history, the effervescent music scene

© University of Venda

is characterised by a gamut of folk and urban genres like, Kwela, Marabi, Mbaqanga, Bubblegum, Afro-pop, Isicathamiya, Maskandi, Kwaito, Amapiano and Gqom. *Jerusalema* advances the cultural reflection by featuring genres such as Kwaito, Bubblegum, Afropop, Isicathamiya, Mbaqanga, and church music widely in the narrative. Mbaqanga and Umqashiyo tracks in the film include Giya by Mzwakhe Mbuli, *Kazet* by Mahlatini and Mahotella Queens, *Take Me Home Taxi Man* by Soul brothers used respectively in the convenience store robbery, gambling in the streets of the township and when Lucky and Zakes operate as Taxi crew. Township jive includes *Uptownship* a song by Hugh Masekela and *Midnight Ska* by Reginald Msami. Disco/ Bubblegum music in *Jerusalema* is captured through tracks such as Nomakanjani and Vulindlela by Brenda Fassie. Other music genres include Africa choral music, Isicathamiya, and sacred music. Kwaito Music, featured through tracks like *Indoda* and *Jerusalema* by Mandoza is a significant genre in South Africa, described by Steingo, (2005) as a feelgood “music associated with the black youth of post-Apartheid South Africa”.

The poignancy of the soundtrack in the films is also bolstered by various folk music tracks deployed in the films including the traditional percussion music that is played in the club during a blackout when Riva first encounters Nora in a club in *Viva Riva*. More African folk sounds are featured through the percussive African talking drums that play during a high-speed chase in *Jerusalema*, the musical chant when Lucky and his gang attack Hillbrow for a cleanup and when Lucky is abducted by the rogue taxi crew. A traditional wind instrument also plays when josh is escaping from the rehabilitation

© University of Venda

centre in *Jerusalema* in addition to the folk and folk inspired music used in the sampled films, including *Wakariru* an arrangement of the eponymous traditional Gikuyu tune in *Uradi.*

Another musical genre significantly explored in African crime films is hip-hop, in its rap styles, fusions and derivatives. Hip-hop style music in Africa has been accorded various definitions including as popular youth music, synonymous with poverty, resistance, and crime in African countries (Mclaren, 1999; Bynoe, 2002; Richardson and Scott, 2002; Perullo, 2005; Tanner, Asbridge and Wortley, 2009; Kimani, 2022) Fused with folk and contemporary African sounds, the hip-hop music deployed in African crime films becomes a potent communicator of the socioeconomic demographics and cultures associated with hip-hop in Africa. For instance, hip-hop music is evident in *Òlòtūré* featuring afrobeat fusions such as *Johnny, E No Finish,* and *Follow Follow,* by Falz. The genre also features prominently in *Uradi* with tracks such as *Embesha, Mi Siogopi*, *Champez* by Khaligraph Jones and *Ogopa* a *Kapuka* version by Boss MOG characterising the repertoire in the film soundtrack. Kwaito is considered a generic relation to hip-hop as evinced by Swartz (2008). This relationship relates to the assertions of hip-hop as a metaphor for crime and resistance since Kwaito is viewed as a township music with similar associations. Indeed, Arthur Mafokate cited in Steingo (2005, p. 339) believes that “people named the music after a group of gangsters, the *AmaKwaitos*.” This assertion further explains the appropriateness of Kwaito as a prominent feature in South African crime films as it imports with it the

© University of Venda

ubiquitous street meaning already assigned to it, a lucid conceptual ideal in African crime films.

The repertoire in the African crime films as demonstrated in the preceding averments, embodies a sample of African music genres and styles, threaded and coloured by the variety of cultures and soundscapes of the countries within the sub-Saharan regions of the continent. The featured music provides an adequate platform to probe the cultural, historical, political, and religious signification of the spaces, the people, the customs, and the histories of Africa in the cinematic rendering, within which the music functions. The music therefore becomes a potent signifier within the filmic matrix, through which the African crime film gains its universalities through world genres and asserts its particularities through local genres.

3.4 Linguistic Dispositions of The African Crime Film

This section investigates the various linguistic aspects of the African crime films. In this vein the nexus between language and identity in the films is established as well as the stylistic aspects of language reviewed.

3.4.1 Language and Politics of Identity in African Crime Films

Language is a significant aesthetic within the audio-visual framework of African crime films. Manifesting stylistically as cinematic dialogue, monologues narration and music lyrics, languages as estimated by Thiong'o (2013); Thiong'o (1986), and Thiong'o (2009) is a potent element of intangible culture that stands as a pillar of identity for a people. Besides the omnipresent dialogue, the selected films also deploy voice-over

© University of Venda

and narration. The narration in *Jerusalema* is in the “voice of god” style, which is supposed to provide an explanatory layer to the story, giving context to actions and joining dots on the story and character arcs that are not present in the visual and diegetic audio expressions. Thiong’o (2009) equates the loss of language (linguicide) and miscegenation of languages (linguifam) to the absolute annihilation of a people’s way of life and the survival of their being as communities and nations. In his explication, Thiong’o (2013) cites African cinema as an art form that he has re-membered African languages in a world where literature has struggled to unshackle itself from the strong grip of colonisers languages like English and French. In this vein therefore he advocates for the publication of literature in African languages, an achievement he observes in African cinema.

African crime films reflect this assertion of multilingualism with their verbal expressions as evidenced in the sampled films. *Jerusalema, King of Boys, Uradi, Òlòtūré*, *Bodaboda Thieves*, *Click Click Bang* and *Noem My Skollie* express their dialogue in a range of indigenous national and slang lexicons that are endemic in the depicted African and rural settings. The use of this language not only locates the films within the portrayed setting but establishes language as one of the markers of the identity of the crime genre films and further deepens the concept of language as a tool of cultural expansion expression and assertion against established linguistic hegemonies assertions acceded to by Barasa (2023, personal communication).

Some of the languages used in the films as previously stated straddle the realm of indigenous ethnic languages that make up the African linguistic tapestry, European

© University of Venda

languages used officially in Africa and slang/creole languages that are used in the mediation of the conflict and confluence of cultural heritages in Africa including the European Arabic and indigenous African, a phenomenon christened the triple heritage by Mazrui (1986). This section examines the place of language choice within the defining frameworks of African crime films. To achieve this the discussions shall be centered around the issues of language as indicators of identity, and style within the linguistic expressions as a defining edict of African articulations evident within the corpus under inquiry.

3.4.1.1 Indigenous Languages and the Question of Ethnicity

The African crime film is deeply African linguistically. This thesis is anchored on the fact that the films aptly and within their breadth use indigenous languages in their dialogues and other vocal expressions. The languages reveal identity, affinity and the location of the film's action and settings. Some of the languages used in the films include Kiswahili, Gikuyu, Luganda, Bini, Yoruba, Zulu, Tswana, Xhosa, Sotho, and Afrikaans. The use of the local indigenous dialects signals a sense of freedom and nuances of defiance to a medium largely expressed in Hollywood languages. Indeed, some of the films under query including *Jerusalema,* were official county submissions to the AMPAS Academy Awards (Oscars) under the foreign language category.

The use of indigenous languages is a peculiar dilemma for African filmmakers. Alluding to the linguistic plurality in *Jerusalema* avers that about 50% of the film was in English and the other 50% in African languages (Ziman, 2010). The African languages Ziman alludes to include the eleven official indigenous languages in South Africa including

© University of Venda

Sepedi, Sesotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans and other more than twenty (20) recognized languages spoken across the country. Originally scripted in English the film script was translated into seven different languages to accommodate the actors and had to engage the services of a linguist, the associate producer Mtutzetu Matscoba. Influenced by the linguistic abilities of the main actor Rapulana Seiphemo, the actors playing his younger version, and his mother had to speak in Tswana despite their comfort in Zulu. The other characters dabbled in other languages making the film a linguistic collage (ibid).

Noem My Skollie on the other hand is largely delivered in Afrikaans. The setting of the film is the Cape Flats in the 1960s and the main characters are the Coloureds. Afrikaans according to Smith (1952) is a transformation of the Netherlandish Dutch to South African Dutch characterized by a blend of Dutch and African indigenous languages spoken by more than 8 million people. The use of the native South African languages in the two films localizes them to the primary spectatorship of indigenous South Africans. Indeed, Ralph Ziman the *Jerusalema* director cited in Stecker (2010) avers on his film's linguistic choices that,

> I wanted the film to be as authentic as possible. I also wanted it to be accessible to an English-speaking audience, but I knew that if we didn't get acceptance from our core audience, we would be dead in the water. For me, any modern film has to be totally authentic. It's absolutely critical. There was a time when you could make a war film where the Germans all spoke English with foreign accents but I don't think that works for a contemporary audience. It can also date a film. I really love the sound and cadence of African languages and I love the way people in South Africa switch seamlessly from one language to the next. It's the way we are and the way we speak, and it adds texture and depth to the dialogue.

© University of Venda

This phenomenon is also evident in the Kenyan films *Uradi* and *Click Click Bang* which use Gikuyu, Kiswahili and English as the main dialogic languages in their expressions. Kiswahili is a widely spoken language in east and central Africa and has begun taking root in southern African countries like Malawi, South Africa, and Zambia (Mazrui and Mazrui, 1993). A blend of Bantu languages and Arabic, Kiswahili traces its beginnings in the East Coast of Africa and its native speakers the Waswahili are still domiciled within the coastal mainland and islands of East Africa including Mombasa, Kilifi, and Lamu in Kenya, Zanzibar, and Pemba in Tanzania. Outside its vernacular disposition, Kiswahili is a common denominator for populations natured and nurtured in many disparate ethnic languages and therefore it forms an important currency of linguistic transaction in trade, education, culture, and human relations across the landscape of East and Central Africa, with a potential to grow further South and West.

The use of Gikuyu and Swahili in the Kenyan crime films resonates with the use of Luganda, Yoruba, and Bini languages in *Bodaboda Thieves, Òlòtūré* and *King of Boys* which are from Uganda and Nigeria. Luganda and Yoruba are widely spoken languages in their respective countries, while Bini is one of the smaller ethnic languages in Nigeria, boasting two million speakers in Edo state. The deployment of indigenous ethnic languages is starkly evident in African crime films spoken fluently by leading characters. This deployment serves an important role of identity assertion and grounding the genre within African settings an important trope in the corpus. This is a counter-hegemonic ideal advanced by the films as they reconfigure the generic film language through linguistic coups.

© University of Venda

Lingala is another important vernacular spoken in African crime films. Featured extensively in *Viva Riva*, in dialogues by the main and supporting characters in the film, Lingala, a Congolese lingua franca with more than 20 million native speakers is a sociolingual compass to Kinshasa the capital of DRC. As a localization feature in *Viva Riva*, the dialogic aesthetic in the film is characterised by expressions in Lingala dialects spoken in Kinshasa. In addition, the language is also featured in the musical lyrics of the songs deployed in the film.

Katutura charts its unique path in this regard, as the only African crime film whose dialogue is rendered fully in English within the selected corpus. Schott (2023 personal communication) associates this with the need for the internationalization of the movie and the expansion of the spectatorship into Anglophone jurisdictions. He however revises his idea in retrospect averring that the film would have sufficed for Namibian spectatorship if it was in Herero or Damara languages the most spoken in Windhoek. Schott's dilemma could find an answer in multi-language dubbing as executed by *Noem My Skollie* which has English and Afrikaans as audio language options, which is a key strategy in achieving **Glocalisation** which is notably an inherent language of indigenous cinemas.

From the foregoing, it is lucidly established that African indigenous languages, official and vernacular are an important trope in the sampled African crime films, a disposition that cements the films within the depicted settings, reveals the socio-cultural identities of the characters and locates the films within the evolving politics of African cultural assertion in the global space.

© University of Venda

3.4.1.2 African Slang and Urban Languages

Slang, creoles, pidgins and urban youth languages are blends or hybridisations of hegemonic European languages and indigenous African languages (Githiora, 2002). African crime films deftly use the slang languages spoken largely by young characters and fluently expressed by older characters. The specific languages deployed in the African crime films include sheng an urban youth language in Kenya, Tsotsitaal, and Isicamtho which are South African urban tongues and Pidgin English a creole spoken in Nigeria and West Africa by extension. The slang and creole languages abovementioned tap their lexicon, accent, vocabulary, and syntax from indigenous African and foreign languages going beyond code-mixing and straddling the realm of neologism and language coinage.

Based on the evolving, temporal, and alienating dispositions, the languages are considered to not only belong to the youth but also serve as lingua for criminals to communicate with an another. Hurst (2018) cites the characterisation of Tsotsitaal as "a highly stylised slang registers of an urban form of [a South African] language". Other studies define it as a pidgin drawn from local South African languages[23], and a language of criminals[24]. The significant fact thereof for example is that Tsotsitaal in provides a sociolingual connotation of a linguistic culture concomitant to South Africa. Nigerian Pidgin English is used in the dialogue and music lyrics used in both *King of*

[23] Molamu (1995) cited in Hurst (2018)

[24] Silva (1996) cited in Hurst (2018)

© University of Venda

Boys and *Òlòtūré*. The language, which is spoken in Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and some other parts of West Africa[25], provides a poignant reference point in the universalities and particularities of African crime film. Born out of simplification of English, a hegemonic language and the nuances of indigenous languages, pidgin English created a common tongue for the more than 200 tribes in Nigeria that speak different languages.

The African slang and youth languages in African crime films offer ample mediation between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic languages providing a non-binary platform upon which the African's story is narrated and African issues negotiated. This middle ground is extolled by Thiong'o (2009) who views the languages as a midpoint solution to the strain of linguicide and linguifam. This study agrees with Thiong'o (2009) and evinces that indeed the slang languages besides situating African youth identities, breathe life into the liminal spaces of cross-cultural hybridity and aid the films to transcend the rigid Manichaeism founded in hegemonic European languages and counter-hegemonic ethnic African languages, which caters for the **glocalisation** aspect of African crime films.

3.4.2 Stylistic Language

The linguistic expression in African crime films constitutes an aesthetic reflective of African orality in linguistic style, within African conversational and storytelling

[25] (*West African Pidgin English*, 1975)

© University of Venda

expressions. In essence, the language expression in African crime films borrows and advances the use of stylistic devices prominent in oral literature in its dialogic elements expressed through voice-over, narration, and character dialogue. Some of the stylistic devices that are notable in the films include the use of figurative language, proverbs, and hyperbole among others. African oral literature is defined by Okpewho (1992) and Finnegan (2012) constitute proverbs, songs, narratives, and riddles among the elements of oral literature. Bukenya et al. (1994) postulate the expression of oral literature as orature which Thiong'o (2009) accedes to. Mbugua (2019) outlines proverbs, figurative language, simile, metaphor, and humour as the constitutive elements of style in the linguistic expression of Gikuyu comedies. In apportioning their value to the whole film story Mbugua (ibid) finds that those elements of style are important materials in the generation of indigenous cultural codes that hold a wealth of information about the identity beliefs, norms, and the customary practices of Agikuyu people. This study argues that the stylistic elements in the language not only express folk cultures but also extend a marker of identity on urban cultures and expressions, providing images through which African people from different countries, cities, villages, and Hamlets can be viewed and understood.

The sampled films execute and reflect this trope of stylistic language through the expressions of the various characters who use metaphors, figurative language, similes, and proverbs to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas to other characters. Some of the instances include,

© University of Venda

Dialogue	Stylistic Devices
Where there is carcass vultures gather	Figurative language
The taproot that stands in the way of an elephant will definitely be crushed.	Figurative language
Why should I be afraid of a lion that is so powerless.	Metaphor
Your boldness is more than that of a dog who has walked into a lion's den	Metaphor
So, because of a cat's absence rats have taken possession of the house.	Figurative language derived from a proverb
That woman is as slippery as an eel	Simile
You have stepped on the tail of a tiger	Metaphor
There is no honour among thieves	Figurative language
A butterfly that challenges a thorn head on, will surely have its wing and beauty torn to shreds.	Proverb
A tree that cannot support us when we rest on it can't kill us if it falls on us	Figurative language
Youll realise that the teeth that a dog uses to play with her puppies are the same teeth she uses to discipline them.	Figurative language/ Metaphor
They say one's child can't be so bad that he is offered to the lion as food. (member)	Figurative language/ Metaphor
To avoid thorns from poking you in the eyes you observe them from a safe distance.	Figurative language/ Metaphor
You all fear a lion that has lost its claws and teeth. (Makanaki)	Figurative language/ Metaphor
The ram that moves backwards has gone to summon more power. (kemi in reference to Eniola)	Figurative language/ Metaphor
The slow crawling of a lion is a lot of fear.	Figurative language/ Metaphor
The locust bean said that it had never felt insulted until it needed Okemesi where it was called a tick.	
Besides, in the outskirts of Soweto there were more white pickup trucks in the streets more than there were white men in Sandton"	Figurative language

© University of Venda

Another stylistic element is the liberal use of strong language and epithets to express threats, anger, disapproval and various emotions. Various characters across the films repeatedly use the word “fuck!” and its derivatives as a curse word. “Makwerekwere”, “Darkie”, “whiteys” are also used in *Jerusalema* in hateful and derogatory ways by different characters. This use of language follows a path trodden by other crime films, to characterise the colourful and lewd linguistic environments that predispose them.

3.5 Chapter Summary

The foregoing discussion encompasses an analysis of audiovisual aesthetics and language use in the African crime films. The findings reveal various dispositions of cinematography including the framing of sexualized and battered black bodies, and landscapes in the depicted settings like cities and slums. The chapter then appraises the soundscapes of African crime films whereby African crime films claim uniqueness in the deployment of sounds of violence and the musical iconography composed of musical text centred on the African social, cultural, political, and economic conditions; and musical genres that are characteristic of the African popular, religious, and cultural scenes. The linguistic element as an aesthetic feature in African crime films is the closing section of the chapter where revelations of the deployment of official, ethnic and slang languages endemic to Africa is noted. In addition, stylistic use of the language is also discussed where use of proverbs, figurative language and the use of epithets is expounded. This chapter provides a continuum for the next chapter that investigates the cusp between themes and the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions in African crime films.

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

4 CHAPTER FOUR:

THE NEXUS BETWEEN THEME AND CONTEXTUAL VERISMS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter's crux is tapped from the third objective of this study, which sought to analyse theme as a source of contextual truths about the portrayed contexts. Messaging and thematic expression lies at the functional cusp of African. Straddling the liminality of entertainment, education historical chronicle, cinema then takes the form of a megaphone of reliving the regressed realities of the depicted spaces and people. Dianga (2013) in her review of Kenyan message films christens this phenomenon as the didacticism. Other studies like Njoroge (2019), and Kimani (2022), advance the centrality of theme as a communicator of reality, ideology, and the African perspective, which grows from seminal discourses including Thiong'o (2009), Diawarra (2001) who extol theme as narrative strategies of realising the decolonisation concept. Ngugi (ibid) specifically describes thematic choice as a place of weakness in African cinema, taking note of the adoption of generic entertaining stories, as opposed to highly nuanced messages that edify the African perspective. Various film studies (Nelmes, 2012b; Petrie and Boggs, 2012; Bordwell, Thompson and Smith, 2020) converge on the definition of theme as the central and peripheral messages that a film tackles. Messaging in cinema is therefore the central concept that this chapter concerns itself with, building a discourse around the thematic rendering in the movies and contextualizing it within the ambient realities of the spaces depicted.

© University of Venda

Africa and Africanness cannot solely draw from a priori dialogues but need to engage deeply in the African existential posteriori. The episteme tapped from the elements of phenomenological and ethnographic studies will go a long way in fostering a lucid understanding of the boundaries of reality within the African knowledgescapes. It is within this context that this chapter draws its raison d'etre, in building a case of the thematic treatment of socio-economic issues encapsulated in the sampled films.

4.2 Parochial nationalism and transnational strife.

African crime films articulate the deeply ingrained nationalistic suspicions that are endemic among African peoples occupying both the systemic and social spheres. The nationalistic psych Borders on ethnocentrism and breeds negative action fomenting violence among residents of an African city coming from disparate nations. To understand the phenomenon of xenophobia and parochial nationalism it is important to establish the phenomenon of intra and trans-African movement of people. It is an established fact that cross-border movement and integration within Africa has been quite challenging throughout post-independence African histories. Hartzenberg (2011) captures this difficult phenomenon while capturing the enduring aspirations of an African economic and political union citing inadequate infrastructure and the lack of goodwill from the peoples across borders contended to by Hanaoka et al. (2019). Adeola (2015) and Arthur, Paalo and Adu-Gyamfi (2022) attribute the difficulty to real and perceived feelings of suspicion and hostility towards foreigners who Mthombeni (2022) insists are skewed towards Africans. Tawodzera and Crush (2023);Crush et al. (2019) and Adeola (2015) enumerate the reasons for cross-border movement and

© University of Venda

settlement among Africans to include trade, tourism, education, intermarriage, refuge from war and seeking career prospects inter alia, which Hartzenberg, p. (2011, p. 2) attributes to the "stepwise integration of goods, labour and capital markets, and eventually monetary and fiscal integration."

Ravaging wars in the Eastern African bloc and the Horn of Africa have led to an influx to countries like South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, hosting refugees from Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Somalia(Véron, 2016; Woldemariam and Young, 2018; Afriyie, Ayangbah and Effah, 2023; Matfess and Lyons, 2023). Uganda leads the way in the number of refugees and asylum seekers that are hosted within her borders, followed by Kenya, which hosts two of the largest refugee camps Dadaab and Kakuma, located in Garissa and Turkana counties in northern Kenya. Besides, Kenya plays host to many visitors within her city, suburbs, villages, and peri-urban areas, co-opting other Africans into her formal and informal workforce (Betts *et al.*, 2023; Tague, 2023).

South Africa, a young democracy and bastion of stability among the large economies of Africa, also hosts one of the largest population of nationals from other African countries within her borders, providing them with education, employment opportunities and a chance for livelihood (Elder, Crush and McDonald, 2003; Isike and Isike, 2012; Biavaschi *et al.*, 2018). This has had the unprecedented consequence of high competition for opportunities, leading to a systemic and social volatility and resistance towards foreigners. Studies including Adeola, (2015); Idemudia, (2017); Thela et al.,(2017); Arthur, Paalo and Adu-Gyamfi, (2022); Mthombeni, (2022); Nesiama and

© University of Venda

Ogunsanwo, (2022) have cited the writ large fact that the violence characterised as xenophobia mainly targets foreigners of African origin and ignores Asians, Europeans and Americans who are largely named as prominent actors in the rampant corruption and state capture, with a significant stranglehold on the South African economy.

African crime films under scrutiny in this study provide a Palantir that reveals these issues in their diegetic narrations. *Jerusalema* represents foreigners from the point of view of the main character, Lucky Kunene. As he seeks to clean up Hillbrow, Lucky has a specific target. He means to get rid of the *Makwerekwere*, led by local drug runner Tony Ngu. Lucky, Views Tony, like other foreigners, as unwelcome agents that threaten the fabric of the order and enterprise that he seeks. Tony, on the other hand, views the native black South Africans as lazy and delusional in their wait for Mandela to deliver the post-apartheid fruits for the nation-state and people. Lucky does not take the view kindly, and this accelerates his resolve to destroy Tony. A characteristically nonviolent character, Lucky commits his first, deliberate, daylight murder against Tony, and although it is in apparent vengeance for the drive-by killing of Zakes, it is a curious choice in the depiction of the character, as it reeks of the original xenophobic attitude earlier displayed. This attitude displays itself poignantly in mundane circumstances when characters apportion the blame to foreigners for absurdly odd crises that are self-inflicted. In one instance, a pastor who plies in Lucky's taxi in Johannesburg manifests the petulance in the xenophobic school of thought in his dialogue with Lucky and Zakes that proceeds thus,

Pastor: do you know where AIDS comes from?

© University of Venda

Lucky: your mother!

Pastor: you are talking shit. It is the bloody *makwerekwere*! Nigerians and Congolese

The foregoing dialogue reveals a hyperbolic and laughable accusation against the foreigners, which reveals a more worrying reality of a citizenship conceded to a doctrinaire conviction that their socioeconomic problems stem from the influx of foreigners in the country. The choice of a church minister as the character to voice out the dialogue indicates that the unfortunate narrative has permeated to the micro level of the society and most notably, being propagated by those charged with the responsibility to preach love and unity.

The recurrent xenophobic attacks and numerously reported discriminatory arrests and physical attacks on foreigners by the South African police, lay credence to the view provided by the film (Adeola, 2015). Since 2021, a publicly pronounced movement self-christened, Operation Dudula, has been prowling the South African townships, threatening foreigners, evicting them from their homes, destroying their property, abusing them, and looting their businesses (Mthombeni, 2022). Dudula is an *isiZulu* word that translates to push out, force out' or 'knock down' (Mthombeni, 2022). Launched in 2021, the grassroots "patriotic" movement agitating against undocumented foreigners, cited by Mabasa (2022) as "violence entrepreneurs" has morphed into a political party, which translates to the subsuming of xenophobic toxicity into the South African body politic. This cements the aversion of immigrants within the fibre of the nation-state, strengthening the proponents and conscripting the unwilling citizen into the hateful brand. Meanwhile, this apparent mainstreaming of xenophobia

© University of Venda

fortifies the real and imaginary border walls in Africa and furthers the stubborn suspicion and unending conflicts among neighbouring African states as the recipients of their discrimination and violence seek to pay the violent reparations in kind. This has been evident in other countries where members of the citizenry of and the organs of state treat nationals from other countries as unwanted foreigners (Adeola, 2015).

The foregoing unfortunate thread of nationalistic scorn and hostility is also evident in *Viva Riva*, reflecting the enduring suspicions and hostility traded between the Democratic Republic of Congo and her neighbours. The encounters between Riva and the Angolans pursuing him bears other telling encounters in the context of national strife. At the Mariano border point of Congo, the Angolans, despite having a local guide and proper papers, are detained, and coerced to produce a bribe to facilitate their release. They Are viewed as unworthy of entry to the Democratic Republic of Congo and pestilential to the system. This is despite years of neighbourliness and shared cultures and histories. Jorge, one of the Angolan characters in *Viva Riva*, spares no niceties for Kinshasa and Congolese people when he witnesses a bribery case, describing them as niggers and monkeys. The use of niggers and monkeys is an archetypical lexicon in racial derogation, which is ironic emanating from a fellow African. The use of the racial slur against the Congolese in this context draws its inspiration from the epoch of Slavery and the embers of racial strain and discrimination in Europe and America. César the leading Angolan thug deepens this scorn with his view of Kinshasa, the largest metropolis in the Democratic Republic of Congo while walking to the oil warehouse. In the film sequence, César, and Jorge, led by the

© University of Venda

Commander and GM, pass by a muddy, filthy section of the road, and he quickly Quips with palpable Disgust, "*Kin La Belle, Kin La Poubelle" (*Kinshasa the beautiful, Kinshasa the trash bin)

This is later followed by a more telling statement after arriving at the warehouse on a rundown street. He leans over to Commander and offers, "Your country is the worst cow dung[26] I've ever seen. Maybe you should have remained colonised." This conflictual assessment of the two neighbouring countries further manifests itself in the way the Congolese border Commissioner treats Caesar and his henchmen. After ascertaining that they are Angolans, the Commissioner proceeds to have them stripped and incarcerated for unsubstantiated reasons. Upon further engagement by the Commander, the commissioner reminds her that, "Don't you know how our compatriots are treated in their country?"

This question subdues the Commander's view and edges the Commissioner's bid for a bribe to a notch of success. The result of this encounter is that César manages to brutally gun down the commissioner as he pretends to accept the one 10,000-dollar bribe terms, only to unleash a gun instead.

This anecdote is a potent aphorism to the sour relations between the two neighbouring countries and the others by extension. The relations between Congo and Angola have seen violence and ethnic cleansing occur between their peoples (Eisenhammer and

[26] This is also translated by Bouwer (2018) as a "pile of shit".

© University of Venda

Paravicini, 2018). Characterised by an influx of Congolese, mostly from Kasai, fleeing violence and seeking greener pastures in the rich diamond mines of the neighbouring province of Angola, the conflict has created a record of expulsions of the Congolese as documented by Paravicini, Bujakera and Eisenhammer (2018) and Eisenhammer and Paravicini (2018). The more than a decade long violence against Congolese nationals in Angola following the end of the civil war in 2002, was downplayed by the Angolan government that characterised the Congolese migration to Angola as "a "silent invasion" that threatens public order and national security" sparking retaliatory expulsions of Angolans from Congo as recorded by Paravicini, Bujakera and Eisenhammer (2018) and Human Rights Watch (2012).

To understand this phenomenon of strife, it is important to contextualise the historical and social relations between the two nations. Besides, the Congo-Angola Strife, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been engaged in disagreements and political brawls with other neighbouring nations, including the Republic of Congo (Congo, Brazzaville) and Rwanda. One important signal of the strife with Brazzaville is the failure to date, to actualize the building of a bridge over the two capitals separated by the Congo River. Addressed by Franklin Boukaka in his song *Point Sur La Congo* (Bridge on the Congo), in which he supplicates for the unity of the Congo and harmony between the Congolese people of Kinshasa and Brazzaville, the cities on the two banks of the great Congo River, the suspicion still reigns (Burke, 2020). Efforts to build a bridge date from 1991, with numerous stoppages and postponements, with the latest plan for the construction being 2023 to 2028 (AfricaNews, 2019; Woof, 2020). The

© University of Venda

bridge or lack, thereof, is emblematic of the subsisting suspicions and volatility between the peoples across the river, largely attributed to the colonial legacy of the French and Belgians, the subsistence of which lucidly points to post-independence regimes interested in similar pursuits of parochialism and obstinate nationalistic prejudice.

In another case the Democratic Republic of Congo has in recent past rekindled old hostilities characterised by accusations of incursion and security sabotage trained on Rwanda. The regime of Felix Tsishekedi, the current DRC president, has continually held the view that the Rwandan army has been funding and equipping the M23 rebels that have kept Eastern Congo in a limbo of volatility and pointless deaths of her citizens (Lawal, 2024).

