NARRATIVE DISPOSITIONS OF NON-VERBAL ELEMENTS OF SOUND DESIGN IN SELECTED KENYAN DRAMA FILMS

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University or for any other award.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my brother Geoffrey Mbui Kimani the man of valor.

To my parents Michael Kimani and Mary Murugi.

To my wife Elishiba Nyambura.

To my beautiful daughter Maisy Murugi Thuku, the apple of my eye.
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I must acknowledge that I am at this point, and this work has been made possible by the abundant grace of God. I consider this achievement a blessing. I am eternally thankful to my parents Michael Kimani Chege and Mary Murugi for believing in me and being my pillars in my quest to ascend in education and life. Thank you to my dearest wife Elishifa Nyambura for immense support and cheering me on even when the journey seemed too long and tough. Thank you to my siblings Gladys, Veronicah, and Ibrahim for support.

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To those I have mentioned and the many I have not, may the Lord rain a fountain of blessings in your lives. Múroríma gúkuumia.
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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Aural Elements** - Film sound elements, both verbal and non-verbal.

**Drama films** - A genre of plot driven fiction films, characterized by realistic characters, settings, and story events.

**Film Music** - Used interchangeably with music, film score and music score. It refers to the instrumental and vocal melodies and rhythms deployed in a film’s soundtrack. In the context of this study the musical lyrics are considered as non-dialogical elements and as poetic expressions in the cinematic montage.

**Narrative** - Refers to a story- in this context, a film story.

**Narrative value** - Narrative talent(s); narrative quality (ies); Narrative disposition; refers to the inherent and creative abilities to make meaning and tell a story in part or whole.

**Non-verbal sound elements** - Used interchangeably with “non-dialogical” sound elements and non-speech sound elements, it refers to elements of a film sound track that do not constitute a coherent human verbal or dialogue communication. For example sound effects, film music, ambience, and silence.

**Sound design** - The creation, recreation, and manipulation of sound elements and effects to express a film story by exploiting their intrinsic communicative characteristics and their interaction with visual and narrative content.

**Sound track** - Refers to a complete nest of sounds that constitutes the audio element of a film.

**Diegetic world** – Refers to the story world or the environment in which a film story is set.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMAA – Africa Movie Academy Awards

AMVCA – Africa Magic Viewers Choice Awards

BAFTA – British Academy of Film and Television Arts

ENG – Electronic News Gathering

IT – International Track

KIMC – Kenya Institute of Mass Communication

KIFF – Kenya International Film Festival

SFX – Sound effects

DAW – Digital Audio Workstations

AIDS – Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ABSTRACT

Aesthetic creativity in the manipulation of technical elements of image and sound in a film lies at the heart of storytelling in cinema. As such, it is the aim of this study to interrogate critically how the film story is exposed, advanced, and narrated by non-verbal elements of sound design, namely film score, sound effects, ambience and silence, and how that can therefore be translated into intrinsic narrative characteristics of non-verbal sounds in film. Anchored on structuralism and semiotics film theories, this study endeavoured to investigate the denotative, connotative, and functional qualities of the aural elements in the sampled films, and how the traits exhibited, contribute to telling the story. Four purposively sampled Kenyan fiction films, *Killer Necklace* by Judy Kibinge (2008), *Formula X* by Steve Ominde (2009), *From A Whisper* by Wanuri Kahiu (2009) and *Nairobi Half Life* by Tosh Gitonga (2012), were analysed on their deployment of the sounds in their narratives. The study further interrogated the salient ways in which the non-verbal sound elements advance meaning and radiate the various story points and rudiments. This study applied observation, focus group discussions, and interviews, as methods of data collection. Content analysis was then deployed to synthesize the data. The findings from the study reveal deliberate deployment of a range of forms of non-speech sounds in Kenyan films. Further the study finds that the non-verbal elements of sound under investigation play various metaphorical and assigned functions in the films that exude significations and expressions that are in congruence and consequently mirror elements of narrative like plot, character, thematic rendition, mood, and setting. This study concludes that indeed, the expressions, and symbolic representations spelled out by non-speech elements in their singularity and as part of the intricate inter-webs of the film structure, can be coded as narrative dispositions of the said elements.
CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Although narrative cinema is perceived as a visual medium, fifty per cent of the motion picture experience is aural (LoBrutto, 1994). Film sound is said to have been successfully infused in the film medium in 1927, over three decades after the projection of the first Lumiere’ silent film. The dawn of the talkies was marked by the premier of The Jazz Singer directed by Allan Crosland (Belton, 1985). Crafton (1997) notes that since people first reproduced images on a screen, they had wished to add sound to increase the illusion of reality. The idea of reality here spells the belief that dialogue was to bring the much-needed dimension of storytelling that the images struggled with, resulting in the use of barkers and intertitles-voice. Noting that The Jazz Singer was not the singular effort that reinforced the talkies, Crafton (1997, p.12), nevertheless, comments on the importance and impact of The Jazz Singer in asserting the space of dialogue and need for a new paradigm,

The film demonstrated forcefully, though, the importance of the star voices in the sound film, the appeal of popular music, and the potential rewards for adding dialogue and singing to otherwise silent films.

Regardless, not all directors conformed to the euphoria of the talkies. Filmmakers like Charles Chaplin were not as enthusiastic. In Life And Art Of Charlie Chaplin (2003), a documentary film by Richard Schickel, the narrator notes that,

Chaplin finished work on the circus just three days after the premier of The Jazz Singer. Sound was about to revolutionize the movies and everyone, Chaplin included
wondered if the tramp, a figure who was impossible to imagine talking would survive the revolution.

Deployment of sounds in films went through more experiments as new technologies came about. As Gomery (1985) enumerates, the technologies ranged from vitaphone to sound on disc, optical film and then the magnetic tape that came with portable recorders like the Nagra tape recorder through the 1950s and 60s. However, concerns over 'ornamental' use of sound continued. Filmmakers and critics such as Sergei Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin advocated for a contrapuntal use of sound in relation to the image, whereby sound is treated as a disparate autonomous element of the cinematic montage in meaning generation (Eisenstein, Pudovkin & Alexandrov, 1985). Pudovkin (1985) suggests the application of a principle of asynchronism to avoid the 'recorded theater' - like appearance of synch sound cinema. He further avers that the role sound should play in film is beyond a slavish imitation of naturalism and that the first function of sound is to augment the potential expressiveness of the film's content.

These concerns also reverberate in Chion (1994) who characterizes cinema as vococentric and verbocentric, which refers to the trend of filmmakers edifying dialogue while suppressing other sound elements. This assessment refers to both deployment of sounds in film, and critical analyses of the films, as tilted towards dialogue.

Dialogue in Kenyan films takes the lion share of the soundtrack as Merimba (2013) observes, adding that the use of music and sound effects is not as elaborate as is the case with Hollywood films a phenomenon he attributes to budget constraints. This conclusion however seems to largely abstain from the fact that there are hundreds or
more music production studios which would support and supplement the available institutional and online sound effects and music libraries in providing the sounds for deployment in Kenyan films.

Through the milestones in the development of sound cinema and its critical responses, various perspectives on the space and roles of sound have been brought under discourse. Film sound studies, like Bordwell and Thompson (2008), Sijill (2005), Prince (1997), Altman (1992), Boggs (1996), Chion (1994), Walter Murch (2000) and Claudia Gorbman (1989) inter alia, agree on three main elements of sound, namely music, dialogue and sound effects. The three elements mould the basic film soundtrack. Of the three, film music and sound effects anteceded dialogue and had been part of the aural element of cinema during the silent era. The silent films that anteceded the talkies were not necessarily completely silent but included, albeit during projection, music, pre-recorded or live, to accompany the silent images and sound effects. It is worth noting, that a year before the production of the Allan Crosland's *The Jazz Singer* (1927), a big budget silent feature, Don Juan was retrofitted with a score and loosely synchronized sound effects with a goal to create an all-sound film (Crafton, 1997:11). As expected, the film generated public excitement and its box office and critical reception was an overwhelming success.

Besides music, sound effects, and dialogue, different theorists add silence, ambience, and voice-over to the list. Boggs (1996) identifies and briefly qualifies silence as a sound effect, stating that a short dead track or complete absence of sound can be as effective as the most powerful sound effect. He adds that its common use is to simply increase, by contrast the impact and effects of the sounds that follow the moments of silence. Cavalcanti (1985) agrees with this idea,
asserting that, with noise, we must include silence. He then draws an analogy based on his analysis on the use of silence in the climax of Walter Ruttmann's film, *Melody of the World*, and states that, in the hands of an artist of Ruttmann's calibre, silence can be the loudest of noises, just as black in a brilliant design can be the brightest of colours. Silence is also identified, and defined as an element of a film soundtrack by Balazs (1985), Rubin (1985), and Chion (1994).

Ambience/natural sound or noise has been regarded as an element of a film soundtrack by among others, Chion (1994) who refers to them as elements of auditory setting (E.A.S.) in reference to the fact that they characterize the sonic environments in a film and define its auditory space, a position affirmed by Cavalcanti (1985) and Balazs (1985).

The four non-verbal aural elements; music, sound effects, ambience and silence have featured in several studies such as Shapaya (2013), Kassabian (2001), Thom (1998), Bordwell and Thompson (2008), Sijill (2005), Prince (1997), Altman (1992), Boggs (1996). Most of these studies analyse individual elements for their utility in the films and their expressive, dramatic and spatial functions, most of which are illustrated by Thom (1998, p.3) as to:

- Indicate a geographical locale
- Indicate a historical period
- Define a character
- Connect otherwise unconnected ideas, images, or moments
- Heighten realism or diminish it
- Heighten ambiguity or diminish it
- Draw attention to a detail, or away from it
- Emphasize a transition for dramatic effect
- Describe an acoustic space
- Startle or soothe
- Exaggerate action or mediate it
• Suggest a mood, evoke a feeling

Of particular interest to this study was how the non-verbal elements of sound, in-turn, import their expressive qualities in film and subsequently contribute to the unfolding of a film story. The contributions are based on generation of meanings that tie the story ideas together akin to building blocks and symbolic meanings that communicate the story ideas to a viewer based on the story context of the symbols. These qualities elucidate and build on narrative elements (such as plot, character, point of view, dramatic conflict, story structure, setting, and mood) and are what this study sought to encode as narrative dispositions of the non-verbal elements of sound in film.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Sound, just like the image track, provides a filmmaker with options to create, recreate, manipulate, and deploy individual elements of sound to formulate thought and generate meaning. Non-verbal elements of sound are as vital components of a film story as dialogue and the image. Successful storytelling in film is dependent upon the effective exploitation of the expressive and communicative qualities of the visual and audio elements, both intrinsic and the ones created by interaction among the elements in the films structure. Kenyan films have been deploying non-verbal elements of sound in their narratives with notable achievements. However, little has been done to establish the position, contributions, and contextual narrative characteristics of the non-verbal elements of sound design in Kenyan drama films.
This study sought therefore to investigate the range and type of non-verbal elements of sound, how they are deployed in Kenyan films and their expressive, dramatic, and symbolic qualities contextualized as narrative dispositions. The investigation targeted the creation of direct and symbolic meanings by silence, sound effects, music, and ambience/noise. Further the study sought to interrogate how this is done in a symbiotic partnership with the image and the verbal elements of sound design with the goal of telling the film story in part and to its fullness.

1.3 Objectives of study

1. To identify non-verbal sound elements infused in the selected Kenyan films.

2. To investigate the functions of non-verbal sound elements and their interactions with other verbal and visual elements in the selected Kenyan films.

3. To explore the narrative dispositions and communicative qualities of non-verbal sound elements in the selected Kenyan films.

1.4 Research questions

1. Which non-verbal sound elements are infused in selected Kenyan films?

2. How do non-verbal sound elements function, and interact with other verbal and visual elements in the selected Kenyan films?

3. What are the narrative and communicative qualities of the non-verbal sound elements deployed in the selected Kenyan films?
1.5 Rationale and Significance of study

Sound is deemed to naturalize film by completing the equation of the spectators' perception of films. However, for the very reason that sound does appear natural, it remains one of the least examined areas of film theory and aesthetics (Aumont et al: 2004). Film sound is seen to have less influence since its sense of appeal is to the subconscious as the visual sense takes the conscious center stage. It is in this view that film sound in both practical terms and theoretical study is mostly bypassed. Diang’a (2013) recommends that research be conducted on trends of the use of particular film elements in Kenyan films and one of them being film sound.

With the Kenyan film scene expanding rapidly, in attempt to satisfy the ever-increasing demand for audio-visual content in Kenya, the importance of creative and effective treatment of the aural element in the films cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, this study will be a vital input in the practice of sound design, most especially in Kenya, as it details how the how sound elements are and can be exploited in storytelling.

As filmmakers strive to achieve quality for their sound, scholarly attention and engagement in critical analysis is vital. This study, like those that anteced it, would go a long way in filling a gap of knowledge in the study of film sound in Kenya. The specific topic that this study explores is the story telling qualities of sound effects, music, ambience, and silence in Kenyan films.
1.6 Scope and Delimitation of the study

This study was based on four Kenyan drama films produced by Kenyan filmmakers. The films that were analysed included *Killer Necklace* by Judy Kibinge (2008), *Formula X* by Steve Ominde (2009), *From A Whisper* by Wanuri Kahiu (2009) and *Nairobi Half Life* by Tosh Gitonga (2012). The films were analysed on the storytelling value in only four of the non-verbal sound elements (Music, sound effects, ambience, and silence) as deployed in their soundtracks.

1.7 Review of Related Literature

This section examines related studies on sound design, sound and image relationships and functions of sound in film. These studies consist of discourses on film sound and analyses of films globally and locally.

1.7.1 Related studies

Chion (1994) wades into the much-circumvented waters of theorizing sound, in a laudable effort, to define the dialectics between the two elements of the audiovisual medium. In attempting to define the relationship between sound and the image, Chion introduces the concept of **added value**. He defines **added value** as the expressive, and informative value with which sound enriches a given image so as to create the definite impression (in the immediate or remembered experience one has of it) that this information or expression naturally comes from what is seen and is already contained in the image itself (Ibid: 144). This concept, however, presents a contradiction in which Chion further avers that, added value, is what in error intimates that sound is unnecessary and that it merely duplicates meanings; which in
reality it expresses all on its own or by interactions between it and the image (Ibid).
This reality of the space of film sound and its narrative value was central to this study.

Chion (1994) encodes the sound and image relationship as the audiovisual contract, engendering the connection as an artificial merger as opposed to a natural union. In a follow up to this idea, he introduces **synchresis**, defined as the mental creation of the synchrony of two contrapuntal elements, a combination of two words **synchrony** and **synthesis**. Chion goes further and examines music in its emotional effects and its dramatic leitmotif qualities that empower it to exude storytelling prowess. In the same line, he looks at silence in its form as a sound element and its technique of expression and the impact in film. Decrying the eschewal by theorists from critically engaging ambience and sound effects, Chion (1994, p. 144) laments thus,

> For a long time natural sound or noises were the forgotten elements the repressed part of film not just in practice but also in analysis. There are a thousand studies of music and numerous essays on the text of dialogues and finally some work on the voice. But noises, those humble foot soldiers, have been assigned a purely utilitarian and figurative value and consequently neglected.

Chion, as discussed forth, defines the interactions of sound and image in film in an attempt to assert the space of audio in cinema. However, he does not address how sound, in its capacity and in its contract with the image, builds the film narrative. The study aimed at filling this gap by interrogating the storytelling qualities and value of non-verbal sound elements, which include ambience, sound effects, and silence.

Boggs (1996, p.212) captures a quote by director Akira Kurosawa, in which he avers
In motion picture both images and sound must be treated with special care a motion picture stands or falls in the effective combination of these two factors. Truly cinematic sound is neither accompanying sound nor the natural sounds captured at the time of the simultaneous recording. Cinematic sound is that which does not simply add to but multiplies, two, or three times the effect of the image.

This assertion, ideally, is based on the argument that sound, albeit an equal partner to the image in film, rests on an aesthetic paradox in which viewers notice images even when sound defines the visuals. Sound in film is extremely powerful, but for viewers, it is a less noticed element of the film form (Prince, 1997). The viewers in the context of this study include the critics and scholars who for a long time have given the sound elements a wide berth in their theorizations and critical analyses. However, the emphatic assertion of the power that sound wields as is evident in the study is not further described in terms of how the soundtrack designs the narrative with its influences on the other aspects of the film aesthetics like mise-en-scene, time and point of view; a gap that the study sought to address.

Boggs (1996) notes that sound track is made up of sound effects, dialogue and the musical score; which he observes add levels of meaning and provide sensual and emotional stimuli, thereby increasing the range, depth, and intensity of spectators’ experiences, surpassing what mute visuals can achieve. He also examines sound effects, dialogue, and the musical score in terms of their quality and function in film and briefly touches on silence as a sound effect. Boggs, however, does not go further to explore how the functions of the sound elements can be translated to traits of expression and how they contribute to the construction of a film narrative. This study aimed at filling this gap.
Prince (1997) identifies and discusses three sound categories; dialogue, sound effects, and music. He places the elements in the context of sound design, and as such, evaluates them on their acoustical (direct, reflective, and ambient) characteristics. Further, the elements are examined under the codes of sound design, namely; Sound hierarchy, Sound perspective, Synchronous and non-synchronous sound, Sound bridges, Off-screen sound space and Sound montage. Through a technical analysis of several Hollywood films, Prince explains dialogue, sound effects, and music, bridging their utilitarian value in the films, and audience perspective. The study sought to translate the utilitarian values as a deployment strategy that is geared towards building the film story, and analyze how the soundtrack works to realize the different narrative elements like character, plot, point of view; which is the goal of this study.

Sijill (2005) identifies four sound elements that movies rely on to tell their stories: dialogue, musical score, voice over, and sound effects. She goes further to divide the sound elements into diegetic sounds; which are sounds organic to a scene, and non-diegetic sounds; which are defined as sounds that are not part of the story world. Sijill further characterizes sound effects into realistic, expressive, surreal and external. Based on their functional, and their dramatic value, in terms of character, emotional response and spatial qualities. The study briefly examines the dramatic value of music, considering the poetic qualities of its lyrics, it’s symbolic traits and its utility as a moveable prop, basing its analysis on Apocalypse Now (1979), Shawshank Redemption (1994), Out of Africa (1985), Klute (1971), ET (1982), and Barton Fink (1991). This study that aimed to, among others, interrogate the communicative qualities and narrative value of sound effects, music, silence and
ambience in Kenyan fiction films, sought to interrogate how the sounds import their qualities and interact with the visual elements to shape the story; a gap opened by Sijill (2005).

Bordwell and Thompson (2008) discuss fundamentals of film sound, detailing perceptual properties including, loudness, pitch, and timbre. They also examine the sound manipulation techniques i.e. mixing, creating dramatic sound streams, and how sound is woven onto the film form. The study also tackles the dimensions of film sound including rhythm, fidelity, space, and time. Further, the functions of film and sound elements like music, sound effects and dialogue are interrogated but their disposition to mould and construct the narrative is not included in the narrative; a gap the study sought to address.

Shapaya (2013) delves into the definition of Kenyan experimental films, concentrating on their narrative and cinematographic qualities. In the study, Film Sound’s contribution to the traits of experimentation in the films under study, *Tamani* and *Taharuki*, is evaluated. Dialogue as a sound element, forms the larger part of the study’s arguments on sound, in its sociological, contextual and experiential qualities as observed in the films. Music is also briefly analyzed in the study, with an acknowledgement that a variety of music is used in Kenyan films. The study considers music for its functional values in defining characters and emotional traits. Shapaya (2013) further observes that academic studies on sound in Kenyan film are unavailable and recommends that there is need to study sound elements in Kenyan film including; sound effects, background music, background noise/ambience, among others. This study aimed at interrogating the storytelling qualities exuded in music, ambience, and sound effects and silence; a gap noted in
Diang'a (2013), a study on style and content in Kenyan message films, tackles among others, dialogue, music and sound effects as elements of style in the films under study. The study examines the different technical functions that sound plays in the films under study. She further delves into a descriptive analysis of the utilization of dialogue; sound effects and music in the four films under study; noting the great audiovisual potential that the Kenyan filmmaking wields. She finally recommends that there is need for research on trends in the use of particular film elements in Kenyan, and by extension, African cinema. This study aimed at investigating the narrative qualities and value of non-verbal elements of sound in Kenyan fiction films.

Merimba (2013) observes that music and sound effects are not elaborately used in Kenyan Drama films, as is the case in Hollywood films. This statement is tantamount to admitting that sound effects and music, where used, are not deployed purposefully and for the advantage of the film. The comparison thereof exposes a situation where sound is simply the unavoidable other in a film that receives less attention and only gets attention when the image is deemed insufficient enough to tell the story. The resultant attention is mostly at the postproduction desk.

1.7.2 Theoretical Framework

The inquiry and analytical description of the narrative qualities in the non-verbal sound elements in film, the objects of this study, were moulded around and within structuralism and semiotics.
**Structuralism**

Structuralism is defined as the study of how various codes function within a single structure, within one movie (Giannetti, 2001). The idea therefore in structuralism is that meaning is not intrinsically contained in a film as a whole but is embedded in its structural components. Hawkes (2003), foregrounding his thoughts on the definitions of structure by structuralist thinkers like Jean Piaget and Italian jurist Giambattista Vico, observes that the concept that the world is made up of relationships rather than things, constitutes the first principle of a way of thinking which can properly be called “structuralist”. The beginnings of structuralist thought can be traced to the ideas of Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure.

Butler (2005) observes that Saussurian structuralism, involves examining the structure of cultural artefacts by splitting them up into individual bits or signs. He further asserts that film is an amalgam of many disparate bits and signs. Structuralism therefore is concerned with the idea of an underlying web of symbolic meaning relative to a film's surface structure, and the meaning thus can be traced in the depth of the structural components of a film in their interactions. In this view, for instance, the story telling characteristics of non-verbal elements of sound design would not be traced in the observation of the impact of the whole soundtrack but in how the individual elements radiate story elements by linking up with other elements of the aural track, visuals and narrative. To reinforce this idea, Stam (2000, p. 105) avers that,

"Within structuralism as a theoretical grid, then, behaviour, institutions and texts are seen as analysable in terms of an underlying network of relationships; the elements, which
constitute the network, gain their meaning from the relations held between the elements.

In this assessment, the ideal espoused by structuralism as a mode of reading is concerned with the text and the analysis is therefore in the confines of the text. This was important for this study that aimed at observing and analysing elements of sound as deployed in the films and how they function in synchronization and counterpoint with other elements in the films. As such, in the framework of structuralism, narrative qualities of the non-verbal sound elements (silence, music, sound effects, and ambience) were moulded succinctly by interrogating the meaning generated from the relationship between the aural and visual elements of a film in view of its structural characters.