Despite vehement denials and counter accusations by the Rwandan government, compounded by unwarranted attacks within the border of Rwanda by the Congolese army, the reality points out to two neighbouring countries that are protracted in constant war, and that are fixed in spoiling for conflict at every opportune moment (Rutazibwa, 2023). These strained relations have their basis, however. Rwanda indeed played a significant role in deposing the dictatorial regime of Mobutu Sese Seko and the installation of Laurent Kabila (Rutazibwa, 2023; Lawal, 2024). Rwanda has also been cited as having played a role. In the fatal overthrow of Laurent Kabila which resulted in the installation of. Joseph Kabila, his son. As the two countries continue with the unfortunate brawl and conflict, innocent citizens continue to suffer within the borders of Congo, and the mineral rich mines of Eastern Congo continue to be exploited by greedy businessmen and foreign nations (Lawal, 2024).

© University of Venda

Although no specific reference is made to the nationalistic ego trading in the Kenyan situation, *Uradi* provides a glimpse of the raging suspicions and discrimination meted against foreign nationals in Kenya. Though a generally open to all country, with a social and systemic culture of good hospitality to visitors, cases of discrimination abound the systemic and social spheres. As captured in Adeola (2015) Somali nationals in Kenya and their Kenyan relations have borne the brunt of discrimination, labelling and systemic harassment a reaction to numerous acts of terror associated with Al-Shabaab, a Somali based terrorist outfit. Radicalised through Islamic fundamentalist teaching, the AL Qaeda associate criminal group through its various cells has committed atrocities within the Kenyan borders killing, injuring, and destroying property (Maruf and Joseph, 2018). Ranging from the, the Westgate Massacre in 2013, the Garrissa University attack in 2014, the Mandera bus attack in 2014, and the Mpeketoni attack in 2014, their carnage has claimed thousands of lives, who include peace loving citizens of Kenya, security forces and foreign nationals (BBC News, 2015; Mutambo and Hajir, 2020; Ombati, 2022). The criminal acts by Al-Shabaab elements have led to a social and systemic profiling of ethnic Somalis as sympathisers, active members, and abettors of their genocidal tendencies (Cagayare, 2013). This profiling has led to many instances of extra judicial killings, forced disappearances of suspects and the incarceration (Adeola, 2015). The climax of this profiling was the detention more than 3000 ethnic Somalis in the Moi International Sports Centre in Kasarani and police stations in deplorable conditions by govt security agencies in 2014. This action cited in Amnesty International (2014) received wide condemnation from human rights groups who argued that the acts of arbitrary arrests, detention, encampment, and expulsion

© University of Venda

were in contravention to domestic laws and international human rights conventions (ibid).

Uradi reflects this suspicion with the writ large insinuation of the nexus between Islam, Somalis, and terrorist violence. By assigning the roles of terrorist characters Muslim names including Ramah, Omar, and Rashid, it is lucid that the narrative fits within the framework of the national psyche in Kenya, that a Somali is highly likely to be a terrorist or piracy functionary at first glance with other considerations coming secondary. This has led to social ostracism by common citizens and systemic bullying by state actors (Cagayare, 2013). For instance, for a long time in Kenya it has been a challenge for ethnic Somalis to get an identity document (Brankamp and Glück, 2022). This suspicion stretches beyond the realm of terror and has dabbled into volatile geopolitics.

Currently and in the recent past, Kenya and Somalia have been embroiled in a tussle over the mapping of a disputed maritime area, a matter that has found its way into the corridors of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). These issues have compounded the socio-political outlook of the Somalis in Kenya, where a stereotypical label of terrorist or pirate has been cemented into the ordinary Kenyan thought process and everyday lexicon. The ideological phobia has led to other segregation measures, like the case of government-employed teachers agitating to be transferred from service in the North Eastern region, the home counties of the Somali community citing insecurity as a justification (BBC News, 2015). On the political and governance front, the profiling banter has seen commentaries on the growing influx of leaders of Somali origin within the three arms of government, especially within the executive arm. The appointment of

© University of Venda

Aden Barre Duale to the Ministry of Defense and Noordin Haji the former Director of Public Prosecution to head the National Intelligence Services caused some online disquiet among nationalist chauvinists, who quiver at the growing population and influence of ethnic Somalis within the governance infrastructure in Kenya. *Uradi* unveils this suspicion without further exposition but provides enough fodder to create the impression. In one instance after a successful surveillance assignment, Komu is informed that his surprise payment will be availed by Ramah. This shocks him as he has always known the individual by the name Jemo, a moniker of the name James. The change from a Christian to a Muslim name, the attendant shock by Komu and the subsequent terrorist actions surreptitiously build into the narrative of Islam and terrorism and buying into the creed that Somalis are foreigners and unwelcome masters of terrorism in Kenya.

From the foregoing, it is evident that African crime films canvass the national strife and parochialism within the social, cultural, political, and economic realities within the African cosmos. Indeed, demonstrated by examples of discrimination and alienation attitudes among characters in the films, the chapter has unveiled the specific cases in African countries including the xenophobia in South Africa, the conflicts in DRC and the Muslim/Somali situation in Kenya.

4.3 Crime as a Corollary of Endemic Socio-economic Conditions in Africa

Film serves as a lucid lexicon in the adumbration of socioeconomic situations of continental Africans in the represented dominions. Indeed, socioeconomic dialectics lie at the cusp of the arguments adduced by crime films serving as perceived inspiration

© University of Venda

in the engagement of criminality. Among the social economic conditions articulated in the African crime films include poverty, housing, urbanisation, unemployment, energy crisis, education access, healthcare, brittle and alcoholism. African crime films raise and argue out the foregoing issues reflecting the reality dispositions and contextualising them within the wider cosmos of the illustrated locales.

The issue of poverty and economic marginalisation is articulated lucidly in the selected African crime films. The skewed access to resources and ramifications as a ubiquitous figuration of continental African is addressed broadly in the films. Poverty in Africa has been cited as a thorny issue, with statistics indicating that “around 431 million people on the continent were living below the extreme poverty line of 1.90 U.S. dollars a day in 2022” which is approximately a third of the population in Africa (Galal, 2023). This economic disposition is antecedent to the lack of basic needs like food, shelter, education, and healthcare. Poverty therefore cascades to a disenfranchised population, ridden by hunger, disease, illiteracy, and the proliferation of informal settlements.

The character of Lucky Kunene and his gang propagate the perspective of the black South Africans who still argue that the country is yet to make a step away from the economic balkanization practised by the apartheid government. In the opening sequences of *Jerusalema*, we are introduced to Lucky Kunene as a high school student. His demeanour and expressions indicate the signs of a bright African student with the hope to pursue a course leading to a profession that may change the fortunes of his poor family. This sets a hopeful tone that the story will end up as a narrative of

© University of Venda

success, However, this faith is quickly and irrevocably dashed by Lucky's crestfallen expression when he learns that his admission to the prestigious course in Jo'burg Tech was not accompanied by a scholarship. The obvious meaning to a boy from a poor family, which Lucky quickly translates, is that hope for tertiary education is only but a pipe dream. This is a ubiquitous story in African settings. Images and sounds that posit a disenfranchised population unable to offer their children education - which is touted as a basic need in African countries - are all too familiar. The stratified education system tailored to offer quality in exclusivity for an average poor child is accurately captured as a pipe dream in *Jerusalema.*

In Kenya education remains not only paid for but expensively so, despite efforts to declare it free for all, following a thoughtful clause in the free primary education policy introduced by the third president his excellency Mwai Kibaki, and furthering its roots in the policy of free secondary education introduced under the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta (Otike and Kiruki, 2011). This unfortunate situation draws its thrust from the watering down of quality in public institutions and the proliferation of private institutions that have managed to efficiently fill the lacuna of quality in offering education services and have further fostered a commercial edge to education (Abuya *et al.*, 2015). This reinforces the creed that quality education is meant for the highest bidder.

The sampled films capture this through the ironies reflective of the diegetic characters and situations. *Òlòtūré* through the depiction of Linda and Beauty exposes the underbelly of a system that substitutes the value of education to the earnings from trading in prostitution. Beauty, the younger sister to Linda pegs her hope not in pursuit

© University of Venda

of education but in the opportunity of travelling to Europe to make money from prostitution. Although oblivious to the real job awaiting her in Italy, Beauty is buoyed by the fact that she is going to make money from an unskilled labour engagement in Europe. This anecdote indicts the Nigerian society in its assignment of value to education against gains made from other vocations and illicit trade including human trafficking and prostitution.

Katutura and *Uradi* take us to a school environment, with Kondja in secondary school and Komu pursuing a course at the university. The two characters despite their close shave with dangerous crime and criminals, get to survive and take benefit of a second chance accorded by education. The role of their education is clear. Komu becomes a valued member of the terrorist cell due to his skills in architectural engineering learnt at the university and Kondja attracts the attention of Shivago due to his popularity in school. These two educated characters however lose their souls as they battle to save their country and township. Lucky also exemplifies this trait. Despite dropping out of higher education due to lack of means, Lucky is a voracious reader, burning the midnight oil and spending his traffic time reading. His learning sets him up for success as he battles illicit trade, attempting to save the soul of Hillbrow a symbolic action of liberating the space from the yokes of the masters of apartheid yore, and expropriating it to the new, previously oppressed landlords that live in it and believe in it.

Katutura engages in this issue through its depiction of the Katutura township in Windhoek, Namibia portrayed as a sprawling, congested space typified by unplanned settlements and semi-permanent tin houses. The view of dusty streets, rusty

© University of Venda

corrugated iron roofs, derelict tracts of land, rundown buildings, destroyed roads, heaps of garbage, congested markets and muddied city streets emerge as very stark realities in the African crime films. Evidenced by the images of Katutura Slum in *Katutura*, Soweto, and Hillbrow in *Gangster's Paradise; Jerusalema,* Katwe and the streets of Kampala in *Bodaboda Thieves*, Lagos in *King of Boys* and *Òlòtūré*, the sprawling Cape Flat slums and the expensive dumping site in *Noem My Skollie*, the village houses in *Uradi* and old government houses in *Click, Click, Bang* emphasize this idea. The physical imagery of the depicted settings creates a visual metaphor for the living conditions of the characters in the films. Indeed, the images of Soweto and Hillbrow reflect the struggles that young Lucky, Zakes and other residents face. During the film's exposition, Lucky and Zakes sell merchandise in the train on their way from school to fend for a meal for their family. Their ailing mother is unable to fully cater for them and as evidenced on the dinner table at Lucky's house, black tea and a piece of bread suffice, punctuated with a slight brawl for the meagre meal.

In addition, Lucky's life must take a different trajectory away from the promise of success in education after he misses a full scholarship at Jo'burg Tech. His options for raising school fees are only limited to an unproductive car wash business, a fuel station attendant job, and the perilous taxi operation. His panacea to this life of penury is surmised to lie within the criminal enterprise. Of all the characters within Soweto, only comrade Nazareth projects the image of a well-to-do character, suggested by his muscle car, his many women, and his flashing of cash. In Hillbrow, an older Lucky also

© University of Venda

finds value in the white-collar crime of hijacking buildings as a pathway out of the biting poverty, despite engaging in a legitimate taxi business.

This imagery is also congruent with Komu in *Uradi* and Kevin Motego in *Click Click Bang*. The two Kenyan boys, one from a simple life in the village, the other, a talented orphan living in a low-income estate in Nairobi, change their hustling tact into crime, to face the vagaries that poverty deals them. Komu comes from rural poverty that affords him basic needs but has a challenge raising university fees. Despite this inability of his parents, his aunt clears the fees in earnest, and he is able to join the university. This is in obvious contrast to Lucky, an urban poor who must deal with his situation on his own. Kev, on the other hand, an urban poor like Lucky banks on his soccer talent to change his life and that of his terminally ill sister, Mokeira. This narrative resonates with Abel's situation in *Bodaboda Thieves* having to contend with little at home and compounded with an indebted father and a mother trying to fend for the family by engaging in the back-breaking vocation of breaking huge rocks to ballast in a gaping quarry. The situation for Kev, like Abel, pushes him to crime, which ironically holds a promise for the alleviation of poverty-driven situations. This is the same kind of locus that forces Eniola, AB, and Linda, among other characters, to take up crime and prostitution with alacrity. The dire situations in their backstories, typified by the lack of food safety, shelter, education and career opportunities, become the *force majeure* into their criminal instincts and life of crime.

The review of the socioeconomic imaginary of the characters, the situations, and the tough seasons, temperate in their lives, also reveals the brooding social-economic

© University of Venda

conditions endemic to the depicted spaces, making the characters, samples of a larger population encumbered by the lived realities whose slice is presented in the films. The breakdown of economic systems is depicted in the sampled films to include scarcity of fuel in Kinshasa as portrayed in *Viva Riva* situation that has been rampantly experienced in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda inter alia. This breakdown is also compounded by the unreliable supply of power also shown in *Viva Riva*, a common phenomenon in Congo[27] and experienced in South Africa vide the load shedding situation (Mkhize, 2022).

Another realistic depiction is the breakdown of health care in Kenya. *Click Click Bang* raises this pertinent issue through the characterization of Mokeira, Kev's sister, who suffers from renal failure. Her suffering is compounded by the lack of funds to adequately cater for needful dialysis sessions and a transplant, which is cited to be a sustainable solution. Their desperate situation and meagre earnings are a reflection of the disposition of many Kenyans who die hopelessly or sink further into poverty due to treatable illnesses that turn into debilitating physical and economic monstrosities that occasion sure death and inevitable poverty. In African countries, avoidable fatalities happen every year due to the skewed access to healthcare services attributable. A moment of reckoning for African countries emerged during the epoch of the COVID-19 pandemic that left populations exposed and vulnerable as their governments bungled

[27] This is aptly captured in a scene where popular musician and Congolese millionaire Fally Ipupa's music video recording is interrupted by the frequent blackouts rendering his team helpless in (Dumant, 2023) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J9NjHTS60w

© University of Venda

prevention efforts and turned to donors and developed economies for vaccines in the resultant public health emergencies (Bright *et al.*, 2021; Lucero-Prisno *et al.*, 2021; Turyasingura, James and Vermund, 2023). African crime films are a potent discussant of a myriad of issues afflicting Africa. In this case, therefore, they take the role of a critical voice in reviewing the healthcare practises and public health investments within the African countries. Mokeira's situation in *Click Click Bang* reflects the many private and public health crisis that Africans have had to wade through, fighting preventable, communicable, and non-communicable diseases that are airborne, waterborne and lifestyle diseases brought about by poor diet including Ebola, AIDS malaria, Poliomyelitis, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, and gastrointestinal diseases. It also gives credence to the perpetual efforts in promoting maternal and reducing infant mortality. This emerges therefore as an idiosyncratic component of the African crime film in terms of its social economic engagement.

Besides the exposition of the endemic socioeconomic conditions of Africans, crime films expose the socioeconomic binary conditions of the haves and have-nots in African countries. This Marxist dialectic lucidly draws the line between characters like Sidi Kamara, the Member of Parliament's nephew, and Kevin in *Click Click Bang,* Ribeiro and Lucky in *Gangsters Paradise:Jerusalema*, Komu and Karen in *Uradi* inter alia, who exemplify the Marxist duality of privilege and deprivation. Kev desperately angles for the Europe soccer scholarship to change his dire circumstances at home but Sidi Kamara, a sportsman of privilege gets the chance. This instance is typified not only by the denial of Kev, but the evil nature of the situation is seemingly exacerbated by the

© University of Venda

fact that Sidi is from a privileged background. It is thus clear that the socioeconomic argument raised in African crime films also dabbles into the Marxist realm, whereby privilege is contrasted with poverty and consequently adduced as sufficient inspiration for criminality.

4.4 The Crime Paradox

This section engages with the anima of crime as a two-sided coin of construction and deconstruction. To animate the paradox, the discussions thereof review the place of crime as a socio-economic panacea to the Africans attempting to surmount the vagaries of biting poverty and as a viable option to the shame and victimhood attendant to poverty. This is contrasted to the destructive effects of crime to the victims, perpetrators, and the African society, which has to contend with the painful loss of her youthful productive population, felled by police bullets or marauding mobs. The paradox is elucidated under the thematic aegis advanced by the African crime films under study. This is done through the appraisal of the crime origins and end stories of the various narrative carriers within the films.

4.4.1 Crime and Criminality as The Elixir of The Proletariat

African crime genres posit the notion that crime is the catholicon from an attendance of poverty and struggle. Drawing from the typical origin stories of lack and struggle for leading criminals, the films suggest, quite strongly that legal enterprise only serves as part of this struggle, with crime, providing the much-needed relief from this debilitating disposition. Encumbered by a myriad of impossibilities and shortfalls in basic needs,

© University of Venda

education, healthcare inter alia, the moral character must adopt a Machiavellian perspective to surmount the want for basics and conquer the world of plenty. This hustler philosophy draws from the Machiavellian adage of “the end justifies the means”. Indeed, society is invited as a catalytic collaborator in advancing this philosophy by playing the key roles of abettor and beneficiary to the illicit enterprise. The characters in the African crime genre cite their “Black tax” responsibilities as primary objectives and unquestionable reasons for dabbling in crime.

Lucky elevates this ideal in Gangsters Paradise via his origin story of struggle and lack at home in Soweto. His dream to pursue higher education in Joburg Tech is compounded by the struggle for basics, including food and education for his siblings. His new earnings from the carjacking business immediately go into the family meals at home, expanding quantity and choices from chicken to fruits and juices. The next payment goes into improving the comfort at home by bringing on a television set, new furniture and school uniform for the siblings. This thread also runs in *Bodaboda Thieves, Uradi, Click Click Bang, Viva Riva, King of Boys* and *Òlòtūré*. After his first payout from the bodaboda robberies as a getaway rider, Abel buys a television set for his family, the lack of electricity supply at home notwithstanding. This also recurs in Komu who Is quick to bring along his village girlfriend Kirigo to Nairobi to enjoy his newly found success. This idea is further cemented when Kirigo’s pregnancy becomes a reason for him to re-join the terrorist cell for one last job. His conscience and earlier doubts fade in the face of the girlfriend’s situation. This flows into Kev’s decision to join Kasisi in crime to improve the situation of basics at home and assist in medicating his

© University of Venda

sick sister. This pattern continues in *Viva Riva*, where Riva finds his friend JM to share his money in debauchery and a wad of cash for his estranged mother and *King of Boys,* propelled by Eniola who becomes a Lagos philanthropist drawing from her. ill-gotten wealth. *Òlòtūré* mirrors this phenomenon through Linda, who finances an opportunity for her younger sister Beauty to go to Europe for greener pastures with proceeds from prostitution.

This pattern resonates with the *American Gangster (2007),* a narrative in which Frank Lucas the main character invites his mother and large extended family to his new mansion and offers them opportunities in his criminal enterprise. It also appears in *Nairobi Half Life* where Amina engages in prostitution to fund her college studies with the hope of opening a boutique franchise. These anecdotes generate a discernible pattern of characters making conscious decisions albeit with limited options to engage in criminality as a means to alleviate themselves and their loved ones from the inevitability occasioned by unsustainable livelihoods.

This idea is fortified by Onyango (2024, Personal communication), who avers that crime is a viable means of enhancing the livelihoods of those with low incomes and dealing with unemployment. Crime, in this way, is elevated to a societal equalisation model. A mechanism to take from those immersed in plenty and in turn, redistributing to the poor, and customising resources for the previously oppressed. Lucky attempts to redress the Apartheid injustices and the post-Apartheid decay of the vibrant Johannesburg by hijacking buildings owned by absentee white landlords to provide habitable housing for his people. Riva, on the other hand, steals the Angolan gangster's

© University of Venda

oil to quench his gasoline-starved city of Kinshasa and share with his local people the dollars from the enterprise. Komu sells his soul to the demon of terrorism to provide for the comfort of his family and Kondja, agrees to peddle Shivago's drugs for the safety of his girlfriend Isola. The paradox of their actions, however, is at the tail end, they stand to be the primary beneficiaries and sufferers of the consequences of the actions that they take. This tallies with Warshow (1948) in his view of the gangster as a tragic hero that courts danger, which in the end consumes and destroys him.

4.4.2 Crime as the African Society's Anathema

On the counter side of the paradox, are the unbecoming consequences of crime to the society that plays abettor and coy rival to the criminal. As criminals use illegal means to improve their circumstances, they also leave destruction in their path, causing pain and suffering to their victims and a teetering imbalance of morals in society. In its wake, the commission of crime debilitates the economy, destabilises livelihoods and destroys lives. Indeed, a clear line can be drawn between the causative relationship between crime and desolation in society. Deprived of security and basic amenities due to the unmitigated temerity of the criminal, an average African must contend with less wiggle room to grow as a danger perpetually lurks around them. With threats of robbery, kidnapping and death, the continental African must brace themselves for such eventualities or engage in vigilante action, an ironical solution of fighting crime with crime.

The characters in the sampled African crime films, including Riva, Lucky, Komu, Abel, Gimba, Kevin and AB, demonstrate that their dabbling into crime is the bane of their

© University of Venda

progress, and the sacrifice of their fellow citizens, including their loved ones, who die painful, avoidable. This paradox is reflective of the African philosophy of morality in storytelling and characterization, whereby characters become psychic mirrors of what is expected, what is possible and what is real. The paradox also provides a space for the spectators, like the active audience, to add their moral conclusion to the story. A moral dilemma is another important generic highlight of specificity in African crime films as observed by Simiyu (2023, personal communication).

4.4.3 Figurations of Criminality in African Crime Cinema

African crime films reveal the propensity of continental Africans to self-harm and destruction through crime. the films unveil this imaginary through the depiction of various forms of crimes and the commission of criminality. Ranging from what may be considered ordinary misdemeanours to heinous crimes, the films lift a veil on the possibilities, realities and actualities in the criminal underworlds plaguing the African landscape. Among the depicted crimes in the genre include financial crimes, murder, sexual and gender crimes, terrorism, robbery, and human trafficking which are the most prevalent at African national and transnational levels according to Onyango (2024, Personal communication).

4.4.3.1 Financial Crimes

Financial crimes are broadly explored in the selected films. Ranging from bribery, public finance pilferage, racketeering and money laundering, the financial crimes are valorised through characters like Eniola, Aare, Senator Rewane in King of Boys;

© University of Venda

Advocate Lucas Sithole in *Jerusalema* the traffic police officer in *Bodaboda Thieves,* the border police in *Òlòtūré* and the officials in *Viva Riva*.

Eniola, a criminal of repute thrives through bribing politicians to buy and maintain clout that serves the twin purposes of cementing her space in politics and protectionism for her illicit business laundered through the facades of apparel shops and philanthropy. Eniola grows her wealth and underground influence through coercion and blackmail receiving 40% of all crime proceeds from the Lagos criminal network. To stay afloat, she greases the hands of senators, police officers and the state governor. Her funding to the state politicians becomes a methodical stratagem for the ruling elite to corrupt the electorate as they stash stolen millions of dollars in cash in their homes. Lucas Sithole advances this through his bribery of city council officials to get privileged information on absentee landlords that facilitates Lucky's business of hijacking buildings in Hillbrow. Boasting about it and pointing out the systemic failures, Sithole explains that the crime is bolstered by corrupt officials, inefficient court systems and a law that does not regard theft of physical assets as a major crime.

The police in *Bodaboda Thieves* and *Òlòtūré* are bribed to look the other way as crimes are committed. The traffic police officer lets an unlicenced Abel continue with the *bodaboda* business after collecting a handful of coins. Police in African countries including Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Nigeria among others have been accused of converting the traffic control vocation to be a chance for selfish gain, through the normalisation of bribery, at the expense of road safety and legality. In an unfortunate turn of events, the human traffickers in *Òlòtūré* manage to cross the border

© University of Venda

with the bus full of girls after bribing an immigration official. The dystopic ending of the film reflects the dire circumstances in Africa born out of corruption. The breakdown of infrastructure, healthcare, employment, security, and education inter alia, constitute the results of a society engaged in financial crimes.

As valorised in the films, healthcare in *Click Click Bang,* security in *King of Boys,* and human life in *Òlòtūré,* are in jeopardy courtesy of money changing hands. African states are replete with cases of financial impropriety that span from lowly officials like the traffic police officer in *Bodaboda thieves* to mid-level government officials like the immigration officers in *Òlòtūré* and *Viva Riva* to the higher echelons of state like the judges spoken of In *Viva Riva*.

Lawal (2007) argues that corruption and financial impropriety have become a mainstay in the governance of African nation-states, and a thriving industry in African economies. The news and anti-corruption transparency reports are replete with instances of graft touching on low cadre officials and high-level officials. African presidents including are among the individuals within the African governance matrix, who have arrogated to themselves colossal sums of public resources Mlambo, et al. (2019) sample Jose Eduardo dos Santos, Omar Bongo, Mobutu Sese Seko and Sani Abacha among dozens of presidents that have been adversely mentioned in graft scandals and those evidence to have pilfered their countries' resources. Such allegations of graft have roped in government ministries, prosecutors, and judges that auction government services and justice to the highest bidders. Financial crimes in African countries create an indelible blot on the societal fabric in African countries, leaving in its wake

© University of Venda

dilapidated economies, tainted governance networks and a disillusioned citizenry bearing the debilitating consequences of the financial delinquency.

Among the most rampant financial and economic crimes in Nigeria, Kenya, and Africa by extension, is the online fraud and advance payment fraud christened 419, a moniker derived from the law governing fraud cases in Nigeria. Perpetuated through emails, credit cards and mobile phones, online fraud has led to the growth of publicly known gangs like the Yahoo Boys, the Kenyan prison gangs and the infamous confirm gangs of Nakuru in Kenya. Whitty (2018) describes the 419 gangs as consisting of young Nigerians seeking a better life and with familial backgrounds characterised by poverty, raising the argument that scarcity leads them to seek the opportunities to make extra money, a deep and dark cyclic tunnel that they are unable to climb out of. In *The Master* (2004) a Nigerian film on advance fraud *I Go Chop Your Dollar*, a musical track by Name Owoh deployed in the narrative goes thus,

I done suffer no be small
Upon say I get sense
Poverty no good at all, no
Na Im make I join this business

419 no be thief, it's just a game
Everybody dey play 'em
If anybody fall mugu
Ha! My brother, I go chop 'em

National Airport, na me get 'em
National Stadium, na me build 'em
President na my sister brother
You be the mugu, I be the master
Oyinbo man, I go chop your dollar
I go take your money disappear
419 is just a game
You are the loser, I am the winner

© University of Venda

I Go Chop Your Dollar, a song that was banned and occasioned numerous arrests for Nkem the composer[28], uses poverty to justify the 419 scams, calling the victims fools. Onyango (personal communication, 2023) a Kenyan crime researcher refers to the activity of the confirm gangs as a result of the unfortunate combination of poverty as a circumstance and toxic politics that buys into violence as a commodity in its practice. Politicians fuel the cycle by propagating the cyclic politics of retrogression, all the while feeding the crime dragon with money during campaigns as they seek to intimidate and subdue opponents using illicit means.

4.4.3.2 Crimes against humanity

Murder is a prime instalment among crimes against humanity widely explored by the selected films. A ubiquitous crime in the reports and bulletins of Africa, murder finds credence among cases of homicide genocide and pogroms in various African areas. Captured aptly in the poesy of Thabo Mbeki's speech in the 1996 inauguration of a new constitution, murder is a crime against humanity that has haunted the African consciousness since pre-colonial times. In the speech Mbeki avers that,

> Perhaps the worst among these who are my people are those who have learnt to kill for a wage. To these, the extent of death is directly proportional to their personal welfare. And so, like pawns in the service of demented souls they kill in the furtherance of the political violence in Kwa Zulu Natal. They murder in the taxi wars. They kill slowly or quickly in order to make profits from the illegal trade in

[28] The news of his arrest is captured in Libbenga (2007) and Pasternack (2011)

© University of Venda

> narcotics. They are available to hire when husband wants to murder wife and wife, husband.

The impassioned speech by the then deputy president locates not only moral depravity but also the reality of a murderous population profiting from ending human life. The palpable historicity of the murderous taxi wars in South Africa and political violence indicates the reality of political violence in Africa spanning from the Post Election Violence in Kenya to the brutal conflicts in DRC, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Sudan. These manifestations are an inkling of the staggering statistics of civilian homicide and assassinations. The African case file is replete with unsolved murders of politicians, clerics, artists, scholars, and ordinary civilians going through their ordinary lives which is a significant lived trauma in Africa.

Recently, the high-profile murders of popular South African musician Kiernan Forbes (AKA) and his friend and business partner Tebello Motsoane in February 2023 shocked the world to the core (Nkanjeni, 2023). Captured in the CCTV cameras, the brazen murderer provided a window through which previous murders of reggae star Lucky Dube[29], Kenyan Member of Parliament George Muchai[30], Catholic priest Fr. John Kaiser[31], and businessman Jacob Juma[32] in gangland-style, can be viewed as

---

[29] https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/19/world/africa/19iht-safrica.4.7965473.html?smid=url-share

[30] https://nation.africa/kenya/news/kabete-mp-george-muchai-two-bodyguards-and-a-driver-shot-dead-in-nairobi-1066314

[31] https://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/26/world/american-priest-dies-in-kenya-and-authorities-suspect-murder.html?smid=url-share

[32] https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/entertainment/county-nairobi/article/2000201648/how-jacob-jumas-murder-was-planned-and-executed

© University of Venda

concomitants of intolerance, self-destruction, and erosion of humanity. This murderous culture is wielded by characters like Kasisi and the police in *Click Click Bang*, Victor in *Òlòtūré*, Eniola in *King of Boys*, Rashid in *Uradi*, Gums in *Noem My Skollie*, Nazareth in *Jerusalema*, Shivago in *Katutura* and César in *Viva Riva*. The characters individually and collectively amass a hefty body count, leaving a slew of murders in their wake. Their actions represent a culture of dehumanized man-eat-man societies, characterised by crimes against humanity.

Further, the murders provide a criminology aspect to the films with a chance to better understand the psychic, social, cultural and political skew of the murders in Africa. In addition, the resolutions in the crime films capture the contrast between impunity and the atonement that comes with legal and judicial consequences. As demonstrated in *Noem My Skollie* Gimba, Gif and Shorty are convicted and hanged as a punishment for murder, which tallies with the arrest of Rashid and Omar in *Uradi.* However, Victor in *Òlòtūré* walks scot-free as does Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema,* and Eniola in *King of Boys*. All the murderous criminals in *Viva Riva* die as they do in *Katutura* after they turn their guns against one another. *Click Click Bang* sees them die extra judicially. The multiplicity of approaches in dealing with the crime of murder and the perpetrators not only tinkers with the moral and amoral consciousness of the Africans to pass their judgment but also provides a teaser to critique the law and judicial action following the crime of murder. The contexts as enumerated by Mbeki (ibid) in addition to terrorism

© University of Venda

and insurgency - twin political realities of the 21st century in Africa[33] - compounds murder in its genocide, homicide and femicide, forms, an existential crisis that requires review and lasting solutions.

Carjacking, mugging, and robbery are other crimes explored in African crime films. Characterized by the property snatchings in *Bodaboda Thieves,* bank robberies, carjackings and money in transit heists in *Jerusalema,* the crimes present a poignant image of the reality in African cities and hamlets, where armed and unarmed thuggery is reported daily. As shown in the films, the robbers vary from motorbike gangsters and muggers whose modus operandi is stealing from unsuspecting pedestrians and motorists to gun-toting bank robbers who ransack finance establishments and cash in transit vans. The films, in this case, function as a criminological resource purposed towards unveiling the reality and reactions to the crimes which are shown to attract contrasting views of admiration and violence. The robber either becomes a neighbourhood hero like Kasisi or suffers the fate of Oti and his gang in *Nairobi Half Life* or the jail route as espoused in *Noem My Skollie*. The diversity in the counter-crime measures offers a view into what Africa portends as solutions to such crimes; getaway, jail, gunned down or feted. The diversity once more becomes a signature formula for the crime genre in the reflection of ambient realities and historicities.

[33] The two are discussed at length by (Ünal, 2016; Morier-Genoud, 2020; Mashimbye, 2022; Lekunze and Page, 2023)

© University of Venda

Sexual assault and sex trafficking are rife transnational crimes in Africa (Human Rights Watch, 2012; Aluko-Daniels, 2015). The selected African crime films delve into the idea through the depiction of various sexual violations and assaults. Ranging from the violent on-screen sequence of Ballie raping AB at the dumpsite and Gums forcing Gimba to sleep with him in prison in *Noem My Skollie*, to Sir Phillips raping Ehi in *Òlòtūré*, the sex trading at Mere Edo's brothel in *Viva Riva* and the whole phenomenon of trafficking girls for commercial sex work in *Òlòtūré,* the films draw a picture of rampant sexual crimes in Africa. Captured in Ross Kemps's documentary on South African prisons[34], and Tobores Ovuorie's story in Ovuorie (2014), the stories in *Noem My Skollie, Òlòtūré and Viva Riva* find credence and evidence that cements the phenomena of sexual abuse and trafficking in South Africa, Congo, and Nigeria. Further to this the SAPS records sexual violence as a national crisis in South Africa citing grim statistics including 42,780 cases of rape in the year 2022. The data offers a perspective on what the films seek to explore about African societies including the abduction of the Chibok girls by *Boko Haram* insurgents in Nigeria to serve as brides to jihadists as portrayed in Desmond Obviagele's film *Milkmaid* (2021) and documented by Habila (2017). The redress for sexual crimes is a stoic lack of resolution and brazen impunity as the films cover. The lack of solutions further adds to the theory of a gendered view of crime and its redress in Africa, as sexual crimes (whose victims are mostly women) are neither resolved judicially nor extrajudicially.

[34] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDRgT4zcJNc

© University of Venda

4.4.3.3 Police Brutality and Excesses

The blurred lines between order and disorder are carelessly straddled by those charged with maintaining law and order. Law and lawmakers not only mingle freely with lawbreakers but facilitate and control the business and activities in the underworld. As outlaws, they nonchalantly subvert the law, bend it to their whims and clutch to its ambiguities to clamp on others, a betrayal of the same principles they are supposed to embody and radiate.

Law enforcement is a fulcrum upon which the binary theme of order and disorder oscillate. In the context of this study discussions, law enforcement is supposed to be the protagonist that provides a ruthless opposite to criminals and criminality. Globally, law enforcement is legally entrenched in society as a modus operandi empowered with systematic and material objects to facilitate its roles. In each African country, there are several levels of law enforcement including armies, police, crime investigators intelligence units and a host of licensed private security companies. This model of law enforcement operates on the defence of civilians and attacks on criminals who threaten the security of civilians. To achieve this, the law enforcers are provided with training, privileged with power, and armed with all sorts of weapons meant to scare, immobilize, restrain, stun, injure and kill any threat to security.

Law enforcement as depicted in the African crime films, like law enforcement in real situations, charts a path markedly different from the one in its blueprints of creation. As it is depicted, law enforcement is a haven of corruption, an abettor of crime, and a powerful support system to criminals and in some cases, a propagator of systemic

© University of Venda

vices like racism. The paltry victories coupled with the streak of unfortunate misses and fatal mistakes expose the underbelly of a system rotten to its core.

The law enforcers in various African countries stand accused of propagating excesses that place them squarely within the space of criminal conduct. Civilians in various nations have protested brazen brutality, use of excessive force and corrupt dealings by the police. There are many instances, but several anecdotes suffice. In Kenya, cases of police brutality have found a space of discussion within and outside the borders. Specific instances that will be deduced include the police crackdown against the Mungiki sect led by *Kwekwe* Squad, a special unit constituted to deal with the gangs. Spread across several provinces in Kenya, the Mungiki, “a mafia-like gang” Anderson (2002), “a player in the violence market” Servant (2007), notorious for committing gruesome murders, extortion, racketeering and political violence, had become a menace with numerous murders attributed to them, and a stranglehold to businesses, including transport, and local businesses in neighbourhoods and villages (Atieno, 2007; Servant, 2007; Mwangi, 2010). It was a requirement to pay them a levy to run a shop, a matatu, or even to build a house. The consequences of any resistance towards their extortion manoeuvres included robbery, injury, or death by most macabre means. At their prime Mungiki had a signature of beheadings, skinning and eye and genital gouging in what looked every part like ritualistic killings (Anderson, 2002). The images from their attacks were gory, blood-curdling and achieved, at least for them, a wave of terror that made citizens more subservient to their ends (Kagwanja, 2003).

© University of Venda

How a gang would get so powerful is an especially important query. With friends in high places and with sympathisers and collaborators among the police, the gang had in its hands a free reign without disruption (Atieno, 2007). Their access to power meant ease in acquiring weapons, and intelligence, and circumventing the justice system, as they held, in simple terms, a get-out-of-jail-free card! Such relationships are characterized by suspicion, toxicity and instability as the collaborators are in nature terms, sworn foes since they represent the opposites like the biblical duality of good versus evil – in this case, order and disorder, law enforcement and lawlessness. In such a collaboration therefore, the victim will always be the innocent, law-abiding citizen to whom the criminal wreaks havoc and terror while the police watch in glee and pretend to offer solutions. Like every toxic relationship, when the citizens protest, the bonds must break, and the collaborators must now go for each other's jugular. In Kenya, as recorded by Anderson (2002) the Mungiki scalps of victory began admitting police officers into the statistics. The response was swift and brutal. The *Kwekwe* Squad (translating to the weeding squad) was formed with a singular mission; to annihilate Mungiki! The extent of their actions may not have been captured by the statistics recorded in civil society reports and news reports. Their entrance into crime-fighting recorded mass disappearances and deaths of young Kikuyu men identified as Mungiki adherents. By the time of its disbandment, the squad is recorded to have disappeared and killed hundreds of youths (KNHCR, 2008).

Kwekwe Squad is one of the many death squads replete in the African landscapes (Masumba Walyemera, 2022; Wabala, 2022; Yesufu, 2022). The law enforcement

© University of Venda

squads have in many countries been deployed to brutally crack down on criminals and in unfortunate cases, innocent citizens considered to be political dissidents. Steeped in history, the law enforcement squads have hit headlines with their trail of death and disappearances. *Kwekwe* is akin to other Kenyan outfits like the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), Anti-Sock Theft Unit (ASTU), National Security Intelligence Service (NSIS) and Special Service Unit (SSU) that morphed from Flying Squad. The outfits, drawn from the national police service have left behind statistics of destruction and terror. ATPU, ASTU and Flying Squad, formed to curb the terrorism, cattle rustling, and robbery menace became synonymous with the very criminals they were drafted to fight, by propagating violence and the human rights violations of torture, and extrajudicial executions (KNHCR, 2008).

At their zenith of operation, the outfits were accused of a slew of human rights abuses, including torture, forced disappearances and extrajudicial executions. A sample of their specific exploits includes the executions of gangsters like the plundering trio of Wanugu, Wacucu and Rasta in the 1990s, and the murders of vocal Muslim clerics like Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Abubakar Shariff alias Makaburi, Mungiki leaders (Wagacha brothers, Njuguna Njuguna the spokesperson and Maina Njenga's wife), and other nameless, faceless criminals, dumped in vast wilderness and rivers (KNHCR, 2008; Wabala, 2022). In 2022, Kenyans learnt with shock the presence of tens of bodies stashed in gunny bags and thrown in River Yala (Omondi, 2022). This led William Ruto, the newly elected president to disband the SSU, citing their excesses (Reporter, 2024).

© University of Venda

The disbandment did not, however, translate to a silencing of the extrajudicial guns as IMLU (2023) report indicates.

In March 2017 an amateur video jolted the Kenyan consciousness to the callous execution of criminals in Kenya. The video, depicting Ahmed Rashid, cited as a "dreaded crime buster", killing two unarmed boys in Eastleigh, Nairobi, in the full glare of the public (Wambulwa, 2023). The daylight murder of Jamal Mohammed and Mohammed Dhair Kheri was simply a recognisable facade to the faceless executioners calling themselves 'Hessy' (Osen, 2019). Hessy an arcane outfit displayed their plunder online, warning criminals and posting gory photos of slain criminals, mostly young boys and girls, including "the prettiest gangster" (Baraza, 2017). The clampdown as noted, was not limited to criminals. Innocent citizens were silenced in a campaign of subverting justice or suppressing truth. Kenyan consciousness is haunted by the deaths of lawyer Willie Kimani, his client and taxi driver in 2016 (Wangui, 2022) and the Kianjokoma brothers in Embu, Kenya (Ayega, 2021). The killing of Benson and Emmanuel Ndwiga, in August 2021 during the COVID-19 restrictions raised public uproar, and media attention as the police excesses were brought to light in ruthless honesty (Ayega, 2021). Drawing a conviction in the Willie Kimani case and an ongoing case in the Kianjokoma brothers' instance[35] is evidence of a society attempting to mend a malignance in her policing, metastasizing on a subdued population. A sad truth of post-independence Africa.

[35] Wangui (2022)

© University of Venda

Hessy and Rashid are not isolated cases. The Nigerian SARS Dominated headlines and attracted global ire in 2020, precipitated by a culture of killing, assault, and harassment of innocent citizens (Chinwa Ole, 2022; Ecoma, 2023). The End SARS campaign, both on the legacy and online media, opened the lid to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a special police entity that had gone rogue with a notoriety for various human rights abuses (Peterside, 2022). Akin to Kwekwe, Flying Squad, and Hessy in Kenya, SARS continued with their plunder even at the height of the countrywide protests, killing 51 civilians in their violent clampdown (Ecoma, 2023).

Tapping from a heritage of violence against civilians by the Apartheid security forces, the South African Police Service and the South African National Defence Forces have continued the legacy of violence previously perpetrated by the colonial police force (Yesufu, 2022). Guilty of killings like the Sharpeville and Soweto massacres, the Apartheid police created a heritage replicated in the incidents like the Marikana massacre in 2012, where police killed 34 mine workers and severely injured 78 others by firing live bullets at the striking workers (Bruce, 2018; Higginbottom, 2018; Joseph, 2023). The police actions in this case unveiled the reality of police brutality in South Africa, as evidenced in Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema* when he avers that,

> Cops, frustrated by the rising crime rates under a legal system that could not keep criminals behind bars, took the law into their own hands.

Lucky's words, punctuated by images of dead suspected criminals, reveal police excesses as a placebo to a subterranean political malaise. As Detective Blackie Swart speaks to a journalist After Lucky is acquitted by the court, he indicates that there is a

© University of Venda

deep-seated historical problem in the handling of crime and the perception of the public. The conversation goes as follows,

> **Swart:** You know what their problem in South Africa is? Bad guys go free and good guys go to jail.
> **Journalist:** But how did it get to this?
> **Swart:** Look who is running the country. These other guys we arrested and put in jail. Now they think the criminals are victims. It is our fault.
> **Journalist:** Who do you mean by our fault?
> **Swart:** I mean us. The white cops. From before. But that's another story.

Although Swart catches himself before he goes into a more revealing explanation, the conversation as it is, illustrates a police force still laden with past guilt and serving under the leadership of their victims of the past. This translates to a system beleaguered by mistrust, trauma and profiling even within the rank and file of the security and governance sectors of the country. The net result is a reactive outfit bogged down by attitudes of otherness and hence prone to violence as an expression of their frustration - an extension of the historical translation of their destabilising crime situations depicted. As the accent in the lexicon of violence persists among the police, the alienation from the community grows. The isolation denies any chance of collaborative policing, which leads to an adversarial relationship between the two potential partners, leading to a culture of violence, summary execution, torture and eschewal of due process in seeking justice and law enforcement. As demonstrated in the foregoing, African crime films exude the agency of exposing, discussing and valorising cases of

© University of Venda

inept and lawless enforcement of law and justice in African countries, through the portrayal of violence, extrajudicial executions, torture and use of brute force, which has been reviewed against historical cases in various African jurisdictions.

4.4.3.4 Courting Injustice in the Courts of Justice and Prisons

The administration of justice in African crime films is broadly explored through the valorisation of court processes court systems, judgments, jurisprudence, and the depiction of judges as characters within the films. The portrayal of the courts and judges is a chequered image that presents the courts as efficient arbitrators and facilitators of the wheels of justice juxtaposed with the courts as links within the chain of injustice and miscarriage of justice. Courts are also depicted as weaklings flailing in the sway and influence of criminals or an oppressive police and governance system. On this particular idea judges are portrayed as vulnerable tools swooned to the machinations of criminals and at the risk of suffering personal harm based on the cases that they are adjudicating.

Viva Riva Presents the court system through the portrayal of a corrupt system where judges deliver rulings in favour of the highest bidder. When the Immigration Commissioner arrests the Angolan gangsters, they are presented with an option of paying 10,000 dollars to the commissioner or risk the consequences of paying more to a judge. This particular instance denotes that a trip to the court of law is simply an occasion to spend, as justice is presented as a commodity on the shelves at the marketplace of those who can afford it.

© University of Venda

The court in *Gangsters Paradise: Jerusalema* is presented in two faces; the first is revealed through the first case where Lucky Kunene is charged with a slew of crimes including racketeering. Through an exchange of files in the police repository an obviously guilty Lucky Kunene is acquitted by the court, much to the chagrin of detective blackie swart. The detective's exasperation after the acquittal reveals a court system that is bound and that dances to the whims of the manipulations presented. This reveals a fair administration of justice where cases are decided based on the law and facts presented but on the other hand, it also exposes the underbelly of the court as a space that can be used to sanitise criminals through manipulation of facts and corruption of case details. The second face of the court system in *Jerusalema* is provided by the final case in which Lucky Kunene is convicted of his crimes as charged. This case balances out the situation in the first case which shows the filmmaker's intention to depict the South African court system as an efficient and reliable infrastructure in the administration of justice and governance.

This face of the court system in South Africa is further reinforced by the portrayal *Noem My Skollie* in two major cases against the young ones. The court demonstrates its space within law enforcement and fair administration of justice unswayed by emotions or manipulations. In the first case presented in the film, Abraham and Gimba are convicted to jail time and in the second case after presentation of facts on the murder of an old man, Gimba, Gif, and Shorty are convicted and receive a death penalty sentence which is summarily executed. The justice system in South Africa is again valorised in the two films through the depiction of the prison system portrayed through

© University of Venda

the incarceration of comrade Nazareth, Nomsa, and Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema.* This instance displays the prison system as a place where offenders are rehabilitated. On the other hand, the prison service, and bail system are also depicted as ways of dealing with escaping the prison system. This is besides the depiction as a porous system that can be circumvented *Jerusalema* shows through Lucky who manages to escape from custody assisted by the sheer buffoonery and greed of the prison warder assigned to guard him in hospital. In fact, this loophole emerges when he manages to fool the prison health service and leaves the security prison to be treated in a hospital where he manages to escape custody.

Noem My Skollie, on the other hand, presents the prison system as a flawed space that is overrun by gangs that continue their activities within the impregnable walls. Indeed, the power exercised by the leadership of the number gangs in the prison cells, the freedom, and the confidence within which they run their affairs including drug running, committing sexual assault, and murder paints an image of a prison system that has been institutionalised into a network of criminals and a base for them to continue their affairs in safe custody.

Another portrayal, of the court system in Africa is the court process in *King of Boys.* Through the cases presented against Eniola, the court system in Nigeria is adequately appraised. The portrayal reveals a court system prone to manipulation of facts by unscrupulous Court officers Including investigators like Inspector Shehu and lawyers like Kemi who take the court through a wild goose chase and manipulation of facts to gain a conviction or non-conviction based on their interests. The portrayal also puts to

© University of Venda

life the image of the dangers that the officers of the court are exposed to when handling cases. During the Eniola case, Judge Nwachukwu's family is abducted and brutally murdered to influence his judicial ruling. His predicament reveals the vulnerability that the court officers experience; the intimidation and the threats to their lives and those of their loved ones, which in turn leads to a misapplication of the law, misrule, delayed justice, and miscarriage of justice.

The depictions by the films as discussed in the foregoing, do not exist in a vacuum. Corruption of the justice system has received wide reportage and has been a subject of review for a long time. In the case of Kenya, a flawed and corrupt court system has attracted criticism with specific judges being accused of receiving bribes and engaging in malpractices during their tenure of service. In Nigeria, the Supreme Court has been accused of being biased and ruling cases in favour of the highest bidder. A case in point is the presidential election petition of 2023 arising from the 2022 elections. The Supreme Court of Nigeria was accused of ignoring the glaring facts submitted before the court as they ruled in favour of the powerful functionaries and parties. The convergence of the motion picture and reality, as demonstrated in the foregoing, further cements the idea of African crime films being potent discussants of the situation of law and justice within the African nation-states. Indeed, the parallelism of specific cases presented and those depicted in the films supports the argument that the African crime film draws directly and aptly articulates the historicity of Africa, in this case unveiling the realities ambient in the law and justice systems within Africa.

© University of Venda

4.5 African Politics and Governance

Politics as a tool of governance is supposed to be a vehicle through which the citizenry of a nation-state negotiate for their space and demands their rights getting what is due to them in terms of development and alleviation from the vagaries of everyday living. Indeed, politics exists at the cusp of the transactional interaction between the ruling elite and the ruled citizenry. African politics is largely a blend of colonial practice, pre-colonial heritage, and influences from other cultures. The thesis by Ali Mazrui that Africa has been cultured by a triple heritage drawn from the Pre-colonial traditional African practises, influence from Arabs and Europeans can be proven through the practice of politics in various African countries (Mazrui, 1986; Mazrui and Laremont, 2002). Ranging from democracy, theocracy, autocracy and even monarchy, African politics has morphed in many ways, but has remained with one thing constant: the art of exclusion rather than inclusion Into the dialogues of governance.

African crime films articulate an image of politics in Africa and portend specific historicities within the African nation-states. These articulations provide a space to review the Byzantine brand of politics practised in Africa and an appreciation of the political realities experienced every day by the average continental African. The selected African crime films present African politics as a purveyor of hopelessness. Through subtle and overt critical lenses in films like *Jerusalema, Noem My Skollie*, *Viva Riva*, *Click Click Bang* and *Bodaboda Thieves* politics is reviewed within the context of an aloof infrastructure of governance that breeds politicians who are presented as greedy partakers of public resources, happy to benefit themselves and their loved ones

© University of Venda

with public resources, leaving the larger population to fend for themselves and suffer the consequences of a broken-down society.

Jerusalema indicts Post-Apartheid South Africa politics and politicians. Despite a gallant fight that led to the loss of lives, the depiction of the post-apartheid life for the average South African is still that of squalor and hopelessness and one characterised by the sheer wonder of why blood and sweat were expended fighting for independence. This regret is conveyed through the character of Comrade Nazareth, a former guerrilla fighter who received no reparations after the political transition and his hopes for taking back the property that was expropriated by the white Apartheid regime are dashed. In a drug-fuelled conversation with Tony Ngu, the two characters make a comparison between the plight of Igbos in Nigeria and the Post-Apartheid South Africa. The conversation proceeds thus,

> **Tony Ngu:** Us Igbos, we call ourselves the Jews of Nigeria. Do you know why? Because we have suffered persecution. that is why we are here, but you guys you had it tougher.
>
> **Nazareth:** They told us we were to punish those whities. We were going to take from them.
>
> **Tony Ngu:** And in reality, nothing.
>
> **Nazareth:** All I wanted was a house in Sandton and a Mercedes convertible.
>
> **Tony Ngu:** Now we are being demonized by this society they are calling us dirty filthy stinking *makwerekwere.* How do you think that makes me feel Nazareth?
>
> **Nazareth:** Pissed off!
>
> **Tony Ngu:** Yes. Only I understand how under-appreciated you are brother.

© University of Venda

The two characters engage in a victimhood banter and cast back at society for not giving them the much they have given. Nazareth a hero in the apartheid fight and Tony a purported victim of persecution in Nigeria perhaps in reference to the Biafran war and the resultant attitudes towards Igbos in the nation-state of Nigeria[36], find each other in an embrace of friendship courtesy of the quicksand of drugs and crime. This victimhood factor leads Nazareth to crime which he christens "Affirmative acquisition" and manifests through his outbursts of violence and eventual fall into drug abuse. This perceived treatment of the Independence veterans also finds validation in the reality of the Mau Mau of Kenya who continue to decry their post-independence suffering despite their Sacrifices to fight the colonialists. Wahome, Kiruthu and Mwangi, p. (2016, p. 225) lay this bare, when they affirm that,

> They suffered at the hands of both colonial and post-colonial governments in equal measures. The former criminalized and humiliated them while the latter used, abused and demonized them. This implies that the freedom fighters never enjoyed the glory and recognition for which they so gallantly fought.

On a general purview, the neglect of these important people within the society indicates the callous outlook that the ruling elite have towards the proletariat. The neglect experienced inspires feelings of hopelessness and explains why some may decide to go into illicit business and crime. *Click Click Bang* relays this situation through Kevin a talented footballer who pegs his hope on the chance to be spotted by European football

[36] This is aptly captured in a video documentary NewAfrica (2020) https://youtu.be/7JCvIvb8PpY?si=1utAsF776W1Ub8yg

© University of Venda

scouts. Despite possessing immense talent, his chance is taken away by a politician's nephew. His angst after the denial, points his blame squarely on politicians whom he accuses of using bribery to advance the chances for their loved ones leaving the hopeless citizenry to suffer from the challenges of poverty and the consequent lack of healthcare services. This accusation finds credence in the rant voiced out by Jemo in *Uradi*. He avers thus,

> **Jemo:** Who are the terrorists in society? Look around you!
>
> **Komu:** What do you mean?
>
> **Jemo:** Wake up and smell the coffee man we live in a man-eat-man society. Okay let's say a terrorist has killed 50 or 100 people, but there is a politician sitting in an office who has stolen 5 billion meant to buy medicine and build a hospital. People die due to lack of medicine or equipment! I watched my mother succumb to cancer every time the machine had broken down. When the politicians fall sick, they go abroad get treated then come back. So, tell me, who is the real terrorist? You would rather have someone who kills you right now, as compared to the one who kills your future, your kids' future, and your whole generation.

Jemo uses an anecdote of a politician as the worst terrorist and murderer in comparison with the Islamic terrorists and insurgents. His comparison of the terrorist and the politician posits that the politician on average and on a general scale kills more people through neglect of duty including the provision of healthcare services and critical infrastructure.

Politics in Africa is also depicted as an agent of chaos and disorder. Directly and indirectly, politics Is appraised as a source, catalyst and site of chaos and disorder. The electoral violence, that is explained offscreen in *Click Click Bang* is a reference to the historically accurate post-election violence of 2007/2008 a major flare-up in Kenya

© University of Venda

after a disputed election (Ochieng, Khachina and Iteyo, 2023). The violence led to the death of more than 1500 people and the displacement of more than 800,000 People (Ochieng, Khachina and Iteyo, 2023). The violence was a result of toxic politics that were tailored towards creating ethnic hatred and therefore took the form of ethnic cleansing, as communities rose against communities. Specifically, Kikuyus, President Kibaki's tribesmen were targeted by Kalenjins and Luos triggering revenge attacks. Other communities were caught up in the brutal crossfire depending on which side they were perceived to have supported between major political players, Kibaki of PNU And Raila Odinga of ODM (ibid).

Depicted within the same scale of verisimilitude, is the breakdown of the transport system, a potent sign of bad politics in Congo. The busting multitudes hanging precariously on a train reflects political disorder in Kinshasa and the Democratic Republic of Congo by extension. With the heritage of toxic politics since gaining Independence, the Democratic Republic of Congo has had a chequered practise of politics punctuated by a period of three decades under the rule of a greedy dictator Mobutu. Inspired by greed to amass the vast mineral wealth within Its lands, the post-independence Congo is characterised by the push and pull of political forces in the different provinces attempting to assert their sovereignty as a way towards exclusivity in accessing the minerals (Lawal, 2024). The chaos that ensued, saw the assassination of the first prime minister, Patrice Emery Lumumba, and the first president Joseph Kasavubu, resulting to ascendancy of Mobutu to presidency through chicanery and a subversive coalition with Belgium and America (Weissman, 2014).

© University of Venda

Mobutu's plunder of 30 years was ended by a Rwandan supported coup that resulted in the installation of Laurent Kabila as the president of the Republic of Congo. Kabila himself was eventually assassinated by his own presidential guard which circled to Joseph Kabila, his son, as the president. The political story of Congo, like many other African countries is identifiable as causal to the rundown infrastructure, the lack of basic amenities, and the general chaos characterised by struggle for the fittest, plaguing African Cities (Warfa and Mwetu, 2023). Despite the democratic election of Felix Tshisekedi, as Congolese president, violence still rules the fabric of Congo, as militia and rebels continue to terrorise the citizens in the rich mineral areas of Eastern Congo. Despite several interventions by the United Nations and the East Africa Regional Force, the guns are yet to go silent in Congo and massacres are still the order of the day as citizens get displaced in their own homeland (Lawal, 2024).

Military coups have become a growing concern in the contemporary Africa. Drawing the attention and ire of the African Union and regional organisations like ECOWAS, the violent government takeovers are becoming an attractive fad of upstaging corrupt, inept, and perpetual kakistocracies in Africa. Reviewing the juntas, (Marawako, Sixpence and Mapuvire, 2022; Taruvinga, 2023) indicate that such takeovers signal paradigmatic change to systems that have grown aloof from the responsibility given to them vide the governance mandate. As the splinters of the newest coup in Gabon crackle as the fire starts, the furnace burns hot in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso even as embers of the revolution glow brightly in recent past cases like Congo, Zimbabwe, Egypt, and Tunisia.

© University of Venda

Military takeovers are not a new phenomenon nor the only government takeover strategies in Africa. At the early onset of independence among African countries, military takeovers became the fodder for African governance as some countries like Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan experienced debilitating civil wars and ethnic cleansing that led to ravaging carnage of infrastructure, loss of life and livelihoods for her people. The African story of revolution though is not just written in blood. It has also been characterised by peaceful, democratic regime change and constitutional reforms that have transited African countries from the paradigms of violent engagement to negotiated and mediated democracies. Revolutions in African societies however cannot be limited to transitions in the higher echelons of power only. This section concerns itself with the shifts from the micro towards the macro level of the societal structure as it sets itself up for modern society and tackling contemporary societal issues. Specifically, revolutions in branches of governance like religion, politics, law, and order to the lower units of society like family, education spaces and ideology.

King of Boys reveals a case of politics, of exclusivity and disenfranchisement in Africa, through Eniola's denial of a chance to explore her political muscle. Eniola exposes a society averse to the inclusion of women within its governance. Despite her valuable contributions to the ruling party, her expectations for equivalent rewards like appointment to high office are dashed, and she is reminded of her place in the underworld and political space. Political power and influence are used by politicians to coerce poor people to vote them in, and in the after that leave them vulnerable with no

© University of Venda

chance for negotiation or development to speak of. This Lordship of poverty reveals itself In many African nation-states where cities host affluent leafy suburbs adjacent to poverty-stricken shanty towns in a contrasting side-by-side image. The contrast between Soweto and Sandton, the contrast between Lavington and Kawangware, and the contrast of Lekki and Makoko are instances of the binarism created by the politics of exclusion and display the stark difference between the African that draws gain from politics, and the one who counts losses from the brand of politics practised Within the African nation-states.

The criminal characters including Lucky, Kasisi, Eniola, and Riva, exhibit political consciousness and civic duty among the population and mirror a committed civil society that is determined to expose the ills bestowed upon countries by politicians. Indeed, the criminal, although not the virtuous, of all within the society, becomes a useful pillar within the fight for democracy and enhancing civic engagement which is an important ingredient In the desired political emancipation of the African people not from the masters of yore, but from the greedy misguided post-independence African leadership focussed only on accumulating wealth for their families. The African crime film in this context gains a political dimension and straddles into the political drama subgenre. This characterises the genre as a bending and blending of various dispositions that make up different genres, which tags the African crime film genre as a creative omnibus of perspective generically.

Katutura is an African crime film, but its political thesis is centred on a population that is still afflicted by the vagaries of a past so brutal. The film not only characterises

© University of Venda

criminals, victims, and law enforcers but it places on a pedestal, a society in dire need of a way out of its painful situations, crime being one of them. Looming large in the film is a question of historical injustice as the narrative progresses. The film through characters like Kondja moots the idea that at the present, members of the society need to think more about the future, consider how to grow the feeling of belonging and adopt a sense of permanence within Katutura. That way, they will allow themselves to build more permanent and stable lives in Katutura and invest more economically, morally, and socially within the community. This will deter elements like Shivago and his ilk from bullying a neighbourhood into his whims of evil business and encourage more Kondjas.

From the foregoing, the Odyssey of the African criminal is akin to the stories in the selected African crime films. It is important to note that the character arcs of those criminals depicted in the films reflect the situations of the crime context and the political situations of the depicted areas. The African criminal as depicted in those films seems to be a political animal, and as such the crime is a political tool for advancing certain ideologies. In the films under scrutiny, criminals ranging from petty thieves, the organised mafia, the corrupt security agencies, and the corrupt agents of the state are all reflections of a broken-down society. The stories and their situations show that each of them holds a valid reason for crimes committed, reasons that are attributed to the failings of the state machinery, the dwindling economies, the lack of opportunities, and the general hopelessness resulting from toxic and corrupt post-independence politics.