**Semiotics**

Semiotics is the study of signs, signification, and signifying systems (Stam, Burgoyne & Lewis, 1992). Monaco (2000) defines semiotics as a general term that covers many specific approaches to the study of culture as language. In comparing cinema to language, semiotics brings its discourses on the sign to cinema. Stam, Burgoyne & Lewis (1992) define the sign as something, which stands to somebody for something in some respects or capacity. The definition presents three coded elements; the former “something”, which refers to an object, in this case an element of sound in a film; “Somebody” which connotes an individual who perceives of the object, in this case the researcher, and the respondents and the latter “something”, which refers to the represented concept or implied meaning of the said object. It is also referred to as a term from semiotics that refers to any meaningful unit, for
example, a word, an image, or a sound, which stands for something else (Pearson & Simpson, 2001).

The language concern of the sign is the relationship between its manifest form, the signifier, and its conceptual form, the signified. Stam, Burgoyne & Lewis (1992) aver that this relationship was defined as arbitrary by Saussure (1915), and as tripartite by Pierce (1931). Peirce (1931) distinguished between three types of sign: the iconic, the indexical, and the symbolic sign. Stam, Burgoyne & Lewis (1992, p. 6) define them thus:

The iconic sign represents its object by means of similarity or resemblance; the relation between sign and interpretant is mainly one of likeness, as in the case of portraits, diagrams, statues, and on an aural level, onomatopoeic words. An indexical sign involves a causal, existential link between sign and interpretant, as in the case of a weathercock, or of a barometer or of smoke as signifying the existence of fire. A symbolic sign, finally, involves an entirely conventional link between sign and interpretant, as is the case in the majority of the words forming part of “natural languages

The sign lies at the heart of this study in analysing the signifying characteristics of the aural elements under inquiry. In order to draw a distinction from the linguistic sign, Metz observes that the Cinema's signifier is perceptual-visual and aural (Mast, Cohen & Braudy, 1992). Hence, cinema exudes its own language defined by Stam (2000) as the set of messages whose matter of expression consists of five tracks or channels; Moving photographic image, recorded phonetic sound, recorded noise, recorded musical sound and writing. Of the five, two form part of the elements under study in this inquiry. Stam, Burgoyne & Lewis (1992), note that the tripartite division of the soundtrack into phonetic sound (dialogue), music, and noise, drawn from the vocabulary of filmmaking practice, is hardly adequate to the analysis of the
audio-visual logic of the represented world of the film. This study also examined silence, sound effects, and ambience as expressive and communicative elements of sound in a film and the symbolic nature of their deployment as signs in the selected films.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Research Design

This study was qualitative, employing the descriptive design. Tavakoli (2012) defines descriptive design as an investigation that provides a picture of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs, as opposed to studying the impacts of the phenomenon or intervention. This study design attempts to look at individuals, groups, institutions, methods and materials in order to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyse, and interpret the entities and the events that constitute their various fields of inquiry. This study design was helpful in describing the narrative disposition of non-verbal elements of sound as observed in the selected films and creating a synthesis with data obtained from interviews and documentary sources. The primary data formed the base and main body of the analysis, arguments, and conclusions in this study with perspectives and framework from documentary sources used to support and contextualize the conclusions to the wider sound design discourses.

1.8.2 Sample size and selection procedure

The detailed analysis and description of the narrative qualities of the non-verbal elements of sound design was based on a purposive sample of four Kenyan drama
films: *Killer Necklace* by Judy Kibinge (2008), *Formula X* by Steve Ominde (2009), *From A Whisper* by Wanuri Kahiu (2009) and *Nairobi Half Life* by Tosh Gitonga (2012). The ten percent formula, as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) was used to obtain sample frame of ten fiction films, from the total population of one hundred films from a list of films produced in Kenya archived by the Kenya Film Commission and the Department of Film Services and sold in various retail outlets. The four samples were then purposively picked considering richness in soundtracks, including those nominated for various awards in sound category. Specifically, the variety of sound elements used, strength in the deployment of all or any among, silence, ambience, sound effects and music, and modes of deployment in the films' narratives, the gender of the filmmakers and variance in the drama genre characteristics.

### 1.8.3 Data collection

#### i.) Primary data

Primary data constituted information collected from the sampled films, perspectives from various film experts, and critics. The data was obtained using the following methods:

a) Observation

Observation of the sampled films for analysis formed the main bulk of obtaining the primary data. Here, the researcher watched the films and took notes on the elements of sound infused in the soundtrack and the deployment of silence, ambience, sound effects and music in the film narratives.
b) In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews with a total of six Kenyan technical experts, directors, sound recordists, sound editors, and music composers was the second source of primary data for this study. The interviews were vital in corroborating the researcher’s analyses and offered other enriching perspectives on the space of sound in Kenyan film narratives.

c) Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions were mounted by engaging nine Kenya Institute Of Mass Communication final year film students, from the film criticism and evaluation class. They included a combination of students from; Sound, Camera, Editing, Production/Directing areas of specialization in a group discussion after watching the films together and in their own time. The discussions were used in the corroboration of the data and the analysis done by the researcher.

Population

The population of this study had two levels:

i. The selected films that included:


ii. The respondents to the films which comprised of:

Six artistic and technical personnel in film including a director, sound recordists and
sound editor as well as film expert-critics/scholars were interviewed to offer insights and other perspectives to enrich the researcher's analysis.

ii.) Secondary data

To strengthen the analysis of the primary data, secondary data was sourced from books, journals, articles, and other films that carry information relevant to the subject of this study from the Kenyatta University postmodern library, the departmental resource centre, the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication library, Momoviez film library, and Internet sources. The information gathered here helped in furnishing and strengthening the analysis and arguments that were synthesized from the primary data.

1.8.4 Research instruments and equipment

Watching of the sampled films was based on observation guides shaped from the subject under inquiry. The guides in table form detailed the identifying distinct factors in the deployment of silence, ambience, sound effects, and music such as sound element description, a description of the scene it is deployed in, its role in the scene, narrative value, and notes in different columns. Interviews were recorded in audio and video format and short notes taken on important aspects reflected on the interviews that would require further probing. Equipment such as Blu-ray DVD player, computer, Tablet, Digital audio-visual recorder/camera were used for playback of films, typing, reading softcopy material, and recording interviews.
1.8.5 Data Analysis

Data collected was qualitative in nature and so the analyses endeavoured to seek out the non-verbal elements of sound design in the films and analyse their impact in the film narratives and the distinct qualities in function and signification that translate to storytelling qualities inherent in them. Content analysis was used for this purpose. Thematic analysis was done on the transcribed interview notes as well as an analysis of notes made from the readings of the secondary data sources based on the topics of interest as guided by the study objectives.

1.8.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher, in the interest of respecting the intellectual property rights of the filmmakers whose films were analysed in this study, endeavoured to acquire original DVDs by purchase or directly from the filmmakers. The researcher also duly sought appropriate permissions for the facilities that were used throughout the study. Confidentiality of respondents was respected and introductory letter from the university was invoked to give the respondents an assurance of the purpose of this study.

1.8.7 Conclusion

This chapter has delineated the introduction of the basics that characterise this study. The goal of this chapter was to point out the background, main aim of this study and establish the gap it seeks to fill. The objectives stated in this chapter form the spine of this study, and the base upon which the proceeding chapters rest their arguments. Each of the proceeding chapters therefore applies itself to at least an objective stated in this chapter.
CHAPTER TWO
FUNDAMENTALS OF SOUND DESIGN

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a reference point for important definitive and explanatory concepts that elucidate the rudiments of sound design historically, conceptually and in practice. To define sound design in the context of this study requires an understanding of the background of sound design during from its beginnings during the silent era experiments, the advent of the talkies, and throughout the development of the film medium to its present forms. The chapter then builds a narrative on the actual and ambient issues that characterise the development and current trends in the practice of sound design in the Kenyan film scene.

2.1 Fundamental Concepts of Sound Design

Sound design is a product of the constant need in filmmaking to improve the aural aesthetics of cinematic storytelling to compliment the advancements in visual techniques and the evolving filmmaking technology. To understand this assertion we shall attempt to derive a plausibly succinct definition of sound design. Whittington (2007, p. 1) defines sound design based on for basic concepts:

1) Creation of sound effects
2) The establishment of an overall plan of a film soundtrack
3) The wiring of sound exhibition technology in theatres
4) A mode of reading in critical analysis of cinema

This chapter concerns itself with the first and second rudiments to develop its definition of sound design. First sound design refers to the creation of specific sound effects which are multi-layered and multifaceted in their ability to convey
meaning (ibid, p. 1) To comprehend this perspective, we shall break the definition into its components; **creation** which is to actualize or bring into existence; **specific** or clearly defined or identified; **sound effects** which are understood in this context as elements of the cinematic soundtrack; and **conveyance** of meaning which is the expression of particular messages. The second perspective looks at sound design as the collaborative establishment of an overall plan for an integrated soundtrack. This introduces additional components like **collaboration**; **overall plan** and **integrated soundtrack**.

The above definitions develop an idea of sound design concept as bi-pronged: a product and a process. Sound design as a **process** points to actions and activities that are serially undertaken by different personnel in the sound crew from the pre-production phase to post-production. This would include; script analysis and drawing up of the sound plan in collaboration with the director, in order to make it tally with his vision, hiring of different sound crew personnel for the production and post-production stages, selection and procurement of appropriate equipment and resources, the recording, composition and creating of the different elements of auditory settings, the editing, mixing and re-recording of the whole nest of sounds. The process connotes collaboration, time and space within which the sound is designed.

Sound design as a product on the other hand refers to the final, artistically embellished soundtrack or the design: The design is what constitutes the aural experience that the audience gets to listen to during a movie screening or the final audio element in a movie. To qualify as a design, the factors of manipulation geared towards generating meaning are very vital. The manipulation encompasses
multi-layered and multifaceted elements and effects of sound encapsulated in one mix to augment their, and the visual elements communicative potential. The collaboration therein holds together the elements of sound, which are presented as a seamless wave, blurring the conflicts in the soundtrack in what Chion (1994) refers to as synchresis.

In his analysis of what sound design means to the film sound techniques Prince (1997, p. 153) asserts that,

> Sound design goes far beyond the routine of getting audible sound and mixing effects and music with dialogue. Sound designer create a total sound environment for the films images, an environments that not only supports the images but also extends their meaning in dynamic ways.

Sound design in Prince’s assessment transcends the judgment upon its pristine technical qualities like frequency, fidelity and amplitude. His argument recognizes that sound design creates holistic sonic environments that go beyond providing the aural dimension for the visual elements, but raises within it, questions and perspectives, that aid in locating meaning not only of the visible image, but of the ‘invisible’ image and thus, advancement on the story being told.

As noted earlier in this chapter, sound design is a concept of a constantly evolving cinema in terms of aesthetic, narration and technology. Sound design represents the unending clamour to refine storytelling in film, and the need to define the space of film sound. Sound design is as old as sound in film. Since the invention of the motion picture camera, there were numerous experiments to add synchronized sound to the pictures and throughout, there were efforts to add sound to pictures albeit non-sync, during projection in the form of live orchestras, and barkers or Benshi in
Japan, who added music, voice and sound effects to a movie being projected to an audience live (Kimani & Mugubi, 2014).

The production of the first talkie, *The Jazz Singer* by Allan Crosland in 1927, spelt success in the production of sync-sound films, inspiring a floodgate of innovative experiments in the use and application of sound elements to films. This raised concerns and scepticism. Referring to the embroidered use of sound effects by filmmakers of the early talkies, Clair (1985, p.93) avers that,

> We must draw a distinction here between those sound effects, which are amusing only by virtue of their novelty (Which soon wears off), and those that help one to understand the action, and which excite emotions, which could, not be raised by the pictures alone.

In rhythm with Clair’s concern on the ornamental use of sound effects in early sound films, Bottomore (2001) quoted in McKee (2006, p. 347) observes that, when sound effects were first used to accompany silent films,

> There was much outrage in the movie industry and among audiences about overzealous ‘sound effect boys’, who would see some minor element on screen, say a cow in a far field when the lead characters are having a romantic kiss under a tree in the shot’s foreground, and disrupts the scene with excessive mooing and ringing of cow’s bell.

Though amusing for its exhibition of exuberant naiveté the application of sound effects in early cinema as evidenced by the assessment of the ‘sound effect boys’ reflects inspired experiments to realize the ultimate communicative power of the sounds. A similar theme runs through the development of other elements of the cinematic soundtrack like music and dialogue, ambience and silence.
A climax of the experiments in film sound and the dawn of more sophisticated manipulations of the sound element point to the spirited works of Walter Murch and Ben Burtt, in their effort to realize a rich and wholesome soundtrack for the Francis Ford Coppola 1979 film, *Apocalypse now*. On the development of the sound design, Murch, (quoted in LoBrutto, 1994, p. 91) explains that,

On *Apocalypse Now* Francis Coppola said three things about the sound. He wanted it to be in quadraphonic sound, he wanted it to be true to the experience of being in Vietnam, and he wanted the sound and the music to interpenetrate each other. So, based on those three principles, the sound track evolved.

*Apocalypse Now*, a dramatic film on the Vietnam war about captain Willard, a troubled man sent on dangerous and mesmerizing odyssey into Cambodia to assassinate a renegade American colonel Kurtz, provided the challenge to Murch and Burtt to develop a sound track that explored a creative multispeaker system that would pan sound in 360 degrees around four speakers in the right and left side of the front and rear of the theatre. The film also got them to explore the deployment of sounds that would build into the verisimilitude of the Vietnam sonic spaces and, lastly, to have music interact on a deeper level with other elements of sound as opposed to the aloofness and stoic nature of pit music.

To achieve this, Murch in LoBrutto, (Ibid) reveals that he had on paper a detailed mapping out of the sound effects, indicating where each or other would be in mono, Stereo or in full quadraphonic sound whereby sometimes the dialogue would be just mono and the music would be quadraphonic. Murch also explains the painstaking efforts he took to create and recreate sound effects like the deconstruction of a helicopter sound into its various components on the synthesizer ending up with
synthesized blade ‘thwarp’, turbine whine and gear sound (Ibid). Murch assesses that all those efforts, form the source of the sound design concept. This assessment and definition provided an apt explanation and rudimental ideas of earlier experiments in films like Citizen Kane by Orson Welles (1914), The Good the Bad and the Ugly (1967) and Once Upon A Time In The West (1969) by Sergio Leone.

With the advancement in technology, from the optical recording to the magnetic tape that empowered Murch’s and Burtt’s experiment in the 1970s and 80s to the digital equipment and digital audio workstations (D.A.Ws) during the 90s and the post millennial era, experiments in sound increase in basics and in scope. This has led to more polished, embellished and purposeful soundtracks in view of meaning creation and ultimately cinematic storytelling.

2.1.2 Techniques of Sound Design

As noted in the foregoing discourse, sound design can be defined as the planning, creation, recreation and manipulation of sound elements to generate meanings, by exploiting their intrinsic communicative qualities and those derived by interaction with other visual and narrative elements. The spine of sound design is the development/advancement of the film narrative. To achieve the fete of successfully designed sound, several basic techniques in sound creation, recreation and manipulations prove vital in the process of sound design. They include:

a. Recording

This technique consists of storing transduced audio signals on audio archiving playback material such as tapes, disks, films, digital cards, hard disks for later use
(Holman, 2010). To record any sounds, various resources must be present i.e. a sound source, a transducer (microphone) and recording software or storage material. Recording is a technique that spans from the pre-production to the post-production phase as different elements of sound are created for the film. This include recording of ambiences and ‘room tones’ as ‘wild tracks’ in the selected filming locations the recording of dialogue and other sounds during principal photography, the recording of Foley effects, dialogue replacements, and musical scores. Nisbet (2003, p. 253) identifies two separate types of sound recording:

Those that create a ‘sound picture’ and those that are selective of a particular ‘sound element’ to the virtual exclusion of others. The sound picture is the complete picture; a story in its own right, but a recorded sound effect represents a distilled essential quality of location or action, a simplified conventional sound, and the most significant element of a complete picture.

As a technique of sound design, recording is not just the simple task of taking the artists voices with a microphone into a recorder but an intricate process that involves selecting the right equipment ranging from microphones mixing consoles and audio adapters cables and recorder and the actual recording; which utilizes certain ways and styles of ‘miking’ or microphone placement, artist preparation, and technical settings in the various equipment being used for the recording. Nisbett (2003) insists that, the key is to record sounds that are credibly part of the film sound track either in synch or not including atmos, or buzztrack (background atmosphere).

b. Editing.

Sound editing, like image editing, involves a rigorous process of selecting, processing, arranging and logging sounds, with its own parameters, also defined by
Viers (2008, p. 126) as the process of trimming, cutting, and preparing audio. Prince (1997) enumerates this as sound dissolves, sound cuts, sound fades and sound perspectives. The principles spell out some of the components of sound editing. For instance, sound cuts refers to cutting of sound clips together and combing them into a coherent montage; sound fades denote the increase and decrease in amplitude (volume) of the sounds on beginnings and ends of particular sound clips or sequences; sound dissolves like the image dissolves refer to the smooth transitions between disparate sound clips/sequences; sound perspectives refer to the audio processing to assign directionality to particular sound by panning to particular speakers depending on the audio system be it monaural, stereophonic, quadraphonic or surround systems. Sound editing also brings together different sound elements that have been recorded. For instance on the editing bench, dialogue, sound effects, ambience and music are blended, contrasted and in some sequences non-diegetic silence is created (Nisbett, 2003).

c. Mixing

Sound mixing or re-recording, is the process of combining and blending numerous sounds into a particular number of sound channels, and manipulating the source sound signals, amplitude, frequency, dynamics and panoramic characteristics. Mixing can be done on mixing consoles or digital audio workstations in studio or in the field where the recording involves multiple sound sources, hence separate recording inputs with a field mixer (Holman, 2010).

The essence of sound mixing is to build a soundtrack that incorporates different sound elements without creating a din that is unintelligible. To achieve this sound
mixing employs fading and panning as very vital tools. Fading using sliding faders or knob potentiometers to increase or decrease the level of different sounds helps in highlighting the dominance of particular sound elements to enhance the meaning attached to those sounds in the particular sense, hence creating coherence in the aural storytelling. Panning on the other hand manipulates the panoramic characteristics of particular sounds in order to create an illusion of direction, and speed of an object on screen or off-screen (Sonnenschein, 2001). For instance, a vehicle driving from the left to the right side of the screen is panned from the left speaker, through the centre speaker and to the right speaker where the sound is faded out denoting the vehicle is driven away in that direction (LoBrutto (1994).

The three techniques of sound design as elucidated in the foregoing discourse denote the process of creating designed sound for a film. However, notwithstanding the details fleshed out of the three techniques, it would fall short of fact, to assert that they constitute the whole gamut of the process of sound design as they lack the vital planning and the final dubbing phases of sound design. The process of sound design therefore begins before recording and ends well after the sound is mixed.

2.2 The Cinematic Soundtrack

The soundtrack in film is the collection of all sound elements in a film. The film soundtrack constitutes the aural half of the audio-visual dichotomy of cinema. Akin to a sum total of as sound elements, the soundtrack will in this context be regarded as a series montages that work, as Prince (1997) avers, by assembling elements into a complex whole that is richer in meaning than each of the elements taken into
consideration. As such, the cinematic soundtrack edifies and multiples the power and potential of the sound elements in telling the film story.

To comprehend the soundtrack better we must enumerate the elements of the cinematic soundtrack, which include; Dialogue, voice over, sound effects, ambience/natural sound, music and silence. All those elements are also plural in terms of their types, which shall be discussed later in this chapter, and this numbers would easily translate to a disorganized collection of noise, but as Prince (1997 p.157) asserts,

In creating a film soundtrack designers employ six essential codes of sound design; sound hierarchy, sound perspective synchronous and non-synchronous sound, sound bridges and off-screen sounds.

Sound hierarchy denotes the dominance of particular sounds and the suppression of others. In telling a film story different elements of sound export their expressive qualities to a film sequence and intertwine with others to build a network of meanings that build a coherent progress to the film story. Cinema began as a silent medium as inventors ran a myriad of experiments to infuse sound in film, but the soundtrack, as we know it today developed gradually with different elements joining the fray at different points of the development.

Film is a dynamic story telling tool that grows around the visual and aural aspects. As a film story and plot develops, it utilizes the various elements of sound to advance its varying messages, exploiting the elements in their singularity and in multimodal blends. This can pose far-reaching challenges, the greatest being to find the prime story telling element among the cacophonous din of the rich blend. This ultimately calls for what Murch (2005) refer to as dense clarity, which is simply a
simulacrum of lucidity amidst the density of the multitudes of sound elements. In *Apocalypse Now* (1979), a film considered by sound critics as a model of sound montage, the sound designers found themselves dealing with up to one hundred and sixty (160) tracks of different sounds (Thom, 1999). Such a copious number of tracks, even with the smart D.A.W technologies of the 21st century would raise pertinent queries on how to privilege the sound element that best radiates the film story at particular moments in a film. To answer this question we refer to Murch (2005, p.8) who paradoxically explains that,

> Sometimes, to create the natural simplicity of an ordinary scene between two people, dozens and dozens of soundtracks have to be created and seamlessly blended into one. At other times an apparently complex action soundtrack can convey with just a few carefully selected elements.

The assertion above raises many questions on how then, to determine which elements are fit for the soundtrack in a certain sequences, how to determine the density of those elements, and how to find clarity amidst the density of the elements. The answer to these questions lies in the film narrative, which is the skeletal framework on which the sinews of audio-visual elements are moulded. The film narrative imports the expressive characteristics of each element and blends of the elements to create and recreate its own elements of plot, story, mood, point of view, setting and characters. For instance if a particular sound element, like ambience is deployed to show a certain geographical locale, then the location sounds characteristic to the setting in question will be dominant in the soundtrack. Affirming this point of view, Murch (2005 p. 23) explains that,

> The bottom-line is that the audience is primarily involved in following the story. The right thing to do
is ultimately whatever serves the story telling in the widest sense.

Service to the story being the key element therefore, the soundtrack at each ticking second of a movie’s running time should bear the ability to tactfully privilege certain sound elements, thereby establishing some sort of pecking order among the sounds that would dynamically vary in amplitude. This ranking is what is discussed herein as the hierarchy code of designing sound.