© University of Venda

4.6 Religiosity and Religious Extremism

The subject of religion is a prominent point of expression in African crime films. Set forth by characters in specific anecdotes in the narratives, religion, and spirituality craft their own space and exude specific influences in the decisions of the characters under scrutiny. Used as a backdrop of morality through which the filmmakers attempt to give direction, religion and spirituality find several dimensions reviewing the space they occupy within the African crime narratives. Firstly, religion is depicted as a catatonic drug, blinding people from their realities. The sampled films depict characters that hold implicit beliefs in their religions and spirituality, in turn eschewing pragmatic and logical formulas to tackle their realities. These depictions are critical to comprehending the infrastructure of religion in Africa, its contribution to society, and its place in unravelling the cluelessness and the hopelessness of a population far removed from the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions, due to beliefs in a higher power in charge of their circumstances. In one dimension this tallies with Mbiti (1990) who characterises Africans as “notoriously religious” and inn deep touch with spirituality in their everyday existence.

This is evident in the religiosity displayed by Mama Abel in *Bodaboda Thieves*. A devout Catholic, she always remembers to pray in the morning as they all leave for their different duties and forces Abel to carry with him the prayer rosary as he goes out to seek employment. She is featured in two scenes reciting the Hail Mary prayer and rosary. Her character displays an unquestioning, and irrevocable belief that her prayers are enough to change their dire circumstances at home. This same attitude is displayed

© University of Venda

by Lucky's mother in *Jerusalema.* Far-in taken by her church, she religiously participates in her fellowship activities, notwithstanding the wanting situation at home. Her language is the Bible, and she tries hard to recruit Lucky into the belief, questioning his choice of books while nudging him to burn the midnight oil reading the Bible, terming it as the true word of God. Besides the several instances of her participation in church activities her zeal to share the word of God, and the belief that the man of God has referred her to a Bible verse that would turn her errant son around, Mama Lucky, carries with her a specific verse (Psalms 137) for lucky to read.

This critical outlook based on Lucky's and Abel's eschewal of the direction provided by their mothers and taking their chosen paths also recurs in *Viva Riva*. During the altercation with his parents, Riva accuses the mother of being an absent parent, only concentrating her energies in church. Despite her moral outlook and faithful belief in God and practise of spirituality, Riva still identifies her failure as a parent, an accusation she does not deny. Subtle depictions of religion are shown in *King of Boys*, *Òlòtūré* and *Katutura*. Ehi goes to a church after being sexually assaulted by Sir Philip presenting the church as a place to seek solace and solutions to the vagaries of the world. Equally, the pastor in *Katutura* functions as a voice of reason and the saving grace of Katutura when threatened by drug dealers. This depicts religion as a fallback plan and as a moral compass for our society lost in the abyss of inequity and evil. In her lowest moments, Ehi finds solace in the church and resolves to continue with her investigation. Despite the nasty experience, Ehi's resolve is strengthened despite Emeka's protestations.

© University of Venda

Uradi presents an image of violent extremism as another face of religion inspired by toxic dogma ascribed from fundamentalist religious beliefs. Steeped in religiosity more than spirituality, *Uradi* depicts Muslims in their fundamentalist disposition, which is atypical of violent extremism and terrorism. This is a reflection of the real situation in many African jurisdictions and global nation-states where Islamic groups have risen with the intention of creating Islamic caliphates. To achieve their goal, the extremist outfits have engaged in an orgy of violence and pogroms of non-believers according to their twisted dogma. Accused by moderate Muslim faithful of misreading and exaggerating the teachings of jihad in the Quran, the fundamentalists have terrorised many African countries fomenting insurgency and terrorism (Maruf and Joseph, 2018). Religious terrorist groups in Africa include Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, ISIL, Al-Muhajiroun, and Boko Haram, Among others prowling African landscapes in Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia, Chad, and Mali.

Uradi in this particular case, provides a pedestal of looking at fundamentalism as a retrogressive ideology and its effect on innocent populations that are radicalised to violence and those that fall victim to the resulting violent attacks. Recruited through trickery and radicalization within the Islamic places of worship, many youths have been brainwashed to believe that violence is a viable way of expressing their commitment to religion and spirituality. In their exposition of the growth o Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram Maruf and Joseph (2018) and Habila (2017) record how religion and the commitment to it is used to subdue the will of the conscripted young recruits and hence making them vulnerable to the whims of the extremist ideologies. This implicit blind loyalty is the

© University of Venda

seed from which violent extremism is practiced within the aegis of terror and insurgency. These assertions explain the psychological disposition of the Africans that the fundamentalists exploit in the youth. *Uradi* demonstrates this through Rashid and Omar that spend colossal amounts of money to fund terror activities. The film however does not dabble into overtime politics of Religion. *From A Whisper (2009)* cited in Kimani (2022) delves into the religious convictions of Fareed, a character portrayed as an ordinary Muslim faithful who transforms into a murderous terrorist with his religion being the *force majeure.*

The specific instances cited from the selected crime films demonstrate that religion is indeed a central idea within the primary framework of crime storytelling. Either touted as a new inspiration for criminal acts, a moral compass for criminal acts or the opium that numbs the feelings of victimhood and tries to inspire hope where there is none, religion finds its space within the centrepiece of crafting the stories of the lives and times of the continental African. The image that is painted by the films indeed connects with the real situations within the African landscapes, characterised by crooked Pentecostal evangelism, socially limiting religious canons and the extremism inspired by religious radicalization that has translated to violence. A case in point is Joseph Kony, the Ugandan rebel leader who has been cited to use his Christian fundamentalist teachings to turn innocent children into soldiers bent on killing populations and spatial conquest.

Besides the expectation of commitment and absolute loyalty from members, the religious organisations portrayed in *Jerusalema*, *Bodaboda Thieves*, *Òlòtūré* and *Uradi*

© University of Venda

also display nonchalance and insulation from the realities suffered by their members. Despite their influence within the society, religious organisations in Africa remain inert and complicit with corrupt governments, and criminals abdicating their solemn duty of moral guidance and coalescing with those that engage in illicit trade and corrupt acquisition of properties. The churches cheerfully receive offering and tithe without questioning the source. This has led to obvious accusations of hypocrisy and being listed among the dysfunctional entities within progressive societies.

4.7 Drug Use and Abuse

The issue of drug substance abuse is presented as a prevalent menace afflicting the young and old, the privileged on the underprivileged in African nation-states and cities. Presented as a perpetration of crime and an element of suffering by law-abiding citizens and criminals alike, drug abuse is revealed in the African crime films as the bane of progress, positive thinking, and the future of African characters.

Africa is a major conduit in drug trafficking trade in the world. Used as a major transit space and destination for hard drugs from South America, Southeast Asia and America, Africa has suffered the drug menace with the debilitating consequences of diminished productivity and a zombie population, leading to a breakdown of the socioeconomic fabric spanning the micro and macroeconomic levels. Drug abuse in Africa is quantified to reach high levels among the African continental population and transforming from a drugs producer and transit zone to a drug destination from other parts of the world (Fentaw, Fenta and Biresaw, 2022; Onaolapo *et al.*, 2022).

© University of Venda

The selected African crime films depict the abuse and trafficking of a variety of drugs, including tobacco, alcohol and a variety of hard drugs, including heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine. *Jerusalema* provides a vivid depiction of the drug menace in South Africa and Johannesburg in particular. The effect of this menace is shown across the black and white populations represented by Josh, the Jew boy from the suburbs of Johannesburg and the dozens of black characters in the clubs including addicted individuals like Comrade Nazareth. The drug running is attributed as depicted in the film to foreigners, Nigerians to be specific. The extent of drug use and dependency is captured aptly by Tony Ngu's assertion on the situation in Hillbrow, "I sell drugs. That is business. They call us pushers, But I don't push, it flies off the shelf!"

In a particularly arrogant but accurate picture, Tony tells Lucky that drugs are a profitable business. This specific inference indicates that indeed, there is a serious drug problem in the depicted space. Equally locating this problem is *Noem My Skollie* which depicts Mr. Carelse as a major trafficker of Cannabis. Sativa. His haulage of the drug also receives competition from the number 28 gang. The severity of the drug problem is father cemented by the characterisation of the young boys, including AB, Gimba, Shorty, and Gif smoking at a very tender age. However, unlike the situation in *Jerusalema,* the drug problem is not portrayed as a crisis in *Noem My Skollie* but as a normal day leisure activity and there is no legal or extra-legal attention given to it.

The social problem is illustrated when AB Goes to ask for money from his father who prefers to gamble and drink instead of providing for his family. In contrast, *Jerusalema* Attempts to show the negative effect of the drugs by showing the zeal to fight the

© University of Venda

menace through Lucky Kunene and the police. However, the drug fight as articulated in the film and advanced by the Dudula movement, seems to be a shorthand for engaging in the politics of parochial nationalism since the targeted drug runners and communities are foreigners. Specifically, Nigerians are mostly accused of being the major drug runners within the townships of South Africa (Tarisayi, 2024).

The Kenyan situation is captured by the portrayal in *Click Click Bang* through Kasisi and his friends in the opening sequences who sit idle, chewing Khat and drinking hard liquor. The characters in the scene provide a subtle hint at the deep social problem in Kenya mostly characterised by alcoholism. Alcoholism has been cited as a crisis in Central, Rift Valley, and other regions in Kenya a reflection of the grim fact captured by Muteti et al. (2022) that "globally, an estimated 3 million deaths are reported every year as a result of harmful alcohol use, representing 5.3 % of all deaths". The alcoholism problem has been compounded further by the socioeconomic circumstances and the proliferation of factories producing second-generation alcohol, which has in several instances produced grim results of death and permanent blindness to the drinkers (Wangui and Walter, 2024). The idea of drinking to be cool and to pass the time is also shown in *Bodaboda Thieves*. Abel and his friends pass the time drinking and smoking in a gambling joint in the guise of looking for employment. Also plagued by the problem of lethal traditional and second-generation brews, Uganda and Kenya suffer the consequences of a population sunken in alcoholism and its effects.

© University of Venda

Òlòtūré, *Katutura* and *Viva Riva* Provide a platform to evaluate the drug problem in Nigeria, Namibia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Katutura* overtly delves into the problem, by portraying characters that are directly engaged in the supply and drug abuse. With drug lords like Shivago, his peddlers and drug addicts like Esme, the story in *Katutura* postulates a dire situation within the Namibian society whereby their potential is decimated by drug use and abuse. The business of drugs invites the twin problems of poverty and violence within the society as the drug runners become more coercive and the society trying to propel itself gets disenfranchised from doing any business due to addiction and dependency. The drug business is also stands accused of causing erosion of values enunciated through the depiction of Esme who is unable to take care of her son due to her battle with addiction to hard drugs.

Òlòtūré and *Viva Riva* covertly present this problem through the portrayal of characters engaged in bar hopping and casual drinking as they revel in the Lagos and Kinshasa entertainment establishments. After receiving colossal sum of money from GO, Riva's first thought is to go and drink and party in the club. The characters in *Òlòtūré* in addition also spend their twilight work lives in bars where drinking and drug use (including libido enhancement drugs) is rampant. This drug situation recurs in other films like *Nairobi Half Life*, *Killer Necklace*, *The Four Corners*, and is reflected in American gangster movies, Italian Mafia films, and British spy films. Although presenting historically specific cases as they are in the depicted jurisdictions, the issue of drug abuse as a thematic concept can be viewed as a universal disposition of the African crime genre, either as a mainstay of the criminal as in *Katutura, Jerusalema,*

© University of Venda

American Gangster and *The God Father* inter alia, or a societal problem afflicting the population as shown in *Click Click Bang*, *Bodaboda Thieves* and *Jerusalema* through comrade Nazareth and Josh. This depiction provides an apt window through which the phenomenon of drug abuse in Africa; the codeine addiction in Nigeria, the Alcohol situation in Kenya and the hard drugs situation in South Africa can be reviewed.

4.8 Chapter Summary

Each society has issues that either propel or threaten the existence of its people. The place of genre in addressing the social, cultural, political, and economic issues, is the main discussion of the foregoing. This chapter stems from the third objective of this study and draws from the discourses in the previous chapters that attempt to characterise the African crime film genres based on direct and implied dispositions in their audio-visual silhouette and narrative framing. The present chapter set out to engage in further analysis of the genre based on thematic rendering and the connections between the inherent themes and the African societal issues subsumed within the narrative and those articulated through the central and peripheral messaging.

This chapter discussed a variety of thematic concerns and equivalent African issues valorised in the selected African crime films. The issues discussed include the parochial nationalism that plagues many African countries, alienating fellow Africans, which draws the consequence of diminished trade, cultural exchange and advancement of hatred and unfounded violence. This thematic matter has been used to draw parallels to the bagging issues of xenophobia and its attendant violence in South Africa, the strife between neighboring countries like Congo, Angola and Rwanda,

© University of Venda

Ethiopia and Eritrea, Kenya, and Somalia. Their adversarial relationship despite shared cultures, history, and geopolitical interests, is an issue that the African crime films reveal through this theme.

The next chapter adds to the continuum of this dissertation by recasting the discussions in the preceding chapters within specific philosophical and ideological frameworks. The chapter the draws a framework of a theoretical framework fit for African cultural discourse and analysis of African films, among other cultural products.

© University of Venda

5 CHAPTER FIVE:
SOCIO-INTELLECTUAL CONCOMITANTS OF AFRICAN CRIME FILM

5.1 Chapter Overview

African crime films function as instruments for the examination of societal knowledge systems and the scrutiny of the theories underpinning them. By critiquing these films, audiences are encouraged to reassess their knowledge frameworks and confront the intellectual assumptions that shape their understanding of crime and society. This chapter aims to consolidate the discourse established in the preceding chapters by interpreting the audio-visual aesthetics, themes, and narrative structures in light of the evolving African socio-intellectual landscape. To accomplish this, I undertake a review of various African and related perspectives concerning socio-cultural configurations and identities, the nuances of representation and mediated influences, ethical and normative questions posed within the films, the foundations of African intellectualism, and theories pertinent to African cinema, ultimately leading to a proposed framework for analysing African crime narratives cinema.

5.2 Interstices of Social-cultural Representation and Mediated Identities

The African crime films set their narratives within the framework of discernible issues, individuals, and locales that are prevalent in African societies. In the preceding chapters, it has been established that these films centre their themes on culturally, historically, and politically recognisable subjects within African countries. Specifically, African crime films endeavour to address issues such as political greed, injustice, police brutality, and socioeconomic challenges encompassing poverty, struggling

© University of Venda

economies, and historical injustices experienced by sectarian populations, including ethnic, religious, and racial groups. Furthermore, these films explicitly confront matters pertaining to access to education, basic amenities, food, shelter, clothing, and security. Regarding justice, the films explore the conduct of law enforcement towards the populace, examining how police and military forces often violate civilian rights or disregard their pleas for protection, scrutinise the role of courts, which are expected to act as arbiters of disputes and uphold justice in functioning societies portraying them openly as instruments of injustice, where freedom may be purchased or stolen from those who rightfully deserve it through dubious methods, including tampering with judgments via bribery, threats, and manipulation of evidence by corrupt lawyers and the accused.

Additionally, the films illuminate the behaviour of politicians who, rather than investing in the empowerment of their citizens, resort to bribery for political gain and embezzle public funds for personal enrichment, thus further eroding the populace's access to public goods. Consequently, African crime films become a critical component in open discussions regarding societal ailments and in proposing solutions to these challenges. Likewise, through characterization, crime films highlight the failures within governance structures and identify individuals, organizations, and entities within society responsible for these shortcomings. This analysis addresses the issue of determining who is accountable for Africa's inability to achieve fully functional and efficient societal organs. Thus, these films are particularly significant in fostering discussions about issues within African societies that require homegrown solutions. The instances of

© University of Venda

representation birth the exposition of various identities archetypal to the Continental African. The identities straddle the social, cultural and economic spheres, evincing local edicts and embracing global branches and thought, which blend into an African viewpoint and reveal gender, ethnic and conditional identities. The representations thereof of people, spaces, events and phenomena further fosters a discourse and portraiture of various identities attributable to the characters and settings within the African traditional and contemporary paradigms. To understand these assertions, I expound on societal conditions, gendered identities, religious identities and ethical questions raised in the films in the proceeding discussions.

5.2.1 Centrality of the Society and its Conditions

At the nucleus of the African crime film sits the society on whose fulcrum its members and conditions oscillate. The crime films manifest society through characterisation of various players in the social strata including individual members, families, neighbourhoods, ethnic communities, and nations. Additionally, the films appraise societal conditions through situational depictions in the narrative pitting characters against difficult circumstances in their odysseys and sojourns as they quest to achieve certain goals and surmount obstacles. One of the conditions canvased in the films is the socio-economic condition encapsulating access or lack of proper healthcare, education, and basic needs (food shelter and clothing) and security.

The African crime films capture a narrative of inequality and skewed distribution of resources across demographics. *Jerusalema* explores the inequality through the depiction of characters across the divide. Lucky and Leah Friedlander among other

© University of Venda

characters represent this dichotomy. Lucky born and bred in the shanty town, projects an image of a bright boy whose chances of success are hampered by this condition, a corollary of being born to a shanty town single mother, who lacks financial power to nourish and educate her children. Her struggle is captured through vignettes of the meagre menu served on the dinner table sparking a brawl among the kids who see Zakes' presence as an unwelcome mouth reducing their rightful ration. "Why can't he go and eat at his own home?" Lucky's brother wonders. The object of their squabble being a dreary, unbuttered piece of bread and black tea. Besides the food situation, the family like others in their sprawling neighbourhood has to make do with habitation in temporary and semipermanent shanties that do very little to protect them from the elements. This is in stark contrast to the shimmering city of Johannesburg captured in dreamy distant silhouette skylines its details obscured from their view but its majesty swooning to their desires.

This identity of the marginalised majority in society also recurs in *Noem My Skollie* where the main protagonist AB, his family and friends; Gif and Tyrone represent a population characterised by struggles to fend for basics. In one iconic scene for example, AB approaches his father (who is busy swigging a bottle of moonshine and gambling with his friends by a garbage dump) for money to buy food. The old Lonzi dismisses his son, his ire revealing a frustration occasioned by lack of means. Engaged in low scale leisure with peers, his frustration reveals that his income as a dustman cannot support both basic needs and his cheap leisure, drawing an image that the two present competing interests - which means investments in one, diminishes the chances

© University of Venda

to attain the other. This connotes a deplorable living also amplified by Tyrone's homelessness'. The characters condition of penury not only lies within the characters lack of means and materiality but resides within their implicit and explicit ambitions to succeed and join the elusive suburbia for a life of luxury and fast lanes.

The desire for success and riches reveals itself in Lucky (*Jerusalema)* Komu (*Uradi)* , AB (*Noem My Skollie)*, Abel (*Bodaboda Thieves)*, Linda (*Òlòtūré*), Eniola (*King of Boys)* interalia. Abel like Lucky purchases food and a television set at the first sign of money despite there being no power connection at home. It is this conditions and attendant ambitions that the filmmakers posit, push them to crime as a Machiavellian route to success. Besides basic needs, education access is an issue that mediates the socio-economic identities of the film characters. From the *Jerusalema* exposition, it is evident that Lucky banks on education to change the fortunes of his family. His commitment to schooling despite his obvious disadvantages that force him to sell 'peanuts for peanuts' - a euphemism for meagre income earned from a small mercantile after-school business, conducted illegally in the train, ensuing chases from train stewards – demonstrates a deep desire to succeed, with education as the fuel. His vision is that his college education would be supported by a scholarship, a hope that is irrevocably shattered, consequently altering his path of success from education to crime. His diminished chances notwithstanding, Lucky is privileged compared to characters like AB, Tyrone, and Anto *(Viva Riva);* young chaps whose narratives eschew the education dimension. Based on their depicted odysseys, the characters receive no chance even at elementary education.

© University of Venda

The significance of education to the African child despite the pitfalls of unemployment and the minefield of poor economies cannot be gainsaid. The importance of education is best exemplified by Komu a university student who is afforded a second chance to pursue a legitimate career as his terrorist masters go to jail in *Uradi*. It is averred in the narrative that his value to the crime outfit is bolstered by his knowledge and skills drawn from his architectural degree, whose pursuit is supported by his charitable aunt. This imperative therefore reinforces education as an important driver in crafting chances of success and reinvention for characters even when encumbered by existential armageddons and the place of the society in supporting the needy to achieve it. Komu's aunt and the scholarship scheme that Lucky hopes for represent the sections of society that serve the role of equilibration in situations where immense potential meeting dire lack. African societies have institutionalised this form of charity, or "black tax", levied on successful relations to alleviate the suffering of their poor kin.

The lush suburbs of the Johannesburg city is where Leah Friedlander calls home in *Jerusalema*. Surrounded by opulent neighbours like Santos Ribeiro, the Danvista mansion landlord, Leah's struggles only revolve around her brother's addiction to drugs. To her, poverty looks glamourous, as it only exists in glossy, pitiful images. However, the reality of the poor is a distant facade even though it lies within the physical vicinity of her affluent Sandton neighbourhood. Sheltered from a life of lack, Leah only sees the aesthetic dimension of poverty, as she lacks a human manifestation to associate with the image of poverty. It is important to note that the film does not explicitly explore Leah's background, likely because she is not a major character.

© University of Venda

However, her contrasting life of comfort implicitly suggests that she enjoyed the privilege of a quality, expensive education with peers of similar backgrounds. Her stature in the film provides a stark contrast of abundance and success, which raises the possibility that, given a chance, an African character can thrive in comfort. It may be argued that her race[37] gives her the extra advantage. her success underscores the capacity of African children to achieve success when presented with sufficient opportunities. However, the important questions that loom large from the contrasting conditions like a thick mist are: (1) why are the opportunities not shared equally for all African children? This is a question that must be raised in the capitalist societies African countries have turned out to be, creating feudal societies that offer public goods to the highest bidders, segregating the struggling majority. (2) What is needed to fuel an equality renaissance in African countries? (3) How do we surmount the inequality? Some of the answers reveal themselves in the societal mindset evident in the foregoing and proceeding discussions on the sense of communalism. How Zakes is accepted in the Kunene household; In Aunty Celia's decision to host Tyrone, and in Komu's aunt's decision to educate him.

Another condition examined by films is inadequate healthcare. Healthcare is regarded as one of the primary human needs and rights. The right to adequate healthcare has been strengthened by regional and global initiatives aimed at improving access to universal health coverage, as evidenced by legislation, treaties, and conventions.

[37] Leah is a white, South African of Jewish ethnicity.

© University of Venda

Healthcare systems are depicted in films, illustrating the experiences of characters as they navigate diverse health issues and medical situations. These films illuminate the challenges and adversities that individuals encounter within the healthcare system, addressing themes such as access to care, the quality of medical services, and the emotional burden that illness can impose on patients and their families. By portraying these narratives on the big screen, filmmakers seek to raise awareness and stimulate discussions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of healthcare systems worldwide.

The films characterise the absence of a reliable and equitable medical scheme accessible to the disadvantaged and those who are within the lower cadre of the socioeconomic spectrum. Specifically, the films show the vulnerability of that population when encumbered with chronic, critical and terminal illnesses that require specialised management, and which require a lot of resources to treat or manage, a critical tool that the portrayed masses do not possess. The mediated perception, however, is that it is the responsibility of the government to provide adequate healthcare services for all its citizens, regardless of their socioeconomic status, thereby essentially categorising healthcare as a primary societal good, in the same category as the provision of critical infrastructure and education.

The characters directly blame their elected representatives and government officials when encumbered with difficult healthcare situations that lack solutions and thereby consider the government responsible for the deplorable health services. *Click Click Bang* explores this issue of healthcare through the depiction of A major supporting character Mokeira, Kevin's sister who suffers from A critical renal disease which

© University of Venda

requires her to undergo periodical dialysis sessions. Her condition indicated in the film is that she is unable to pay for her dialysis sessions due to joblessness, and lack of a stable source of income leading to several medical scares. Mokeira and her sibling Kevin hope that Kevin's talent and the opportunity to go and play soccer in Europe would alleviate her suffering as she won't be able to not only pay for the dialysis but also for the expensive kidney transplant procedure that she so desperately requires.

However, the shattering of the European dream diminishes any hope for her health to be taken care of. After his loss of the chance to Sidi Kamara Kevin not only feels aggrieved that the chance was taken by Sidi who is of A lesser skill, but he also feels aggrieved that the same money that should have been used to take care of his sister's healthcare is used to bribe the soccer scouts to select Sidi instead. So, his disappointment is not just about losing the opportunity but is also as a result of the lost chance to get has his sister the expensive medical services that she needs to get herself back to good health. Mokeira’s predicament therefore underscores the vulnerability of the Kenyan population and Africa by extension to diseases that span critical, genetic, communicable and non-communicable maladies that require complex and expensive treatment and management. The required vaccines, curative drugs and pharmaceutical research are an expensive affair only accessible to those that can afford it. Film also reveals the toll that the medicines take on not only the sick but also their loved ones who have to make sacrifices, committing their finances, their time and their attention as caregivers.

© University of Venda

Kevin engages in a variety of odd jobs and ends up in crime just to make sure that his sister has medicine. This is a motif that is also depicted in *Uradi,* and *king of boys.* In *Uradi,* we learn that Jemo's mother died of cancer. Having no means to pay for the expensive treatment and critical care that the disease requires, she wastes away and dies painfully, an event that stays in Jemo's mind turning his perspective to believe that the worst terrorists are those that steal from the sick. The politicians that take away and corruptly enrich themselves with funds meant for stocking hospitals with medicine employing doctors. The burden of health care as Jemo and Kevin demonstrate, in financial Social and emotional dimensions is borne not just by the sick but also by their families, orchestrating the collective suffering of a whole family as they contend with the malady of their kin and figure out how to finance their care. The resilience demonstrated, therefore is not only centered on the sick but also on their caregivers, their loved ones and those finance and manage their care.

Another aspect of healthcare addressed in the films is the issue of alcoholism and drug abuse as a health problem. U*radi* depicts almost father as an unrepentant drunkard who seems to attract no respect or affection from his family due to his drunkenness. *Katutura* and *Jerusalema a*lso widely and to deeply explore the issue of drug abuse. Even though the issue is not explored as a health issue but rather as a social and a legal issue, the potrayal raises fundamental questions about what the South African, Kenyan and Namibian among other African societies are dealing with in terms of drug abuse among its population and attendant effects. In *Jerusalema* the characters of Nazareth and Josh portray Individuals who are addicted to drugs, to the point that it

© University of Venda

becomes a health problem. This is evident as he becomes frail mentally and physically due to drugs and Josh, ends up dead from a drug overdose.

Alongside the issue of drug abuse, another dimension that is highlighted is the impact on maternal health. This aspect is briefly explored in the film, but it raises significant questions. In the neighbourhood of Katutura, a young girl is depicted purchasing an emergency contraceptive pill. Although she feels uneasy and uncomfortable, she is able to obtain it without any questions or advice. This portrayal is not accidental; it reflects the filmmaker's perspective and the ideas he wishes to convey. In an attempt to balance out the characters, the filmmaker also depicts Foibe as being sterile and unable to have children. This aspect is explored both socially and medically, as we witness Foibe getting tested and receiving distressing results indicating her infertility. This contrast is further emphasized by Esme who is able to conceive but is unfortunately hooked on drugs. The scene featuring the young girl purchasing emergency contraceptives sheds light on the vulnerable position women can find themselves in when men refuse to take responsibility after sexual encounters. While there are various contraceptive options available, including physical methods like condoms and male contraception methods such as vasectomy, the burden of contraception and confirming fertility is often left to women. What is particularly concerning is that the film does not depict any accompanying sex education or maternal health training, even within the prominently featured school setting.

The Katutura inhabitants are in a condition of temporality after being uprooted from their original dwelling which essentially de-escalated them from a viable place of plenty

© University of Venda

to a space they could not settle. This is mirrored in *Jerusalema* that takes the "new Jerusalem" social mobility concept. With particular political, economic and social upscales expected at the dusk of Apartheid, the Desmond Tutu led forgiveness and reconciliation process evidently glossed over the needful restitution for the oppressed population. The society still remained thirsty for a reset and replenishment into a just and equal nation. Characters like Nazareth hoped the independence war would transform their socio-economic conditions by taking from the 'whiteys'. However, the truth and reconciliation adjudicated admission of guilt without redress and complaints of marginalisation without affirmative compensation to those that had been historically dispossessed. The net effect was the perpetuation of the earlier capitalist creed, with the minority remaining as owners of capital. This is adduced by the film's allocation of conditional roles; Lucky and his black people inhabiting the condition attendant to slums and the derelict Hillbrow, whilst Leah, Santos and other white people inhabiting the organised comforts of the hither and thither hoity-toity leafy suburbs. These are the utopian "Jerusalemas" Lucky, and his ilk yearns for, and it costs building hijacking for him to afford the condition, which is short-lived as he becomes an easy target, poignant like a sore thumb. The society in this case takes the identity of a dislocated, disenfranchised but hopeful character not fully reconciled with its difficult, oppressive past but seeks a renewal, restitution and a utopia of equality, equity and respect, but stuck in a historic limbo or temporality.

Among the clear depictions of African phenomena and identity is the portrayal of the culture of collectivism under communal engagement in characterisation. Kenyatta

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

(1978) establishes that in terms of behaviour, Africans operate collectively. Unlike the solitary gangster who prowls the realm of crime, criminal activities are predominantly conducted by gangs, militias, vigilante groups, and terrorist organisations. Combating these crimes is not the responsibility of a lone super-detective or masked vigilante, but rather a team or squad of police officers. Therefore, although individuals may commit crimes independently, their actions often align with the directives of larger organisations they are affiliated with. This is a manifest phenomenon in Africa, where many traditional cultures feature egalitarian leadership systems characterised by councils, caucuses, and collective decision-making. These peculiarities are evidenced in the African crime films, which characterise gangs, crime families and communities with shared histories under destinies. This is a particularly important cusp between the African crime film and the phenomenology of African people in their diversity.