Sound perspective in sound design denotes the idea of sonic space. Primary in the construction of a film soundtrack is the creation of real and imagined environments for the characters to float and glide therein. Prince (1997, p.161) defines sound perspective as, the use of sound to convey information about physical space. The physical space referred to is the sonic environments that are created by the cinematic soundtrack. The environments created are defined by their various characteristics that include their sound-reflective and sound-deadening features, which refer to the reverberant qualities of the environments. Sound reflective environments are the settings characterized by surfaces that reflect sound or create echo effects. Such environments can be expressed by applying delay effects in the sounds. Sound deadening qualities on the other hand refer to the absolute or relative absence of the sound reverberations, which denote surface made of sound absorbent materials like soft boards, styrofoam, natural fibre or sponge foams which are used in sound recording environments like studios or sound stages. This feature is mostly used in narration and commentaries or ‘voice of God’ which is deemed to be aloof, authoritative and unaffected by the other elements of the sonic environments and thus distinguishing the space in which the two sound elements are set, hence suggesting two environments.
Perspective also helps to describe other characteristics of the sonic environment, like the magnitude of the space, the distance of objects in the said space and the directions of the objects’ locations. Bordwell and Thompson (2008) describe perspective as “the sense of spatial distance and location”. The expanse of the sonic space is well suggested by the density of the sounds, blended in a sound track. Multiple sounds, suggesting numerous objects in the same physical space would suggest a smaller space compared to few sounds playing in each other’s background, like a couple looking at a necklace through a jewellery shop window (on display) talking and the sound of a distant ambulance siren wailing in the background. The suggestion of distant objects also simulates expansive sonic space or large spatial dimensions (Chion 1994).

By simulating the panoramic properties of sonic space, directions of various objects in a film scene is established. This is possible in multi-speaker systems, as the monaural systems blare all sounds from the centre and seems to fill a room from a single direction. In stereophonic systems for instance sounds can be panned to the right or left speakers with the centre speaker serving, when the sound producing objects fill the screen or are at the centre of the screen. For instance, the couple, later having a conversation, the lady standing near the window on the left side of the screen and the gentleman sited on the bed which is on the right side of the screen could be panned by placing the lady’s sounds in the left speaker and the gentleman’s voice in the right speaker, with the ambient sounds playing in both speakers. This suggests the directionality of the sounds and ultimately the perspective. The physical space in film is very vital. Further, the setting as created using a sound track that exudes the code of perspective goes a long way in building the diegetic space in the
minds of a film audience, which is an important step in constructing the film narrative (Lobrutto, 1994).

Synchronous and non-synchronous sounds denote a relationship of sounds with the image. The causal relationship is basically the connection between a sound and a visual of its source. Synchronous sound is matching of a sound and its visual counterpart, a phenomenon widely discussed due to its reek of realism. Synchronous sound can be traced to the dawn of the talkies when, after many experiments, a film with synchronized dialogue, *The Jazz Singer* (1927) was projected.

The synchronized dialogue ushered in a new paradigm where the image and audio could express the film story. Debates arose though on the issue of synchronized sound, which made sound seem like an appendage of the image as opposed to an autonomous tool of constructing a film story in collaboration with the image.

If we compare the sound to the silent film, we find that it is possible to explain the content more deeply to the spectator with relatively the same expenditure of time. It is clear that this deeper insight into the content of the film cannot be given to the spectator simply by adding accompaniment of naturalistic sound; we must do something more. This something more is the development of the image and the sound strip each along a separate rhythmic course. (Pudovkin 1985, p. 86)

Concerned with the ‘naturalistic’ creation of the talkies Pudovkin (1985) raises pertinent issues, by first acknowledging the importance of sound as a dimension of creating meaning in film and then decrying the deployment of sound as an accompaniment to the images to enhance their realism. In the line of thought, he strongly suggests the deployment of sound asynchronously a phenomenon explained by Balazs (1985) as the situation in which there is a discrepancy between things that
are heard and those that can be seen. He also avers that hearing a sound without seeing its source in synch, makes it grow beyond the dimensions of the image adding that asynchronous use of sound helps in the conveyance of the pathos and symbolical significance and providing rich opportunities for the effects of tension and surprise. As a code of sound design, synchronism and asynchronism lies at the heart of storytelling as it defines the relationship and level of interaction between sound and the image, which helps in developing meaning. Adding his voice on this debate, Walter Murch a sound designer, quoted in Paine (1985. P. 356) suggests that,

Image and sound are linked together in a dance. And like some kinds of dance, they do not always have to be clasping each other around the waist: they can go off and dance on their own. There are times when they must touch, there must be moments when they make some sort of contact, but then they can be off again.

With the dance analogy, Murch lucidly describes how a dynamic relationship between sound and the image can be built in a film sound track by creatively and tactfully engaging synchronous and non-synchronous sound.

Sound wields the ability to connect otherwise unconnected series of images by establishing a flow in time and space using synchronous and asynchronous sounds and ambient sound in a sonic environment; a soundtrack is able to create a connection between images that seem unrelated or unconnected. Boggs (1996, p. 230) affirms that,

Sound is also an extremely important transitional device in films. It can be used to show the relationship between shots, scenes, sequences, or it can make a change in image from one shot or sequence to another seem more fluid or natural.
For instance in *From a whisper*, Abu after dropping Tamani in her makeshift home and gallery, sits in his car and fingers an audio cassette thoughtfully and the crackling sound of the tape morphs into another scene of Fareed looking for the tape in the centre console storage compartment and inserts it in the car stereo. The sound effect of the crackling tape helps in connecting the two scenes, creating a bridge from present to past in a flashback.

Sound bridges also function in dialogue scenes where the visuals transits from talking heads, to reaction shots, to cut-ins and surrounding scene shots by establishing continuity through the uninterrupted flow of the dialogue. The talking head connects all those shots and grounds them on to the dialogue scene space. Sound bridges are also used in foreshadowing an upcoming scene by deploying the sound before the corresponding image and together with the image. Boggs (1996, p. 230) reinforces this idea when he avows that,

> A fluid and graceful transition between sequences is achieved through the overlapping of sound from one shot to another. The sound from a shot continues even after the image fades or dissolves into an entirely new image. This overlapping usually represents a passage of time, change of setting or both.

This is reflected in *Nairobi Half Life*, when a conversation between Oti and Mwas while having a meal in a food stall begins playing while the image of a sprawling skyline of the slums reigns the screen, predicting their dialogue scene.

Off-screen sound space connotes the ‘frameless’ disposition of film sound. Unlike the image, that is bound inside a frame that segregates the expanse of space and density of objects outside it. Unlike the image, sounds emanate from both on-screen and off-screen source and it is the off-screen sounds that establish the world outside
the image frame and contextualize the images on screen to a larger space. Metz (1985, p.157) avers that,

In a film, sound is considered “off” (literally off the screen) when in fact it is the sound; source that is off the screen: therefore, an “off-screen voice” is on the screen. Sound is simultaneously “in” the screen, in-fact, behind, around, and throughout the entire movie theatre.

On the same line, Bordwell and Thompson (1985, p. 193) explain that,

Off-screen sound can suggest space extending in various directions beyond the visible action.

These assertions on the spatial dimensions created by the cinematic sound track, that the image segregates, reveal how the off-screen sounds add a sinew to the storytelling muscle of cinema. By extending and revealing new spaces and space dimensions, off-screen sounds adds to the levels of meaning that the visuals and other sounds import to the film. This is because the sounds suggest other characters, objects and phenomenon that are not visible, but are present in the visible character’s physical environment.

Sound montage refers to the arrangement of sounds into complex and highly intricate patterns that create meaning Prince (1997). The meanings generated mostly emanate from the sound patterns as opposed to individual sound elements regarded in singularity. Through editing, sounds are cut together, cross fading into each other, blending together and juxtaposed, creating various tones of parallels and contrasts that work towards radiating certain meanings.

The crux of a sound montage is building into a film’s story, what any sound element in singularity would not achieve. For instance in building narrative elements like
plot and story, a progressive network of information needs to be developed and as such the collaboration of the various elements of sound. With this in mind therefore, the cinematic soundtrack is further guided by the need to develop meaningful montages to build a film story.

2.3 Diegesis

Diegesis in cinema refers to the location of events or actions in a film in the story world (Buckland, 1998). Every story in film creates a world for itself in which characters exist and the events in the story take place. Such a world consists of its visual and sonic characteristics that are therefore depicted in the film. Diegesis in this view provides a platform for the categorization of sounds, which include:

2.3.1 Diegetic sounds

Diegetic sounds are sounds that characterize the story world and are produced by characters and objects visible or invisible in a given story space. Diegetic music is referred to as Screen music by Chion (1994) and Source music by Gorbman (1987).

2.3.2 Non-diegetic sounds

Sounds deemed to be emanating from sources that exist outside of the story space. Chion (1994) also encodes non-diegetic music as pit music.

2.3.3 Internal diegetic sounds/ meta-diegetic sounds

Sounds considered as representative of a character’s inner world, emanating from a characters mind like in dreams, memories, and hallucinations (Sijill, 2005).
2.4 The Kenyan Audio-Visual Scene

Crafton (1997) looks at development of cinema in technology and aesthetics as a product of invention, innovation and diffusion. He regards invention as the creation and unveiling of new technology in terms of equipment, innovation as experiments and discoveries of new techniques in the creation of motion pictures and diffusion as the rapid and far-reaching spread of the inventions, innovations and their products. The portrait of Kenyan cinema in retrospect would in view of the sound design process be a product of diffusion but the ‘product’ would staunchly remain a formulation of ‘innovation’. The films that dot the Kenyan cinematic scene reflect the dexterity and creativity of the personnel and the reverberance of the Kenyan sonic spaces.

The genesis of Kenyan cinema is dated in the early decades of the 20th century, with the earliest Kenyan films identified as documentaries and travelogues detailing the adventures of famous explorers and game hunters in African hinterlands, exposing the flora and fauna (Okioma & Mugubi 2015). Early films in Kenya included instructional videos for Africans. Such instructional films constituted tools of civilizing the backward Africans like the importance of washing hands after visiting the toilet and before eating and so on (Simiyu, 2010). The films, ranged from silent films to sound films that were screened using mobile cinema units.

Kenyan films, regarded so, by virtue of their creation by Kenyans, involving Kenyan crew and cast for the Kenyan market date around the 1960s, characterized by the making of Mlevi and Mrembo by Ragbil Singh and Kuljit Pal, featuring actors such as Athmani Kipanga and Peter Lukoye popularly known as Tamaa Bin Tamaa.


As the Kenyan films grew in number, the quality of the audio-visual element came under scrutiny as film festivals and film awards came up, joining the blossoming sector. Kenya International Film Festival (KIFF), “Kalasha” awards among others, provided competitive and critical forums in which filmmakers not only received feedback from their audience through open plenary discussions, but also got their films evaluated and adjudicated, some winning awards and some falling short. Among the myriad of awards presented sound aspects, like the overall soundtrack
encoded Best Sound, Best Sound Editing and Best Sound Mixing were slotted for separate awards.

To understand the development of the soundtrack designs in Kenyan film narratives, we must retrace our steps to where it all began. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Kenyan filmmaking processes are results of diffusion from established industries in Europe and America. For instance filming equipment, that mostly included blimped 35mm film cameras, super 8mm and 16mm film cameras, magnetic tape audio recorders like the ¼ inch Nagra tape recorder, microphones, lights and analogue film and tape editing benches were imported into the country and personnel to use the equipment were trained by foreigners a fact alluded to by Wambulwa (Personal communication, April 17, 2015). This stretched even into the premier film training institute in Kenya, the Kenya institute of Mass Communication, established in 1968, with a film department being started in 1975, a product of collaboration between the Kenyan government and the German organization Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Nguru, 1982).

The film training courses, tailored on the main departments of filmmaking included; production training that trained directors and producers; camera training to train camera persons and lighting operators; Editing that trained film editors and sound training departments that trained film sound personnel. According to Manyara (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) through the years to date, albeit being one of the many institutions that train filmmakers, KIMC continues to train its students in the aforementioned courses with new additions like animation. The factor that breaks the narrative of training constancy in the courses is the ever-changing technology that transforms with it, the techniques of filmmaking.
As mentioned earlier in this chapter, when Kenyans began filming, the available technology was in the form of 16mm, 8mm and 35mm film cameras, and magnetic tape field and studio recorders, a technology that mostly demanded out of synch recording and synchronization of picture and audio at the editing stage. Wambulwa (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) recalls on the level of involvement of a soundman in production and comments thus,

The soundperson recorded sound in the field, and then transferred the tape to 16mm film. Once the sound and picture had been edited and they needed music and sound effects, the soundperson sourced from the library and transferred to 16mm. Then the sounds were handed to the sound editor who now had several sound tracks. The mixed tracks including sounds recorded in the field, mixed with sound effects and music were referred to as an international track which could be taken anywhere in the world.

Manyara (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) affirms this and adds that,

The mix began with an I.T (international track) as the first tracks, which had the picture and synchronized sounds. We used to call it I.T1. Later on we could have an I.T2, which had synchronized picture and sound plus sound effects. The I.Ts would be merged together until there was the final master mix, which came last. The soundperson was involved in every stage to ensure quality from recording to post-production.

The next phase of technology was video recording, in relatively smaller and lighter equipment like the Electronic News Gathering (ENG) cameras (video camcorder) that recorded both sound and picture in magnetic tapes. The portability and the infusion of sound inputs and controls on the camera body was received with enthusiasm by producers and cameramen and with petrified anxiety by sound personnel, who felt that the autonomy and creative space of the sound recordists had
been irrevocably breached. Wambulwa (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) describes the tense moments thus,

> When the camcorder arrived in Kenya, anybody could become a soundman. The belief was, so long as one could see the deflection of sound (in the input meters) then they could handle a recording. That is when we had (albeit in error) anybody, (regardless of expertise) claiming to be a soundman.

Video technology though proved to be more malleable in terms of creating and manipulating the film soundtrack. Synchronized sound picture recording enabled the sound persons to exert their creative energy on bolstering the film soundtrack by adding other sound elements, as the task of synchronizing was no longer there. However as true as the foreboding the arrival of video cameras brought to soundmen, sound recording was subtly relegated and the relevant stature of the soundman threatened. Wambulwa (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) remembers that,

> The soundperson who had earlier on enjoyed a lot of freedom in creating the soundtrack was not having the same chance, since in the field the first microphone that came in, was attached to the camera and the cameras had no facility to support an external microphone. So, the recording of sound was not very good due to microphone placement issues.

The result of the crowned cameraman and the drowned soundman was poorly recorded audio that ultimately demanded the return of the soundman on set, though not to the above the line position they previously enjoyed. However, Kamau (Personal communication, July 13, 2015) expresses hope noting that,

> There was a time sound recording was done by simply plugging the boom microphone to the camera and shooting. Nowadays, producers are realizing there is a
need to have a field mixer. We have already started recording sound and picture in separate, and soon enough we are going to postproduction sound which was previously left to the mercy of picture editors and so now a sound editor is sliding back to his space.

Digital audio recording even after the perils of the video technology brought forth more creative space for the sound personnel in Kenyan film, especially in postproduction. With the availability of various Digital Audio workstations and recorders added flexibility in the process of audio creation. Recorders like zoom H4N, H6, H2, DAT recorders, recording on digital discs and memory sticks and flashcards made it easy to manipulate the audio on various D.A.Ws like cool Edit, soundtrack pro, reason, Cubase, Adobe sound booth, pro-tools and so on, transcending the sound practices a notch close to the idea of sound design. Kamau (Personal communication, July 13, 2015) insists that digital audio technology has empowered the sound recordists to explore techniques of sound design, for better aural implementation of a film script, while maintaining pristine quality of recorded sound. His position is affirmed by Owino (personal communication, October 13, 2015) who observes that digital sound recording equipment offers the flexibility of simulating sound studio set-ups even in the field.

Kenyan film soundtracks have been, and trudge on as products of continuous innovation. Aside from dialogue, creative deployment of sound effects and music is notable in Kenyan productions. Supported by a strong music sector that boasts of hundreds of music production studios that have set pace in East Africa since the 1950s (Amateshe, 2012), Kenyan films boast of rich and tasteful soundtracks that augment the storytelling process in the productions. The Sound and music recording houses provided and added to the filmmakers a range of sound effects not in their
libraries and a range of music genres that fit and expand in their film narratives, importing their intrinsic communicative dispositions and creating meaningful sequences in their interaction with the visual and narrative film elements. The designed soundtracks in contemporary Kenyan films continue to exhibit the wealth of sounds in Kenya and expand the space of aural storytelling in the motion pictures.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has defined sound design from different perspectives and elucidated various concepts and techniques that affirm sound design as a carefully, integrated, and deliberate plan of activities geared towards creation of intricate aural patterns that best generate meanings in a film. Further the chapter has built a narrative that contextualizes the development and practice of sound design in Kenyan films, highlighting its challenges and achievements. This is important in creating a geo-technological picture of the Kenyan film industry in order to build a foundation upon which the analysis of the sound narrations as deployed the selected films shall pulsate upon in chapter three, four and five. The proceeding chapter investigates the role played by music, silence, ambience and sound effects in the sampled films.
CHAPTER THREE

FIGURATIONS OF NON-VERBAL SOUND ELEMENTS IN KENYAN FILMS

3.0 Introduction

As discussed in chapter two, the cinematic soundtrack constitutes of numerous elements of sound, which include; verbal sounds like dialogue, narration and voice over; and non-verbal sound elements which include music, sound effects, ambience and silence. These elements of sound are different in their creation and makeup and are equally deployed and depicted differently in film. The non-verbal sound elements, which form the interest of this chapter, have been considered in view of their varied forms, genres and in disparate compositions in the selected Kenyan films and this chapter endeavours to identify, define and characterize them.

To build a coherent argument from a point of comprehension, the chapter begins with an introductory summary of the sampled films; , Killer Necklace by Judy Kibinge (2008), Formula X by Steve Ominde (2009), From A Whisper by Wanuri Kahiui (2009) and Nairobi Half Life by Tosh Gitonga (2012). The summaries include recounting the plots, capturing vital milestones in the narratives and referencing important contextual information about the films, like award nominations and wins, which ground the films as good models among Kenyan films in view of the objectives of this study.
The chapter then analyses music, sound effects, ambience and silence as deployed in the sampled films, appraising their genres, compositional categories and noting the contexts of their creation.

3.1 Introductory Summaries of Selected Kenyan Films

This section recounts the storylines of the sampled films, highlighting important story milestones, describing important aspects of the stories, and detailing the various contextual issues relating to the film soundtracks like production details, awards, and prominence of the composers. This section therefore, is provides material that forms major points of description and analysis for the proceeding and chapters.

3.1.1 Judy Kibinge’s *Killer Necklace*

*Killer Necklace* is a 2008 film directed by Judy Kibinge. This film tells the story of a young man in college, facing a tough dilemma, between joining the crime world, that claimed his brother’s life in order to improve his living and most importantly buy his girlfriend Noni from an affluent leafy suburb an expensive gold necklace, or abstain from crime and keep struggling in the capitalist society, with chances of disappointing Noni.

The film opens with a sequence of Noni, tucked in an affluent home, engaged in a phone call with Mbugua as she takes a shower in a bathtub. She then proceeds to dress up and heads to the market, where she buys some groceries after which, we see her, held by the waist by Mbugua, admiring a gold necklace in a shop window. On getting to Noni’s home Mbugua’s pretences are unearthed to the audience when he
barks orders conceitedly to Jonah, (who is pretending to be a taxi driver), then gets back to literary beg Jonah to wait for him, when Noni is a bit far. Their illicit affair is revealed when he bribes Njeru the gardener to let him in shrugging of his assertion that Boo is familiar to him.

Noni Cuts short Mbugua’s romantic advances, creating a diversion with her tasteful wine toast and then casts the image of a damsel in distress to Mbugua, giving him pressure to elope with her. Their conversation is however suddenly interrupted by a honking car, which throws them into activity; Mbugua escaping through the balcony and Noni hurriedly tidying up the bedroom. Mother finds Noni at it and slaps her as Mbugua, hiding in the flower bushes, hears Father approaching and they bump onto each other as he tries to walk away. Luckily, Njeru the Gardener comes to his rescue before Father continues questioning him.

With a wine bottle tucked in his pants, Mbugua joins Jonah in the car and they drive away from the suburb and into a densely populated and full of life shanty town, where they park the vehicle, and peel off the yellow taxi stripe. Seated under a tree getting his hair shaved and styled, Jonah tries to convince Mbugua to join him in crime, pouring scorn on Mbugua’s optimistic ambition for a career after completing his college studies, which Jonah actually pays for. Mbugua is firm though that he wants nothing to do with crime. Later, with cash for his grandmother’s medicine in his pocket a conniving merchant then lures Mbugua with a promise to find a cheap, gold necklace and together they walk into the dark slum alleys into a dingy bar where Mbugua ends up buying a fake gold-coated necklace. Dejected, and with no money for his grandmother’s drugs he goes home and sits by Cucu’s bedside and confesses to her of his mad love for Noni.
Mbugua seemingly with a new resolve goes to Jonah’s house and he is convinced to go and rob mama Bessie, a frequent customer at “First lady wa ghetto’s” bank, (where she works as a cashier). Through a series of montages, Mbugua trails mama Bessie in the city streets and manages to steal from her, when a vehicle knocks her down as she struggles with Mbugua.

After cheating death by mob lynching, Mbugua then freshens up, changes his clothes and blends into a busy street, after which, he buys the necklace, and drugs for Cucu, and then heads to Noni’s place. On reaching Noni’s place and bribing Njeru with a fat wad of notes, Boo watches as Father physically and sexually harasses Noni. He enters the house; exchanging mean looks with Father and he drops the necklace. He then storms off, sits alone overlooking the slum and then heads to Jonah’s place and demands for a gun. With a gun in hand, Mbugua, boldly enters Noni’s compound and heads to the house where he witnesses Njeru teasing Noni in the kitchen and Father giving Mother the gold necklace he dropped on the floor. As Noni savagely fights for the necklace with mother, Mbugua aims his gun at them during the scuffle, then trains it at his head and finally walks out of the compound and along the road where Jonah finds him and they drive off together into the night.

*Killer Necklace* won the acclaimed Kenyan filmmaker, Judy Kibinge the award of Best Director at the 2009 “Kalasha” awards and has been screened in many festivals worldwide, including the New York African Film Festival.
3.1.2 Steve Ominde’s *Formula X*

*Formula X* by Steve Ominde (2008) is a Kenyan drama based on the story of Frank Kibunda, a scientist who discovers an AIDS vaccine, dubbed formula x. On the wake of his success, he goes through a hostage ordeal in his home, together with his wife and secretary, in the hands of Juma, a crook hired by a rival company.

The film opens with a board and plenary sessions of the launch of formula x, where Frank explains the details of the vaccine to a stakeholder’s audience. Through a series of intercut montages, we see Juma breaching Frank’s compound while Cindy heads home in a taxi. After a series of attempts to break in, Juma finds himself in the house and begins ransacking it. Oblivious to each other, Cindy and Frank head home, the latter with Lisa his mistress in tow. Meanwhile, as Juma tries to decode and download the formula x data from Frank’s computer, that he finds in the study. On arrival, Frank finds his front door open, but that does not trigger his suspicion, and is rudely surprised when he bumps on Juma on the stairs as he heads to his study. Juma then holds them hostage at gunpoint, coercing Frank to copy all his formula x data into a laptop computer in his backpack.

With his mission almost complete, Juma rendezvous is interrupted by the arrival of Cindy, who finds them watching cartoons on TV, pretending all is okay and Frank providing an unconvincing business meeting explanation. As she ascends the stairs, Cindy pauses and recollects Lisa’s face from pictures she had seen in her husband’s camera, and she turns with rage directed towards Lisa. Juma has to stop the escalating brawl between the two women with a warning gunshot and he starts giving instructions to smoothen his exit. But Frank blocks his way and he violently
knocks him down and as Frank writhes in pain, there is a knock on the door. As the tense Cindy goes to answer the door, Juma follows her closely, with his gun trained at her.

The nervous Cindy speaks with their neighbour, holding on to the door in an unwelcoming manner and lets him go without a signal of their distress. After the neighbour leaving, Juma resumes his instructions on his escape strategy and miscalculates his actions when he is beguiled and swooned over by the seductive Lisa who makes him lose concentration for Frank to snatch the gun. Now wielding the gun, Cindy stops the scuffle and makes Juma to surrender and sit. Frank then proceeds to question him and forces him to delete the formula x files he had copied to his computer.

Juma, now at gunpoint, reveals to Frank and the ladies that he is a criminal for hire, a trade he began after failure in insurance brokerage, selling shoes and jewellery. He explains that he was lured by his friends to become a car thief and narrates about one particular robbery that got him arrested, questioned and detained. He further reveals that he was released at the mercy of corrupt competitors of Frank’s that want to steal the Formula x research.

A phone call from Frank’s neighbour who had earlier visited provides the turning point, when Frank picks it, his back to Juma and the ladies, only for him to turn and see Juma holding Cindy, a knife lingering threateningly on her neck. Beaten, Frank has to hand over his gun as ordered by Juma and as Juma barks instructions on his final exit plan, the neighbour overhears the conversation through the still engaged
phone and he calls the police who quickly, and armed to the tooth begin driving to Frank’s place.

The final sequence is an intercut montage of the policemen heading to Frank’s place as Juma herds, Frank, Lisa and Cindy out of the house, the two computers in hand. The film closes in suspense as the police enter Frank’s compound and Juma, with his hostages in tow, attempts his escape plan, heading outside the house.

*Formula X*’s soundtrack enmeshes a range of sounds spanning from an ensemble of local Kenyan artists like “Zaidi ya Mziki”, Nonini, Kanjii Mbugua, Eric Wainaina and experienced music recordists and editors in Soul Child music recording studios.

3.1.3 Wanuri Kahiu’s *From a Whisper*

*From a Whisper* is a 2009 film by Wanuri Kahiu produced in commemoration of 10 years anniversary of the 1998 bomb attack on the American Embassy in Nairobi. Woven on the real event, the story details the life of Tamani, who loses her mother Joyce Kezio in the bomb attack, but grows up believing that her mother is missing as convinced by her father Sam. Disturbed and unstable from her mother’s disappearance, she creates and defaces walls, with her many paintings with heart symbols and the initials of Joyce Kezio (JK).

Unimpressed by her behaviour, Sam wants her to go back to live with her aunt in Michigan, USA as she defiantly hangs her paintings and spray paints on the walls of the Bomb blast memorial park. Meanwhile Abu, an intelligence officer and a witness of the blast, now in the park’s security office is intrigued by the paintings and tries to dig deeper into them and after meeting Tamani and acquainting to each
other he finds out that the mysterious ‘JK’ on her paintings was her mother that she was desperately trying to find. Touched, he decides to furnish her with information on her whereabouts, which turns out to be in her resting place, and Tamani, devastated by the truth of her mother’s death, goes berserk and bitterly confronts her father.

Angry and dejected, Tamani burns down her makeshift home and art gallery, an amenity the plot reveals through flashback was bought for her late mother by her father shortly before the bomb claimed her life. She is rescued evacuated by Abu who offers to take her home and in between, he reveals that he was a close friend to Fareed, one of the suicide bombers who executed the heinous crime. Together, they ponder on issues of forgiveness and Abu encourages Tamani to find it in her heart to forgive her father, suggesting to her that she visits the memorial park with her father as a start.

Told majorly from two points of view, Tamani’s and Abu’s, the film plot is woven through a series of flashbacks opening the film with a flashback of the material day of the terrorist attack that claims Tamani’s mother. The story begins with Sam, Joyce and little Tamani boarding their vehicle intercut with the terrorists loading their weapons in the trucks and oblivious of each other, the family and terrorists drive off through the same road and at one point their cars stop at the same point in a traffic snarl up to the city and innocent little Tamani makes faces and shows her painting to Fareed undeterred by his obvious indifference. The scene ends when Joyce alights from the car and walks off and Sam and Tamani drive away.
Abu looking at the audio cassette remembers Fareed’s fetish for the music in it, as he recalls Fareed’s dealings with the terrorist mastermind, whom after lending Fareed his car, Abu encounters at a local restaurant only missing their meeting with Fareed by minutes. Abu’s curiosity is further expanded after he witnesses a scene in the city, where a security guard shoos-off one of the terrorists taking pictures of a building, and training his gaze with the mysterious man, he notices with surprise the man boarding his car, that he lent Fareed earlier, which immediately drives off. Intrigued by the scene, Abu tries to ask Fareed what relation he has with the suspicious fellows after evening prayers, to which Fareed responds with hostility and irked, walks away briskly leaving a perturbed Abu, who decides to trail him. The trail leads to the compound where the terrorists are preparing for the attack.

On the day of the attack, Fareed wakes Abu up for morning Prayers which they hold in Abu’s living room, after which he tries to convince Fareed to abandon his ill intentions, but an adamant Fareed defies and warns him not to go to the city that day. Fareed rises to leave and when Abu tries to block his way, Fareed attacks him and leaves him unconscious.

Fareed then goes to the terrorist’s hideout, records his terror statement, load up the weapons and drive off and in a repeat of the first scene, the terrorists and Sam’s family drive to the city through traffic. Meanwhile Abu comes to, and despite his wife’s Frantic enquiries he runs out and heads to the terrorist’s compound which he finds empty but on his way out, finds a note, which he takes to his boss, who summons the security officers analyse the note and then head out.
Meanwhile Sam’s family arrives in the city and drops Joyce who walks off as the terrorist truck approaches. Little Tamani looks out of the car window, enjoying the view, when suddenly the bomb goes off causing massive destruction collapsing a building, killing and maiming in a massive wave. Shaken and worried Sam leaves little Tamani in the car and runs to look for Joyce and he goes through the smoke, injured people and rubble and he finds, her lying down dead and he weeps. He then goes back to little Tamani and tells her, that her mum is lost but they will look for her. In the melee, Abu together with other officers manage to arrest one terrorist as he attempts to flee the scene. Later, Sam mourns in his house, little Tamani in his arms and Abu, now at home, expresses his resentment towards Fareed to his wife because of his actions.

In the final sequence, Sam is driving Tamani to the airport and they stop over at the bomb blast memorial park, where to their surprise, they find Tamani’s colourful paintings on display. Sam is pleasantly surprised by Tamani’s paintings and finally connected in the memory of Joyce Kezio, father and daughter reconcile, cancelling Tamani’s trip and they embrace as Tamani and Abu exchange knowing looks.

The From A Whisper soundtrack incorporates a rich blend of original score compositions by accomplished award winning musician Eric Wainaina, a wide range of sound effects, natural sounds and balanced dialogue. Best Original Soundtrack in the African Movie Academy Awards (AMAA) in 2009, is an award the film won, that stands out in view of this study. In addition other awards the film also won include; Best Directing, Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay and AMAA achievement in editing, in the 2009 AMAA edition. The film was also awarded the
Festival Choice Prize by the BAFTA/LA in 2010 and Best Feature Narrative at the 2010 Pan African Film & Arts Festival.

3.1.4 Tosh Gitonga’s *Nairobi Half Life*

Mwas is a Young chap aspiring to be an actor. His dream though seems unachievable in his rural dwelling, where he lives with his family; his brother, struggling mother and drunkard father, getting a meagre income from selling bootleg movies.

In his usual charming merchant gimmicks of re-enacting movies to local thugs, mid conversation, a truck passes advertising a traveling theatre show, which he runs after, and joins a large crowd paying audience to a play. As the cast takes a break backstage, Mwas provides an interlude when he re-enacts a scene from the film, *300 Spartans*, to a young boy, engaging the crowd, and ascending the roof of a shack, from which he crashes. Luckily he suffers no injury, and gains an applause from the crowd and gets noticed by Jose the leader of the ‘vultures’ the traveling theatre group. After the show, Mwas approaches Jose and a fellow actor, and expresses his interest to join ‘the vultures’ to which Jose replies that his impediment to being a successful actor is the fact that he lives in the rural area and that he also needs an agent. Taken aback, Mwas further inquires how he would get an agent and convinced by Jose to part with his hard earned, 500 shillings bargained from a premium of 5000 and walks home penniless but happy and hopeful from his engagement with his new ‘agent’ Jose.

Determined to go to Nairobi to seek his acting niche, Mwas, shrugs off his brother’s incestant prodding of how unrealistic his dreams are, and his drunken father’s
cautions of how evil Nairobi is. Struck by the determination in Mwas, his mother gives him some cash to sustain him and early morning Mwas, luggage in hand including a bag full of car stereos handed to him by Daddy M to take to a city trader, walks to the bus terminus, his face radiant with Joy.

After an exciting ride to the city in a mini-bus, Mwas alights in downtown Nairobi, awed by everything, when violent muggers pounce on him and take away all his belongings, including the parcel given to him by Daddy M, leaving him stranded and dejected. The splendour of the city still not lost on him, Mwas walks randomly and aimlessly in the city streets and at one point notices Jimmy Gathu, a popular actor and Television personality at the entrance of the Nairobi’s Hilton hotel and star struck, he smiles as he stares at the entourage from a distance when a commotion between city council officers and hawkers finds him transfixed. Swallowed in the midst of the conflict, he is arrested and despite his frantic protestations, he is booked at the central police station together with the hawkers.

In the cells, several hardcore criminals who, grab, shove, and startle Mwas around calling him unpalatable names scare him to a sitting position on the floor. Oti a hardcore criminal and a frequent guest to the central police station cells, then goes for a short call in the cell’s men room, which he finds looking disgustingly murky, waste lying splattered all over the floor. He then orders Mwas to clean the toilet, and with no option Mwas goes in to clean and vomits from the sight, but to everyone’s surprise he soon takes to it and cleans the toilet singing in gaiety something that intrigues Oti, who recommends Mwas to Dingo for a job.
Released from jail, Mwas heads straight to the Kenya National Theatre as instructed by Jose and, as promised, finds Jose in a percussion rehearsal. Happily, Mwas informs Jose that he had come to Nairobi (to join the vultures) but Jose dismisses him and Mwas, surprised by the open deceit, and is taken aback by Jose’s assertion that, that is how Nairobi operates. Not easily crashed, Mwas enters the auditorium where he finds a rehearsal going on and asks for an audition and he is directed to the theatre notice board where he overhears a conversation between a couple about an audition in phoenix theatre group.

Mwas then heads directly to Dingo’s place, a dingy shack housing rough, and unkempt looking gang members. Mwas asks for Dingo announcing that he had been sent by Oti to ask for a job and Dingo sends him out with one of his cronies to get him a job. Mwas gets a job in a seedy hotel where he does all manner of work; cooking, cleaning, serving and preparing food. With nowhere to go, Mwas sleeps on the tables, in the biting cold, as the pounding rain falls on him, through the leaking roof.

Later, during the day, Mwas cleans a mountain of utensils, clearly adapted and engaged in his new career, when Oti passes by and is disgusted to find him doing such work and takes Mwas with him abandoning the utensils. On their way, they branch into a brothel where Oti goes to see his girlfriend, Amina, a prostitute after which they go to a hotel, where they are joined by Oti’s gang, who are at first suspicious about Mwas.

Later as Oti, his gang and their new entrant Mwas, sleep on mattresses on the floor, Amina Knocks and Mwas opens and to his surprise she enters, dresses for bed and
joins Oti in bed. The following morning Mwas heads to the auditions in Phoenix theatre and later joins the gang in vandalizing parked cars under the cover of darkness. Mwas is assigned the duty to transport the loot on a handcart. As Mwas pulls the handcart, a police cruiser approaches from a bend ahead, and the gang disappears into the darkness. Left alone to face the patrolling policemen, Mwas devices a plan to escape arrest by pretending to be a religious lunatic, and he sings a hymn, which fools the police to believe he is mad.

Loot in hand, the gang goes to sell to Waya a black-market automobile spare parts dealer, who gives them a measly two thousand shillings, alleging that the Nissan spares are a hard sell, recommending them to vandalize Toyota Corolla parts. On their way back, Oti snatches a phone from a lady on the city streets and threatens her when she attempts to get it back. Oti gifts the phone to Mwas and as they walk briskly through an alley, Oti scurries to a wall hiding from ‘the beasts’ (corrupt flying squad policemen). They later join the other gang members on a city street adjacent to a car parking lot and wait for the security guard on shift to leave and then descend on parked Toyota corollas and begin their vandalistic plunder. Mwas breaks a headlight while attempting to remove it and an irked Oti gives him a quick lesson on how to vandalize, at which one of the car owner’s finds them and raises alarm to an indifferent public and pursues them, as they run away. On getting to a dark alley, Mwas and Oti turn on the innocent victim and accuse him of being the thief and the hapless fellow has to take to his heels.

Later, Mwas happily recounts the incident to the gang, as they make merry, playing billiards in a local pub and is rudely interrupted by the arrival of the policemen, who proceed to extort some cash from a scared and jittery Oti. During another sale of loot
to Waya Mwas plays negotiator and extracts an extra bargain of cash from Waya using theatrics to threaten that they will sell the parts to Waya’s neighbours.

Buoyed by the success of the transaction, the gang then proceeds to make merry, drinking and smoking in a bar, when Mwas receives his audition call back through a phone call. He later goes to phoenix theatre where they have a meeting, to discuss the details of the play, with directors and fellow cast. After the meeting, Mwas is invited by play cast mate Cedric, to go partying in Westlands for a night of drinking and dancing. Later, Oti accompanied by Mwas heads to check on Amina at the brothel and he is informed, to his chagrin, that she is engaged with a customer and he leaves Mwas with some money for her and skedaddles. Seated on a bench outside the brothel waiting for Amina, Mwas hears her screaming to a lashing and thinking she is being attacked, storms the room, but Amina dismisses him, telling him that she is at work. After she is through, she finds Mwas on the bench and confesses to be flattered by his gesture of concern.

Later as Mwas walks through the city streets he is spotted by Daddy M and his gang and as Mwas tries to explain how, he lost his bag of stereos, Daddy M hits him with a bottle on his head breaking it and knocking Mwas down. He then coerces Mwas to arrange the robbery of an SUV for them, and Mwas convinces Oti and the gang to rob a car for Daddy M. Excited by the idea, Oti gets guns from dingo and carjack a taxi which they use to trail a Toyota SUV and rob it from a couple as they slow down at their gate and commandeer it away. Happy about their success, Mwas and Moze drive away in the SUV and stop at a dark street waiting for Daddy M’s crew, who suddenly appear from the darkness and attack Mwas and Moze, knocking them out.
At this point in the plot, a montage of the play rehearsals progressing is intercut with Oti’s gang continued rendezvous with carjacking robberies, growing bolder, robbing during the day, and in public; then Mwas going on a lunch date with the Amina. Later, Mwas takes Amina to a movie date where he reveals to her about his life as a budding actor.

After the rehearsal Mwas walks into a gang brawl between Dingo, Oti and their gangs about sharing of their carjacking loot. The confrontation escalates as guns are drawn in a Mexican standoff, which is broken by the entrance of the policemen who extort thirty thousand shillings from Dingo and walk away. The confrontation ends in acrimony, Oti’s gang storming out angrily. Dingo’s gang runs out after Oti’s gang accosting them in public and engage in a brutal street fight. Mwas in an attempt to rescue one of his gang mates from Dingo’s blows, jumps on Dingo, knocking him down on a protruding stick that stabs him through the chest to death.

Armed police arrive in cruisers arresting the feuding gangs and the beasts round up Oti’s gang, bundle them in the trunk of their station wagon and take them to an abandoned house where they lock them up. Later after suffering cold, thirst and hunger, the gang grows desperate to save themselves from certain death, after the beasts shoot Waf, one gang member in cold blood.

Led by Oti, they hatch a plan to pelt the beasts with concrete pebbles and run away during the melee. Several gun shots later, Kyalo, Moze, Oti and the two beasts lie dead as Mwas runs away, evading capture by the two police backups. Literally running away from the jaws of death, Mwas runs non-stop through estates, city streets and finally gets to the phoenix theatre where he finds a frantic cast and
directors putting final touches for their performance. Barely out of his emotional sack, after seeing all his gang mates die, Mwas is able to pull off a good performance, and as the audience, among them Amina, gives the bowing play cast and directors a rousing applause, Mwas is tearful and distant as the film fades out.

*Nairobi Half Life* was the official submission of Kenya to the Best foreign Language Film category in the 85th Academy Awards in 2013. Also, among many awards amassed in different festivals the Achievement in Sound award in the 2013 AMAA awards is a key consideration of this study. Besides the sound award, *Nairobi Half Life* received awards like Best Art Director, Best Make-up Artist, Best lighting Designer, and Best Cinematographer in the Africa Magic Viewers choice Awards (AMVCA) in 2014 and Best Actor for Joseph Wairimu the lead actor in the 33rd Durban International Film Festival.

### 3.2 Music

Music has been deeply used and widely deployed in the selected films in its various shapes, importing its abstractness and manipulating its hues and gradients in dynamic levels. *Formula X* (2008), *Killer Necklace* (2009), *From a Whisper* (2009) and *Nairobi Half Life* (2012) embody and embed music in their soundtracks in various forms. This section shall look at these forms in terms of: genre, and compositional forms.

#### 3.2.1 Genres of Music in Selected Kenyan Films

The four selected films deploy various genres of music in their soundtracks. Hip Hop or rap music is one genre that features in the films. *Killer Necklace* (2008)
features a Kenyan hip-hop track by the Dandora based group Ukoo flani Maumau artists Juliani, Johnny-boy, K-Swiss and Agano. *Fanya Tena* plays along a panorama of majengo slums as Jonah and Boo (Mbugua) drive leisurely through majengo slums from the leafy suburbs. The Hip-Hop genre also features in *Nairobi Half Life* with the track *Hip-Hop Halisi* that interplays in the sequence that Oti and his gang take guns from Dingo and board a taxi under pretences but later force the driver into the car trunk at gunpoint, then proceed to trail an SUV, which they steal and commandeer away. Hip-hop music also used in *From a Whisper*, playing in the car stereo when Sam and his family arrive into the city and Joyce alights, bids them farewell and walks away, and Sam drives off. Another Hip-Hop track plays through Tamani’s headsets while she sits defiantly in her father’s office. Hip-hop as a genre as noted above has been used in all the films in different scenes and for different functions that shall be discussed in chapter 3.

Another genre related to the Hip-Hop genre is the Kenyan pop music that includes Kenyan local sub genres like “Genge” and “Kapuka” genres. “Genge”, is associated with Calif record studios, Pro-Habo music studios and producers such as Musyoka and Clement Rapudo and artists such as Nonini, Juacali, Mejja and p-unit (Amateshe, 2012). “Genge” music featured in the select films includes *Hodi Nairobi* featuring P-unit a trio of rap artists that plays in the sequence of Mwas’s transit to the Nairobi city from his rural home and when Mwas goes to Khanji electronics, and finds a rude abusive shopkeeper. More “Genge” music tracks like *Ganji* by p-unit and *Alright* that are deployed in *Nairobi Half Life* sequences, when Oti’s gang earns seven thousand shillings from the sale of the looted corolla spare parts to Waya engage in merrymaking in a local pub, when Mwas receives his audition call back.
Alright interplays in the scene where Cedric and Mwas drive to Westlands after the meeting in Phoenix Theatre, for a night of drinking and dancing.

Other renditions of the Kenyan pop music deployed in selected Kenyan films include “Kapuka”, a genre associated with Ogopa deejays music recording studio. Characterized by a fast paced percussive beat, “Kapuka” music featured in the selected film soundtracks includes Salari by Nameless a popular artist in Kenya. Salari is deployed in Formula X in Lisa’s flashback, in university, with her friends in the hostels, explaining to them the unorthodox interview techniques she employed to get a job in Frank Kibunda’s firm. Besides “Kapuka”, Kenyan RnB, soul and funk music is deployed in the films. Tracks like salvation an original track performed by Kanji Mbugua is infused in the animated montage in the opening sequence of the film, the animated images and graphics, providing a teaser for the film; Songa Mbele a track performed by Steve-o is infused in Formula X in the sequence where Juma in his flashback (explaining his story to Frank, Lisa and Cindy) remembers his predicament during his stint as a struggling insurance broker, going from office to office and disappointment after disappointment and in one instance being denied entry to a company premises.

Funk music is another genre deployed in the films. Just a Band’s, Ha-He plays in Nairobi Half Life when Oti’s gang, among them, newly recruited Mwas goes on a vandalism rampage under cover of darkness. The gang steals headlights; side mirrors and other car accessories from parked cars and load them on a handcart that Mwas gets the duty to tow. Forever people, a track by the same band plays in the pub when Mwas and Cedric join other revellers in Westlands for a night of drinking and dancing.
Afro soul is another genre that features in the films, as original compositions and tracks sourced from popular music. **Uko wapi** in *From a Whisper* performed by Maia von Lekow is a melancholic track that plays in the sequence after the bomb blast. An agitated Sam leaves little Tamani in the car to go look for Joyce, and the young Tamani looks out of the car windows as people run helter-skelter, injured, bloodied, rubble all-over. Sam on the other hand runs through the smoke and dust witnessing the devastation of the blast, bodies strewn on the tarmac, burning cars, rubble from collapsed buildings. He finally finds his wife sprawled on the ground lifeless, and weeps. Dejected, he then goes back to the shaken Tamani and tells her that he didn’t find her mum. **Zingatia** another original soulful track performed by Lavosti plays in the aftermath of the bomb blast Abu going to the mosque and performing ritual ablution before going into the mosque for prayer. It also plays through a montage of Abu’s wife restlessly awaiting him at home; a scene of an apathetic Sam, holding little sleeping Tamani in his arms, a time lapse of the Nairobi skyline and then to the scene where Abu is taking grown up Tamani home.