Invariably, the articulation of existential conditions beset on African crime film characters reveals an egalitarian and communal identity that dictates upon members of the society to act for the good of the community, taking care of each other and always priming the community. The acts of selflessness among characters are scripted for the sustenance of the community. For these reasons, some criminals are viewed as enemies of the community; hence, the community punishes or facilitates their punishment. Criminals like Tony Ngu and his Nigerian drug dealing ilk in *Jerusalema,* Mr Carelse and others in *Noem My Skollie*, Alero and Chuks in Òlòtūré , César in *Viva Riva,* Rashid in *Uradi*, and Askofu in *Click Click Bang* among others, are therefore

© University of Venda

viewed as unwanted, repugnant and dispensable criminals since they do not give to society and only thrive to its detriment.

On the other hand, Robin Hood criminals, like Lucky, Kasisi and Eniola get a second chance, and the proceeds of their plunder are invested back into the community, making them community vigilantes and even role models. This breeds a moral dilemma that I shall discuss later in this chapter. Inherent in the communal identity is communal pride and concerted celebrations of individual and collective victories. For instance, a group of women delivers Komu's university admission letter in a jolly mood, while equally Kasisi and the community await with bated breath to witness Kevin's success in the soccer scouting venture. Their excitement at his prospects and their disappointment after his loss, is in unison, which signals a communal feeling, which is a signature notable in the sample films. Society, therefore, takes the silhouette and soul of a nurturer who readily partakes in the victories and guilt of her children. Through the depiction of supportive families and communities, albeit naively so, the society as a character demonstrates the sense of collective virtue when edifying or punishing one of their own and in the experiences of each member, thereby centralising society as a major character in the African crime films.

5.2.2 Gendered Identities

Another aspect of African identity canvassed in the films is the gendered spectacle and female Agency and power in crime and society at large. Since the advent of crime cinema, women have been mainly cast in support character roles, while male characters have dominated the leads. Most notably, the leading characters

© University of Venda

representing the various players of the crime world are predominantly male character roles. Newland (2017) avers that the crime film has for the length of its existence been "overwhelmingly the remit of the violent male". Grant (2007: 80) attributes this phenomenon to "white male consciousness", fashioning genres such as adventure, war, detective, horror, science fiction, the Western and gangster for a male audience, and casting "romantic melodramas and musicals as women's films". Summer (2022) accedes with this assertion averring that the gender-slant phenomenon is also rampant in Hollywood and further takes note of the market awakening of filmmaking that is considerate to women in the central role allocation.

Feminist critics in Africa have deponed that women deserve to be included in the spirit of equality, in all facets of labour and leadership (Abah, 2008). Crime filmmakers have resisted this idea and further reinforced male dominance by establishing principal characters are man-only roles (Grant, 2007). Warshow (1948) additionally characterises the American gangster as male, recounting the persona in the masculine pronoun "He". Nollywood is another example of a cinema culture that stands accused of marginalising female characters, relegating them to the periphery of stereotype, objectification, and victimhood, characterising them as prostitutes, suffering wives, femme fatales, witches, husband killers and objects of sexploitation (Abah, 2008; Ibbi, 2018; Osakpolor, 2021). Dovey (2012: 19) acknowledges that since the 1960s films by Africans have built consistency in the depiction of "strong women characters, positive matriarchal cultures and a critique of tyrannical patriarchal cultures." This

© University of Venda

acknowledges the role of women and their contribution to the cinematic genres, which ring true of African crime films.

The role of a woman in African crime films reflects the role of a woman in society and goes ahead to humanise the criminal and extend the narrative in view of the criminal characters' relationships. The women characters in the sampled films are depicted as mothers, colleagues, lovers, wives, law enforcers, neighbours, teachers, sex workers, pimps, and journalists in various arcs, including protagonists, catalysts, love interests, and antagonists. In such roles, the women reflect on their agency against oppression in Africa, their intersectional struggles and pyrrhic victories. In the characterisation, the films portray the realities faced by women in Africa and reimagine more possibilities of power, leadership, and equality. The role of Eniola Salami as the Oba (king) reinforces this point. Her assertion of power against established male dominance, manifested by Aare Akinwande, male politicians, male gangsters and policemen like inspector Shehu and Nurudeen Gobir, reinforces the space of women in the larger African society. In exercise of her power Eniola deploys high handed tactics including threats, violence and murder to assert her space and reinforce her agency.

Besides Eniola’s exercise of hard power, there is also a demonstration of soft power by women like Foibe in Katutura. Foibe's affection for Dangi provides her with an influential role in his life, serving as a guiding force in his decision to avoid a life of crime and association with criminals. Their romantic relationship amplifies her power, as her love and support become vital in Dangi's pursuit of a virtuous path. Another example of soft power is demonstrated by Nora, whose influence over Riva and Azor

© University of Venda

is undeniable. Through her charm and sexuality, Nora is able to ignite intense passion in both men. Despite Riva and Azor's perceived power in terms of wealth and violence, they find themselves completely captivated by Nora, resulting in a masculine rivalry fuelled by their infatuation for her. This dynamic showcases how women can manifest control and influence over men, as the focus shifts towards them. This power dynamic is also evident in the character of Mére Edo, the brothel owner in *Viva Riva* and to an extent, in the *Òlòtūré story*. These women strategically use their sexuality to create allure and desire that men readily succumb to. Their provocative outfits cater to male fantasies and exploit their vulnerability, further emphasizing the power they hold over men.

The significance of power is further illustrated through the portrayal of motherhood, whether biological or adaptive. The unfortunate drug-addicted individual, Esme, finds her strength in her role as a mother striving for redemption in Katutura. Despite the vulnerabilities associated with her drug dependency, she serves as a crucial influence in the lives of her son and Dangi. Her involvement in Dangi's life, as well as her importance to the Katutura community, is intricately linked to her identity as a mother. This concept of motherhood not only endears Esme to others, but also humanizes the otherwise ruthless character of Eniola who coaxes her errant son Kitan whilst painfully punishing her rivals.

The impact of motherhood on male characters is undeniable. The intrinsic power of motherhood, whether exercised by a mother, spouse, or any familial relation, acts as a sobering force that guides the decisions and choices of men. For instance, Komu in

© University of Venda

Uradi, who once intended to leave the terrorist network, reevaluates his position upon learning that his girlfriend is expecting a child. The revelation of a positive pregnancy test carries substantial weight in his decision-making process. This impending fatherhood alters his previously self-centered approach, integrating his girlfriend into his considerations. Moreover, this dynamic is evident in the reverence and affection displayed by Kasisi, a notorious killer, toward his wife Mamushka. His expressions of love are embodied in the respect he holds for his wife, expressed through his love and respect to her and their son, Karl Marx, an embodiment of Mamushka's motherhood.

Another expression of power among women in crime films is demonstrated through power dynamics that I would characterise as reversals. The female characters achieve these gender reversals when they rise from being oppressed to oppressor or when they rise from victimhood to be facilitators and leaders in the crime syndicates. Eniola is a perfect example of a girl who grows up in an environment of gender-based violence and goes through a period of exploitation of her womanhood but reverses this by orchestrating the death of Alhaji Salami (the Lagos crime lord) and his family, replacing him as the *Oba* of Lagos criminal underworld. Her victory albeit pyrrhic and temporary, demonstrates a clear reversal of power when she rises from a place of oppression and exploitation by men to become the very power that controls the actions of men in the underworld.

This gender reversal is further demonstrated in *Òlòtūré* through Alero, formerly a commercial sex worker who was trafficked by men to Italy for exploitation. In the film Alero has returned and converted her scars and pain to the grit of commerce and

© University of Venda

brutality. From the oppressed, she becomes the oppressor herself as she joins the human trafficking gang to traffic fellow women to Italy for sex. To achieve this, Alero must surmount a variety of masculinist hoops, including bringing down hitherto dominant pimps like Chuks. Chuks is the old type of pimp that held sway over many girls, however, in this story, Chuks has lost his grip and has only one girl remaining. He physically brutalises her to maintain his grip on her, but she still looks for every opportunity to run away from him. Alero's victory against Chuks is a clear reversal, only that it's not a complete one, to the point that he becomes the oppressed. She, in asserting the reversal, surpasses him in the trade and thereby diminishes his power.

In another clear demonstration of this kind of power, Lucky's eventual success in *Jerusalema* can only be attributed to women. Held together by his mother's prayers, Lucky's eventual success comes through women who use their power to propel him to his newly found Jerusalem. Anna-Marie Van Rensburg, a banker and company registrar, helps Lucky with his paperwork, defends him to the police and finally facilitates his escape from prison. Her power, seen from two dimensions of being a woman and being of the white race, is used effectively and manifested clearly when it is used to provide to Lucky what his male power as a Hoodlum of Hillbrow could not. So, Anna-Marie Van Rensburg converts Lucky, the taxi operator, to the Hoodlum of Hillbrow. On the other hand, Leah Friedlander ushers Lucky into his new suburban paradigm by letting him visit her home and meet her parents in the suburbs. Leah, in this case, provides the acceptance of Lucky in the wealthy spaces. Initially shunned and chased away from Santos Ribeiro's compound, where he's not even allowed to

© University of Venda

enter, Lucky is finally welcomed not just to the compound, but he sits at the dinner table of a Jewish family in the wealthy suburbs. It is Leah, then, who inspires him to own a house in the suburbs. Finally, after Anna-Marie Van Rensburg assists Lucky in escaping from the hospital custody, it is Leah who facilitates the rest of the journey by providing money and a car to get away. The power of these women cannot be understated. Their power of access and facilitation is put at the disposal of Lucky to propel him to other levels or free him from self-induced limitations, as well as change his mentality from racial blame to racial collaboration in his pursuit of crime and his pursuit of love.

The image of power manifested in the foregoing, recaptures the histories and epochs of indefatigable African women who have surmounted intersectional challenges in politics, education, religion, and other facets, including Winnie Madikizela, Wangari Maathai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Wangu wa Makeri, *Alaafin* Orompoto, Queen Nzinga among others. The depiction also features motherhood as an important aspect of understanding women in Africa. Championed by Nnaemeka (1997), motherhood centralises women in the African existence, contingency and identity. This means that the place of women is deeply ingrained in the ethos of African living, a recognition aptly made in the filmic narratives of the films under study.

5.2.3 Religious Identities

Religion and religious practice are another important aspect of identity that is explored in the African crime film. Through the portrayal of Characters practising Various Religions and depictions of various ritualistic conducts. The films appraise the

© University of Venda

religious dispositions not only involving individual characters but also collective societies in continental Africa. One of the clearly depicted religions is Christianity and its variety of denominations. One of the denominations clearly shown Is the Catholic denomination. We get to see The Catholic practise in *Viva Riva* and *Bodaboda Thieves.* In *Viva Riva* we encounter the Catholic Church through a priest and a nun. The Priest in the film is however shown to engage in illegal dealings of fuel smuggling with Kinshasa gangsters including Riva.

His dalliance with criminals in commerce is an important view of religious men and women as a corrupted entity fallen from virtue and perpetuating the very evil, they condemn. This portrayal is not unique to the Catholic because we get to see a Pentecostal minister who seats among a council of gangsters in Lagos, together with Eniola and others as a member. As a member of an underworld Lagos council the Pastor is a criminal or an abettor of crime thereby prescribing the same image of religious practitioners that have miscegenated their creed to do that which they tell others to eschew. Going back to the religious practise of Catholicism in *Bodaboda Thieves,* it is reflected by the depiction of canonical practices and the use of iconographic catholic paraphernalia.

For example, we encounter Mama Abel Who recites the Hail Mary in Luganda and remembers to adorn her son with a prayer rosary to protect him and remind him about prayer. Although different religions Have their own set of prayer beads, *Bodaboda Thieves* specifically utilises the holy Catholic rosary characterised by a crucifix. Religion in this situation just like we see it in Òlòtūré takes the role of an escape, a safe

© University of Venda

haven where good tidings and protection are sought. This we largely see not through men of cloth, but through ordinary Christians seeking divine intervention in a cathedral, in the case of Ehi and at home, in the case of Mama Abel. Additionally, religion is shown as a source of reason, and a place of reconciliation, with the men of cloth serving as conciliators and voices of reason. The pastor in *Katutura* provides this image. This is an important motif in *Jerusalema,* where Lucky's mother paints a picture of Biblical salvation as a source of solace and direction for Lucky. She severally recommends a Bible to him in the place of the biographies and novels, he reads.

He accepts Dangi as his son-in-law and works with him and others to try and fight crime in *Katutura* Through counsel and protecting potential victims of such crimes. By protecting Kondja And working with Dangi to subdue Shivago, the Pastor portrays a good image of religion and religious men concerned with the goings on of the society and how to heal it from the various malaise. We also get to see the practise of African traditional ritualism in *Òlòtūré where* a traditional *jujuman is* brought in to cast spells on their girls and bind them to a spiritual oath of not running away from the human trafficking outfit. Methods like smearing of blood and swearing inside a coffin while naked, while the *jujuman* chants incantations are employed. The methods also occur in *King of Boys* when the duel between Makanaki and Eniola intensifies, and each of them seeks divine intervention in their conflict, Eniola going for Pentecostal prayers, and Makanaki visiting a traditional Witchdoctor for divine protection. The extremism thereof is also reflective of the fundamentalist ideology manifested by the terrorist cells in *Uradi.* The violent terrorism perpetuated by criminal outfits like the Islamist Al

© University of Venda

Shabaab, mirrored in the film, is anchored on the warped, dogmatic reading of Islamic pillars of Jihad, wherefore terrorist fighters are considered holy warriors of *Mujahideen.* In another depiction of religion, benignly so, we get to experience Judaism, the Jewish religion, through Leah Friedlander's family dinner hosting Lucky. Jewish prayers are offered, also portrayed during Joshua's funeral, where Jewish religious traditions are offered and rituals conducted.

The synthesis of the previous discussions regarding various religions illuminates the diverse religious identities practiced by characters within the depicted jurisdictions, which encompass an array of denominations including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and even African traditional ritualism. The films contribute to the reinforcement, albeit modestly, of Mbiti's assertion that "Africans are notoriously religious." Regardless of the specific religion practiced, Africans exhibit a profound faith in deified entities, rendering religion a communal practice that enriches their interactions and provides answers to existential inquiries. These religions function as essential components of the moral compass, offering venues for solace, serving as desecrated altars of corruption and violence, and providing conscientious voices of reason within a highly toxic society. This dynamic represents a significant idiosyncrasy in the messaging and aesthetic dimensions of the African crime film.

5.2.4 Ethical and Normative Questions

> *They say that behind every fortune is a crime. After every revolution comes a new order but before that comes opportunity. After all, it wasn't it P.W. Botha who said adapt or die –* ***Lucky Kunene in Jerusalema.***

© University of Venda

Stemming from my reading of the African crime films in the prevenient chapters, the guilt of the individual character and the implied complicity of the society in his exploits demonstrates the inherent tension within the societal definition of morality which seems lucid but is easily fogged by the leniency towards errant children it considers heroes. Morality therefore is treated at cross-purposes with legality even in the characterisations of the law enforcement who flagrantly engage and collaborate in illegality in their conduct of moral societal duty This section therefore appraises the ethical and moral issues notable in the African crime films covering moral dilemmas, notions of justice and human rights and the ethos of African post-independence governance.

5.2.4.1 **Moral Dilemmas**

The nature of morality is akin to a swinging pendulum, its trajectory influenced by the subjective views of different times. African crime films depict morality as a dynamic construct influenced by the evolving perspectives of a society caught between desperate circumstances and illicit opportunities. In the wake of independence movements during the 1960s, leaders in the post-colonial era acknowledged the urgent need to confront pressing issues hindering Africa's prosperity, including poverty, hunger, and illiteracy. Many African nations adopted socialist economic models to tackle these interconnected issues of illiteracy, poverty, and hunger, alongside efforts toward industrialisation. Unfortunately, the pursuit of financial acquire and personal enrichment took precedence for numerous leaders, ultimately compromising national progress. This led to violent coups that overthrew several post-independence leaders,

© University of Venda

plunging their countries into leadership crises and economic turmoil exacerbated by leaders lacking virtue and vision, often preoccupied with parochial nationalism and mired in both internal and external conflicts. These unfortunate circumstances resulted in a disenfranchised population deprived of essential needs, education, and healthcare. In their pursuit of self-sufficiency, many Africans have turned to menial jobs or sought shortcuts to achieve success.

One shortcut that numerous African youths have pursued in recent times is criminal activity. The African news sphere is abundant with accounts of theft, corruption, online fraud, and violent crimes. Society, albeit falling victim, becomes complicit, enjoying the proceeds of crime and frustrating efforts to capture the criminal since the said criminal is a father, son, daughter, sibling, neighbour or even a benefactor during tough times!

This phenomenon is demonstrated in the sampled films, through the heroic and victim depiction of the criminals, Including Lucky Kunene in *Jerusalema,* Eniola in *King of Boys*, AB in *Noem My Skollie,* Abel in *Bodaboda Thieves* and *Riva* in *Viva Riva*. The characters present an image of victimhood from systemic failures that lead them to commit crimes. These crimes are considered by sections of society as heroic and represent a significant redress for the violations of the rights of the citizens. Lucky considers himself an agent of reparation for the loss of livelihood for many Black South Africans. Specifically, as Lucas Sithole, his lawyer, portends, his actions are geared towards solving the housing problem in Johannesburg, a duty that the government has failed to deliver. Lucky also represents a force that tries to fight emerging vices of drug abuse, petty crime, and prostitution within the Hillbrow residencies. In addition to

© University of Venda

affording a few luxuries for himself from his criminal enterprise, Lucky also represents the triumph of those people whose ambitions and dreams were killed by the government through lack of provision of affordable education, as well as projecting a silhouette of a Robinhood who steals from the rich to help the poor. The proceeds from his plunder, like those of Eniola and Riva, are used to change the fortunes of his family, friends and the larger society by contributing to the church, schools and other community initiatives.

This provides a platform for interrogating criminality in the African setup and juxtaposing the definition of criminality from a legal, moral and sociological standpoint. Legally, criminality goes against the principles of law and thereby attracts sanctions and punishments that range from fines to custodial and non-custodial punishments. In extreme situations, the law fathoms the vacation of a person's right to life through judicial and extrajudicial executions. In the moral and sociological purviews, the criminals are sanitised by their inspiration for crime and charitable disposal of the proceeds from their plunder. The African crime films, in a characteristic fashion, develop extensive expositions of the criminals' less fortunate beginnings, placing the blame on systemic failures and misgivings not attributable to the criminal protagonist. Further to this, the films endeavour to show the charitable spirits that the criminals possess and the actions they take that demonstrate their community ethos and the deep-seated pathos they have for their communities. Their deaths are interpreted as sad endings of heroes, and their triumphs are celebrated as opportunities for new beginnings and a restitution of power.

© University of Venda

The foregoing presents an existential dilemma of demarcating the boundary between good and evil. The fluidity of moral perspectives presented reveals that characters' illegal actions are often overlooked in specific circumstances, depending on their character and the narrative's perspective. When criminality is viewed by the society that benefits from the proceeds of crime and then opined on by law enforcement, an impasse ensues. The divergence is based on the shifting North of the moral compass. As each character adds to the instalments of perspective, a moral dilemma on whither the moral stand is. The films therefore present an existential moral crisis, domiciled in African politics, religion, organs of justice, education and other spheres.

5.2.4.2 **Notions of Justice and Human Rights**

The depiction of an African criminal in African crime films is multifaceted. Not only do the criminals bear responsibility for illegal actions and instil fear among citizens, but they also embody a rebel fighting against systemic oppression and human rights violations, all the while being a victim of these circumstances. Human rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible elementary rights and freedoms entitled to every human being, regardless of their nationality, race, religion, gender, or any other characteristic. They include a broad spectrum of rights, encompassing both civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and a fair trial. Justice serves as a fundamental principle that upholds human rights. Its purpose extends beyond mere punishment of wrongdoers, encompassing the vital aspects of fairness, equality, and adherence to the rule of law. It is the pursuit of justice that enables societies to strive for equality and establish an environment where human rights are universally

© University of Venda

respected. Within the realm of justice, various categories exist, including distributive, procedural, retributive, and restorative justice. African crime films centre on the themes of human rights and justice, exploring these concepts through their narratives and aesthetics. They reimagine realistic situations, prompting crucial questions about African societies' ability to justly nurture, protect, and punish their children.

The perception of human rights and justice in the aegis of crime wields differing viewpoints, pitting society, law enforcement and other state entities. This contrasting view illustrates itself in the situation where the said criminals are engaged in an act of resistance against injustice, for example, when protesters are decrying a variety of injustices, spanning socioeconomic and political oppression by state and non-state actors. The state will view them as criminals, but the larger society and the citizenry will see them as heroes who are simply engaged in their civic duty. This is rampant, especially in African states that systematically criminalise their citizens who actively engage in their everyday commerce or violate government-set rules that contradict constitutionalism, democracy, and the practice of good governance. In such instances, the nation-state uses the armed forces to clamp down on citizens exercising their rights by engaging in civil disobedience in protestation of a particular alienation of their rights.

The peculiarity of this issue lies in the fact that state institutions, such as the police, security forces, and civil service, have a perpetual existence and are not subject to the whims of any ruling regime. Different regimes of the executive, legislature and judiciary serve fixed terms after which they cannot be able to claim control of those organs anymore, so it is an abrogation of lawful governance when the ephemeral organs of

© University of Venda

the state engage the perpetual organs of the state in the commission of gross violations of human rights which blots the locus standi of such organs of the state. Africa is replete with specific instances, such as the case of the *Kianjokoma* brothers, who lost their lives at the hands of the police. This unfortunate incident occurred because they violated the dusk-to-dawn curfew, which was implemented as part of the COVID-19 containment measures. The police were enforcing the curfew rules set by the National Security Council, viewing it as a means of controlling those who infringed upon them. Regarded as innocent by their families and the broader society, these young individuals were heading home after a day of work and socialising with their friends. The only error they made was exceeding the designated curfew time by a small margin, which, in a strict sense, did not pose a security issue. Implementing the curfew was a measure incorporated within the restrictions aimed at controlling the transmission of COVID-19. This peculiar scientific anomaly involved imposing limitations during late night hours following individuals' close contact throughout the day, potentially resulting in exposure. Bolstered by a myriad of rules and stipulations that included masking, sanitising their hands, and keeping and maintaining social distance, considering that there wasn't much risk that these young people portended to the health of their compatriots themselves, and the health of the nation at night. In addition, if indeed their actions violated that code, as prescribed by the government, they did not deserve death. A warning from the security officers would have sufficed, or on stricter terms, if the violation was to be treated as a very significant and grim crime, then the police should have arrested and charged in court as per the constitution of Kenya and the

© University of Venda

rule of law. Such brutal government-sponsored violence applies to numerous cases in Kenya and Africa at large.

During the Marikana massacre in South Africa, cited in Chapter 4, the police had the option to arrest the picketing mine workers or escort them back home. The intentional infliction of harm and injury upon the workers blatantly disregarded their basic human rights to life and expression, serving as a clear demonstration of the government's audacious exploitation of bio-power[38]. In this case, therefore, the state regarded the workers as criminals, while the society viewed them as victims of unfair employment practise, unfair treatment, application of labour laws and state violence occasioned by the same organs established in perpetuity to protect and safeguard their rights. The other instance is the #EndSARS situation in Nigeria, where the security forces charged with the responsibility of protecting the life and property of Nigerians became the aggressor and started abducting, torturing and killing innocent Nigerians. In the ensuing protests canonised by the hashtag #EndSARS the police again forgot their role of protection and began opening fire on innocent citizens, further killing and injuring dozens.

The poignant aesthetic and narrative point of dying by extrajudicial bullets is showcased in sampled African crime films that depict African bodies torn apart by police bullets. Notable examples of this motif include Click Click Bang and Jerusalema.

[38] This is a Foucauldian concept. The meaning thereof is adopted from the elaboration by Achille Mbembe in his article “Necropolitics” (Mbembe, 2003)

© University of Venda

These films delve into the reality of police brutality, portraying young men being gunned down by police bullets to combat organized crime. The brutal deaths of Askofu and Kevin serve as a stark reminder of the grim scenes witnessed during instances of extrajudicial executions, such as the violent images broadcasted worldwide on June 25th, 2024, during the economic protest in Kenya. Similar to the films, these images epitomize the violation of the right to life, further reinforcing the characters' deprivation of economic rights, liberty, fair trial, and civil rights.

The filmic muses on justice in African crime films span the whole gamut of restorative, retributive, and distributive justice. For example, the crux of *Jerusalema* is retributive justice borne of skewed or absent distributive and restorative justice. The punishment by death and judicial action suffered by Lucky, his gang and others are a result of post-apartheid maintenance of the economic status quo despite the hope of equal redistribution of resources therebefore held by oppressors. This is a familiar narrative across African landscapes that condensed the post-independence societies into feudal and capitalist states characterised by gaping chasms between the wealthy owners of capital and the working class (both employed and unemployed). Threading from the interconnectedness of the Africans, the suffering of one affects many, hence requiring a form of justice that punishes the wrongdoer and heals society.

Lucky engages in crime (robbery and building hijacking) as a way to provide for his family and friends. He hijacks the Hillbrow buildings to not only enrich himself, but to make the habitation liveable for his people. Where Leah sees criminals, Lucky sees God-fearing people who deserve better housing and safer neighbourhoods. This

© University of Venda

means he goes into crime to alleviate the suffering of his people, thereby absolving him from the path of retributive justice. This may explain why the filmmaker chooses to save him from legal custody. The phenomenon is recurrent in *King of Boys*, *Uradi, Noem My Skollie, Bodaboda Thieves* and *Katutura* which attempt restorative justice or communal healing. Through Lucky's, Eniola's, Komu's, Abel's, and AB's survival, the films explore the restoration of the communities by ending the criminal menace and leasing new chances to the constructive elements of society. In some cases, the characters escape jail, and legal redress, for the benefit and sustenance of the larger collective, because they represent the living, breathing communities of Africa previously disenfranchised.

On the other hand, the films also explore the application of retributive justice through the legal and judicial processes that some characters are taken through. *Noem My Skollie* hangs Gimbal, Gif and Shorty after they are found guilty of murder by a competent court process; Rashid and his terrorist gang in *Uradi* are taken to custody in a legal process; and the rogue killer cops in *Click Click Bang* are taken into police custody. This is a signal that elements that go against the societal grain by destroying the fabric of collective ethos in a selfish pursuit should be punished! Such characters are perilous to the survival of the community, and therefore, society confronts them with retributive justice for restoration to happen.

5.2.4.3 **Post-Independence African Governance**

African crime films, in their expression and point of view, also envision radical change within society through the depiction of subversive thoughts and actions aimed at

© University of Venda

overthrowing the oppressive and corrupt status quo and condensed through polemic rhetoric, recalcitrant characters, the portrayal of the anti-heroes and outlaws as major players in the societal order, characterisation of leaders as inept caricatures and upstaging of the established normative structure, using characters, and plots, to create a re-imagination of societies where leadership is ideal and tethered to the aspirations of the citizenry.

Cinema as a medium presents society with various dimensions of functionality, including symbolic representation, education, entertainment and subjective sensitisation, and serves as a megaphone of counter-hegemonic consciousness. In the execution of the foregoing functions, cinema dabbles in conversations that nestle between priming and criticism of society in one instance, and polemic messaging in the other. This study sets out from the idea that cinematic messaging can be inherently subversive and an important platform for imagining and projecting revolutionary thinking in society. To spark this debate, it hews its crux from two questions; what revolutionary messaging is contained in African crime films? How do the African crime films package the reformation messaging in cinematic language? The expressions point to an African Cinema that conjures up the subterranean feelings of disgruntlement and props up the attendant subversive thought and engagement.

The African crime film goes beyond being an exposé of wrongs committed and attempted redress in the quest for social order. The genre wields within it messages of subversion and insights of revolution. Each of the films provides a platform of critique for the rank and file entrusted with societal leadership from politicians, security

© University of Venda

operators, religious leaders, social-political opinion shapers, parents, teachers, business leaders, economic leaders, crime lords and ordinary citizens. The films spare no soul. The whole society is invited to the altar of ignominy to view their corruption of societal ethos tailored to advance their ends to the peril of collective progress. These messages - subtle and forceful - are fashioned to appeal to the affective being of an African and impugn the soiling of her motherland. To achieve this, African crime films deploy language, themes, images, characters and music.

For instance, Kasisi and Kevin in *Click Click Bang* view their country's leadership as completely dysfunctional and unable to deliver the services they are supposed to offer and their handling of specific public goods like healthcare, security and employment for all. The two characters engage in a dialogic commentary, which borders on subversion. After being denied a chance to join the European football academy in favour of Sidi Kamara a member of parliament's nephew, Kevin views this as an act of corruption where influence and money, specifically public money is used to acquire an advantage over a hapless *mwananchi.* Kevin alleges that the MP used the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty - meant for development in the constituency - to bribe the scouts and officials to recruit his nephew and ignored the very talented Kevin because of expediency fuelled by illicit money taken from public coffers.

Later, as they prowl the city looking for a victim to pounce on, a politician on the campaign trail makes a speech promising *Wananchi* that he will get rid of crime in the city and specifically, he says that if he gets elected, there will be a criminal's burial

© University of Venda

every Saturday. An irked Kasisi offers that, *"If I ever meet a politician during my robbery spree, I would steal everything from him including his skin."* In addition, he mutters a prayer and says he wishes they would all get testicular cancer. His wishes, promises, and threats point to a *mwananchi* completely dissatisfied with the performance of the political leadership in his country. It further represents a citizen who no longer recognises the authority and the contribution of the political leadership to the growth of the country. He can only see and fathom the negative effects that they have brought, including an economic slowdown, theft, perpetuation of greed, cronyism, nepotism, and tribalism.

Kevin and Kasisi's view also manifests in *Uradi* in a discussion between Jemo and Komu on what is the lesser evil between the acts of terrorism that they are engaged in, and the acts of omission and commission by the politicians. Jemo concludes with a comment that the politicians are the worst among them and that their acts of omission and commission, taking away resources for health care, education, and public good is equivalent if not worse than the violent terror that the two are propagating on behalf of the terrorist Islamic cell led by Rashid. This view is also in *Òlòtūré* through the depiction of Sir Philips, an influential politician who participates in the illicit business of sex trafficking while enjoying protection from his privileged position and the police.

Revolutions in Africa since independence have taken many forms, including democratic transitions on the ballot, armed struggles, insurgency, coup de tats, civil conflicts, constitutional reviews, and overhauls. Africa is replete with examples since independence. The post-independence governments in Ghana, Congo, Nigeria,

© University of Venda

Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, inter alia were overturned in military and civilian coups, causing unending strife and wars (Meredith, 2006).