Religious music is another genre that features in the music scores of the selected films. Characterized, by tunes in popular music and original renditions for the films soundtracks, this study considers this sub-genre as it plays particular defined roles in the films. **Tinga Malo** an original rendition of a popular “Dholuo” tune of the same name, performed by Erick Wainaina in *From a Whisper* is deployed severally in the film in a scene where little Tamani and her mother enjoy other mother daughter time, playing with plasticine shapes and expressing their love, drawing heart shapes on a misty bathroom mirror. The song also plays after Tamani discovers of her mother’s death and runs rampage, confronting her father and destroying her
paintings. A melodic rendition of “swallah” Islamic prayer plays in prayers scenes in a mosque and at Abu’s house, when Abu and Fareed pray together. Kilio, a popular gospel tune by “Zaidi ya mziki”, a group featuring Kenyan gospel artists Jogg-c and gospel fathers is deployed in Formula X in Juma’s flashback, detailing his struggles, unsuccessful stint as an insurance broker, his humble life in Kibera slums and informal business hustles and hawking.

3.2.2 Compositional categories of music deployed in Kenyan films

Besides a wealth of varied genres and subgenres of music, the film music in the selected films soundtracks also exhibits pieces of music herein categorized by their compositional characteristics. The range of composition of the musical tracks shall be looked at with regard to; instrumentation, vocal renditions and the hybrid fusion, dividing this section into

i. Instrumental music

ii. Acapella

iii. Fused music (Instrumental and vocal)

i.) Instrumental Music

Instrumental music has been used widely in the four films, and perhaps forms the largest part of the film scores in the film soundtracks. Consisting of single instrument renditions and multi-instrument compositions, the instrumental music in the films is largely infused in the film’s dramatic scenes. Formula X features a range of renditions of its largely instrumental film score. Ranging from its percussion and synthesized keyboard instrumentals when Frank unveils the formula x AIDS vaccine
to a plenary forum; stringed instrument and bass rendition as Juma the burglar breaches into Frank’s compound through the roof and breaks into the house in the full glare of the surveillance cameras; and the beguiling piano rendition of a romantic tune during Lisa’s flashback, of her wanton ways in Frank’s office, seducing him, explaining the details of their affair to Cindy, Franks wife, and then remorsefully repenting. The instrumental track plays out as a gradually transposed or morphed version of one melody and rhythm only changing the instruments pitch and at times tempo.

*Killer Necklace* also employs a variety of instrumental music in its soundtrack, including Highlife music instrumentals, blending mellow strings with rhythmic percussions, deployed in the scene where Noni, the domestic servant is introduced on screen in a bubble bath in a suburban mansion, then heading to the market where she meets Mbugua, and expresses her desire for the golden necklace displayed on a jewellery shop window. The same instrumental track plays in the sequence where Mbugua, now wielding a fat wad of stolen cash buys the golden necklace for his beloved Noni and medicine for his grandmother. *Killer Necklace* also features percussive instrumental music from drums and metallic barrels being played by street performers.

In *Nairobi Half Life*, instrumental music ranges from the tense horn blown track, as Mwas re-enacts a scene from a film trying to sell bootleg films to his village friends; to the rhythmic “Nyatiti” picking as a truck announcing a traveling theatre show at Gathanji market passes by, prompting Mwas to hurriedly follow the truck; to the reverberating goat skin barrel drums, cowbell and shakers being played by a troupe in the Kenya National Theatre compound when Mwas, fresh out of jail, goes looking
for his ‘agent’ Jose. Also synthesized scores blending piano melodies, bass rhythms
and percussion line the *Nairobi Half Life* soundtrack.

**ii.) Acapella Music**

*Nairobi Half Life, From a Whisper* and *Killer necklace* embody within their
soundtracks some acapella (vocal) music, both on screen and off screen. For
instance Moze, a character in *Nairobi half Life*, sings his composition *Songa kando
Mpango wa kando*, when in their lair, and in a later scene in the abandoned house
where he, and his comrades are wiped out execution style, save for Mwas. Mwas,
while still a novice in the ways of the gangs but a creative budding actor sings a
popular hymn chorus *Parapanda Italia* feigning lunacy, when he meets patrol
officers in a cruiser as he pulls a handcart full of looted vehicle spare parts, thus
evading arrest.

Poignant in the killer necklace soundtrack is *Mombire Ngai cia mihianano* a
“Gikuyu” golden bells hymn sang by the ailing Cucu. Her voice rings above the
night sounds as she lies on her bed singing, as the besieged Mbugua makes his way
to Jonah’s house to accept his terms to become a thieving criminal. Equally salient is
the vocal chant that is deployed in the opening and closing montages of *From a
whisper*, sang in a soulful melody repeating the words “haiya” and “mama yoo”.

**iii.) Fused Music**

These are the music tracks characterized by the combination and blending of
instrumentals tracks and vocals or lyrics. A lot of fused music has been deployed in
the films under study and most of it is detailed in the genres section of this chapter.
The fused music in the Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper and Nairobi Half Life includes originally composed tracks for the films as well as library music or popular music from the contemporary music circles.

Some of the fused tracks in the film include; Tinga Malo, Uko wapi, zingatia, Nani and Jimmy eat the world in From a Whisper; Hodi Nairobi, Ganji, ndege ruka and Ha-He in Nairobi Half Life; Fanya tena in Killer Necklace and Kilio, Songa Mbele and salvation in Formula X.

In summation, as noted in the foregoing discussion, music in its varied genres and compositional shapes forms a vital part of the selected films’ soundtracks with evident manipulations of its dynamic characteristics. Key to its dramatic and narrational contributions to the films is the manipulation of the music in terms of diegesis. The music is deployed as background sound or non-diegetically, as source music or diegetic music and as source score, which refers to the shifting between diegetic and non-diegetic, a phenomenon Chion (1994) refers to as spatio-temporal turntable.

3.3 Sound Effects

Sound effects are the second non-speech element of a film sound design that this study focused on. Sound effects constitute the sounds of objects in a film’s sonic space both on-screen and off-screen, including props being used by actors; synthetic sounds without particular sources in the real world, generated using computers and according to Handzo (1985, p. 407) all other sounds generated by actors in synchronous filming. This scope of defining sound effects encapsulates incident object sounds, reflected sounds and ambient sounds that are divided by Sijill (2005)
into four categories including; realistic, expressive, surreal and external sound effects.

Realistic sound effects are those sounds that are organic or natural to a particular film scene, produced by direct and reflective sources, onscreen and off-screen, synchronous and non-synchronous, diegetic and non-diegetic. They include sounds like cars hooting, birds chirping, footsteps and other sounds that mimic real sounds of particular objects. Expressive sound effects on the other hand according to Sijill (2005) refer to realistic sound effects that have been altered to infer a certain idea. Manipulation of their pitch, volume, and adding delay effects interalia are some of the techniques of alteration of the sounds to add new levels of meaning on them. Realistic sounds like sirens, glasses clinking or engine roars are accentuated or synthesized in digital software’s to create distinct sounds that effectively communicate or reinforce certain ideas.

Surreal sound effects refer to the sounds that span from a character’s mind, in illusions, dreams, hallucinations or imagination. For instance the sound of an audience clapping and cheering, in the mind of a tense actor standing alone centre stage holding a script, staring fantastically at an empty auditorium. Sijill (2005) also calls these sounds meta-diegetic sounds. External or non-diegetic sound effects refer to the sounds that are outside the characters, immediate sonic environment, infused to express certain ideas in a scene. They also include the synthetic sounds deployed to add to the layers of meaning and do not necessarily correspond to the depicted physical environment.
As such, sound effects range from actual sounds recorded during synchronized principal photography or as separate wild tracks; Foley simulations recorded in studio or synthetic sounds created in digital audio workstations (D.A.Ws); or sourced from audio libraries (Nisbett, 2003). *Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper*, and *Nairobi Half Life* deploy various sound effects exuding realistic, surreal and external characteristics that collectively radiate various levels of expressiveness. They Include:

### 3.3.1 Car Sounds

A variety of vehicle sounds have been widely deployed in *Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper, and Nairobi half Life*. They include cars honking, vehicle doors closing and engine sounds.

Sam, in *From a Whisper* already at the car park, presses his car horn to call out to his wife Joyce and little Tamani and the hooting sound gets them running to the car and the family departs. The honking sound is also used in *Nairobi Half Life*, when Oti and his gang are busy vandalizing cars on parking lot in broad daylight and a passing motorist hoots loudly and in a later scene when the SUV being trailed by Oti and his gang arrives at a gated entrance, stops and then hoots for the gate to be opened. In *Killer Necklace*, Noni and Mbugua the two lovebirds sit close to each other on the bed and blissfully engage in a conversation about their love and the future when a honking sound sends them scampering. The honking sounds thus cited, are realistic in tone and texture, but express different meanings in view of their context of application. The onscreen honk in *From a Whisper* signals Sam calling out to his family; the sound in *Nairobi Half Life* is ambiguous, in that it could signal
a motorist in his normal city manoeuvres or hooting to scare Oti, Mwas and their comrades from their thieving rampage; and the sound in *Killer Necklace* signifies arrival of Father and Mother, which explains why Noni and Mbugua burst into frantic activity to tidy up and escape.

Sounds of vehicle doors closing have also been used in the films under study. Mbugua in *Killer Necklace* slams Jonah’s car door arrogantly, when Jonah, pretending to be a taxi driver drops him and Noni at her suburb home and later closing the door gently when he gets back from his escapades in the mansion. In *From a Whisper* car doors closing are deployed diegetically when Sam’s family boards the vehicle for their journey to the city and in *Formula X*, when Frank and Lisa alight from the car on arrival at Frank’s house. In *Nairobi Half Life*, Oti’s gang slam shut the taxi driver in his car’s trunk during their carjacking mission and later in the film, the trunk of the beasts’ car, is slammed shut behind Oti and his gang as they are taken to their abandoned house of death.

Engine revving sounds, hums and roars are also deployed in the films. The engine revs as it comes to a stop when Jonah drives Mbugua and Noni to her home and as they drive away in *Killer Necklace*. In *Formula X*, the sleek Mercedes Benz revs as Frank drives into his compound and in *Nairobi Half Life*, when a police cruiser appears from a street adjacent to where Oti and his gang had been vandalizing parked cars under the cover of darkness. In *From a Whisper*, engines roar when Sam and his family depart home and when the terrorists drive out of their compound and join the main road where Sam and his family are. Another poignant engine hum is when Abu, after dropping Tamani at her makeshift home, sits still in the car in deep thought and the hum morphs through his flashback of Fareed borrowing his car.
3.3.2 Footsteps

Footsteps are also employed in the films to varied degrees. In *Nairobi Half Life*, we hear the footsteps of Oti and his gang in the stillness of the night rushing to parking a lot to vandalize vehicle parts; and in a later scene, while in the middle of removing a headlight from a parked Corolla, the vehicle owner finds them and runs after them. Footstep sounds are also employed during the phoenix stage play rehearsals as Cedric and Mwas run, scuttle, walk and skip around the wooden stage. Footsteps are also used in *Formula X* instances being when Frank and Lisa enter the house oblivious of Juma’s presence. Mbugua in *Killer Necklace* hides behind the flower bushes, his face betraying fear when he hears Father’s brisk footsteps approaching.

3.3.3 Gun Sounds

Gun cocking sounds and gunshots ring loud in *Nairobi Half Life* when Oti and gang, already neck deep in carjacking attempt to rob an armed motorist who shoots at them and they skedaddle. Another gunshot sound rings in the abandoned house during the gang’s foiled escape after which of Oti’s gang and the beasts, only Mwas runs out evading gunfire from the two policemen. Several guns are cocked in *Nairobi Half Life*’s gang confrontation scene in Dingo’s lair where Oti’s gang and Dingo’s trade harsh words over division of the carjacking loot. In *Nairobi Half Life*’s final scene, which is a phoenix theatre play on stage, a simulated gunshot blasts on stage. *Formula X* employs the sound of the gunshot in the scene where Cindy realizes, Lisa is Frank’s mistress and Juma discharges his gun to shut them up.
3.3.4 Phones Ringing

Different phones produce disparate sounds or tunes and sound different depending on the location they are placed in. Used widely in *Formula X*, some instances include; when Juma’s phone rings as he tries to access the house; Nicole’s (Cindy’s friend) ringing when Cindy calls to inform her of her cancelled flight; and Cindy’s office secretary’s phone ringing when Cindy calls; and Frank’s cell phone as he drives home; Juma’s cell phone as he tries to unlock Frank’s laptop computer; and Frank’s home phone, when their neighbour calls. In *Nairobi Half Life*, Mwas phone rings, as he and his gang friends make merry after a successful sale of the stolen vehicle spares. Deployed in both on screen and off screen the phone sounds though mostly diegetic strongly bear expressive characteristics and play vital roles in the film narrative as shall be discussed in the proceeding chapters.

3.3.5 Other Sounds

A rich myriad of sounds is deployed in the film soundtracks to not only heighten the levels of realism, but to unveil meanings that bubble the springs of the film narratives. Among the sounds include Njeru’s shears snipping in *Killer Necklace* as he prunes and manicures the flowers in Father’s affluent compound. Wine trickling in a glass off-screen as Noni pours a wine for a toast with Mbugua; corkscrew creaking as Mbugua, unfamiliar with it, fidgets around trying to make it work. A slapping sound rents the air, when Mother finds Noni tidying up the bedroom. Other poignant sounds include spitting sound, when Jonah disgusted by the taste of the wine Mbugua takes from Father’s house spits out, his face screwed in disgust in *Killer Necklace* and Oti spitting in *Nairobi Half Life*. Drawers opening, typing
sounds, linen fluffing, clinking crockery, cathedral bell bubbling hookah, the hiss of a spray can, and a variety of crashing, breaking and banging sounds, accumulate into the wealth of sound tracks in *Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper* and *Nairobi Half Life* and build into the film narratives.

### 3.4 Ambience

Ambience, natural sounds or background noise can be described as the sounds that characterize a particular sonic environment. The sounds of a particular environment would rope in poignant and subtle sounds that combine to form a din that feels like a single unidirectional mash of sounds. According to Chion (1994), natural sounds may be divided into lasting noises and punctual noises. Lasting noises are the ambient sounds that extend throughout a sequence and punctual noises are poignant isolated, occasional events or sounds that form part of the sonic environment.

As such, ambience includes the sounds present in the synch-recorded footage and those added in post-production. Rubin (1985, p. 280) describes background noise as “the voice of the outer world, of progress, of time.” Rubin’s description captures three characters of ambience as sounds that denote existence of an external space beyond what we see on screen; the changes taking place in a particular space or movement from one space to other spaces and as sounds that show time for instance morning day time dusk night by the particular noises associated with specific times in a day.

The relevance of ambience as an element of the film sound tracks however, is not just tied to the issues of time and space but as Balazs (1985) avers, “the vocation of sound film is to redeem us from the chaos of shapeless noise by accepting it as
expression, as significance, as meaning”. Just like the whole gamut of the film soundtrack, ambience can be perceived (albeit in error) as a cacophonous, formless cocktail of sounds. However by characterizing the sonic environment in different film scenes and revealing more elements and dimensions of the soundscapes, ambience is able to covey meaning as it blends and contrasts with visuals and other sound elements.

A variety of ambient sounds have been deployed in the selected films, and they include walla or indistinct human chatter, vehicle sounds, hooting sounds and a preacher shouting indistinctly from a distance in the market where Noni goes shopping in *Killer Necklace*. The humming chatter, and the roaring vehicle sounds dominate as lasting noises colouring the scene with the occasional honking and the shouting pastor punctuating the scene sounds. A blend of different sounds also characterizes the sonic environment of the suburban compound where Noni lives. In the opening scene of *Killer Necklace*, birds chirp, as a lawn mower rumbles but barely drowns the quiet demeanour of the softly whistling trees. The contrast between the suburb and the slum area is strikingly clear, as the slums air is filled screaming “matatu” exhausts, children playing, sirens wailing and an occasional bird punctuating the scene with a chirp, quickly drowned by the other sounds.

Walla, sounds of billiard cues and balls knocking, glasses clinking and feet shuffling among other sounds characterize the bar scenes in *Killer Necklace* and *Nairobi Half Life*. Mbugua goes to the bar in search of the golden necklace, much coveted by Noni his love, and Mwas in *Nairobi Half Life* is engaged in a celebration with his gang comrades after a successful sale of stolen spare parts to Waya a local black-market dealer. The two bar scenes, though similar in the rudimental investment of
sounds, differ in tone; *Killer Necklace* employing a darker theme interplayed with dull, instrumental disco music.

City sounds mash together revving engines, cars honking, sirens, people engaged in chatter and multiplicity of footsteps and shuffles, in *Nairobi Half Life* and *From A Whisper*. When Sam and Tamani drop Joyce in the city, when Fareed and the terrorists survey their attack target and in the final scene where father and daughter reconcile at the memorial park, city sounds characterize the ambience in *From a Whisper*. *Nairobi Half Life* deploys Walla, footsteps and car sounds as Mwas traverses the streets of Nairobi on his first arrival to the city when he is ruthlessly robbed off all his belongings in broad daylight; as he makes his way to Khanji electronics and as he takes Amina for a lunch date. The 'uptown' sounds are however remarkably different from 'downtown' sounds, the former characterized by traffic and bird sounds, contrapuntal to the latter, which includes a cacophonous chatter in the many makeshift car repair shops. The downtown sounds include buzzing gliders, knocking mallets, welding sounds amidst the din of indistinct chatter, heard when Mwas and his gang friends pass as they go about their illicit trade or head to their abode.

Traffic sounds also colour the ambient sounds in *Formula X, Nairobi Half Life* and *From a Whisper* Engines running, cars hooting, and car stereos blaring music are deployed when Sam and his family are caught up in a traffic snarl up heading to the city. Sounds of roaring engines, vehicles zooming past, hooting and car radios, blast the airwaves as Cindy heads home aboard a taxi, and Frank and Lisa on the other hand, drive home in Frank's Benz, both cruising on the road.
Cricket sounds, dogs barking and birds chirping are heard at night and dawn, when Tamani relaxes in her makeshift home and early morning and when Fareed wakes Abu up for prayer in *From a Whisper*. Chirping birds, punctuated by an occasional car zooming past characterize ambient sounds in Abu's estate in *From a Whisper* and Frank's residence in *Formula X*, poignant when Juma enters Frank’s compound, and when Lisa and Frank flirt in the compound's parking space when they arrive.

The bomb blast aftermath infuses ambient sounds such as, distressed screams, wailing ambulance sirens, helicopter sounds, and fires crackling in a staggered mash of lasting and punctual characters in *From a Whisper*. The ambience in the four films is varied; encapsulating numerous sounds to create sonic environments that in dynamic ways advance a range of meanings, which aid in the sparking and progression of the narratives.

### 3.5 Silence

In the epoch of sound films, silence has grown to well embrace its stature and standing as an element of film sound design. Demonstrated by both absence and presence of sound, Rubin (1985) describes silence as the “voice of the image”, an assertion that is succinctly captured by Balazs (1985) who explains how silence elevates the intensity of men's physiognomy, reinforcing their expression, albeit in a voiceless language. Murch (2005, p. 32) avers that,

> The ultimate metaphoric sound is silence. If you get the film to a place with no sound where there should be sound, the audience will crowd that silence with sounds and feelings of their own making and will individually answer the question of "why is it quiet?"

Murch's argument raises pertinent questions of how silence is created and achieved.
in a film. For the silence to evoke images in the minds of an audience, then it must be suggested by, or suggest sounds. In order for silence to exist in a film therefore, there must be sound for the contrast of presence and absence to be there, and hence silence as McKee (2006) argues, should not be considered separate from sound but rather an integral and important element of sound. Silence in a film sound design can be in two forms; Absolute silence or dead track which refers to a non-diegetic moment of no sound; and relative or implied silence which is connoted by the presence of particular subtle and distant sounds.

3.5.1 Actual Silence

Also referred in this study as absolute or pure silence, actual silence is the complete absence of sound in an audio-visual track. Also known as dead track according to Boggs (1996), absolute silence is achieved by the sudden cutting of all sound to create a soundless moment for a particular desired effect. It is important to note though that absolute silence is rarely used in film.

The selected films have deployed actual silence in various ways;

As Mwas and Moze relish in the joy of their first successful carjacking, they drive to a secluded spot to deliver the stolen vehicle to Daddy M as agreed. On arrival, they alight and wait for Daddy M, when suddenly his gang pounces from the darkness and violently descend on Mwas and Moze, knocking them out unconscious, a moment infused with a dead track. The commotion of brisk footsteps, shoving, punches, knocks and kicks, culminates in one dizzying blow that dips into total silence. Another instance in Nairobi Half Life is Mwas's second morning in Nairobi, at dawn, cold after a night spent on a hard wooden table, under a leaking roof of a
makeshift hotel on a rainy night. Perched on a rooftop with a spectacular view of the skyline silhouette of the city of Nairobi as the sun rises Mwas yawns and rubs his palms in pure silence interplayed with the fading pit music.

_Nairobi Half Life_ also deploys actual silence in the scene where Oti and his gang are locked in an abandoned house awaiting execution by the policemen. They all sit pensively in silence; perhaps each in their thought contemplating the end, and in this moment, their keeping mum, is compounded into a deep absolute silence by the absence of any sound in the scene. _Formula X_ deploys actual silence when Cindy, Frank’s wife, after awkward introductions, and explanations of the presence of Lisa and Juma in her house and the strangeness of them watching a cartoon program on Television, pauses as she ascends a flight of stairs and the soundtrack goes silent with her pause, as she recollects Lisa's identity. Actual silence is also in _Killer Necklace_, when Mother arrives home to find Noni hurriedly trying to tidy up after her escapades with Mbugua. A smirk look on Mother's face, Noni petrified, and lost for words, stands beat trying to look for an explanation is interplayed with reigning absolute silence, palpable tension rising, when a thunderous whacking slap on Noni's face breaks the silence.

### 3.5.2 Implied Silence

Relative silence is the quiet moments in a scene, which are suggested by the presence of certain subtle or distant sounds. Balazs (1985; 118) avers that,

> If a morning breeze blows the sound of a cock crowing over to us from the next neighbouring village, if from the top of a high mountain we hear the tapping of a woodcutters axe far below in the valley, if we can hear the crack of a whip a mile away, then we are hearing the
The examples cited in Balazs's (1985) explanation unveil the crux of the implied silence, which is suggested by the presence of distant sounds and hence denoting that the immediate sonic space is quiet. The distant sounds expand the spatial dimensions of the sonic space in a particular scene, by giving prominence to sounds that appear to come from the furthest lengths of the given space, thus meaning that the sounds around or near the action or character are diminished or absent and thereby implying locational silence or silence in the immediate diegetic space. Silence also is when “the buzzing of a fly on the windowpane fills the whole room with sound, and the ticking of a clock smashes time into fragments with sledge hammer blows” (Ibid).