Post-independence African leadership assimilated into a culture of exploiting their people, resulting in the perpetuation of plunder and human rights violations. Having sampled the luxuries of power, the leaders were seduced by a dangerous form of absolutism and cults of personality, causing them to make detrimental decisions that negatively impacted their countries. There is a multitude of examples that highlight the indulgence of African post-colonial leadership Including celebrated leaders like Osajiefo Kwame Nkrumah who In his quest to become the president of a United Africa threatened the tenure of other presidents and became an enemy of his people as he soaked in power and took away their liberties and violated human rights through executions, and detentions without trial and finally declaring himself president for life. After overseeing economic slowdown, fall of the copper boom and rampant corruption in his government, Nkrumah was deposed and exiled a phenomenon that he blamed on Western influences (Kah, 2012).

In Congo, Mobutu's aspiration to be viewed as the colloquial evolue and gain favour with Western capitals resulted in his betrayal of his people. This is rife in his ouster and execution of the Independence Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba and President Joseph Kasavubu in collaboration with Belgium (Weissman, 2014). Additionally, this complex further elucidates his insatiable desire for European luxuries despite his self-proclaimed Afrocentrism and enforcement of his authenticité creed (Warfa and Mwetu, 2023). His despotic rule stands as a persistent cradle of ignominy within the annals of

© University of Venda

African post-independence governance. Characterised by the execution of rivals, corruption and state capture, Mobutu spent his country's wealth to assuage his ego as “Marshall” and poster boy of the West during the Cold War. Following a unified opposition, he was deposed by Laurent Kabila, who was supported by Rwandan forces, and subsequently exiled to Morocco, where his remains were interred.

African crime films re-imagine Africa revolutionary agenda in various facets including distribution of wealth, education, law and justice, and politics, through the aesthetic and narrative employment of language dismissive of societal norms and that which signals a departure from old order, plots imagining victory against established authorities and the establishment of a new order and themes that are critical to status quo and reigning establishments. However, cinema is not the ultimate panacea for dealing with the myriads of issues afflicting African countries. The significance in the quest for solution-centric cinema lies in its capacity to allow the audience to self-examine, evaluate their spaces, and find solutions to the endemic maelstroms. Therefore, cinema becomes the metaphorical adrenaline jab that flows discreetly in the vein of the African body-social and body-politic to reawaken the effete pulse of Africanness and the neural activity of the African consciousness. This reawakening reveals the potential of Mother Africa’s greatness and the magnitude of the cyclic near-fatal mistakes that her children keep making, that have kept her in perpetual debilitating chronic agony.

From the foregoing, genuine African artistic discourse should have space for contesting dominant narratives, retelling histories, and rethinking cultures marred by heroic ideologies. For example, the canonisation of individuals based on selective memory

© University of Venda

skews history to their benefit and the loss of a chance to course correct by heir generations. As Africa venerates post-independence dictators, the possibility of honest introspection and responsibility-taking is lost, leaving only a repugnant culture of victimhood and cyclic memory wrapped around colonial histories. Cinema therefore provides a platform for recasting pasts and rethinking the futures of leadership and governance in Africa.

5.3 Foundations of African Intellectualism and Theory

African cinema has, throughout its existence, garnered significant critical attention regarding its history, aesthetics, genres, gender, sexuality, identity, ideology, and theoretical underpinnings[39]. Within these appraisals, it has been cited as a repository of history (Sheila, 2017; Harrow and Garritano, 2019; Mututa, 2020), a platform for critique (Bouwer, 2018; Tchouaffe, 2022), a megaphone for counter-hegemonic discourse, a propagator of culture (Abah, 2008; Mbũgua, 2019), and attributed to various aesthetic peculiarities (Ndede, 2021; Kimani, 2022). However, the discourses have seldom addressed the enduring implications of cinema and the frameworks for its interpretation in harnessing knowledge, knowledge systems, and theory. This has been largely due to the tendency to base studies on Eurocentric grand theories or 'Afrocentric' theories devised and propagated by Africanist Western scholars or by a

[39] These discussions are featured in innumerable studies globally, under cinema studies, African studies and so on.

© University of Venda

faction of Western-educated Africans who have coined and embraced the diasporic identity.

I assert that the systems of knowledge and theories from the aforementioned groups have asphyxiated discourses rooted in the realism of continental Africans through their foundational thoughts, which remain intricately linked to the very global hegemonies they strive to resist. The net effect of how Africa is framed in the resultant theories reflects the cyclic debates between structure and agency in sociological theory. By casting continental Africa in an amorphous pool of global Africa, global south, black Africa or Pan-Africa, the postcolonial theorists round off the identity and condition of continental Africans to the nearest generic, social, economic, cultural and political structure of their definitive geopolitics, decolonisation and neocolonial framework, eschewing his/her agency, sovereignty, and egalitarian condition, from which stems his/her responsibility and consequences to commissions and omissions. This means that despite the shared colonial heritage, the Africans and their condition cannot and should not be rounded off to the nearest black race.

Though rightful in their quests and their accounts bearing variant degrees of accuracy, the perspectives largely represent desktop results of "fieldwork" and social science laboratory results as opposed to lived realities.[40] How does a few weeks' visit yield

[40] Zolberg (1969, p. vii) avers that "Africa was both a political cause and a social science laboratory. He explains the laboratory thus, "…the laboratory enabled young scholars to experiment with new theories and new methods while minimizing the risk of interference from established academic authorities who were often indifferent to and almost always ignorant of political life in the Third World."

© University of Venda

more information than living a reality for decades? It may be argued that the researchers dedicate copious resources (material and intellectual) to document these histories and philosophies, which validate their perspectives. Indeed, the science of their research may be foolproof, but in contention, Mapaya (2013, p. 168) avers that,

> …in the Afrocentric paradigm, objectivity is not entirely feasible in the humanities and the social sciences, especially when the study of the one racial group by another is involved.

Mapaya's contention implies that subjectivity is indeed inherent in the Africanist studies, which calls for a careful review before adopting these narratives as uncontested accounts of African people. To this end, I propose that the veracity of documentations of African thinking and historiography should be tested and for this I propose a **three-tier test** which I expound further in the mode of reading African cinema.

Before elaborating on this assertion, it is crucial to define what constitutes a continental African and to discern any differences between the diasporic African. Mapaya (2016) attempts to define an African, describing characteristics related to geolocation and physical attributes, which I find incomplete based on the eclectic African heritage. Mazrui (1986)posits that an African is a product of a triple heritage, while Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, expands on the idea of his heritage by including a diverse range of ancestral origins. He highlights the contributions of the Khoi and the San, indigenous groups of South Africa, as well as the European migrants who settled in the region. Additionally, Mbeki acknowledges the presence of Malay slaves, Bapedi,

© University of Venda

Zulu, Basotho, Nguni, and Xhosa peoples, all of whom have shaped the cultural fabric of South Africa. Furthermore, he traces his ancestry to regions outside of South Africa, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ghana, where he identifies with the Ashanti people. Mbeki also recognizes the influence of the Berbers of the desert and the Boers, who are of Dutch descent. Lastly, he includes the Indian and Chinese communities, highlighting their contributions to the multicultural tapestry of South Africa. Through this extensive list, Mbeki asserts that he encompasses the heritage of all these diverse groups, solidifying his claim that he is an African.

Mbeki's assertion, like Mazrui's perspective, broadens the view of continental Africans regarding ethnicity and, consequently, their physical characteristics. However, Mapaya's perspective merits investigation to further understand the silent line that divides and carves out North Africa that claims Arab ancestry, leaving black Africa within the borders of Sub-Saharan Africa. Studies (Armes, 2006; Saha, 2008; Roy, 2011; Corrales *et al.*, 2015; Sheila, 2017) and grey literature like (Saha, 2008; Wodon and Zaman, 2009; Azzarri and Signorelli, 2020) categorise and map out data and analysis within the confines of Subsaharan Africa or the Arab North. This study followed this thread in sampling and discourse proceeding on the assumption that at least on the prima facie level, culturally, the Sub-Saharans are more inclined to traditional and contemporary African culture blended with European culture while the Northerners are tapered towards Arabic and oriental cultures which would have presented a scope centric challenge in containing theory and conceptual framework.

© University of Venda

The heterogeneity of African cultural landscapes is not a sufficient reason for advancing parochial philosophy. Balkanizing the reading of cultural products that are more similar than different based on physical and other real or imagined borders is to pigeonhole the collective truths of a people in the capsule of binarism and otherness. This notwithstanding, the theorisation of African realities and artistic artefacts should mirror historical specificity while drawing parallels in the various elements of the socio-economic and political infrastructure that diffuse and osmotically transcend geographical and ideological borders in Africa. There is infinitely more weight on the thread that makes the rich mosaic of Africa than the difference presented by the hues thereof.

Numerous studies (Lake, 1995; Akyeampong, 2000; Bastian *et al.*, 2000; Bettelheim *et al.*, 2002; Wright, 2004; Zeleza, 2005; Okpewho and Nzegwu, 2009; Manning, 2010; Falola, 2013; Mangala, 2017) explore various dimensions, phenomena and evolving ontologies of the African diaspora codifying them as global communities claiming African ancestry[41], African nationals that emigrate to other continents. The African Union defines the African disporan as “consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African

[41] They include but are not limited to black people living in the Americas, Australia, Oceania and Caribbean, who trace their heritage to African Slaves transported to their current homelands.

© University of Venda

Union[42].” The AU definition is not only generalist, but it is reeks of political correctness that assumes only genetic identity and not social, and intellectual identities, which I aver are fomented by the nurture and nature afforded by one’s environment. I thereby take cue from Mapaya’s definition of African scholarship which refers to “all academic activities chiefly by such a people, and primarily for the benefit of the African continent” (2016, p. 78) In his advancing explanation, Mapaya attaches value to continental African scholarship and mentorship asserting that it affords a chance for exploration of “African agenda” as “primary drivers” of the investigations and theorisation. This translates to a chance to coin and deploy African theories to appraise African films and other cultural products.

That African continental films, theatre productions and music are theoretically measured against the “high bar” of counterparts from the East and West, reeks of malignant low self-esteem from a people that have triumphed in impossible battles and surmounted the resultant trauma into seeking new levels of partnerships with the world. This is hampered by unfortunate situations like African politicians extending begging bowls for aid and loans, instead of prioritising self-sufficiency, economic development, and sovereignty. Africa is an important cog in the world order, only that the leadership has been diminished to supplicating to powers across the seas while huffing and puffing at their neighbours who hold a key to their success.When their interests are not sufficed, they resort to chants of decolonising global structures and swoon to new offers

[42] https://au.int/en/diaspora-division

© University of Venda

even after declaring how demeaning it is for **fifty-four (54)** African presidents going to meet one president[43]. As they troop back to the Western and Eastern capitals of the world, forgetful about their "Afrocentric" declaration, it is clear that one of the anathemas to African renaissance is the **Stockholm Syndrome** notable in the foregoing.

Creativity and the subsequent development of cultural products based on artistic imagination can be equated to the creation of new beings. In this context, I look at it from the point of conception and birth as a creative process that brings forth a new life, innovative ideas, and new schools of thought. Akin to the biological process of childbirth, the artistic creative process stems from a collaboration of man and culture – a confluence of mind and societal memory. Birth control is a method of stopping the process of conception as either a scientific method of population control or a medical strategy of preserving the health of the childbearing populations of women. In the natural order of human development and survival, birth control is a method of stifling pro-creation and, hence, a negation of the process of creating.

[43] These remarks were voiced by William Ruto during his speech during the IGW African leadership ceremony held in Nairobi between 28-30 April 2023, in reference to the 2023 US-Africa summit. His words in verbatim were "We have made the decision that it is not intelligent for 54 of us to go and sit before one gentleman from another place. And sometimes we are mistreated. We are loaded into buses like school kids. It's not right. It's not right. So, the decision that we have made as AU is that going forward, if there is going to be a discussion between Africa and any other country, we are going to be represented by the chair (of the African Union Commission)." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xqIAL4ZICU

© University of Venda

I take the liberty to use the term birth control and adopt it to define the practice of asphyxiating creative voices in the artistic and scholarship landscape in their attempts to assert their point of view of continental and global Africa and whose underpinning I codify as **the birth control doctrine**. Birth control methods and practices in this instance include cultural censorship, political censorship, Intellectual censorship, Intellectual red-herrings, and the lack of intellectual apprenticeship and mentorship systems. The methods reflect the colonial culture of violent terror for subjugation, resource plunder and economic kleptomania, which postcolonial discourse uses to constantly lampoon the west. Unfortunately, I posit that the methods are now a heritage well kept, revitalised in form, and effervescent than they actually were during the colonial times. The student perfected the art way better than the teacher and it is to him that African intellectual eyes should be trained at.

In this view, this study eschews a comparative approach to reviewing African crime films, with Hollywood and other industries as benchmarks, since the genre, by its very nature, is inter-textual. However, beyond the generic inherence of comparison, I sought to appraise the films regarding their idiosyncrasies, without getting bogged down in the limitations of a comparative framework. Instead, I aimed to analyse African crime films on their own merits, focusing on the unique elements that distinguish them from other industries' offerings. By delving into their distinct cultural, social, and political contexts, I aimed to highlight the specific narratives, visual styles, and thematic nuances that make these films a valuable contribution to the crime genre. This approach allows for

© University of Venda

a more comprehensive understanding and appreciation of African crime films, going beyond mere comparisons and embracing their individuality and collective expression.

Continental African scholarship has yet to assert its cannons and establish the parameters within which assertions on the continent and her people can be theorised. The Eurocentric frameworks criticised by Afrocentrists, and post-colonialists do not offer an adequate framework for appraising African cultural products. This should not be construed to mean that Africa needs a grand narrative or a stiff framework to contain its dialogues, but a set of ideas to set free any stylistic, sociological, psychological, political, and scientific, philosophies that can be applied in their singularity and conceptualised in their plurality to make meaning, and ground concepts on African intellectual discourse, professional practice and suggesting solutions to existential issues in the African continent.

Controlling a people begins with controlling the narrative of their being, the epistemology of their existence and the stature of their culture. The ventriloquists largely reign within the boundaries of political banter (politico-economic) socio-cultural descriptions, geo-historical definitions, and religious and educational harangue. The discussions of how Eurocentrism has affected Africa, and the expressions of disaffection adduced by Afrocentric perspectives are in my view an invisible art of misdirection and a dexter sleight of hand by those seeking to control the narrative. There is a lot on African axiology, epistemology and ontology that can be dwelt upon, whether at a local (community), national, regional, or continental Africa or the black world that Mazrui calls global Africa. However, the attention of the scholarly space has

© University of Venda

been occupied and has spent considerable acreage of published pages on retorting to Eurocentrism in socio-intellectual catfights ironically hosted within the hallowed halls of Western universities. This is not a disparage of the intellectual lamentation of colonialism and neo-colonialism, but an expression of a generational outlook on Africa, not as a specimen for lamentation and defeatist philosophy. The colonial generation that makes up the post-colonial scholarship, political, cultural, and religious leadership, still radiates trauma suffered during colonialism and the independence struggle but inadvertently protects the episteme of control learnt from the colonialist. They have exhibited this latter trait in their doctrinaire scholarship of prescribing an advancement of a brand of Afrocentrism that seeks to be polemic towards Eurocentrism as opposed to one that seeks to model an Africa of the future.

The present Africa lived by the current generation born and bred under the African-led government - on average 5th generation (Mapaya, 2013), compounds her people to lived experiences in an existential milieu like stubborn communicable diseases, unstable economies ravaged by what Dambisa Moyo calls 'Dead Aid"[44], toxic politics characterised by civil war, coup-de-tats, political assassinations, self-aggrandisement, personality cults, ethnic mobilisation, corruption, nepotism, cronyism, opiate religious practice and effects of climate change (Moyo, 2020). To effectively navigate the existential issues, progressive academia and intellectual commentary must seize the opportunity to canvass these matters. The scholarship's trajectory after independence,

[44] Moyo (2008)

© University of Venda

which has persisted as a prominent voice on African issues, has primarily focused on Eurocentric discussions. This perceived shouting match only ends up as a red herring. In my considered view, mainstreaming African post-colonial closure lies within the framework of mooting solutions to the existential niggles. The production of cultural pieces like musical compositions, theatrical performances, films, fine art pieces, photos and dances has consistently appraised the society in situ and accounts for more than the macrocosmic view of a continent's people and proffering generalist band-aids.

Some of the band-aids include Ngugi wa Thiong'o and his linguistic re-membering strategies, which emphasize the use of African languages as a means of decolonisation and cultural preservation (Thiong'o, 2009). A poignant characteristic of the African crime films under study lies in the linguistic choice observed in individual films and the sampled generic corpus. Based on the data presented in Chapter 3, it is evident that these films employ a variety of languages, predominantly the national and official languages of the respective countries. The language use is made up of a blend of indigenous ethnic languages, vernaculars unique to specific ethnic groups, and urban youth languages like Sheng and Tsotsitaal, Gikuyu, Kiswahili, Zulu, Bini, Yoruba, Lingala, Afrikaans, and Tswana among others.

The films primarily utilize indigenous languages and urban slang, except for *Katutura*, which predominantly relies on English for dialogue and communication among characters. This serves as a key point of distinction between the films. However, the director concedes that given another opportunity, he would have chosen to work with Herrero and Damara, using English as a supplementary language. Thus, it can be

© University of Venda

inferred that language plays a pivotal role as a meaningful aesthetic in the portrayal of narratives, signification, and identity formation in African crime films. Moreover, it serves as a prominent stylistic element that enhances the ontology and epistemology of the film. The incorporation of indigenous languages further reinforces the notion of anti-hegemonic expression, a concept extensively examined by Ngugi (2009). However, the language factor, though important, does not offer the totality of emancipation envisioned, and ignores the perilous possibilities of the diversity to contemporary communalism and further overlooks the confluences occasioned by urbanisation that have eroded ethnic languages.

Other band-aids include Teshome Gabriel's view of negritude, which challenges the Eurocentric notions of beauty and identity by celebrating and affirming African cultural expressions (Gabriel, 2011). Moreover, post-colonial ideas examine the enduring impact of colonialism on African communities, whereas the decolonisation movement aims to abolish the remaining colonial structures and systems (Mbembe, 2001). Other perspectives, including Frants Fanon's view, among others, serve the same role of reacting to hegemonic structures (Fanon, 1963).

The band-aids lead to the 'danger of a single story'. 'The danger of a single story' an argument advanced by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her July 2009 Ted Talk[45]. The concept addresses the generalisations or grand narratives about people, in her case

[45]https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

© University of Venda

University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

African people. To illustrate her point, she cites the Western generalisation of Africans as poor and backward among mis-generalisations. In her thesis, Chimamanda argues that the danger of single stories lies not just in their inaccuracy but in their incompleteness.

The danger of a single story arises where the possibility of multiple perspectives is asphyxiated by dominant narratives centred in the simulacrum as opposed to reality, which is used as a birth control pill to homegrown perspectives offering grounded ideas. The reality of the situation is compounded by African scholars cultured by the Western constructs of the African cultural landscape and situation. Through the generation of theory and publication of African ethnographic dispositions, the Western Academy has managed to generate metanarrative philosophical preconditions that many African scholars have been drawn into. The scholars have advanced these constructs and turned them into pseudo-realities dominant in the African academy, influencing epistemological debates. Growing prominent among the discourses on Africa is the concept of victimhood, which has been contorted and concealed within the deceptive cover of courageous shooting back to the West but remains a retrogressive expression of inferiority to the atrocities and masters of yore. African crime film, as psychoanalysts would view it, is the manifestation of the unconscious mind[46] and a medium that beams to the conscious the evils perpetuated by Africans. African film and its study should be

[46] This can be explained as a bank of regressed truths, wishes and fetishes regarded too taboo for a culture best defined by impunity for those errant children of the continent.

© University of Venda

regarded as more than just a tool for retorting to the metropolis but viewed as a mouthpiece to drag Africans to their stage of ignominy akin to the *Udje* dance of the Urhobo people[47].

For instance, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's fixation on the colonial atrocities and insistence that continental Africa should first mourn the deaths that occurred during the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and King Leopold's plunder in Congo[48] is centering Europhonic victimhood while masking African atrocious responsibilities. Stemming from this, I am inclined to ask the following: If we are to dedicate our tears to the mutilation of our ancestors, who then will bury and mourn the children, mothers and fathers of Biafra who were killed between 1967 and 1971 in Nigeria? When shall we cry for those killed during the bloody coup de tats and regime changes in Nigeria? Who shall cry for our children in Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, Kenya and Central African Republic killed during the cyclic civil and post-election strife? Whither shall we sing dirges for the dear departed Rwandan victims of Hutu genocidaires as their skulls, femurs and tibias lie in display for us to remember the atrocity of African violence? Who shall mourn Burundians and Ugandans killed by bloodthirsty regimes? Who shall mourn Ethiopians killed and those who have lost their lives and livelihoods in the hands of a Nobel laureate? I ask to whom shall we blame for the needless loss of life in Marikana, on the

[47] The *Udje* dance is a traditional Urhobo community performance whose songs are made up of satirical poetry geared towards punishing offenders by subjecting them to public ignominy through the use of insulting or degrading words. This is recorded aptly by Ojaide (2003)

[48] (Thiong'o, 2009).

© University of Venda

streets of South Africa in the bloody taxi wars? When shall we begin to ask for justice for those who continue to die every day under the ruthless hands of police in extrajudicial executions, and those who continue to die in the hands of their compatriots armed to make statements against the oppressive governments? When shall we sit in front of the catafalque on which lay our brethren who are dying daily in Kivu and other African regions in a bloodletting duel for resources? In the answers lies an elusive chance for the continental African to take responsibility for his/her regression and seek the path of progress.

The single story is perpetuated and championed by Africans who should provide another dimension and immerse the story into the multiplicity of perspectives on the continent and her affective realities. This exacerbates the risk of perpetuating a victim mentality among Africans, hindering their ability to overcome historical injustices and move forward. By consistently portraying themselves as victims, Africans are failing to take responsibility for their agency and their potential to shape their own future. Furthermore, this dynamic allows external forces to maintain power and control over Africa, as they manipulate the narrative of victimhood to advance their agendas. African scholars and intellectuals must challenge this prevailing narrative and explore alternative perspectives that acknowledge the complexities and diversity of the continent. Only by doing so can Africa reclaim its agency and chart a path toward a more empowered and prosperous future. There is some value in reflecting on the dangerous single story, but I see more value in nesting, more stories of African victories

© University of Venda

and losses, celebrating innovations and failures without deflecting to the old victimhood narrative. This is the way to resolve the dangers of a single story.

I take the view that these dominant dialogues have served their time, and it is time for a new paradigm of scholarship that embraces African discourse inspired by continental realities, phenomena, ethos and evolving identities. This framing of African critique does not seek to excommunicate Africanist and diasporan contributions to the global dialogues and polemic discussions on subjugation, exclusion, oppression, and marginalisation based on subjective variables like race, geo-location, and historicity. Indeed, this discourse draws strength from its precursors that drew blood from the skewed philosophies that sought to underscore the dominance of others and push others to the periphery of economy and cultural expression. However, this discourse finds value in the focused edification of the African cultural product on a celebratory and growth platform, as opposed to a competition of who disparages the other more. It seeks more, a platform of showcase, appreciation and exchange as opposed to balkanisation, labelling and parochialism.

In mooting a theoretical ideal in rhythm with African realities and culture, I see value in the thinking of Isidore Okpewho and Tejumola Olaniyan. Isidore Okpewho, in his Seminal work *Myth in Africa,*[49] attempts to find an appropriate framework for defining and expounding myths in African literature and cultural performance. In his exposition,

[49] Okpewho (1983)

© University of Venda

he evaluates various theoretical frameworks, appraising their value and pointing out their limitations as a currency of understanding African meaning. His recommendation thereof is what he calls the aesthetic approach. Okpewho delineates the core aspects of the aesthetic approach, aiming to embody the African myth by exploring the connection between contemporary African fiction and the longstanding African oral narrative tradition. They include the notion of time, which implies that the artistic consciousness is situated within a defined timeframe or acknowledged figure from history, and the Creative or poetic temperament, which infers that the presence of a creative or poetic temperament is heightened when history is imbued with narrative. Okpewho posits four aesthetic storytelling considerations that influence the correlation between fact and fiction, including preservation, observation, refining and revision of traditions.

Olaniyan (1995) and Mwangi (2009) add postafrocentic discourse into the market of theorisations of African literature. The two diasporans offer a more ambivalent approach with consideration to Afrocentrism and the Eurocentric metanarratives which could be inspired by their African and out of Africa experiences and influences. The theory though not widely and deeply elaborated, offers a wider platform, from which the contemporary continental African may find a platform to locate his/her contemporary and Glocal view. However, the theory tenets are general and do not proffer much on how to approach continental-centric critical views.

© University of Venda

5.4 Towards a Mode of Reading African Crime Cinema

Stemming from the foregoing discussion, it is notable that African cinema is not a European idea of what our lives are from the heights of their camera pedestals but a lateral view of our creative and existential reality that exhibits meadows on the hills, meandering rivers, or dreamy cities, sprawling slums, affluent suburbs, and lingua franca formed in discernible aesthetics. Cinema in its formalistic rendering cannot be separated from its apparatus and consequently, the origins of the technology, however, its content, ideologues and themes are definitely products of the culture that makes it.

Technology only facilitates the innovation of the crux of what cinema is; the story or content, which reflects the history, reality, aspirations and discourse of the culture that tells it. Film in Africa, beyond its apparatus designed and manufactured by the West and East, thus becomes another method of the African orature and the enthrones filmmakers as griots. The import of this, is that African cinema is not an antithesis of the global East or West but exudes a storytelling culture that has harnessed a foreign story form and technology to a custom that reflects the universal prototype but also wields particularity that it contributes back to the prototype.

I propose a theoretical model that shall reflect the following philosophical underpinnings:

- Appraisal and description of how Africans influence themselves and each other with cinema. Discourses on African cinema should be centred on the image of the African persons, phenomena and spaces that wield the potential to influence

© University of Venda

fellow Africans, regardless of geo-locale, to think and act positively for their continent. This should then include a discussion of the diffusion of African cultures, innovations and creativity.

- The recognition of African heterogeneity, with a reflection on the threads of commonality, shared histories and contemporary synergies towards shared destinies. This recognition should extend to the acknowledgement of other cultures outside Africa, related or otherwise, with an Afrocentric view lens focussed on African pride and not prejudice. This shall be key in reviewing intra-African conflicts, transnational strife, and xenophobia while considering more areas of collaboration, unity and brotherhood. African discourse therefore should display the eclecticism of African experiences cultures and subcultures and endemic in the continent Priming the African experience without making it a comparative debate of Africa in contention with any other continent race or people.
- Recognition that some countries in Africa were not colonized but boast of robust culture industries as important examples of African endemic creativity. In this view there should be consideration that African folk/urban culture is the spark that lights up film stories and other cultural products. It is the commons from which every African creative taps into in development of artistic work and scholarly dialogues.
- The consideration of African socio- political and economic realities in the analysis of thematic messaging and ideological discourse without pointless embroidery. African discourse and critique should examine the subject of

© University of Venda

Africans' struggles without romanticising the squalid conditions as imagery for exoticism and without turning the lives of characters to subjects of pity. Continental Africans are neither mascots in the arena of penury nor hamsters in the lab of Western-baked interventions, but independent contributors to, and partakers of the global condition, quantum notwithstanding. In the cultural, political, social and technological diffusion matrix, flux has historically been symbiotic between Africa and other continents.

- The eschewal of the victimhood culture and fostering intellectualism and creativity led by self-reflection, self-examination and self-critique, without deflecting to comparisons and excuses of colonial, or precolonial history and heritage. African should be able to take responsibility of errors in their dialogues without infantilising the continent as a hapless child that needs protection from neighbourhood intellectual bullies. This means debunking the identities and moral dimensions of the African, judging them from the parameters of altruism. It is possible for Africa, globalisation notwithstanding, to chart her own path of progress without reference to erstwhile oppressors. This shall foster a more pragmatic approach to global politics, economics and intellectual debates. The African continental discourse instead of sympathy mining and a victimhood campaign, pursue the issues afflicting Africans from a stoic and pragmatic stance, squarely placing the responsibility for the African's missteps on themselves by placing them on the dock of penance, destruction, desolation, and loss. It should also bestow upon the African, a responsibility to reset, revitalise and re-establish lost causes, opportunities, and the mojo to continue

© University of Venda

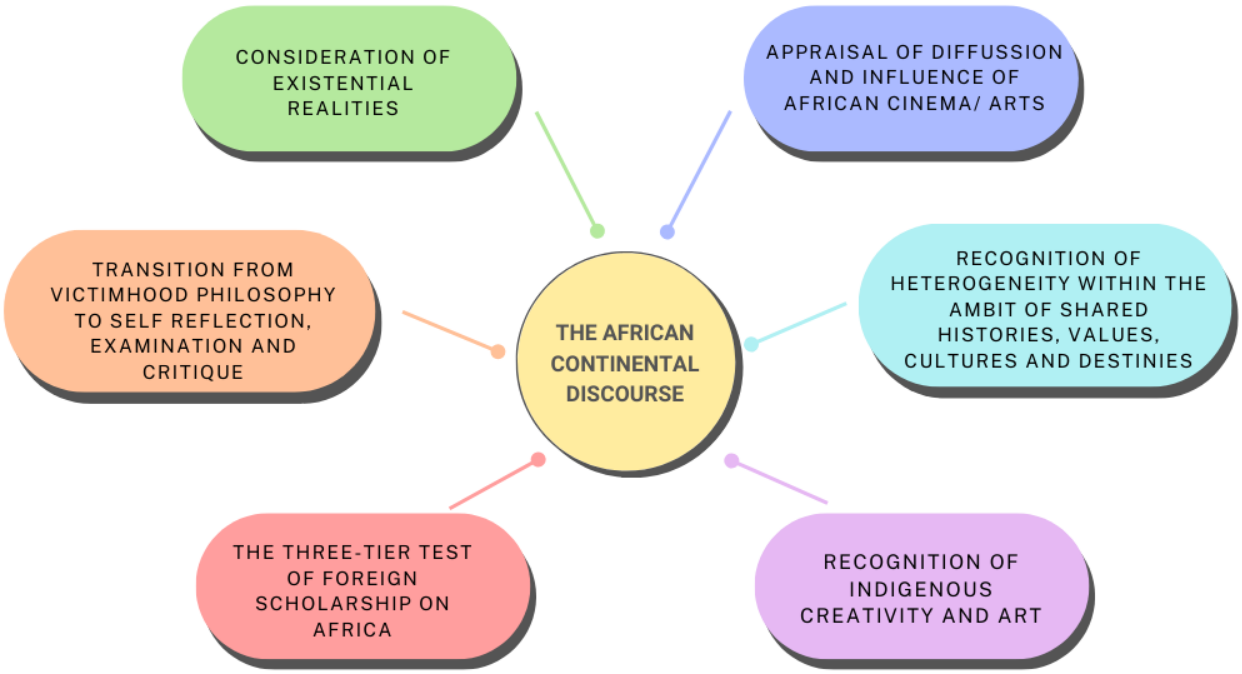
pursuing equity and equality within the global body politic. Therefore, in continental African discourse, the continental African gets a chance to relate, reflect, on their milieu and re-elect to be and remain African.