When subtle sounds like the buzzing of a fly and the ticking of a clock become dominant in a scene, booming with loudness, then they suggest a lull in the said space and thus create relative silence. Like the distant sounds, the subtle sounds denote that the dominant sounds in particular space, like traffic sounds in the city, electronic sounds in an urban living room or chatter and typing sounds in a busy front office, it strongly implies that the expected dominant sounds are hushed and thus silence. Relative silence has been deployed in the selected films in the following ways:

Fareed in From a Whisper sits pensively outside Abu’s house in thought, clutching his prayer beads and distant evening sounds can be heard before Abu joins him. Later in the film, Fareed after reading the terrorist statement swallows hard and stares blankly, the paper he holds, crackling above everything, a distant cricket chirping. Sam Tamani’s father, after a heart wrenching confrontation with his
daughter following her discovery that he was lying about her mother’s disappearance, sits alone, still and deep in thoughts as distant city sounds punctuate the silence around him. In a different scene, Abu and his wife are asleep when small pebbles hitting their bedroom windowpane break the silence, awaking Abu who hears Fareed calling from a long way downstairs. The pebbles and the shouting from a distance imply silence in Abu’s bedroom.

In the *Killer Necklace* bar scene, Mbugua after paying for the faux golden necklace, fingers it gently and notices gold dust residue sticking on his palms, a slight lull, the bar ambience lowered significantly and the music stopped suggest a brief moment of silence from Mbugua’s perspective. Later in the film, Mbugua, after a successful robbery, and full of unmitigated temerity wants a gun from Jonah to go kill somebody. Mbugua grabs a gun from the table but Jonah reaches it in time and holds on to it too. As a close up image of their hands holding the gun fills the screen, the soundtrack fades to relative silence, the chirping of a distant cricket dominating in a moment of quiet. Awkward stillness and silence reigns, before Jonah lets go of the gun and Mbugua storms out with it, disregarding Jonah’s caution.

In *Nairobi Half Life*, there is a brief moment of relative silence as Dingo gasps for air, breathing his last, momentarily diminishing the loud sounds of the violent commotion around him. There is also implied silence when, after a movie screening and other audiences filing out, Mwas and Amina remain seated, their ruffling clothes and shuffling feet fill the quiet theatre. In another scene, as Mwas and Moze stand in darkness beside their stolen SUV awaiting Daddy M and his gang, distant city sounds and subtle night presence can be heard as they wait implying silence in their immediate surroundings.
*Formula X* deploys relative silence when Juma, attempting to access Frank’s house, tries to open the padlock with his set of master keys, the chime and clinking of the keys fill the space. When Juma enters the house, his footsteps fill the room, suggesting silence in the house, which is also suggested by Frank’s house phone ringing loudly, heard from outside the house.

Silence as reflected in the foregoing discourse in its actual and implied form has been injected in the soundtrack of the selected films in a variety of ways. Deployed in different scenes and story scenarios, silence plays various roles and adumbrates the narrative milestones, catalysts and elements in disparate ways that shall at length be discussed in the proceeding chapters of this study.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined introductory summaries of the sampled films and described silence, music, ambience and sound effects as the non-speech sounds deployed in Kenyan films. The chapter has gone further to categorize the different forms and genres of the non-speech sounds deployed in the sampled films and illustrated in detail the scenes in which the elements are deployed. The arguments in this chapter provide an ample basis and context to decipher the roles of the sound elements in the sampled films, in chapter three, and the narrative dispositions in chapter four. The next chapter examines the role of silence, sound SFX, ambience and music in the sampled films.
CHAPTER FOUR

ROLE OF NON-VERBAL SOUNDS IN FILM

4.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into the various roles played by music, sound effects, silence, and ambience in the films. The analysis of the roles has been railed on the conventionally assigned functions for the elements as well as the special functions noted by the researcher in each film. The roles analysed range from revelation of emotions, acoustic characteristics, transition, and bridging time, connecting ideas and enhancing dramatic action. The analysis of the roles played is pegged on specific examples in the films and how the non-speech elements of sound uniquely execute the functions in their individual potential and form their alloy with other elements of the aural and visual track. To achieve this, the study analyses the symbols projected by the elements in the context of their deployment, tapping into conventional symbols associated with the sounds and those connoted in the film scenes. In addition, meanings shared, deferred, and inferred in the parallels and contrasts between the sound and visual elements are analysed, with arguments centralized in the numerous examples derived from the sampled films.

4.1 SOUND EFFECTS

As enumerated in the preceding chapter, sound effects have been richly employed in the selected films in their various compositional forms and in their organic and synthetic form, importing with them their intrinsic expressive potential and building a network of interactions with the image and other elements of the soundtrack to
execute their given roles in the films. The roles played range from emotional, spatial, dramatic, transitional, realism, audience effect, and connective functions that ultimately serve in the development of the film narrative which shall be analysed in chapter four. Among the numerous roles sound effects play in film, the following are poignant in the sampled films:

4.1.1 Enhancing Dramatic Action

Dramatic action essentially is the physical, emotional or psychological activities engaged in by characters in a film. Costello (2004) notes that, the story in a film is formed by character actions as they cause and react to incidents. The encapsulation of actions and activities brings together both the motivated and pass time activities in the progression of a film. Sound effects enhance dramatic action in the selected films by on screen collaboration with the images and importation of their expressive qualities.

The revving sound as Jonah’s car approaches on screen slowing down and exiting to the gravel roadside reinforces the movement of the car in progression, developing the expectation for the next action, of Noni and Mbugua alighting from the car. The engine sound, coupled with the traction sounds as the car is steered from the tarmacked surface to the gravel surface, reinforces the action of Jonah stopping the car for Noni and Mbugua to alight. After the car stops, Noni and Mbugua alight and in arrogance, Mbugua slams the car door and barks instructions to Jonah to wait there for him. He then quickly returns, when Noni gains some distance, to beg Jonah to wait for him; revealing his pretences. The feigned arrogance spans from, and is jumpstarted by the bawdy and almost violent action of banging the car door,
reflected by its corresponding sound in amplitude. We barely notice Noni closing her door after alighting. In further comparison, few moments later after leaving Father’s compound, Mbugua closes the door gently when he enters the car, which is reflected by the subtle sounds of the car door closing. The loud sound of the door banging not only draws attention to the action but heightens it and gives it some prominence.

Also in *Killer Necklace*, when Noni pours wine into the glasses for a toast with Mbugua, the trickling sound deployed off-screen is loud, very clear, and dominates alongside the image of the compound exterior, drawing attention and reinforcing the pouring of the wine. Coming after the clinking sounds of Mbugua fidgeting with the cork screw and Noni so expertly unscrewing the cork, the sound of wine in glass reeks of tasteful sophistication, a vital component of the action that further deepens Noni’s pretences, as a lass born of, and from affluence. That action being so vital, the deployed sound in quality and volume lays befitting emphasis, thereby drawing attention and heightening it.

Coming later in the sequence is a montage of sound effects of linen fluffing, objects falling and clinking glasses, as Noni tries to tidy up the room in a rush, when Mother and Father arrive. This sequence carries within it a revelation to the audience as pertains Noni’s deception and thereby regarding as important her frenetic attempts to tidy up before her employers arrive. Alike to this, the sounds deployed go a long way in enhancing the rhythm and intensity of the action, filing the diegetic space and the audio-visual track of the scene. Very important also is the arrival of Noni’s employers signalled by the loud car horn honking which jolts Noni and Mbugua into action, from their blissful quiet moments.
Mwas in *Nairobi Half Life* falls a few times, which symbolically aligns his actions to the overall narrative. His first crash happens in Gathanji market during the vultures theatre show. In his element as an aspiring actor, and equipped with crammed lines from scenes of the movies he sells, Mwas decides to re-enact a scene from the movie *300 Spartans* for a small curious boy and with the crowd urging him, Mwas climbs on top of a makeshift iron sheet shack. As he waltzes in character, he steps on a weak part of the roof and his performance is cut short as he crashes to the ground. Luckily he escapes unhurt. The hard cut sound effect of the crash accentuates and gives emphasis to Mwas’s actions. Later, as a novice in the big city and incarcerated among criminals in the Nairobi central police station; Mwas is coerced by the fearsome Oti to clean the murky jail toilet. As he tries to accustom himself to the filthy environment, Mwas slides and falls on the floor with a splat and this fall is heightened by the sound.

Oti and his gang make a living by stealing motor vehicle spares. Hitting the target parts characterizes the quick removal of the vehicle parts and it at times ends in the damage of the spare parts. The first instance is at night when the gang raids a parking lot and proceeds to vandalize a haul of headlamps, side mirrors and so on. The sound of the scene is banging, cracking, crackling and breaking as they proceed to knock the parts from their sockets and holders; thereby emphasizing their actions and their crude methods. Later, in broad daylight, the gang raids other parked cars and Mwas, still a learner, hits a Corolla headlamp and it breaks, much to the chagrin of Oti. The breaking sound is emphasized, drawing attention to his action more than the others giving it prominence.
The heightening of particular actions is vital as it draws attention to a specific detail in a scene that marks the progression of a film narrative in view of character deeds. The sound of drawers opening in *Formula X* heightens Juma’s search of a specific object, thus revealing that he is not just an ordinary burglar. It is also reflected in *From a Whisper*’s spraying sounds that heighten Tamani’s actions of spray painting in the memorial park. Her notoriety is noted when she is discussed as the mystery painter by the park security and her painting escapades are reinforced by the familiar sound of the clinking pea in the spray can and the nozzle hissing as the can discharges the paint. In a later scene, metals clank and creak as the terrorists load up the bombs in the trucks signalling the mass of the objects and ultimately the significance of the actions.

Dramatic action is an important component of building the film narrative. Specific actions hold disparate value; and in order to distinguish the most important, sound effects both on-screen and off-screen play a very vital role in enhancing the particular actions and activities.

### 4.1.2 Revealing Emotion

Vital among the qualities of characters and scenes in a film, is the emotional context. The feelings of a character and the mood surrounding a particular sequence, contribute to the understanding of the conflict, actions and general essence of a scene. Ranging from happiness, anger, confusion, anxiety, apathy, pity, and sadness, the emotions experienced in a film are revealed by sound effects among other elements of the audio-visual track. Reinforcing the idea of sound effects revealing emotions Ben Burtt a sound designer, (quoted in Holman, 2010, p. 146) says that,
Each of us carries around in our heads an emotional dictionary, associating certain sounds with certain emotions. The low-frequency rumble equals threat equation is one of the simpler manifestations of this. Doubtless this is true because it is known that a smell can evoke a memory, and certainly a sound can.

Cindy in *Formula X* for instance zips her bag hard, as she argues with her husband Frank. The zipping sound betrays some urgency and violence, revealing that she is upset and anxious, as revealed by the crackling of objects in her handbag off-screen. The objects crackle almost violently as she rummages her handbag looking for her phone, and Frank has to shout at her to stop the fidgeting. Getting late for her flight, with her husband seated at the dinner table indifferently sipping his cup of coffee, Cindy is restless and angry with him and engages him in a confrontation. Cindy’s emotions are revealed by the aforementioned sounds, which depict her frenetic and violent state of mind.

Sound effects also reveal emotions in *From a Whisper*, when beeping sounds break the monotony of the humming engine as Abu drives Tamani home contrary to her wishes. An awkward silence between them, Tamani, restless and nervous, plays around with the air conditioner buttons, the beeps revealing that she is anxious and restless about something. Not satisfied, Tamani dips her hand in the centre-console storage compartment and fidgets with objects in there as sounds of plastics knocking against each other fill the car. She then removes an audiotape that she inserts into the car stereo. Tamani, in a vehicle with Abu, a stranger, is clearly not comfortable with the situation, and her restlessness is revealed and compounded by her fidgety actions reinforced by the beeping and knocking sounds.
Earlier on in the film, Tamani’s burning fury is revealed by the sound of the door banging when she storms into her father’s office to confront him after she discovers the truth about her mother’s disappearance. The banging of the door, the shattering portrait glass, the tearing of papers and the crackling fire, when Tamani throws an object at the family portrait hung in Sam’s office all demonstrates Tamani’s feelings. Further then rips apart her paintings; and burns her research and paintings in her gallery. She belatedly mourns her mother, seething with rage against her father, who had lied to her that her mother was alive but missing. The sounds of her angry actions lay bare her emotional state.

The montage of sounds of objects falling, crockery clinking, and linen fluffing as Noni tries to tidy up mother’s bedroom in Killer Necklace, reveals Noni’s fear and tension. It is evident from her frantic efforts reflected by the sounds, that she is tense and petrified by mother’s arrival. In another scene in the film, bubbling sounds dominate when Jonah, irked by Mbugua’s reluctance to join him in crime smokes his shisha, his hookah bottle bubbling. The sound builds tension, as Mbugua, now in a difficult situation, stands in silence, awaiting Jonah’s decision like an accused awaiting the verdict of a jury. The hookah sounds with a staccato rhythm like that of chugging engine, prolong the scene, like long punctuations on Jonah’s dialogue, building an uneasy and awkward tension in the scene.

In Nairobi Half Life, Mose calmly walks towards Mwas, places his hand gently on his shoulder and without warning punches him hard on the tummy. The punching sound reveals the anger in Mose who deceptively feigns calm but the sound of the punch reveals its force and ultimately his emotion. In a later scene, after a series of carjacking sprees and exciting rehearsals Mwas walks into a confrontation between
Oti and Dingo, their gangs in tow. When Mwas tries to intervene, Dingo draws a
gun on him prompting everyone else to draw theirs in a classic Mexican standoff.
The sound of several cocking guns, and images of fingers on triggers, builds tension
in the scene and reveals fear in Mwas, which is thankfully dissipated by the arrival
of the corrupt “beasts”.

As noted in the foregoing discourse, different emotions are revealed by the
deployment of sound effects by reflecting emotional actions and actions that cause
certain emotional reactions and building into the emotions in particular scenes.

4.1.3 Transitions

A film is an amalgam of different elements of audio-visual character. The elements,
including images, sounds, and graphics are joined together in a coherent flow in editing, creating a progressive logging of different short clips, scenes and sequences.
To smoothen flow and create a semblance of serial development, it is imperative
then, that the change from one short clip is made almost seamless regardless of the
differences with the next clip. The importance of efficient transitions cannot be
overstated as it lies at the core of storytelling, by creating connections, relating
elements and bridging of time and space. Sound effects in the selected films play the
role of creating transitions by linking changes in time, space, emotion, event, and
phenomenon.

Mwas on his first day in the city in Nairobi Half Life walks around taking in the
allure of the city, and at one moment in his peaceful bliss, smiles sheepishly, star
struck when he sees Jimmy Gathu (a famous television personality) outside the
Nairobi Hilton hotel. He is suddenly jolted to consciousness of the commotion
around him by footsteps of hawkers running away from city council officers. The footsteps link the scene of him admiring Gathu and his entourage, and the hawkers’ commotion creating a seamless change between the two scenes.

The thunder and rain sounds, link Mwas's night of torment from biting cold and difficult sleep on a table, to a cold but hopeful dawn with the sun rising. The night scene begins with the clapping thunder and drumming rain, which ends with the breaking of dawn. Later in the film, when a car trunk slams shut, the sequence transits to Oti and his gang driving the taxi, cruising in the highway trailing an SUV. The two scenes separated by time and space are linked by the sound of the slamming car trunk.

In *From a Whisper*, Tamani and Joyce closing the car doors, signals a transition to the scene where they, and the terrorists drive out and confluence, oblivious of each other on the main road traffic. The sounds of the shutting doors usher in the car driving out and the terrorists also driving out linking the sequences, characters, and spaces. The spraying sound connects the flashback sequence that opens the film, with a scene of Tamani all grown up years later, spray-painting in the memorial park. The spraying sound, which overlaps between the two clips, bridges the change in time without much distraction. This technique is repeated when the engine hum in Abu's car as he sits pensively in deep thought, transits to a flashback of Fareed borrowing his car years earlier. The engine hum like the spray hiss plays across the two scenes morphing the two scenes depicting different times.

The cathedral bell in *Killer Necklace* connects the scene where Mbugua receives instructions from Jonah on his first robbery assignment, and the scene where mama
Bessie drives to town. The scene of Jonah’s house takes place at night and Mama Bessie's during the day, and is connected by the church bell, which is deployed between the two scenes spilling from the former, to the latter scene. In another scene, the sound of Father’s car honking interrupts Noni and Mbugua's blissful and peaceful scene, where they sit after a toast and contemplate their future. The honking car jolts them into frantic actions, Mbugua escaping through the balcony and Noni trying to put everything in order. The honking sound therefore serves as the connecting link between the change in activity, and actions of the two characters and a change in the mood of the scene.

Completely oblivious of each other’s activity, Cindy in a taxi and Frank her husband in his car on their on their way home, Cindy dials Frank's number which rings, and the sound is heard together with a shot of Frank behind the steering wheel. The two scenes therefore are connected by the sound of the ringing phone in Formula X. The engine roar of Frank's car as he drives into his home parking transits between the image of the car and Juma now alert, having heard the sound of the car. The car sound therefore provides a point of transition for the two images.

Sound effects therefore, as evidenced, play a vital connective role between the scenes, sequences, spaces, actions, characters, and time. As established from the examples from the selected films, sound effects that build and effect transitions, are deployed between the changing scenes, across or overlapping in the scenes and at the cutting edge of the preceding or proceeding scene thus creating a bridge between the differing but serial points of the films.
4.1.4 Startling /creating surprise

Key to cinematic storytelling is the influence on the feelings of the spectators. Cavalcanti (1985, p.109) captures the crucial role of sound effects in creating surprise when he posits that,

> Noise is so useful. It speaks directly to the emotions. Babies are afraid of loud bangs long before they have learnt that there is such a thing as danger.

Startling effects in a film go a long way in keeping the audience not only abreast to difficult story milestones but also by tagging them to the shocks and surprises of the cinematic events and actions. A startled audience relates to character and story circumstances giving a film the intended impact emotionally. Sound effects import their pace, rhythm and tone to startle an audience. Sharp, loud, and sudden sounds work very well in startling and attracting attention to particular narrative details in a film.

The gunshot in *Formula X* for instance not only startles the characters but also the audience since it is unexpected. The gunshot cracks, as Juma tries to quell the brawling Cindy and Lisa, who in a wife versus mistress fashion, attack each other in a bitter frenzy and though farfetched, Juma discharges his weapon in the air to bring order in the house.

In addition, the crashing sound as Mwas tumbles down from a shack's rooftop in Gathanji market in *Nairobi Half Life* also works as an element of surprise. The adrenaline built up to high octane by his performance, consequently seeing him perched on the roof of the shack playing the all commanding king of Sparta, makes his crushing fall heart stopping. The crashing sound therefore is a vital element of
dramatic surprise in the scene. The footsteps of the running hawkers and roaring engine of the police cruiser provide unexpected moments of surprise. The startling sounds are deployed in the scenes where when Mwas ogles absent-mindedly at a television icon in the former, and when the sound of the approaching police cruiser sends the other gang members scampering into the darkness leaving Mwas, alone on the road towing a handcart to face the patrolling policemen.

The lashing sounds of a whip in *Nairobi Half Life* startle Mwas and provide a moment of surprise. Left with a message for Amina in her brothel, Mwas hears the sounds of a whip lashing and Amina cooing in apparent pain and an alarmed, Mwas storms the room to try and rescue her only to find her in a compromising situation. Surprises are also abound, when an irked Daddy M cuts short Mwas’s dramatic explanation of how he lost Khanji’s package. Amid Mwas’s dialogue, Daddy M suddenly attacks him with a soda bottle, and the sound of the breaking bottle creating a shocking moment. Another startling moment happens later when Oti’s gang now neck deep into carjacking, pounce on a motorist who swings out and without a warning, shoots at them making them skedaddle for safety.

The sudden trotting sound of a toy on the bedroom shelf in Mother’s bedroom when Mbugua touches it in *Killer Necklace* creates a surprising effect, startling Mbugua and exposing the audience more to his naïveté and pretences. Drawing us to his point of view with the suddenness and high amplitude, as the toy trots on the wooden shelf and crashing on the floor below, the sound is unexpected and heart stopping in its wake.
Alike, the crashing sound when Mbugua and Mama Bessie engrossed in their struggle as Mbugua’s attempts to rob a rather agile Mama Bessie is startling. When a vehicle comes up suddenly, and knocks them down, the crashing thud is another example of the startling function of sound effects. The crash is barely the expected result at that point as the two characters viciously fight for Mama Bessie's money, and a crowd gathered to listen to a street preacher now turning their attention to the commotion. This builds tension towards a mob lynching, and before the idea fertilizes in the mind, voila! A vehicle barely heard or seen coming knocks the two down as they extend their fight on the road. This effect is achieved in this scene by building an adrenaline and energy, which is then sharply interrupted by the crashing sound and the loud thud.

*From a Whisper* also deploys startling sound effects to escalate dramatic moments, culminate emotional scenes, and mirror disaster. When Tamani storms in in Sam's office, as he meets some clients, the sound of the banging door provides a moment of surprise and shock which jumpstarts the scene's dramatic build and emotional rhythm. Startling Sam and his guests, the door bang provides a surprising twist to the extent of disturbance in Tamani’s emotional equilibrium. The shattering glass later in the scene where she throws an object at the family's portrait in the office, breaking the glass is another unexpected and startling moment in the film, before she storms out leaving Sam dejected. The earth shaking bomb blast; the deafening boom of the explosion, the screams, shattering glasses; wields within it is a shattering moment of disaster and shock. The sounds deployed, in their suddenness, and amplitude mirror the ambush, the surprise, and startling nature of the sudden and disastrous attack.
Twists and turns built on moments of surprise, shock, and heart stopping incidents and actions lie at the core of creative storytelling. The hard cut sound effects deployed both on-screen and off-screen in *Killer Necklace*, *Formula X*, *From a Whisper*, and *Nairobi Half Life* enhance the element of surprise in the films by creating momentous, split second, shocks and startles that build onto their progressing narratives.

4.1.5 Revealing spatial characteristics

The space depicted in a film both on-screen and off screen, constitutes the diegetic world in which characters live their lives, and the events that form the film story take place (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). These spaces might not necessarily correspond to the real locations depicted in that an expansive sea could be shot in a simulation tank and an office block in statehouse could actually be offices far from statehouse with only its facade used as the establishment. Therefore, scenes done in locations that are different from the depicted ones mostly on a sound stage need to and are enhanced in credibility by realism created by spatial characteristics simulated by sound. To understand some locations, revealing the acoustic properties is thus, vital.

In *Nairobi Half Life* the village of Gathanji where Mwas hails from depicted in the film comes out as a quiet, peaceful, happy-go-lucky locale. This disposition is revealed by the silence, occasional cars passing, and a bubbly shopping centre, where a sizeable enthusiastic crowd pays audience to a visiting traveling theatre group, responding to the stage banter, actively clapping, and cheering the performance. At some point in the scene, the crowd encourages Mwas's acting
charades applauding him even after he falls from a shack rooftop. The sounds of laughter, clapping, cheering, and the quiet presence depict the village of Gathanji as a haven of peace and tranquillity.

The clapping thunder, drumming rain, and the trickling drops on the table reveal how the makeshift hotel where Mwas spends his second night is. The trickling drops that expose to us the leaking roof further typify a roof made of corrugated iron sheets, a characteristic of many houses built in the low class side of town in Nairobi. The reverberant and booming footprint sounds during the Phoenix theatre engagements Mwas has, reveals to us that the stage is made of wood and so does the quiet stillness of the movie theatre hall that reinforces the realism of the scene, since as depicted, the theatres have deadened acoustical treatment.

Father's footsteps in *Killer Necklace* when he arrives and finds Mbogua in his compound reveal paved pathways as his approaching footsteps bang on the concrete slab. In *Formula X*, when Juma calls Frank's house phone while trying to access the locked house the ringing phone reveals some echo, which is further revealed by Juma’s footsteps, when he enters the house and the reverberant sound of the opening drawers. The reverberation in the house shows its expanse in size and the smooth concrete walls which are reverberant surfaces and further revealing that most of the house is empty and sparsely furnished. As such, sound effects reveal the spatial characteristics of a scene exposing the dimensions depth, composition and acoustical properties, through the effects of reverberation and sound decay, which connotes distance in external space.
Sound effects as discussed in this section, bringing their expressive to film and through interaction with visual and other aural elements, play a vital role in enhancing dramatic action, exposing emotional texture of scenes and characters and creating efficient transitions, which surprise and reveal the properties of a given space and setting. By extension, in the narrative, the sound effects build the story and plot, characters, mood, setting and also infer the different points of view in the story as shall be discussed in chapter four.

### 4.2 AMBIENCE

Natural sounds in film constitute a vital element of the cinematic soundtrack. Balazs (1985, p. 116) captures the crucial position of ambience when he affirms that,

> It is the business of the sound film to reveal for us, our acoustic environment, the acoustic landscape in which we live, the speech of things and the intimate whisperings of nature; all that has speech beyond human speech.

Natural sounds are an integral and big part of the sonic environment in film scenes, both off-screen and on-screen. Behind the main dramatic action in a particular scene lies an external environment, sometimes alive with activities, which provide information about an action or characters' immediate surroundings, in its entire expanse. Natural sounds or background noises have been richly deployed in *Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper* and *Nairobi Half Life* where they import their expressive qualities and playing vital roles such as establishing diegetic locations, creating smooth transitions, expressing and enhancing scenic mood, establishing time and revealing spatial properties.
4.2.1 Establishing Diegetic Locations

Diegetic locations are the geographical locales and spaces depicted in a film or the world of the film (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). To establish the locations, natural sounds deployed are the sounds conventional and organic to the scene and which mirror the sonic characteristics of the scene. A fictional environment in this way is built up and assigned sounds that characterize sound-producing elements in it, as well as interactions that happen in the particular scene. For instance, a battle zone in a war film would be ridden with background sounds of distant explosions, and gunfire providing an aural backdrop that clearly defines the depicted environment.

In *From a Whisper* the elaborate traffic sounds; engines running, cars hooting, and car stereos blaring; as Sam and his family head to the city centre, place the scene in an environment of city traffic. The sounds signifying static vehicles, restless drivers and another enjoying morning drive radio; reflect a traffic situation in Nairobi as depicted in the film by the images of a jam-packed gridlock. Also city sounds; constituting the din of vehicle sounds, people and a punctual ambulance siren as Sam and his family arrive in the city centre, also signify the typical ambience of the city. The ambience characterizes by constant movement of cars, people and ambulances that show that incidents are a norm in the city, a typical reflection of the hassles of a big city.

The market sounds in *Killer Necklace*; vehicles passing and hooting, a din of people in indistinct chatter, and a preacher shouting amidst, the mashed cacophony, characterizes the market environment in *Killer Necklace*. The market, where Noni, traverses buying groceries, and later meeting Mbugua is buzzing with activities of
merchants trading their wares, “matatus” engaged in their business and the zealous and spirited preacher, undeterred by the indifferent commotion around him, continues with his spread of the Gospel adding to the noise of the market. The mash of the sounds in turn aptly establishes and describes the environment of the market. In view of composition, the chirping birds and the subtly rustling leaves describe the suburban environment where Father's house is located. The lush surrounding with manicured lawns, bushy hedges and many trees; blend well with the deployed natural sounds.

In contrast, passing “matatus”, their muffled exhausts screaming, children playing and occasional birds chirping on the tree characterize the slum area in Killer Necklace, under which a barbershop and other merchant business thrives. The presence of a dense population and the environment is reinforced not only by the pictures, but also by the children’s chatters, matatu sounds and a wailing siren, which establish an area buzzing with people, public transport and activities and perhaps crime.

In From a Whisper, frying sounds, scooping sounds, boiling, peeling, pouring, clicking cutlery, vehicle passing and indistinct people chatter, defines, and punctually and continuously establishes the local restaurant in which Fareed and Abu meet for lunch. The elaborate sounds span from the activities of the kitchen, the dining space and the hotel exterior compound, a mash of sounds that signify a typical estate hotel of the depicted properties.

The vehicles zooming past, engine humming and car radio booming characterize the traffic environment that Cindy in Formula X is driven in. Aboard a taxi, driving in a
highway at an off-peak traffic, the sounds characterizing the cruising vehicle succinctly signify the location of the vehicle by offering insight on the speed of the vehicle, presence of the vehicle and their manoeuvres.

Reflection of a location by ambient sounds also happens in *Nairobi Half Life* when Mwas and Amina walk to Kenya cinema for a movie date. The sound of a relaxed city centre, peaceful but lively, slowly driving cars, people’s footsteps and some birds chirping depict a subtle and relaxed part of the city, rather withdrawn from the broiling hassles of the city's downtown.

### 4.2.2 Establishing Time

Time and the correct depiction of it in film, is very vital in view of a coherent narrative. Even with brightly or dimly lit images, the signification of a particular time of the day also relies on the employment of time appropriate sounds. Different times of the day even in a singular environment will give prominence to disparate sounds, depending on the dominant activities of the time. Sonnenschein (2001, p. 186) captures this argument thus,

> The acoustic activities of a town will change as people wake up, go to work, take a lunch break, settle at home, and go to sleep.

Adding the element of climactic seasons and weather as an influence to deployed sounds and consequently a signification of the sounds, Sonnenschein (Ibid), adds that,

> A dry and wet period or hot and cold season will emphasize different environmental sounds like rain, wind, frogs, or Cicadas.

The birds chirping in *Killer Necklace* suggests a particular time of the day. The sounds, suggest the time as either, late afternoon or a quiet evening. Birds although
active all day through, are more audible in the morning and evening when the atmosphere is relaxed either fresh from sleep or after a day's work. The birds in the *Killer Necklace* scene therefore establish the time and part off the day in which the action (Noni enjoying a bubble bath) takes place.

Cricket sounds rent the air when a dejected Mbugua heads home after being conned off the money meant for his grandmother's medicine, in exchange for a counterfeit gold necklace. Crickets are conventionally associated with night-time. The crickets also recur in *From a Whisper*, deployed in a dawn scene when Fareed, on the planned day of the attack wakes Abu up for morning prayers in his house and warns him against going to the city. The cricket sounds like birds sounds as such are used to depict both dawn and dusk as evidenced by the examples off the deployment in the films.

Birds also chirp in *Formula X* when Juma breaches Frank’s house and when Lisa and Frank stand at the car park and talk while Juma looks at them through a window. Deployed at this scene the chirping birds reveal that it is still an early time of the day which is corroborated by the radio broadcast, which meanwhile runs in Cindy’s taxi ride.

The time of the day is important for the progression of a film narrative. Even without skyline images of a sunrise or sunsets or the moon playing hide and seek behind passing clouds or beaming in its brightest splendour, natural sounds endemic to a scene also go a long way in setting the day clock. Different sounds have their time associations as observed in the foregoing discussion about birds and crickets. Also, of importance to note among the deployments is the blend of crickets, birds
and a dog barking at a distance as Tamani in *From a Whisper* settles into her bushy makeshift abode at night. The sounds help ground the time as a bit advanced into the night due to the absence of vehicle sounds in the nearby road, and the distant dog.

### 4.2.3 Expressing and Enhancing Emotions

The psychological and emotional tone of a scene or character is very vital in demystifying action pace and rhythm in a particular scene. The impact of a film is also pegged deeply in its emotional depictions and reflections. Natural sounds provide the background and omnipresence of a dominant mood in a scene or mirror a character’s state of mind (Chion, 1994).

The city sounds; the cars, the birds, the chattering people provide a bright, bubbly texture to the scene where Tamani is with her father Sam in the memorial park. The situation is awkward; unsaid words between them and a silent fight of emotions as Sam escorts her to the airport, on her way to Michigan. Tired and bent on getting rid of Tamani’s endless mischief, the scene is tense and glum an almost sullen mood dominates. However, the bustling city sounds train their halogens on the foggy mood and brighten the scene as father and daughter come to an understanding. The sounds are bright and signify life, coupled with the brightly lit shot, which in collaboration, elevate the mood of the scene and seem to punctuate their apologies and re-union.

Piercing screams, sirens, helicopters and fire crackling coming in the aftermath of the earth shaking bomb blast create urgency, a dark theme, a mood so gloomy, they sound like dirges bawling for a slain warrior. Deployed along music, the sounds deepen an understanding of the situation on the ground, a glowering and downcast
mood. The birds chirping in *From a Whisper* when Joyce walks in on little Tamani reinforce the happy mood as mother and daughter smother each other with love, casting the image of the loss, older Tamani feels. The scene of mother and daughter hanging models on a wall and then freshening Tamani up in the bathroom and drawing heart shapes on a misty mirror is embellished by the gaiety of the singing birds that clearly express the gleaming mood of the scene.

The callous and indifferent nature of the city is painted by the bright sounds of vehicles zooming past, pattering footsteps and walla, after Mwas, new to the city, freshly alighted from village bus is robbed ruthlessly in broad daylight. As Mwas stands in horror and confusion barely comprehending what has happened to him, the city continues bustling in a bright, high pitch mood as if nothing has happened which is an absolute contrast to Mwas’s mood.

The bar scene in *Nairobi Half Life*, laden with ambient sounds of clinking glasses, billiards knocking and a din of people chattering underlines the celebratory and cheerful mood of Oti and his gang who make merry after a successful transaction with Waya. The sounds reflect excitement which contrasts with the ambience of the bar scene in *Killer Necklace* in which the sounds are dull and whitewashed enhancing Mbugua’s mood as his day goes away in the hands of a conman. Chirping crickets and a distant dog barks in *From a Whisper* a Fareed sits pensively alone outside Abu’s door clutching to his prayer beads. Fareed’s poise betrays his distributed state of mind and the evening noises enhance the moods in their dull tone and lulled rhythm.
In summation, natural sounds set the emotional tone on parallel and contrapuntal ways, expressing a mood by their rhythm, pace intensity and density. High-pitched quick paced sounds express positive moods, while low pitch, slower rhythms signify dull and gloomy moods.

4.2.4 Smoothening Transitions

Efficiently bridging the changes in images, space and time is a role that natural sounds also play in the selected films. Deployed continuously in scenes to ground all images of a given scene to one space, a change in the ambient sounds denote a change in the space. Affirming this argument Holman (2010, p. 148) states that,

Ambience is the connective tissue of film soundtracks. Its constancy across picture cuts provides an anchor for the visuals that means we are in the same space, with a different perspective on the action.

The market sounds in *Killer Necklace* are used in a balanced mix through the scene visuals and reduce in amplitude uniformly when the scene cuts to the interior of Jonah’s car but maintaining composition. A morph is also achieved when the engine of Abu’s car as he drives Tamani home in *From a Whisper*, is overlapped and matched with the engine hum of Sam’s car as he drives Tamani to the airport. The transition not only signals a change in space i.e. the two cars, but also signals a change in time that is night to morning, form one day to another and from scene to another without an abrupt change.

Another morph is created by the hum of Abu’s car engine as he sits thoughtfully in his static car after dropping Tamani. Abu fishes a tape from the storage compartment and looks at it as the sequence transits to a flashback scene of Fareed, borrowing his
car. The engine hums plays across the two scenes and only other ambient sounds change, but the dominant engine hum remains constant. The hum bridges the time, which in reality is years back and shifting, the spaces from Tamani’s roadside abode at night, to Abu’s estate in the morning.

*From a Whisper* in another instance employs this quality of ambience when the chirping birds and buzzing insects in Tamani’s makeshift home remain constant as the scene transits to a flashback of Sam surprising Joyce and Tamani with a new building he bought for Joyce to open an art gallery. The ambient sounds of an applauding and cheering audience in *Nairobi Half Life* as the phoenix theatre cast among them Mwas, bow when the show ends, provides the final transition of the film as music fades in with the rolling credits, smoothening the change of scenes.

In summation, ambient sounds deployed between, across, at the beginning and at the tail end of scenes, smoothen transitions between shots, scenes, sequences, time, and location and between past and present historical periods in a film.

### 4.2.5 Revealing Spatial Characteristics

The establishment and demystification of setting in a film relies in part to understanding the acoustic properties of a particular location in a film. In the selected films; natural sounds reveal the spatial dimensions, spatial compositions, and the interactions of characters within given spaces.

The bar sounds in *Killer Necklace*; the people talking indistinctly, and billiards knocking, reveal the space of the seedy bar. The sounds suggest a large place, as they seem to be swallowed by the space considering the number of people seen on
screen. Also, a mash of high intensity sounds without reverberation is deployed as city sounds in *From a Whisper* as the city bustles with activity many years after the bomb attack. The sounds reveal a large space with little or no barriers that would foster reverberation.

The wild formless indistinct chatter in the central police jail reveals a presence of many inmates though the ones visually seen are not as many. The many voices boosted by the live reverberant surfaces signal that there are more people and more space than can be viewed on the images.

Ambience therefore, as analysed in this section reveals properties of setting, bridges, space, time and events, expresses and elevates mood; roles that transverse to the narrative progression of a film.

**4.3 MUSIC**

Music is a key element in the cinematic soundtrack in view of creation and expression of meanings. Kassabian (2001) avers that from the very beginning of film music tailored for films has been catalogued according to subject and emotion. The parameters of the catalogue indicate recognition of the poignant emotional and thematic significations that music imports into film. Underlining the categories of music in archives for film, Kassabian (2001, p.17) states that,

> Production music libraries are rerecorded Collections of music indexed by mood (e.g. romantic, eerie, light) geography (western, oriental, panoramic) time (historical) Contemporary, futuristic) genre (classical, rock, marches) Structural function (introduction, links and action (travel, crime, sport)
The film music categories, as enumerated by Kassabian (2001) spell out some roles of music in film, anchored by the intrinsic expressive dispositions of music in film. In this view, when deployed, music is able to signify by its own virtue, and by interaction with other aural and visual elements, thereby creating a myriad of meanings that aid in the progression of the film narrative. The roles of music in film are also captured in some of the principles of composition, mixing, and editing of music in classical films identified by Gorbman (1987) as including; emotional signification, narrative cueing, continuity, and narrative unity.

As such, music plays various roles in *Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper* and *Nairobi Half Life* by diffusing into the films, their expressive values as well as in their dynamic relationships both in matched and contrapuntal levels, with visual element and other aural elements. Among the functions that music serves in the selected films, include the identification of the specific geographical location in a film, signifying and enhancing emotions, bridging time, fostering segues in the films, and enhancing dramatic action and rhythm in the films.

**4.3.1 Indicating Locales**

The locations in a film vary from the geographical locales traversed through in a film including states, cities, regions, continents, countries, temperate zones, deserts, mountains, forest and so on to specific interior locations like bars, theatres, hospitals, stadium, gymnasium, office and so on. Such locations exude particular characteristics in their physical, social and compositional dimensions that are reflected by the visual and audio elements in a film. Music in the films under
Music captures the social-economic characteristics of a particular location directly or by association. The hip-hop song *Fanya Tena* by Ukoo Flani Maumau artists deployed in *Killer Necklace* reflects this characteristic of the slum environment that Jonah and Mbugua live in. The genre of *Fanya Tena* and the artists that perform are in the Kenyan context associated with a movement from the ghettos, or the low income areas in the east of Nairobi like Dandora, Kariobangi south, Bangladesh and so on, where the musicians mainly hail from. Therefore, the music is associated with poverty, unemployment, crime and other intrigues found in such societies. In *Killer Necklace*, *Fanya Tena* is deployed when Jonah the crime lord of the slum, cruises into the slum with Mbugua in the passenger seat. The montage of the slow motion images of a densely populated dirty slum roll, as the car drives through the slum streets leisurely. The music together with the pictures reinforces the arrival of the two characters, into the borders of the slum, and hence helping to identify with the slum as a location in *Killer Necklace*.

In the same line of music capturing the sociology of a location, the lyre instrumentation deployed in *Nairobi Half Life*, aptly captures Gathanji village Mwas’s home, where he fends for himself as a movie seller. The instrumentation, capturing the sound of a “Nyatiti” (a lyre from Nyanza, western Kenya played by Luos) adds a flavour of traditional music, which in the Kenyan context is associated with rural areas. Therefore by deploying the “Nyatiti” sound in the Gathanji village sequence, the film is able to aurally signify the particular location. *Hodi Nairobi* loosely translating to ‘knock knock Nairobi’ the title of a music track deployed when
Mwas arrives in Nairobi reinforces his arrival to Nairobi. As the matatu he is in snakes its way into the city centre, *Hodi Nairobi* plays in rhythm, indicating not only by the lyrics *Hodi Nairobi* but also by its urban pop genre associated with Nairobi city hence indicating Nairobi as a location.

Music in film is also used to identify location by exuding the particular activities associated with such locations. The disco music blaring in the bar scene in *Killer Necklace* grounds the scene in the bar since it is in the Kenyan context associated with pubs. Deployed in an audio nest including the ambience of billiards games and Walla, the music tracks association with the scene is hence bolstered and in that sense, plays its role as a locational identifier. The melodic “Salat” (Islamic prayer) rendition in *From a Whisper* also falls in this category. The music track is deployed when Abu, Fareed and other worshippers are engaged in Islamic rituals, and it helps in identifying the location of the scene as a mosque, whose establishment is not done visually.

The music track *Forever People* by Just a band is used in the club scene in *Nairobi Half Life* when Cedric and Mwas join other revellers in a night of drinking and dancing. Nairobi is in the film, presented in its different dimensions and reflected in various socio-economic zones including the uptown business district for the different businesses and downtown for the rugged and illegal businesses. The social establishment and in this particular Mwas and Cedric bar scene, the location is Westlands mostly associated with the middle and upper class revellers. The music deployed in the scene; techno genre, is mostly associated with those social classes as opposed to rap and reggae. Therefore *Forever People* functions in identifying the bar location as affluent.
Music also depicts location of a scene by reflecting the locations acoustic properties. Deployment of source music or screen music working best for this role, the music takes the characteristics of a particular location including its dimension, and reflective property. The music playing through the car stereo in *From a Whisper*, when Sam and his family head to the city; *Hip-Hop Halisi* blaring in the stolen car as Mwas and Mose arrive at the meeting point with Daddy M in *Nairobi Half Life*, reflects the pitch and timbre of car stereo and hence signifying the location as inside a car.

**4.3.2 Signifying and Enhancing Emotions**

Emotions provide the lever upon which the dynamics of a film narrative create milestones. Emotions therefore could be overriding in a scene or could reflect in a certain characters or spur from an event or phenomenon depicted in a film. Referring to music as an emotional signifier, Gorbman (1987, p. 73) avers that,

> Soundtrack music may set specific moods and emphasize particular emotions suggested in the narrative, but first and foremost, it is a signifier of emotion itself.

This assertion is also reflected in Sonnenschein (2001, p. 155) who avows that,

> In all types of films, rather than supporting the realistic image on screen, the music allows us to sense the invisible and inaudible, the spiritual and emotional processes of the characters portrayed.

As such, emotions such as joy, excitement, anxiety, sorrow, apathy, and sympathy are reflected by different kinds of music with different rhythms and melodies. For instance Soulful, mellow tunes form piano, strings and subtle wind instruments like flutes would augur well with sorrowful and romantic scenes, contrasted with heavy
percussions, fast paced bass strings and rhythms, would work well with exciting, joyful or fast paced fights and chases. However, the converse of the situation where exciting music is used in sorrowful scenes and soulful music in high energy scenes, would serve a purpose of deriving particular meanings from the glaring contrasts. As a signifier of emotion in film scenes, Chion (1994) categorizes music into empathetic music and anempathetic music. Empathetic music refers to the musical tracks that work in tandem with the depicted or dominant emotion in a scene reflecting its attributes and enhancing it and anempathetic music is that which in its tone, texture, rhythm, pace and melody contrasts the event or the character emotion in a particular film scene. In the films under study music functions as an emotional signifier and enhancer in the following ways:

The growing tension and frustration between Frank and his wife Cindy in Formula X is elevated by the dark instrumental music. As Frank sits pensively sipping a cup of coffee, Cindy finds him at the dinner table carrying her luggage and engages him in an argument. The music builds the tension of the scene, which culminates in their bitter argument. The tension enhancement continues with a dark themed instrumental of synthesized bass and delayed strings as a burglar enters Frank’s compound by scaling the wall and with the CCTV recording him. The burglar, who is in constant communication with another on phone, tries to find a way to access the house. The music connotes something sinister happening, and hence signifying tension of the scene.

In another scene in Formula X, a synthesized instrumental score of two alternating notes is deployed as Frank and Lisa his secretary get into the house oblivious of Juma’s presence. Engaged in a casual lover’s chitchat Frank and Lisa savour their
moment as Cindy, (as Frank believes) is crossing the oceans in her flight abroad. Their bliss is however cut short, when Frank on his way to his study, up a flight of stairs meets a gun totting Juma, who then holds them hostage. Juma then coerces Frank to transfer to him all his formula x files from his computer. The tension is revealed and enhanced by the music, which in contrast with the images and dialogue reflects the danger in the scene.

Later, when a neighbour knocks, and Cindy is tasked to talk to him, holding the door ajar another tension inducing instrumental music is deployed. Cindy, almost betraying her uneasiness, a petrified look almost flashing on her face a she is in pretence, wears a brave and calm facade while talking with the neighbour, while behind her a threatening Juma looms large on her. Although the neighbour does not decipher the on-going situation, the music escalates the tension in the scene.