- The application of **a three-tier test** method to assess the veracity of documentations of history and philosophy including, the source test, the time test, and the influence test.
    - The **source test** involves a thorough review of the data sources (primary and secondary) and the credibility of those sources in the articulation of information and is applied to find trustworthiness or truthfulness. The test should also encompass the scientifically representative number and demography of the documented population or jurisdiction. For example, studies on social conditions anchored on grey literature, “expert” interviews, and desktop research without a representation of the experiential contribution of ordinary citizens would not suffice.
    - The **time test** encompasses regard to how much time has been spent in the documentation, the time spent in the continent and the reflection of the concept of time in African traditional and contemporary cultures and is applied to find chronological and historical credibility. For example, longitudinal studies akin to those Western Africanists have published covering epochs and paradigms in African conditions from pre-colonial to the present should be put to the time test to review their temporal credibility.

© University of Venda

- The **influence test** enmeshes musings on the persuasive preconditions of the researcher/author that predispose them to particular perspectives on Africa and is applied to assess impartiality and potential inherent perspective biases. With many a point of view on the continent stemming from dominant Eurocentric, neo-Eurocentric and counter philosophies, the documentation must be evaluated for intellectual, financial, rhetorical and political influences to ascertain their goal, which is writ large tethered to their benefactor views.

The African continental discourse tenets are expressed in the figure below.



© University of Venda

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter ties down the socio-intellectual view of study, locating its averments on the social identities, ethics and intellectual dynamics of African studies. Taking a critical view of Africanist, diasporan and continental theories and studies, the chapter advocates for a continental-centric view of Africa fully immersed and the versed in the African condition, and the contemporary attendances of globalisation and geopolitics. The chapter tapers off into surmising a proposed African continental discourse and mode of reading. The next chapter crowns the study with the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

© University of Venda

6 CHAPTER SIX:

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter entails a summation of the discussions within the dissertation, conclusions or conclusive statements and recommendations on any future research, practice and policy in genre filmmaking and analysis. This study sets out from the premise of reviewing the genre dispositions of African crime films from Sub-Saharan Africa based on nine films proceeding from three objectives;

1. To investigate the audio-visual aesthetics in African crime films.
2. To analyse the narrative and language dispositions of African crime films.
3. To examine the relationship between the messaging in the sampled African crime films and the existential realities in the depicted contexts.

The analysis of findings for the study objectives were intercoursed independently within individual chapters leading to various conclusions that are canvassed and focussed upon in this chapter. This matrix of objectives and chapters is codified in the table below.

Table 3: The objective versus Thesis Chapters matrix

OBJECTIVE NO.	OBJECTIVE	CHAPTER NO.	CHAPTER TITLE
1	To analyse the narrative dispositions of African crime films.	**2**	NARRATIVE CONFIGURATIONS OF AFRICAN CRIME FILMS

© University of Venda

2	To investigate the audio-visual and language aesthetics in African crime films.	**3**	AUDIO-VISUAL AND LANGUAGE AESTHETICS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS
3	To examine the relationship between the messaging in the sampled African crime films and the existential realities in the depicted contexts.	**4**	THE NEXUS BETWEEN THEME AND CONTEXTUAL VERISMS IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS
		5	THE INTERSECTION OF PHILOSOPHY AND IDEOLOGY IN AFRICAN CRIME FILMS

6.2 Summary of Findings

The first objective in the study was to analyse the audiovisual aesthetics in film. Towards this, the inquiry discovered that African crime films exude a host of dispositions straddling the universalist codes of filmmaking including cinematographic techniques like shot composition, image lighting and visual perspectives. The visual iconography in the films is further broken down into the framing of African bodies and landscapes in which the study finds a thread of visualizing battered and sexualized African bodies. The chapter also covers the visual landscapes including derelict slums, dreamy cities, and African nightlife. This, as the chapter unveils, is brought to life using camera techniques, infusion of costumes, makeup, and lighting designs.

The chapter further reviews the soundscapes of African crime films on which the study raises the argument that amidst the universalistic infusion of the elements of a

© University of Venda

soundtrack, African crime films claim uniqueness in the deployment of sounds of violence and the musical iconography composed of musical text centred on the African existential conditions and musical genres that are characteristic of the African popular, religious, and cultural scenes. The music genres deployed in the films as the chapter reveals include Afrobeat, Kwaito, Umqashiyo, Kwela, Mbaqanga, Lugaflow, Kenyan Hip-hop, Congolese Rumba and Nigerian Highlife inter alia. The music, as the analysis reveals tackles various cultural, social, religious, and political issues tied to the African histories, familial cultures, religious rituals and commentary of African politics and governance.

The chapter further discourses on the linguistic element as an aesthetic feature in African crime films. From the discussions thereof, the study posits that the blended use of indigenous slang, creole, and pidgin languages with European or colonial languages like English and French characterises the films. Among the languages identified include Lingala Gikuyu Kiswahili Tswana, Zulu, Afrikaans, Yoruba, pidgin English, Sheng, and Luganda among other things, which are endemic to the depicted jurisdictions. To deepen the comprehension of the language used in the films, the chapter further discusses the infusion of style in the language and functional dispositions of the deployment including the use of language to reveal violence, hatred, and seeds of subversion among the characters in the films.

The second objective analyses the storytelling qualities in African crime films. This is geared towards reviewing the universalities and particularities of African crime films from the aegis of narrative elements including the plot, characters and settings. Railed

© University of Venda

on the genre concept of conventions and iconography based on the narrative symbols, icons, flow and structure and how it links with other subgenres within the larger crime film genre matrix, the chapter proceeds to analyse the storytelling element of the narrative plot.

The chapter arguments and assertions proceed to review the narrative from three points of view; The first is genre analysis as discussed by Warshow (1948), Shadoian (2003) and Leitch (2004) who discuss the story plotting in other crime genres like the American gangster. The second perspective is the storytelling disposition from the view of African narratives or African oral literature, as discussed by Okpewho (1977) and Finnegan (2012). The third perspective is the Booker (2005) characterisation of seven basic plots. The analysis thereof reveals that the plots in the African crime films portend an eclectic storytelling disposition which includes some elements of the gangster genre as advanced by the genre theorists, elements of African Literature and wield characteristics of the diverse types of plots.

The specific characteristics that are noted in the plot include, the **moral of the story**, which is an important edict of the African oral literature. The plots also reveal the character arcs specifically noted in the generic **three-tier characterization** of the criminal, the victim, and the intervening character (the court system or the law enforcement). These are specific genre characteristics or tropes, as indicated by (Shadoian, 2003; Leitch, 2004) in their analysis of the American gangster. On the types of plots explored by the African crime filmsthe study finds that African crime films include, the **voyage and return plot,** the **rebirth plot,** the **tragedy plot,** and the **hood**

© University of Venda

story. Although the three types of plots recur among the nine sampled films each of the cinematic instalments accords due prominence to a specific type, priming either **rebirth**, **voyage and return, tragedy,** or the **hood story,** while blending the characteristics of the others within its presentation of the story.

To further achieve the objective, the study further analyses the narrative element of character in the sampled African crime films. On this, the study finds that the characters deployed in the African crime films portend, to an extent, the trio characterisation in the American gangster, including the criminal, the victim, and the intervening character (Leitch, 2004). However, African crime films do not stop at that but add other dimensions to the characterisation, which includes the wider society and the space or the hood that are given a unique character and specific interactions within the story in an anthropomorphic manner. In specific, the physical space, the conceptual space and the amorphous society are given a soul and personality. Further, the films establish the hood dimension, which is in some cases used to sanitise or decriminalise the criminal by making them function as an important cog within the society they operate in. Conversely, the criminals are also exhibited as harmful to the society or hoods, as opposed to individual identifiable characters that can be given the tag of a victim.

The society, represented by the physical hood (slum, city, village etc.) or groups like families or communities is thus identified as the victim. However, its victimhood is of a paradoxical since it is the same society that takes the role of an active catalyst and abetter of the crimes being committed. As families in the African crime films are identified as disturbed. Their brand of disturbance, as per the analysis is characterised

© University of Venda

by their broken nature and the palpable loss of fatherhood. This in turn is adduced as an important stimulus in the lives of those who choose the hazardous path of crime and embrace other criminals as family to replace their nuclear families at home. In the other situations as this study finds, the family and its situations spur the commission of crimes in the quest to fend and provide for peasant parents, children, and siblings. This Robin Hood and origin story situation deviates from the concept of the criminal in the American gangster genre. It instead portrays the criminal as a rebel with a cause and an emblem of broken dreams, occasioned by an economically and morally rundown, and debilitated society.

The chapter further engages in the analysis of female characters and their space within the crime situation. On this, the study finds that women. Span the whole gamut of the crime commission and abetting, on top of leading the crime. Women are also depicted as victims who not only experience violence at home but in their career pursuits. Women also serve within the realm of law enforcement playing roles of corrupt and violent police and army. Besides the mother nurturer archetypes, the films also feature women as prostitutes and *female fatales* a cue from American gangster films.

The chapter also discusses the criminal as a political animal or a symbolic figure that passes important political messages and discusses complex political situations in their countries. This is a recurring feature in most of the films analysed, as politics feature within their lives, using their voices to reveal management of their healthcare systems, their political systems, their sufferage system, their religious systems, and organs of governance.

© University of Venda

Finally, the chapter reviews the narrative element of setting. The study finds that African crime films are characterised based on the specific settings that they deploy within their narratives. Ranging from the physical settings, which include cities and villages, slums and historical settings, African crime films are set upon strong backgrounds of specificity in terms of geographical locale, and the historical situation of the narratives told. Besides several of the films being based on true stories and real events the sampled African crime films also include stories told in the backdrop of popular events that happened in Africa, including the Kenyan post-election violence, the post-apartheid period in South Africa, the 1960s in South Africa, the post-independence era in contemporary Namibia, and the post millennial “bodaboda” era in Uganda. The settings as discussed, are not only used as the backdrops of the stories but are sources of reference or active trauma for the characters telling the stories. This portends that the African crime film maker and the characters they create are not only set in history and the spaces in Africa, but are also active history makers and chroniclers, in addition to being important players and operatives within the African setting. This furnishes the African crime films with a lot of depth in its quest to tackle African stories and represent African lives through African characters and fortifies the assertion that the crime film is an important discussion of issues among African societies from the past, the contemporary present and the future.

The third objective of this study appraises the relationship between thematic messaging in African crime films and the existential realities within the depicted African spaces and societies. On this, the study reviewed thematic issues tackled within the

© University of Venda

sampled African crime films and compared this to socio-cultural, political, religious, and historical phenomena within the African landscapes, specifically within those countries portrayed in the films under study. To guide this analysis, the study relied on the cultural verisimilitude tenet of the genre theory and the historical specificity tenet of the post-Afrocentricity theoretical approach. The arguments in this chapter are therefore predicated upon the idea that, indeed African crime films are based on, and are depictions of existential realities within African societies and their perspectives are imported from specific historical, cultural, religious, political, and economic ideological phenomena within the African countries. The findings of this study from this objective, reveal that African crime films tackle a variety of themes, including parochial nationalism and transnational strife, reality of crime and its paradoxes within Africa, Issues of religiosity and warped governance systems in Africa.

On national parochialism and transnational strife, the study findings reveal that indeed, African crime films tackle this subject by characterising Individuals and societies of different nationalities experiencing discrimination, violence, and unfounded hatred inspired by their perceived differences based on nationalism. Specifically, the films tackle how border control is used against Africans of other nationalities and the raging suspicions canvassed as fights against crime are used to discriminate, disenfranchise, and bully people of different nationalities. In this instance the chapter proceeds to cross-analyse the diegetic representations of the realities of xenophobia in South Africa, the national strife between Angolans and the Congolese of DRC; and the discriminatory law enforcement faced by the Somalis in Kenya. Contending with Adeola

© University of Venda

(2015), this study further explores the idea that indeed the xenophobia and nationality discrimination experienced in South Africa and other countries is disguised as Afrophobia, as opposed to a general xenophobia that is targeted against persons of all races and nationalities.

Jerusalema overtly tackles this subject through the depiction of the Nigerian drug dealers who meet tragic and violent deaths in the hands of native South Africans like Lucky Kunene and his gang who hold the opinion that the crime committed by Nigerians in their country is worse than they are committing themselves. The chapter takes this cue from this to explore real phenomena in South Africa like Operation Dudula and other specific instances of xenophobic expression in South Africa. *Viva Riva* also explores the tensions between DRC and Angola, which the study uses to review other cross-border brawls with countries such as Rwanda and Uganda. In addition, this subject is covered through the appraisal of the covert depiction of instances of terrorism as depicted in *Uradi,* which are relied on to explore the injustices meted against Kenyan Somalis, who are deemed to be of Somalian origin and hence viewed and treated as second class citizens or foreigners.

The chapter then proceeds to a discussion of the crime paradox and the specific instances of criminality within the African countries. On this, the study explores the reality of criminality, the types of crimes, shapes of criminals that prowl the African landscapes. Ranging from financial crime including, corruption, fraud, and racketeering; Robbery; and murder which is classified as a crime against humanity, criminality within African countries is analysed in the chapter as a paradoxical idea,

© University of Venda

which pits itself as an anathema to African existence and on the contrary, a catholicon for African existence, used to not only to fend a livelihood for the criminals, but also to sustain their families and the wider society around them. After exploring the crime figurations and criminality theme, the study further delves into fighting crime and the place of law enforcers within the fulcrum of criminality. On this, the study explores the. instances of a dysfunctional law enforcement, extrajudicial executions and the involvement of police officers, courts, and other forces in the commission of crimes.

This analysis opens the discussion to adduce specific instances, including the #ENDSARS in Nigeria, the murderous enterprise of the Kwekwe squad and the Flying Squad in Kenya; the SAPS in South Africa and the specific events in history, including the #ENDSARS protests that were triggered by the wanton human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings, torture and unwarranted violence meted against civilians by police officers. The Marikana massacre in South Africa, where innocent mine workers were mowed down by police officers with bullets and the execution of innocent Kenyans, including the Kianjokoma brothers, civil society leaders, and political protesters during the post-election violence, provide contexts of the sequences of extrajudicial killings indicated in the films. The police kill gangsters without following due process that includes arraignment in courts of law. Exploration of crime and the figuration of crime in the study also features the court system. Like law enforcement, the court is also explored as a place of injustice and valorised as a market, where justice is sold to the highest bidder. On the other hand, the courts are also explored as arbiters for society in the situation of criminality, providing the intervening

© University of Venda

characterisation in the films, where the victim must get reparations following the injuries occasioned to them by the criminal. In some cases, the criminals in the films get custodial and non-custodial judicial sentences, as some cheat justice, hence proving courts as the proverbial long arm of the law and custodians of justice that arms the governance system to fight crime in Africa.

The chapter also explores the endemic socioeconomic conditions as a nursery for crime in Africa. Through an in-depth analysis of the origin stories of the criminals, the study finds that the films assert the circumstances of their beginnings as platforms upon which young people anchor their reasoning of going into crime, as an option to the careers that they have failed to achieve. The inaccessibility of quality education, lack of employment opportunities and the lack of social goods like healthcare, education and access to amenities and opportunities for career advancement are advanced as nurseries of criminality. In this sense, young people of Africa living in poverty are forced to go into crime, as a way of fending for their families and themselves. Besides the exploration of the specific characters in the films sampled, the study also relies on published material and interviews that confirm the assertion of criminals in Africa positing poverty and lack in their origin stories as a reason for them being in crime.

The chapter further explores the issues of African politics and governance on which it finds that the films, characterisations, and narratives provide a critique on governance in Africa, critiquing the type of leadership that Africa has and its responsibility to its citizenry. The films provide a platform where corruption among the leaders and their irresponsibility in management of the social goods and public resources is decried.

© University of Venda

Indeed, in this instance, the African crime films provide an adequate window through which African governance can be viewed on the pedestal provided by published material. African governance and politics are revealed to be toxic, corrupt, and bereft of any virtue with a practice of a Byzantine and Machiavellian type of Politics and governance inundated by bad practices like corruption, nepotism, cronyism and bribery of voters.

The African crime films further explore the theme of religiosity and religious characters in the films, which provides a platform for criticism of religion in Africa. The films provide a variety of religious formations, including the Catholic, other unnamed Christian denominations and Islam. Religion is presented as a phenomenon in the everyday lives of the characters, as well as a source of solace to the distressed, in addition to the view of religion as a toxic element of fundamentalism and a nurturer of terrorism and violent extremism.

Finally, the chapter explores the issue of drugs and drug abuse in Africa which is explored in African crime films through the drug use by the characters in the films, drug selling, smuggling, and peddling by other characters in the films, and the efforts of the law enforcement in fighting or abetting. The issue of drug abuse is articulated in two ways in the films; The first view is drug supply and drug abuse as a repugnant, retrogressive phenomenon, which is depicted through some characters who completely avoid drugs to succeed and others who go into drugs, leading them to destruction, loss of life and livelihood. Drug supply is also explored as a lucrative business that film characters venture into, targeting to advance themselves

© University of Venda

economically and socially. On this, the study explores the issue of drug abuse within African countries and proceeds on the platform of studies on transnational drug trafficking within Africa and through Africa, which unveil Africa as having edged from a transit zone for drugs, going to other parts of the world to not only a producer of the drugs but also one of the biggest destination of drugs. This signals the fact that Africa is now in the throes of becoming a derelict space of drug abuse.

6.3 Conclusions

The results of the foregoing study under the interpretations thereof reveal that indeed genre and its nuances are a phenomenon rife in Africa cinema making from the foregoing analysis it is evident that indeed African cinema employs generic notions of repetition and uniqueness lucidly demonstrated in the sampled films, the generic ideals reveal themselves through the audio-visual aesthetics like cinematography, sound effects, music and production design besides the audio-visual aesthetics the crime films also employ notable elements like characterisation, plot and settings to reveal specific universalities of genre and specificities tied to each film jurisdiction and the corpus by extension.

Additionally, the films deploy thematic messaging as a transliteral tool of interpreting various existential issues endemic in particular African jurisdictions and continent-wide. The thematic exploration, among others, chiefly deals with issues of crime and the paradoxes therein and the lingering questions of human rights practice and abuses within the borders of African countries and within transnational jurisdictions.

© University of Venda

As the discussion distils the significance of genre within the important discourses of African cinema, it also recognises the glaring absence of a discourse that centres its respects on the continental African without diminishing his stature and elevating an intellectual victimhood project as advanced by postcolonial theories. The study concludes, therefore, that there is need for a mode of reading of African cultural products, cinema included and a discussion framework that allows the priming of the continental African and their existential milieu without creating a comparative, accusatory or victimhood relation to eurocentrism or neocolonialism. The study therefore concludes that genre is indeed part of the African cinema frameworks and that that it not only portends hegemonic aesthetic and commercial frameworks, but it is also a potent tool of packaging information on Africa, Africans and Africanness.

6.3.1 African Crime Film Genre Markers

The African crime film genre exudes the following characteristics.

Genre markers	Description
Narrative	**Plot Types** • Origin stories • Voyage and return/Rebirth plots • Tragedy plots • Hood stories • Moral of the story
	Character Archetypes • Four-dimensional characterization • Morally ambivalent criminals • Robin Hood criminals • Gang-based criminality • Political agency criminals
Aesthetic	**Visual Markers:** • Framing of sexualized and battered/subdued African bodies • Derelict slums and townships

© University of Venda

	• Dreamy but chaotic cities s • Low-key lighting • Natural lighting
	Sound Design: • Sounds of violence • African musical genres • Musical text as social commentary • Soundscapes of African locales
	Language Markers • Multilingual dialogue • African oral literature stylistics • Code-switching • Urban youth languages
Thematic/Messaging	**Existential Realities:** • Crime as socio-economic solution • Parochial nationalism • Police brutality and corruption • Failed governance systems • Healthcare and education access issues
	Cultural Specifics: • Ubuntu/communalism • Religious diversity • Family dysfunction • Historical specificity
Generic Conventions	**Setting Patterns:** • Slums/townships as primary locations • Cities as both aspiration and destruction • Rural areas as pure origins contrasted with corrupt cities • Religious and educational institutions
	Resolution Patterns • Pyrrhic victories/ Costly survival • Community healing • Moral dilemmas • Historical justice

6.4 Recommendations

The discussions in this investigation revealed various lacuna and opportunities that warrant more studies and aesthetic incorporation of genre in African cinema. The assessment thereof is that the resultant recommendations are fit for cultural, industry and policy leaders, and African scholars.

© University of Venda

6.4.1 Film Industry

This study recommends that the film industry finds value and advances genre filmmaking not only for aesthetic reasons, but for rhetorical and commercial reasons. In this view the genre taxonomy does not necessarily have to conform to existing ones, but can innovate based on available resources, expertise, prevailing conditions and in respect to the African audiences.

6.4.2 Policy

As established in the study the crime genre portends existential issues and attendant consequences, in addition to innovative, community mooted solutions of crime. Policy makers therefore should find value in the films as part of the cultural understanding of the societies under their jurisdiction and best ways of collaborative policing. Intelligence gathering and expansion of the democratic space should also be based in understanding of the unhinged artistic expressions by the griots.

Policy makers should also consider using film as a key tool in civic education and communicating their achievements and agenda. This should not be confused with the creation of propaganda films.

6.4.3 Scholarship and Research

There is need to conduct investigation on the following areas;

- Genre as a commercial strategy in African Cinemas
- The African crime film from and psychoanalytic point of view.
- Cinema as a research tool for criminologists, among other disciplines.

© University of Venda

- Disposition and relevance of other genres in African cinema.
- Grounded theories relevant for continental African discourse

© University of Venda

7 REFERENCES

Abah, A.L. (2008) 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward: African Women in Nigerian Video-Film', *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 1(4), pp. 335–357. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-9137.2008.00027.x.

Abotebuno, A.I. (2023) 'Ghana's Debt Crisis and the Political Economy of Financial Dependence in Africa: History Repeating Itself?', *Development and Change*, 54(5), pp. 1264–1295. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12791.

Abuya, B. A., Admassu, K., Ngware, M., Onsomu, E. O., & Oketch, M. (2015). Free primary education and implementation in Kenya: The role of primary school teachers in addressing the policy gap. SAGE Open, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244015571488

Adeola, R. (2015) 'Preventing Xenophobia in Africa: What Must the African Union Do?', *AHMR*, 1(3).

AfricaNews (2019) 'Road-rail bridge between Brazzaville and Kinshasa [Business Africa]'. Available at: https://www.africanews.com/2019/05/16/road-rail-bridge-between-brazzaville-and-kinshasa/.

Afriyie, F.A., Ayangbah, S. and Effah, K.O. (2023) 'Diagnosing Ethiopia's Tigray War: Reverberations in the Horn of Africa', *Insight on Africa*, 15(2). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/09750878231170177.

Agawu, K. (1992) *Representing African Music*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343783?seq=1&cid=pdf-.

Akyeampong, E. (2000) 'Africans in the Diaspora: the Diaspora and Africa', *African Affairs*, 99(395), pp. 183–215. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/99.395.183.

© University of Venda

Albanese, J.S.. (2015) *Organized crime : from the mob to transnational organized crime*. Routledge.

Aluko-Daniels, O. (2015) 'At the Margins of Consent: Sex Trafficking from Nigeria to Italy', in *Eurafrican Migration: Legal, Economic and Social Responses to Irregular Migration*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, pp. 74–87. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137391353_5.

Amnesty International (2014) *SOMALIS ARE SCAPEGOATS IN KENYA'S COUNTER TERROR CRACKDOWN*. Amnesty International.

Amone, C. (2021) 'Boda-boda, Youth Employment and Globalisation in Uganda', *American Research Journal of History and Culture*, 7(1), pp. 1–9. Available at: www.arjonline.org.

Anderson, D.M. (2002) *Vigilantes, Violence and the Politics of Public Order in Kenya*, *Affairs*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3518466?seq=1&cid=pdf-.

Armes, Roy. (2006) *African filmmaking : North and South of the Sahara*. Edinburgh University Press.

Arthur, D.D., Paalo, S.A. and Adu-Gyamfi, S. (2022) 'Xenophobia and the challenge of regional integration in Africa: understanding three cardinal dynamics', *Acta Academica*, 54(2), pp. 6–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.18820/24150479/AA54I2/2.

Atieno, A. (2007) *Mungiki, 'Neo-Mau Mau' & the Prospects for Democracy in Kenya*, *Source: Review of African Political Economy*.

Author, A., Mazrui, A.M. and Mazrui, A.A. (1993) *Dominant Languages in a Plural Society: English and Kiswahili in Post-Colonial East Africa*.

Ayega, D. (2021) 'DPP orders arrest of 6 police officers linked to Kianjokoma brothers’ murders'. Available at:

© University of Venda

https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2021/08/dpp-orders-arrest-of-6-police-officers-linked-to-kianjokoma-brothers-murders/.

Azzarri, C. and Signorelli, S. (2020) 'Climate and poverty in Africa South of the Sahara', *World Development*, 125. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104691.

Baah-Boateng, W. (2016) 'The youth unemployment challenge in Africa: What are the drivers?', *Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 27(4). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304616645030.

Badawi, Z. (2024) *An African History of Africa*. Random House.

Baraza, P. (2017) 'A new twist of events after the death of Nairobi's prettiest gangster '. Available at: https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/ureport/story/2001240591/a-new-twist-of-events-after-the-death-of-nairobi-s-prettiest-gangster.

Bastian, M. L., Okpewho, I., Davies, C. B., & Mazrui, A. A. (2000). The African Diaspora: African origins and new world identities. The International Journal of African Historical Studies, 33(2), 474. https://doi.org/10.2307/220730

BBC News (2015) 'Kenyan Muslims shield Christians in Mandera bus attack', March. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35151967.

Bettelheim, J., Okpewho, I., Davies, C. B., & Mazrui, A. A. (2002). The African Diaspora: African origins and new world identities. African Studies Review, 45(3), 104. https://doi.org/10.2307/1515119

Betts, A., Omata, N., Siu, J., & Sterck, O. (2023). Refugee mobilities in East Africa: understanding secondary movements. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 49(11). https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2169113

© University of Venda

Biavaschi, C., Facchini, G., Mayda, A. M., & Mendola, M. (2018). South-South migration and the labor market: Evidence from South Africa. Journal of Economic Geography, 18(4). https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lby010

Booker, C. (2005) *The seven basic plots*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bordwell, D., Thompson, K. and Smith, J. (2020) *Film Art: An Introduction*. 12th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Boughedir, F. (2019) 'African Cinema and Ideology: Tendencies and Evolution', in J. Givanni and I. Bakari (eds) *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bouwer, K. (2018) 'Life in Cinematic Urban Africa', in K. Harrow and C. Garritano (eds) *A Companion to African Cinema*. Wiley, pp. 69–87. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119100577.ch3.

Bouwer, K. (2019) 'Life in Cinematic Urban Africa', in K. Harrow and C. Garritano (eds) *A Companion to African Cinema*. Wiley, pp. 69–87. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119100577.ch3.

Brankamp, H. and Glück, Z. (2022) 'Camps and counterterrorism: Security and the remaking of refuge in Kenya', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 40(3), pp. 528–548. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758221093070.

Brautigam, D. (2022) 'China and Zambia: creating a sovereign debt crisis', *International Affairs*, 98(4), pp. 1347–1365. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiac109.

Bright, B., Babalola, C. P., Sam-Agudu, N. A., Onyeaghala, A. A., Olatunji, A., Aduh, U., Sobande, P. O., Crowell, T. A., Tebeje, Y. K., Phillip, S., Ndembi, N., & Folayan, M. O. (2021). COVID-19 preparedness: capacity to manufacture vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics in sub-Saharan Africa. In Globalization and Health (Vol. 17, Issue 1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-021-00668-6

© University of Venda

Brown, B. (2008) *Motion Picture and Video Lighting.* 2nd edn. Oxford: Elsevier Inc.

Brown, B. (2012) *Cinematography Theory and Practice*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Elsevier Inc.

Bruce, D. (2018) 'Shot while surrendering: Strikers describe Marikana Scene 2', *South African Crime Quarterly*, (65), pp. 7–22. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3108/2018/v0n65a3049.

Bukenya, A., Kabira, W.M. and Okoth-Okombo, D. (1994) *Understanding oral literature*. University of Nairobi Press.

Burke, J. (2020) 'Face-off over the Congo: the long rivalry between Kinshasa and Brazzaville'. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/jan/17/congo-rivalry-kinshasa-brazzaville-river-drc.

Bynoe, Y. (2002) *Getting Real about Global Hip Hop*, *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. Winter/Spring.

Cagayare, B.A.I. (2013) 'Westgate attack: Kenya's "Little Mogadishu" fears backlash'. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24222756.

Carstens, P. and Pendleton, W.C. (1997) 'Katutura, a place where we stay: Life in a Post-Apartheid township in Namibia', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 30(3), p. 682. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/220622.

Chandler, D. (1997) 'An Introduction to Genre Theory'. Available at: http://visual-memory.co.uk/daniel//Documents/intgenre/chandler_genre_theory.pdf (Accessed: 2 April 2022).

Chinwa Ole, N. (2022) *The Police Act 2020 as a Primer for addressing Police Brutality in Nigeria (2022) 2(1) African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education 1*. Available at: https://globalgirlsglow.org/police-brutality-in-nigeria-an-unending-nightmare/.

© University of Venda

Corrales, J.-S., Imam, P. A., Weber, S., & Yehoue, E. (2015). Dollarisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Journal of African Economies, ejv020. https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejv020

Crush, J., Tawodzera, G., Chikanda, A., & Tevera, D. (2019). Living With Xenophobia. In Living With Xenophobia. Southern African Migration Programme. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh8r19b

Development Initiatives (2020) 'Poverty in Uganda : National and regional data and trends', *Journal for Studies in Management and Planning*, 2(9).

Dumant, G. (2023) *Congo's Extravagant Millionaires: The Crazy Lives of Africa's Ultra-Rich | documentary*, *Clips, Java Discover | Free Global Documentaries* . Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3J9NjHTS60w.

Duncanson, K. and Mcmillan, N. (2011) *'This is Africa': Filmic Negotiations of Crime, Justice and Global Responsibility*. Available at: http://sydney.edu.au/law/criminology.

Ecoma, B.E. (2023) 'A post-mortem assessment of the #EndSARS protest and police brutality in Nigeria', *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 23(1), pp. 156–181. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2023/v23n1a7.

Eisenhammer, S. and Paravicini, G. (2018) 'Three days of violence that emptied an Angolan town of Congolese'. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1MZ1TS/.

Elder, G., Crush, J. and McDonald, D. (2003) 'Transnationalism and New African Immigration to South Africa', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 37(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/4107377.

ENACT (2021) *Women as actors of transnational organized crime in Africa* . ENACT. Available at: https://www.interpol.int/en/content/download/17993/file/2022%2008%2018.pdf.

© University of Venda

ENACT (2023) *Africa Organised Crime Index 2023*.

Falola, T. (2013) *The African diaspora*. University Rochester Press.

Fanon, F. (1963) *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press, Inc.

Fentaw, K.D., Fenta, S.M. and Biresaw, H.B. (2022) 'Prevalence and Associated Factors of Substance Use Male Population in East African Countries: A Multilevel Analysis of Recent Demographic and Health Surveys From 2015 to 2019', *Substance Abuse: Research and Treatment*, 16. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/11782218221101011.

Finnegan, R. (2012) *Oral Literature in Africa*. Open Book Publishers.

Forjaz, J. and Lage, J. (2019) 'Slums in African Cities', in *Bioclimatic Architecture in Warm Climates*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 251–284. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12036-8_8.

Gabriel, T.H. (2011) ' T owards a C ritical T heory of T hird W orld F ilms ', *Critical Interventions*, 5(1), pp. 187–203. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/19301944.2011.10781409.

Galal, S. (2023) 'Africa: share of global poverty by country 2023 | Statista'. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1228553/extreme-poverty-as-share-of-global-population-in-africa-by-country/.

Githiora, C. (2002) 'Sheng: Peer language, Swahili dialect or emerging Creole?', *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 15(2), pp. 159–181. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369681022000042637.

Givanni, J. (2019) *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image*. Edited by J. Givanni and I. Bakari. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

© University of Venda

Grant, B.K. (2007) *Film genre: From Iconography to Ideology*. London: Wallflower.

Habila, H. (2017) *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings & Islamic Militancy in Nigeria*. Penguin Books Limited.

Hanaoka, S., Sota, M., Kawasaki, T., & Thompson, R. G. (2019). Performance of cross-border corridors in East Africa considering multiple stakeholders. Transport Policy, 81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tranpol.2019.06.003

Harrow, K. and Garritano, C. (2019) *A Companion to African Cinema*. New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell.

Hartzenberg, T. (2011) *Staff Working Paper ERSD-2011-14 Regional Integration in Africa Regional Integration in Africa*.

Haynes, J. (2016) *Nollywood: The Creation of Nigerian Film Genres*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd.

Higginbottom, A. (2018) *The Marikana Massacre in South Africa: the Results of Toxic Collusion*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323607571.

Hope, K.R. (2020) 'Channels of corruption in Africa: analytical review of trends in financial crimes', *Journal of Financial Crime*, 27(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-05-2019-0053.

Hounmenou, C.E. (2019) 'Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Children in the West African Region', in *The SAGE Handbook of Human Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP : SAGE Publications Ltd, pp. 360–382. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526436146.n18.

Human Rights Watch (2012) *'If you come back we will kill you' : sexual violence and other abuses against Congolese migrants during expulsions from Angola.*

© University of Venda

Hurst, E. (2018) 'Tsotsitaal', in *The Social and Political History of Southern Africa's Languages*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 301–310. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-01593-8_18.

Idemudia, E.S. (2017) 'Trauma and PTSS of Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa: A summary of published studies', *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 9(3). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000214.

IMLU (2023) *2023 QUARTER 1 STATE OF THE NATION HUMAN RIGHT REPORT: TORTURE AND RELATED VIOLATIONS IN KENYA*.

Isike, C. and Isike, E. (2012) 'A Socio-cultural Analysis of African Immigration to South Africa', *Alternation: Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, 19(1).

Joseph, J.E. (2023) 'Protests and Media Representations: An Intersectional Analysis of the Marikana Massacre (2012), the Johannesburg Protests, and the Phoenix Massacre (2021)', *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, pp. 59–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2023415.

Kagwanja, P. (2003) 'New generation drinking: The uncertain boundaries of criminal enterprise in modern Kenya', *African Affairs*, 102(407), pp. 241–260. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adg003.

Kah, H.K. (2012) *'Africa Must Unite:' Vindicating Kwame Nkrumah and Uniting Africa Against Global Destruction*, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*.

Kenyatta, J. (1978) *Facing Mount Kenya. The traditional life of the Gikuyu*. Available at: http://ci.nii.ac.jp/ncid/BA86441003.

Kimani, G.T. (2022) *Sound Design in Film*. 1st edn. Utafiti Foundation .

© University of Venda

Kimathi, J. (no date) *Child Sex Trafficking Pandemic of the 21st Century in Kenya*. Available at: www.intechopen.com.

Klantschnig, G., Frowd, P. M., Apard, E., Ike, T., & Antonopoulos, G. A. (2023). Rethinking organized crime in Africa. Trends in Organized Crime, 26(4), 329–339. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12117-023-09519-9

KNHCR (2008) *The Cry of Blood: Report on Extra-Judicial Killings and Disappearances*.

krippendorff, K. (2004) 'Measuring the Reliability of Qualitative Text Analysis Data', *Quality & Quantity*, 38(6). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-004-8107-7.

Lake, O. (1995) 'Toward a Pan-African Identity: Diaspora African repatriates in Ghana', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68(1), p. 21. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/3317462.

Lawal, G. (2007) 'Corruption and Development in Africa: Challenges for Political and Economic Change', *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal*, 2(1).

Lawal, S. (2024) 'A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo'. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo.

Leavy, P. (2014) *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research (Oxford Library of Psychology)*, *Oxford University Press*.

Leitch, T. (2004) *Crime Films*. 2nd edn, *Crime Films*. 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511606458.

Lekunze, M. and Page, B. (2023) 'Security in Cameroon: a growing risk of persistent insurgency', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 57(1), pp. 219–236. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.2022.2120507.

© University of Venda

Libbenga, J. (2007) '"I Go Chop Your Dollar" star arrested', March. Available at: https://www.theregister.com/2007/07/02/419_singer_caught/.

Lucero-Prisno, D. E., Ogunkola, I. O., Imo, U. F., & Adebisi, Y. A. (2021). Perspective piece who will pay for the COVID-19 vaccines for Africa? In American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (Vol. 104, Issue 3). https://doi.org/10.4269/ajtmh.20-1506

Mabasa, N. (2022) *Members of the South African anti-migrant group Operation Dudula march on the Diakonia Council of Churches offices, demanding they stop assisting undocumented African immigrants*.

Mangala, J. (2017) *Africa and its Global Diaspora*. Springer.

Manning, P. (2010) *The African diaspora*. Columbia University Press.

Mapaya, M.G. (2013) *Contours of African Studies in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and South Africa*, *The Journal of Pan African Studies*.

Mapaya, M.G. (2016) 'The fourth and fifth generations of African scholars: A South African case study', *Acta Academica*, 48(2), pp. 76–90. Available at: https://doi.org/10.18820/24150479/aa48i2.3.

Marawako, J., Sixpence, P. and Mapuvire, D.H. (2022) 'An Analysis of the Recurrence of Military Coups in Africa. A Probe into the Experiences of Central African Republic in the 21st Century', *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*, 9(2), pp. 67–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0902008.

Maruf, H. and Joseph, D. (2018) *Inside Al-Shabaab: The Secret History of Al-Qaeda's Most Powerful Ally*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. Available at: https://lccn.loc.gov/2018019388 (Accessed: 11 December 2023).

Mascelli, J. (2005) *MOTION PICTURE FILMING TECHNIQUES*. Silman-James Press.

© University of Venda

Mashimbye, R. (2022) 'Terrorism, Insurgency, and Regional Stability: The Case of Mozambique', *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies*, 17(1), pp. 60–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/18186874.2022.2034483.

Masumba Walyemera, D. (2022) 'Accountability for Police Brutality in Uganda', *Cavendish University Law Journal*, 1. Available at: www.cavendish.ac.ug.

Matfess, H. and Lyons, T. (2023) 'Proxy Wars in the Horn of Africa', in *Routledge Handbook of Proxy Wars*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003174066-29.

Mazrui, A. (1986) *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Mazrui, A.A. and Laremont, R.R. (2002) *Africanity redefined*. Africa World Press.

Mbembe, A. (2003) 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture*, 15(1), pp. 11–40. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11.

Mbiti, J.S. (1990) *African Religions & Philosophy*. Heinemann.

Mbũgua, N. (2019) *CINEMA AS CULTURAL DISCOURSE: A STUDY OF CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY GĨKŨYŨ COMEDIES*. Kenyatta University.

McAlpine, A., Hossain, M. and Zimmerman, C. (2016) 'Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in settings affected by armed conflicts in Africa, Asia and the Middle East: systematic review', *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, 16(1), p. 34. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s12914-016-0107-x.

Mclaren, P. (1999) *Gangsta Pedagogy and Ghettocentricity: The Hip-Hop Nation as Counterpublic Sphere*, *Source: Counterpoints*.

© University of Venda

Melber, H. (2023) '"We will not move" from the Old Location to Katutura: Forced Resettlement in Windhoek, South West Africa (1959-1968)', *Historia*, 68(1), pp. 54–85. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-8392/2023/v68n1a3.

Meredith, M. (2006) *The state of Africa : A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Free Press.

Miller, T. and Stam, R. (2007) *A Companion to Film Theory*, *A Companion to Film Theory*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470998410.

Mkhize, B.V. (2022) 'South Africa electricity crisis: No power for up to six hours', *BBC News Johannesburg*, March. Available at: https://bbc.com/news/world-africa-62053991.

Mkhize, S.M., Shangase, A.N. and Cinini, S.F. (2023) 'African Parenting Style and its Relationship with Youths' Tendency to Participate in Crime: A Case Study of Kwazulu-Natal/ Indanda Township', *Township. Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies*, 1(2), pp. 123–144. Available at: https://doi.org/10.47509/JCCJS.2023.v01i02.02.

Mlambo, D. N., Mubecua, M. A., Mpanza, S. E., & Mlambo, V. H. (2019). Corruption and Its Implications for Development and Good Governance: A Perspective from Post-Colonial Africa. Journal of Economics and Behavioral Studies, 11(1(J)). https://doi.org/10.22610/jebs.v11i1(j).2746

Moine, R. (2008) *Cinema genre*. Blackwell Pub.

Morier-Genoud, E. (2020) 'The jihadi insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, pp. 396–412. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2020.1789271.

Moyo, D. (2008) *Dead Aid: Why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa*. Available at:

© University of Venda

https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20090409/0142.html/_res/id=sa_File1/Dead_Aid.pdf.

Moyo, G. (2020) 'Obstacles and Opportunities for Financing the Fight against Covid-19 in the Debt Trapped Zimbabwe', *iBusiness*, 12(02), pp. 52–68. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4236/ib.2020.122004.

Mthombeni, Z. (2022) 'Xenophobia in South Africa', *The Thinker*, 93(4), pp. 63–73. Available at: https://doi.org/10.36615/the_thinker.v93i4.2207.

Mubecua, M. and Mlambo, V.H. (2021) 'The Expropriation of Land Without Compensation in South Africa: A Strategy for Alleviating or Worsening Poverty?', in *The New Political Economy of Land Reform in South Africa*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 55–77. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51129-6_4.

Mugenda, O.M. and Mugenda, A.G. (2019) *Research methods: Quantitative & Qualitative and Mixed Methods Apporaches*. 3rd edn. Nairobi: Center for Innovative Leadership and Governance.

Mukaiwa, M. (2015) 'The music of Katutura', *The Namibian Weekender*, 6 February, pp. 4–4.

Mukwaya, P. Isolo., Kasaija, Peter., Mbabazi, Judith., Kisembo, Teddy., & Nakanjako, Ritah. (2022). Between regulation and informality: the inner workings of Boda Boda associations in Greater Kampala. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Munby, J. (2009) *Public enemies, public heroes*. University of Chicago Press.

Mushanga, M. (2011) *Criminology in Africa*. 2nd edn. Edited by M. Mushanga. Nairobi: Law Africa.

© University of Venda

Mutambo, A. and Hajir, A. (2020) '147 killed as Garissa University College attacked by gunmen'. Available at: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/70-killed-as-Garissa-University-College-attacked-by-gunmen/-/2558/2674310/-/gcoefgz/-/index.html.

Muteti, J., Kimani, S., Okioma, V., & Kamenderi, M. (2022). Alcohol Use Disorders and Associated Determinants among Public Sector Employees in Kenya. African Journal of Alcohol & Drug Abuse, 7, 3–10.

Mututa, A.S. (2020) 'Customizing post-apartheid Johannesburg: the dialectic of errancy in Ralph Ziman's Jerusalema', *Safundi*, 21(2), pp. 206–223. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2019.1701813.

Mwangi, E. (2010) 'The incomplete rebellion: Mau mau movement in twenty-first-century kenyan popular culture', *Africa Today*, 57(2), pp. 87–113. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2979/africatoday.57.2.86.

Mwangi, E.M. (2009) *Africa Writes Back to Self: Metafiction, Gender, Sexuality*. NewYork: SUNYPress.

Ndede, L.A. (2021) *The Aesthetics of Crime Fiction in Kenyan Film: An Examination of the Paradox of Painful Art in Nairobi Half Life and the Kitchen Toto*. University of Nairobi.

Neale, S. (2000) *Genre And Hollywood*. London: Routledge.

Nelmes, J. (2012a) *Introduction to film studies*. Routledge.

Nelmes, J. (2012b) *Introduction to Film Studies*. 5th edn. New York: Routledge.

Nesiama, E. and Ogunsanwo, A. (2022) *Implications of Xenophobia on Nigeria-South Africa Relations (2012-2022)*, *RUJMASS*.

© University of Venda

NewAfrica (2020) ‘An honest explanation of the Nigerian civil War | The Biafran Story’. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JCvIvb8PpY.

Njoroge, M. (2019) *Cinema As Cultural Discourse: A Study of Cultural Symbols in Selected Contemporary Gikuyu Comedies*.

Nkanjeni, U. (2023) ‘AKA’s death - Here are the facts so far’, March. Available at: https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2023-02-13-akas-death-here-are-the-facts-so-far/.

Nnaemeka, O. (1997) *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature*. Routledge.

Ochieng, O.C., Khachina, M.F. and Iteyo, C. (2023) ‘Causes and Consequences of Post-Election Violence in Kenya’, *African Journal of Empirical Research https*, 4(2), pp. 480–492. Available at: https://ajernet.net.

Ojaide, T. (2003) *Poetry, performance, and art*. us: Carolina Academic Press.

Okpewho, I. (1977) *Principles of Traditional African Art*, *Source: The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*.

Okpewho, I. (1983) *Myth in Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Available at: https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=wfs3AAAAIAAJ.

Okpewho, I. and Nzegwu, N. (2009) *The new African diaspora*. Indiana University Press.

Olaniyan, T. (1995) *Scars of Conquest/ Masks of Resistance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Olaniyan, T. (2004) *Arrest the Music: Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Available at: http://iupress.indiana.edu.

© University of Venda

Olawuni, O. (2021) 'Advance Fee Fraud, other Financial crimes on the rise among women in Nigeria'. Available at: https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/advance-fee-fraud-other-financial-crimes-on-the-rise-among-women-in-nigeria/.

Ombati, C. (2022) 'What we know about Westgate mall attack nine year later'. Available at: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-09-19-what-we-know-about-westgate-mall-attack-nine-year-later/.

Omondi, F. (2022) 'Kenya's River Yala: Mystery and heartbreak of the dead bodies'. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-60083684.

Omo-Osagie, S.I. (2007) '"Their souls made them whole": Negro spirituals and lessons in healing and atonement', *Western journal of black studies*, 31(2), p. 34. Available at: https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-203660016/their-souls-made-them-whole-negro-spirituals-and.

Onaolapo, O. J., Olofinnade, A. T., Ojo, F. O., Adeleye, O., Falade, J., & Onaolapo, A. Y. (2022). Substance use and substance use disorders in Africa: An epidemiological approach to the review of existing literature. World Journal of Psychiatry, 12(10), 1268–1286. https://doi.org/10.5498/wjp.v12.i10.1268

Opondo, O. and Kiprop, G. (2018) *Boda boda motorcycle transport and security challenges in Kenya*. National Crime Research Centre.

Osen, G. (2019) 'Killer squad Hessy targets gangsters freed on bond, say police sources'. Available at: https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/nairobi/2019-03-21-killer-squad-hessy-targets-gangsters-freed-on-bond-say-police-sources/.

Otike, F.W. and Kiruki, B. (2011) 'Free Primary Education in Kenya and its challenges in fighting Illiteracy', *Journal of Education and Practice* , 2(3), pp. 146–154. Available at: www.iiste.org.

© University of Venda

Ovuorie, T. (2014) 'Investigation into the deadly Human Trafficking cartel in Nigeria'. Available at: https://app.premiumtimesng.com/4-tobore-ovuorie/.

Paravicini, G., Bujakera, S. and Eisenhammer, S. (2018) 'Congo accuses Angola of violent expulsions, Luanda denies'. Available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKCN1MQ2OO/.

Pasternack, A. (2011) '"I Go Chop Your Dollar": The Nigerian Music Video about Email Scams', March. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en/article/mgg79a/i-go-chop-your-dollar-the-nigerian-music-video-about-email-scams.

Perullo, A. (2005) *Hooligans and Heroes: Youth Identity and Hip-Hop in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187688.

Peterside, S. (2022) *#End SARS (Special Anti-Robbery Squad) Protests in Nigeria: Organisational challenges and Lessons for state-society relations*. Available at: www.cirdjournal.com/index.php/ppiaaj/index:

Petrie, W.D. and Boggs, M.J. (2012) *The Art of Watching Films*. 9th edn. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.

Reagan, A. J., Mitchell, L., Kiley, D., Danforth, C. M., & Dodds, P. S. (2016). The emotional arcs of stories are dominated by six basic shapes. EPJ Data Science, 5(1). https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-016-0093-1

Reporter, C. (2024) 'They became killers instead of protectors; President Ruto explains disbandment of DCI elite squad'. Available at: https://www.citizen.digital/news/they-became-killers-instead-of-protectors-president-ruto-explains-disbandment-of-dcis-ssu-n307563.

Richardson, J.W. and Scott, K.A. (2002) *Rap Music and Its Violent Progeny: America's Culture of Violence in Context*, *Source: The Journal of Negro Education*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3211235.

© University of Venda

Robinson, J.O., Karofi, K. and Usman, A. (2019) 'The Dark Side of the Ivory Tower: An Analysis of Commercial Sex Work in Nigerian Universities', *Cross-Currents: An International Peer-Reviewed Journal on Humanities & Social Sciences*, 5(5). Available at: https://doi.org/10.36344/ccijhss.2019.v05i05.006.

Roy, A. (2011) 'Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), pp. 223–238. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2011.01051.x.

Rutazibwa, P. (2023) 'Discussing the causes and context of wars and conflict involving the Banyarwanda from the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo', *AfricArXiv* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.21428/3b2160cd.259767b3.

Saha, J.C. (2008) 'Reducing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa: The need for participatory governance', *Development in Practice*, 18(2), pp. 267–272. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520801899192.

Servant, J.-C. (2007) 'Kikuyus Muscle in on Security & Politics: Kenya's Righteous Youth Militia', *Review of African Political Economy*, 34(113), pp. 521–526.

Shadoian, J. (2003) *Dreams & Dead Ends*. London: Oxford University Press.

Sheila, P. (2017) 'CHAPTER ONE MEMORY AS ENGAGEMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HISTORIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN CINEMA', in W. Mano, B. Knorpp, and A. Agina (eds) *African Film Cultures : Contexts of Creation and Circulation*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 14–30.

Shemang, B. and Takambou, M.M. (2023) 'Human trafficking a growing menace for Africa'. Available at: https://www.dw.com/en/human-trafficking-a-growing-menace-for-africa/a-66369429.

© University of Venda

Sigsworth, R. (2022) *Living on the edge: women and organised crime in East Africa*. Available at: https://enact-africa.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/research-paper-33.pdf (Accessed: 20 September 2023).

'Sipalla Police brutality' (no date).

Smit, S., Musango, J. K., Kovacic, Z., & Brent, A. C. (2017). Conceptualising slum in an urban African context. Cities, 62, 107–119. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2016.12.018

Steingo, G. (2005) 'South African music after apartheid: Kwaito, the "party politics," and the appropriation of gold as a sign of success', *Popular Music and Society*, 28(3), pp. 333–357. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760500105172.

Stewart, G. (2000) *Rumba on the River: A History of the Popular Music of the Two Congos*. London: Verso.

Swartz, S. (2008) *Is Kwaito South African Hip-hop? Why the Answer Matters and Who It Matters To*, *Source: The World of Music*. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/41699825.

Tague, J. (2023) 'Refugees in East Africa', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.820.

Tanner, J., Asbridge, M. and Wortley, S. (2009) *Listening to Rap: Cultures of Crime, Cultures of Resistance*. Available at: https://about.jstor.org/terms.

Tarisayi, K.S. (2024) 'Framing Operation Dudula and Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in South African Media Discourse', *Indonesian Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 3(1), pp. 34–43. Available at: https://doi.org/10.56916/ijess.v3i1.529.

Taruvinga, G.R. (2023) 'The Resurgence of Military Coups in Africa: The Case of West Africa and the Sahel', in *Contemporary Issues on Governance, Conflict and Security in*

© University of Venda

Africa. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, pp. 147–157. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-29635-2_9.

Tawodzera, G. and Crush, J. (2023) '"A foreigner is not a person in this country": xenophobia and the informal sector in South Africa's secondary cities', *Urban Transformations*, 5(1). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1186/s42854-022-00046-4.

Tchouaffe, O.J. (2022) *African Cinema, Neoliberal Narratives and the Right of Necessity*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher.

Thela, L., Tomita, A., Maharaj, V., Mhlongo, M., & Burns, J. K. (2017). Counting the cost of Afrophobia: Post-migration adaptation and mental health challenges of African refugees in South Africa. Transcultural Psychiatry, 54(5–6). https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461517745472

Thiong'o, N.W. (2013) *In the Name of the Mother*. Boydell & Brewer Ltd.

Thiong'o, N.W. (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*. J. Currey; Portsmouth, N.H.

Thiong'o, N.W. (2009) *Re-membering Africa*. East African Educational Publishers.

Tracey, H. (1954) *The Social Role of African Music*, *Source: African Affairs*. Available at: https://about.jstor.org/terms.

Tsikhungu, S.E. (2015) *Identity in Postmillennial German Films on Africa*, *Identity in Postmillennial German Films on Africa*. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-04283-2.

Turyasingura, N., James, W.G. and Vermund, S.H. (2023) 'COVID-19 vaccine equity in Africa', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 117(6). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/trstmh/trac130.

© University of Venda

Ukadike, N. (2003) *Questioning African Cinema: Conversations With Filmmakers*, *Bibliovault OAI Repository, the University of Chicago Press*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2307/1514862.

Ünal, M.C. (2016) 'Terrorism versus insurgency: a conceptual analysis', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 66(1), pp. 21–57. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-015-9601-7.

UNODC (2004) *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. Available at: www.unodc.org.

Véron, J.B. (2016) 'Alex de Waal. The real politics of the horn of Africa. Money, war and the business of power', *Afrique Contemporaine*, 258(2). Available at: https://doi.org/10.3917/afco.258.0190.

Wabala, D. (2022) 'Licensed to kill: Behind police death squads'. Available at: https://nation.africa/kenya/news/licensed-to-kill-behind-police-death-squads-4004234.

Wahome, E., Kiruthu, F. and Mwangi, S. (2016) 'Tracing a forgotten heritage: the place of Mau Mau memory and culture in Kenya', in A.-M. Deisser and M. Njuguna (eds) *Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage in Kenya*, pp. 212–226. Available at: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1gxxpc6.21.

Wallace, M. (2014) *History of Namibia*. Oxford University Press.

Wambulwa, A. (2023) 'Ex-cop Rashid charged with murder of two boys in Eastleigh'. Available at: https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2023-04-17-crime-buster-rashid-charged-with-murder-of-two-boys-in-eastleigh/.

Wangui, J. (2022) 'Willie Kimani murder: Court finds 4 guilty, acquits Sgt Mwangi'. Available at: https://nation.africa/kenya/news/willie-kimani-murder-court-finds-4-guilty-acquits-sgt-mwangi-3888556.

© University of Venda

Wangui, R. and Walter, J. (2024) ‘Poison in your alcohol: Inside Kenya's killer liquor trade’. Available at: https://nation.africa/kenya/news/poison-in-your-alcohol-inside-kenya-s-killer-liquor-trade-4536822.

Warfa, A.O. and Mwetu, L. (2023) ‘The Congo Curse: From Heart of Darkness through King Leopold’s Ghost, King Leopold’s Soliloquy to In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu’s Congo’, *International Journal of Culture and History*, 10(1), p. 116. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5296/ijch.v10i1.20802.

Warshow, R. (1948) ‘The Gangster As Tragic Hero’, *The Partisan Review*, February.

Weissman, S. (2014) ‘What Really Happened in Congo: The CIA, the Murder of Lumumba, and the Rise of Mobutu’, *Source: Foreign Affairs*, 93(4), pp. 14–24. Available at: https://about.jstor.org/terms.

West African Pidgin English (1975). Available at: https://about.jstor.org/terms.

White, B. (2008) *Rumba Rules The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu’s Zaire*.

Whitty, M.T. (2018) ‘419 - It’s just a Game: Pathways to cyber-fraud criminality emanating from West Africa’, *International Journal of Cyber Criminology*, 12(1), pp. 97–114. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1467848.

Wodon, Q. and Zaman, H. (2009) ‘Higher food prices in Sub-Saharan Africa: Poverty impact and policy responses’, *World Bank Research Observer*, 25(1), pp. 157–176. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkp018.

Woldemariam, M. and Young, A. (2018) ‘After the Split: Partition, Successor States, and the Dynamics of War in the Horn of Africa’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41(5). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2016.1182909.

© University of Venda

Woof, M.J. (2020) 'Congo-Congo Congo crossing connection construction'. Available at: https://www.worldhighways.com/news/congo-congo-congo-crossing-connection-construction.

Wright, M.M. (2004) 'Becoming black: creating identity in the African diaspora', *Choice Reviews Online*, 42(01), pp. 42–639. Available at: https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.42-0639.

Yesufu, S. (2022) 'The continuity of police brutality in post-apartheid South Africa', *ScienceRise*, (2), pp. 21–29. Available at: https://doi.org/10.21303/2313-8416.2022.002408.

Zeleza, P.T. (2005) 'Rewriting the African diaspora: Beyond the Black Atlantic', *African Affairs*, 104(414), pp. 35–68. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adi001.

Ziman, R. (2010) *'Gangster's Paradise' Director: Language Woes in New South Africa*, *The Wrap*. Available at: https://www.thewrap.com/gangsters-paradise-director-language-woes-new-south-africa-18238/ (Accessed: 9 December 2023).

© University of Venda

8 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Research Ethics Certificate

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mr GT Kimani

STUDENT NO:
23027127

PROJECT TITLE: Genre Dispositions in Crime Films of Sub-Saharan Africa.

ETHICAL CLEARENCE NO: FHSSE/23/ASS/03/2308

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof MG Mapaya	UNIVEN, Arts and Social Sciences	Supervisor
Prof. MN Wanyama	UNIVEN, Arts and Social Sciences	Co-supervisor
Mr GT Kimani	UNIVEN, Arts and Social Sciences	Investigator – Student

Type: Doctoral Research
Risk: Straightforward research without ethical problems (Category 1)
Approval Period: August 2023 – August 2024

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately.
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A it necessary

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: August 2023

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof TS Mashau

Signature

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2023 -08- 23
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950

© University of Venda

8.2 Appendix 2a: Thematic Concentration Observation Guide

FILM TITLE…… **DATE __/__/____**

NO.	SCENE DESCRIPTION ACTION	THEME AND SUBTHEME	REMARKS

8.3 Appendix 2b: Society and Ideologies Observation Guide

FILM TITLE…… **DATE __/__/____**

NO.	SCENE DESCRIPTION/ACTION	SOCIO-ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGY	REMARKS

8.4 Appendix 2c: Aesthetics Observation Guide

FILM TITLE…… **DATE __/__/____**

NO.	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CINEMATOGRAPHY	SOUND	PROPS, COSTUME, MAKEUP	REMARKS

8.5 Appendix 2d: Narrative Aspects Observation Guide

FILM TITLE…… **DATE __/__/____**

NO.	SCENE DESCRIPTION	CHARACTERS	SETTING	P.O.V	PLOT	LANGUAGE

© University of Venda

8.6 Appendix 3: Interview Guide

1. What economic, social issues do you relate with?
2. What inspired the subject of the film?
3. How can you relate the scenes in the film to any real events in the settings depicted?
4. Who are the main characters in the film story?
5. How are women depicted in the film story?
6. What themes do you identify in the film?
7. What ideologies do you identify in the film?
8. How do the shots and shot angles relate to the film subject?
9. How do the costumes and makeup strengthen the realism of the films and deepen the subject of the crime?
10. How does the sound contribute to the uniqueness of the films and their subject matter?
11. What in the films make them uniquely African besides the setting?
12. What factors influence your choice of story and theme?
13. What influences your aesthetic choices when making a crime story?
14. What are some of the unique characteristics you have observed in African crime movies?
15. What is the relevance of the music used in crime film?

© University of Venda