In killer necklace as Noni dolls herself up with makeup, steps into a beautiful dress and struts out to the market, happily doing her shopping, her excitement perhaps to meet her boyfriend Mbugua is elevated by the bright, thumping, high pitched, percussion and strings melody in pacy rhythm. In another instance, downcast and angry after getting conned off one thousand shillings by a conniving jewellery seller in a seedy, dimly lit bar, Mbugua finds his way home. An instrumental track of two transposed strings and piano notes that emphasizes his emotions, as he heads to his grandmother without her medicine is deployed thus. Later Mbugua gets home, no medicine on him, pale, dejected, confessing to his grandmother about his obsession with Noni, and Cucu in feeble voice expresses her hope of feeling better. As Mbugua walks away a dilemma of a good life with Noni in crime, and an empty pocket without Jonah’s crime plots, his emotions are defined and emphasized by
Cucu’s singing, which begins as synchronous and then is deployed non-synchronously. While Mbugua, crestfallen, trudges through the dimly lit slum street to Jonah’s house, the singing not only underlines Mbugua’s feelings but also reveals Cucu’s sorrow.

The reverberating barrel drums and metal gallons being played by a troupe in the city as Mama Bessie heads to the finance bureau to collect her money, functions in escalating the tension of the sequence. Also deployed as screen and pit music, treading the thin line between diegetic and non-diegetic, a technique Kassabian (2001) refers to a source scoring, the drumming builds up the tension from when Mama Bessie collects her cash and Mbugua as instructed, waylays her and then pounces on her, to rob her. As Mbugua and Mama Bessie engage in a push and shove fight for the money, a preacher nearby preaches spiritedly to a gathered crowd, who then notice the commotion between Mbugua and mama Bessie. The music in pace, rhythm and intensity grows with the sequence and thereby building the palpable tension.

Blissful atmosphere is enhanced by the track Tinga Malo in Form A Whisper when little Tamani is busy sticking her models on the patio window and Joyce joins her and stick a heart shaped model together. Joyce then takes little Tamani to bathe and in the bathroom, and mother and daughter draw heart shapes (symbols of love) on the bathroom mirror, frosted by their breaths. The music deepens level of happiness and love between the two in its soulful instrumentation and melody.

Zingatia an original track in From a Whisper is deployed after the bomb blast scene as a crestfallen Abu, heads to the mosque for prayer. The images rolling in slow
motion, Abu removes his shoes and his bloodied shirt, proceeds to perform his ritual ablution, and then enters the mosque. The music plays through a montage of his worried wife waiting for him, as he arrives home and a deeply sad Sam seated, holding a sleeping little Tamani, a tear rolling down his cheek. The music rubs in the emotional wounds left in Sam and Abu by the brutal attack.

In *Nairobi Half Life* the joy of the successful plunder for Oti and his gang is enhanced by *Ganji* an urban pop song by P-unit. After selling their looted wares to Waya and feeling good about themselves, Oti and his gang engage in merry making, walking happily heading to a session of drinking, and smoking. The music in its upbeat rhythm characteristic of its ‘club banger’ category signifies the gang’s excitement and elevates it. *Songa kando* Mose’s composition and his hope for success in the Kenyan music scene, sounds like a dirge in *Nairobi Half Life*, when the gang, locked in an abandoned building, sits pensively when Mose breaks the silence and sings. The song, coming in a time when death is imminent even in their minds, underscores his despair and deep sadness on the turn of events.

### 4.3.3 Creating Segues

A segue is defined by Princeton English dictionary (2006) as the act of changing smoothly from one state or situation to another or transition without a pause by Handzo (1985, p. 409). Gorbman (1987) refers to it as continuity and explains that music provides formal and rhythmic continuity - between shots, in transitions between scenes, by filling “gaps” (ibid). Employing its qualities of criss-crossing the diegetic spaces or its spatio temporal turntable qualities as referred to by Chion (1994), music wields the special abilities to smoothen transitions and bridge time
and space, across shots, scenes, sequences and the whole film. *Killer Necklace*, *Formula X*, *From a Whisper* and *Nairobi Half Life* deploy music across the soundtracks, blending the numerous dynamic changes and shifts across the narratives in the following ways:

**Hodi Nairobi** an urban pop music track is deployed in *Nairobi Half Life* during Mwas’s journey to Nairobi. As the minibus roars its way to the city, the music plays along with the speeding matatu, bridging the time and space through the journey. This deployment is also replicated by the track *Alright*; when Mwas and Cedric drive through the lit highway to Westlands to party. Also, *Ndege Ruka* plays in the montage sequence when Mwas, new in the city and fresh from jail, gets an odd job as a jack of all trades in a downtown hotel; slicing vegetables, washing utensils, serving food and then sleeping on a hard wooden table under a leaking roof in a cold rainy night. The full scene and sequence deployment of the music plays across shots, spaces and time, shifting from locations, daytimes and night times

The chant, that is deployed at the opening sequence of *From A Whisper* as Sam and his family and the terrorists head to the city centre creates a segue through the sequence. The music is deployed through the whole sequence easing the transitions across the shots and scenes and bridging through the action time, and the diegetic locations depicted. *Uko Wapi* used in *From a Whisper* in the aftermath of the bomb blast plays through a sequence of rescuers going through the rubble of collapsed building. The melancholic music continues through images of injured people running helter skelter, bodies strewn along the scene of the attack, Sam running through the commotion looking for Joyce. Also in the sequence, little Tamani,
disturbed by the scene and happenings, crayons a mash of irregular patterns on her drawing palate.

Music also smoothens transition or creates continuity between different historical periods in a film. Abu’s flashback of Fareed borrowing his car is introduced by an instrumental music track. The music playing from an audio tape was earlier played by Tamani in Abu’s car and it made Abu upset and he ejected the tape. At the point of transition to the flashback, Abu holds the tape on his hands in reflection. In the flashback, Fareed inserts the cassette into the car radio and the music plays. The music in the two instances not only connects the present and the past but also connects the characters, in that the music reminds Abu of Fareed. Therefore the instrumental bridges time, space, event and characters, evening over the changes in the factors thereof.

*Formula X* also deploys music scores to create segues in the flow of its narrative. The instrumental music that is deployed in the opening scenes of the film, Frank Kibunda the scientist presenting his formula x vaccine findings to a board and a plenary forum intercut into a montage. The two scenes are alternately intercut and the Music, coupled with the monologue creating a seamless flow in the sequence. Other music tracks are also used to compact together montages of different shots, spaces, time and characters into one seamless sequence. *Songa Mbele* and *Kilio* are music tracks deployed during Juma’s flashback on his travails and tribulations as an insurance broker and a merchant. The sequence shows Juma going through offices as an insurance broker, being denied entry into a compound, and sitting haplessly in his slum abode. The music transits the film through emotions, characters, locations and time.
*Killed Necklace* deploys reverberating drums as Mama Bessie heads to the finance bureau, withdraws her money and on her way out is accosted by thieving Mbugua who attempts to rob her off the money. A struggle ensues between them and they are knocked by a car in their push and shove to the ground. The drumming music begins as screen music with the drummers visible in the shot and the instrumentation continues through the scene, severally shifting between screen and pit music. The music in its dynamics then provides an even flow of the visual events in rhythm, pace and creating a seamless continuity between the changing scenes, locations, characters and time.

### 4.3.4 Enhancing Dramatic Action and Rhythm

Music in the selected films also meaningfully enhances the activities and actions of the characters and escalates the energy of the scenes, twitching and thumping in rhythm with the progressing action. The sampled films deploy music in view of their dramatic role in the following ways:

*Formula X* deploys a heavy percussive instrumental film score as the gangsters, Juma included, trail a vehicle, corner it, and carjack a woman. They then shove her in the trunk, and drive her to remote area, where they dump her and drive off to a hideout. The music is on beat with the scene in pace and rhythm, creating anticipation, and thereby enhancing dramatic action. Another instance is the instrumental employed during the tense scene, when Frank wields a gun forcing Juma to delete the files already transferred to his computer. The telephone then rings, and Frank miscalculates his actions. He goes ahead to pick the call, only to turn and find Cindy held by the scruff of her blouse, a knife lingering threateningly
on her neck. With no option, Frank drops the phone receiver and hands the gun to Juma, who begins planning his escape. The music building the tension of the scene, emphasizes the pace and intensity of the character actions and thus enhancing the rhythm and drama in the scene.

The instrumental music in *Killer Necklace* enhances dramatic action in the scene where the conniving merchant shows Mbugua into the dingy bar and the supposed jeweller. The rugged looking jeweller beckons Mbugua and proceeds to unleash a charade of theatrics as if chanting incantations, and then raises golden necklaces that awe Mbugua. Mbugua the blindly hands the conniving fellow the money given to him by Jonah for Cucu’s medicine. The score played in two vibrating string and piano notes emphasize the actions of the conman and deepens Mbugua’s confusion and building it up as he hands the cash to the con artist.

The deployment of the thumping and pacy urban funk track *Ha He* in *Nairobi Half Life* when Oti and his gang vandalize parked vehicles under cover of darkness enhances dramatic action. Their fast and violent hitting, pulling, rolling and cranking off the spare parts, is emphasized by the energetic music. In a later scene, after Kyalo, Waf, Mose and Oti and the policemen fall under a hail of bullets, Mwas manages slither out, scale a wall and run fast through estates and city streets and finally bursting into phoenix theatre changing room. The action in this sequence is also enhanced by high energy music that plays in rhythm with the action, reflecting and enhancing its intensity.
4.4 SILENCE

Silence wields endless capabilities of generating meaning in film, spanning form its denotation of pace and psychological qualities of a scene. Balazs (1952, p.207) reinforces this assessment when he stresses that,

> In film silence can be extremely vivid and varied, for although it has no voice, it has very many expressions and gestures. A silent glance can speak volumes; its soundlessness makes it more expressive because the facial movements of a silent figure may explain the reason for the silence, make us feel its weight, its menace, its tension.

Among the expressions and gestures of sound include the elevation and evoking of emotions and mood in scenes, drawing attention to particular details, describing sonic spaces and connecting time, ideas and shots. These varied roles are tapped from the depth of the deployed silence and the contexts of synergy with the images. Silence in *Killer Necklace*, *Formula X*, *From A Whisper* and *Nairobi Half Life* functions in the following ways:

**4.4.1 Revealing Emotions**

In *From a Whisper*, the restless angst in Fareed is revealed by the silence that dominates the scene where he sits pensively, clutching on his ‘subha’ prayer beads outside Abu’s house. Deep into the activities of the terrorists and Abu’s curiosity stinging him, Fareed betrays his anguish seated alone outside, as a distant insect creaks. The silence in the scene draws attention to his emotions. Silence also reinforces Sam’s feelings, when he sits alone in his office, silent and in deep thought, after the bitter confrontation with Tamani. Deeply hurt, Sam, head in palms, sits still, distant sounds of the city punctuating the scene. In the silence, the
concentration lies on Sam’s poise and facial expressions, which reveal his sad state. Sonnenschein (2001, p. 125) captures this assertion when he says that, “Silence can remind people that they are alone, that they have been rejected, or that there is no hope.”

The deployment of silence as an emotional expression tool also happens in *Nairobi Half Life* when Oti and his gang are locked in an abandoned house. They sit separately, all seemingly deep in thought, tired, hungry, and petrified by the imminent death, breathing down their necks. The palpable tension among them and around them deepens their apprehension, their postures; heads in palms, stooped between knees, leaned back on the blank concrete wall and huddled, hands between knees for warmth, their faces long, and eyes glassy, staring blankly; reveal their emotions. The silence further deepens the eerie mood, evoking a feeling of despair and prolongs the scene, creating anticipation to the end; to death.

### 4.4.2 Describing Sonic Space

Silence suggests a location of a film scene is quiet, by reflecting the absence of sounds or the presence of particular subtle or distant sounds. Therefore silence reveals the presence or absence of characters or objects that produce the sound in a particular scene.

The cinema scene, when Mwas and Amina remain behind in the theatre as the movie they were watching post rolls, it is completely silent. The silence denotes the environment of the theatre, which typically is acoustically treated to be sound proof and to lessen reverberation. This quality of the theatre is revealed by the reigning
silence as the two sit quietly for a moment, and which alternates with their voices as
they have a conversation.

In another scene, also in *Nairobi Half Life* when Oti and his gang are bolted in an
abandoned building, silence reigns. Set in a large compound, and with no sonic
activity happening in the immediate vicinity of the room they are holed up in, the
location is quiet and thus aptly described and defined by the silence deployed in the
soundtrack in the scene thereof.

In *Killer Necklace* the environment of Mother’s suburban house is silent with a
subtle hum when Noni stops in her tracks when Mother finds her frantically tidying
up. There is a lull before Mother violently and spitefully slaps Noni. The moment of
no activity gives a chance for the property of the sonic environment to reign and as
such, the silence thereof reveals the characteristic of the location.

In *From A Whisper* as Abu and his wife sleep at the early hours of dawn a quiet
atmosphere is interrupted by pebbles hitting their windowpanes, and Fareed calling
Abu from a distance. The preceding silence, the subtleness of Fareed voice, and the
pebbles, reveal the environment of Abu’s house and neighbourhood, as quiet and
tranquil.

As Juma enters Frank’s house in *Formula X*, his footsteps are loud and are reflected
in an echo. Also, when he opens the cabinets and drawers, they are loud and
reverberant, which not only suggests momentarily silence, but also reveals that the
house and surrounding environment as quiet relaxed and not as busy as the city.
4.4.3 Drawing Attention to Details

Film is laden with many details ranging from minute, subtle, vivid and overtly poignant. The items or particulars extend throughout the film narrative, and dot specific points in the image and audio track. As pointed out the details in a film could be outstanding and easily noticeable or subtle and barely noticeable and vary in importance, pertaining the progression of a film. Film sound elements bring to the fore or diminish such details. Silence, an element of the cinematic soundtrack functions in drawing attention to the details. Camper (1985, p. 372) states that,

It seems clear that when silence is the filmmaker’s choice the viewer is being asked to look at the film image in a new isolation and with a new attentiveness.

In *Nairobi Half Life* as the moribund Dingo gasps for breath after falling and a protruding shrub stump piercing his chest, his moment of last breath is clouded in a quiet atmosphere, the commotion around him faded down to a lull in his final moment. In a scene characterized by commotion, quick movement, and cacophonous noise, as the two gangs tear at each other with blows, kicks, pushing and shoving, the silence elicits attention to an important detail in the film, which is Dingo’s death, a brief intimate moment that shifts the narrative to another level. Corroborating this assessment Giannetti (2001, p. 219) argues that, Like the freeze frame, silence in a sound film can be used to symbolize death, because we tend to associate sound with the presence of on-going life.

In another scene in *Nairobi Half Life* Mwas, perched on a rooftop on his second morning in Nairobi after a cold stormy night, enjoys a view of the dawn Nairobi skyline. The silhouette images adumbrate the raw splendour of the rising sun and Mwas is inundated by the sheer beauty and tranquillity, thus introducing the
peaceful and illuminated half of Nairobi where people seem to live full lives. The silence draws attention to the symbolic images that subtly shows Mwas’s aspirations and his present situation.

In *From a Whisper* after the bomb blast, Abu looking jaded and dishevelled heads to the mosque for prayer. The soundtrack of the scene is music deployed over absolute silence. The silence draws attention to the rhythm and emotion of the scene, and to each action of Abu, as he conducts his ritual ablution repetitively. The pictures deployed in slow motion are deeply emphasized in their salience, as he washes his face, scalp, feet and hands thrice.

Silence plays a role of helping to concentrate on the physiognomy of an object, character and thus revealing important details about a scene or event. When the sound in the bar in *Killer Necklace* fades to a quiet lull as Mbugua fingers the fake golden necklace, it reveals his realization that he had fallen prey to a trickster. The particular moment of his realization; the gentle fingering of the necklace and the gold dust residue sticking on his palms, and its small details are amplified by the silence deployed.

In another scene in *Killer Necklace*, Mbugua, drunk in unmitigated temerity grabs a gun from Jonah’s table to go to Noni’s place to attack Father. When he grabs the gun, Jonah quickly holds on to it. In an intimate close-up shot of their hands holding on to the gun, the soundtrack goes silent as the moment of exchange looms, and Mbugua runs out with the gun. In that silent moment, the two gentlemen holding on to the gun, draws attention to Mbugua’s dilemma and ultimate choice, seen after Jonah’s ringing caution to Mbugua that once he spills blood there is no going back.


4.4.4 Fostering Continuity

The continuity of time space, moments, images, sequences and ideas is bridged by the silence in the selected films in the following ways:

The quiet sequence after Mwas and Mose are knocked out by Daddy M’s gang while delivering the carjacked SUV plays a vital role in bridging time. The silence seems to suspend time, as the two young gangsters lie unconscious, and sound fades when they come to in the early hours of dawn. The time the two lie unconscious, and their unconscious state, is signified and reinforced by the reigning silence in the scene.

Silence also works in building anticipation of an action, and thus building a continuous flow of events. When Mwas and Mose await Daddy M’s crew to deliver the SUV, there is slight lull as the two boys wonder where Daddy M’s crew is. The silence is broken by the violent arrival of the gang with kicks and blows, knocking out Mwas and Mose unconscious. The time is suspended by the silence, creating a semblance of a prolonged period and thus connecting the two moments.

In *Killer Necklace*, deep silence is deployed when Mbugua, after robbing Mama Bessie runs to a hideout washes up, removes the dirty disguise clothes then walks out and blends with the crowd in the city streets. The silence in the scene deployed together with instrumental music and gasping sounds drags, and slows the moment, emphasizing the details and building a momentum of the transformation of Mbugua as a character. Just like a time-lapse of a flower wilting or ants devouring a leaf, the silence creates a semblance of the transforming character of Mbugua from a sensitive, thoughtful and forthright chap to a callous, hardnosed, thieving imp in a single sequence, held together by the silence interplayed with the music.
4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has endeavoured to describe the roles played by the non-speech sounds deployed in the four sampled films and attempted to describe the roles in their different contexts of application. In the arguments derived, the researcher found that silence, ambience, sound effects and music play various roles ranging from emotional, spatial, action, and time significations. The arguments thereof form a potent basis upon which the narrative dispositions exuded by the non-speech elements shall be grounded in chapter four. This chapter therefore has set the stage for the discourse in chapter five. The significations and the roles examined shall be discussed further on the platform of the narrative and characterized on the basis of the elements of the film story, including plot, setting, mood, character and theme in chapter four.
CHAPTER FIVE

NARRATIVE DISPOSITIONS OF NON-SPEECH SOUND ELEMENTS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the progressive nexus between music, silence, ambience and sound effects with the elements of the cinematic narrative. The framework of this chapter is moulded on elements of firm storytelling and a critical examination of how they are constructed and connected by the non-verbal elements of sound. Narrative elements include; plot, character, point of view, mood, setting and narration. The analysis therefore centres on the expressive qualities’ of silence, music, ambience and sound effects, both in isolation and gained from their synergy with the images, that pre-dispose them as building blocks and agents of influence in the development of the film narrative.

The first part of the chapter looks at plot as a narrative element and device defining it and decoding the different rudiments of its structure and flow. The non-verbal sound elements are hence analysed on their calibration and signification of the elements of the plot and story structure like exposition, dramatic conflicts, discovery, turning point, denouement and climax. Drawing from the assertion of Gorbman (1987) on the potency of music to signify and create narrative unity, cueing narrative points a position affirmed by Kassabian (2002), Kalinak (2010) and Diang’a (2013), this chapter discusses music as a plotting tool in a film narrative.

In the discussion of the sound effects, silence, music and ambience as agents of plotting a film story, the chapter builds its argument on the significations and the
networked meaning creations by the interwoven elements of the sound and visual track. Conscious to the contribution of sound to the film story, Balazs (1952, p.201) establishes that,

Deeper and more organic is the dramaturgical role of sound when its effect determines the course of the action; when sound is not only made to be heard in the course of the story but can intervene to influence its course.

It is important to note however, the arguments on plotting are based on the analysis of different milestones of the film story, including; exposition, dramatic conflicts, climax, turning points, dénouement and resolution. The arguments therefore draw from the story structure as discussed by studies like Boggs (1996), Chatman (1993), Prince (1997) and Gianetti (2001) as a thread of continuous action.

The second section looks at how the non-speech sound elements build onto the story setting as narrative element. The various settings depicted in the selected films are demystified, expounding their acoustic properties, geographical locations, socio-economic dispositions and spatial dimensions as exposed and exuded by the non-speech elements in their individual expressions and in their blended communication spanning from interplays with dialogical elements and the image.

The third section deals with the narrative element of story theme. To tackle the element of theme and its construction by the non-verbal elements of sound; silence, sound effects, music and ambience, this study endeavours to find expressive connections between the story messages and the sound elements. The central themes and the subsidiary themes that build onto the story and inspire the story arcs and milestones, are herein discussed in view of their building blocks, laid down and
cemented by the non-dialogical elements in their idiosyncratic expressions and in relation with visual and verbal sound elements. Further, the study brings into the discourse the poetic narration by music as a strategy of advancing the thematic rendition of the films.

The chapter then discusses character as the fourth fundamental element of narrative, espoused by the non-speech sounds in the selected films. Tapping into the element of character, temperament, occupation, activities, associations and habits, state of their psyche and behaviour, this study ropes in sound leitmotifs that relate to characters. Further analysis is done on how music, sound effects, ambience and silence envelop character environments and situations that leverage, trigger and draw attention to a characters actions, reactions, and emotions.

The final section of the chapter discusses mood as an element of the story and how the non-dialogical elements of sound design express, communicate, and affirm various moods that characterize the narratives for the films under study. Drawing from the scenic moods, sequence moods, and the overriding moods in the four selected narrative films, this section lays bare the varying and dynamic moods; relates and builds on the expressive signification of the moods by music, silence, ambience and sound effects.

In line with the objective of this chapter to investigate the narrative dispositions of the non-speech sound elements in the selected films, this chapter assigns the expression of the plot, setting, theme, character, and mood of the story to the non-verbal elements in their singular, interactive and complimentary capacity amongst each other, dialogical elements and visual elements. Therefore, the elements of narrative shall be used to neologise the storytelling characteristics of the non-verbal
sound elements, ultimately forming the sections of this chapter they include;

- Plotting
- Thematic rendition
- Characterization
- Story location (narrative location)
- Mood

5.1 PLOTTING

In the root of plot devising, lies the film storyline, which Boggs (1996, p. 30) defines as a "thread of continuous action, where one event leads to another naturally and logically." The progress and milestones in a storyline are affirmed by Prince (1997, p. 193) who avers that,

> Plot refers to the sequencing of directly shown events or the way in which narrative events are stylistically arranged and structured in a film.

Plotting in the context of this study refers to the disposition of the non-speech sound elements that denotes them as building blocks and catalysts of a firm storyline. It refers to the expression of the conception, shaping and progression of a film story structure, propping up its milestones, reinforcing its causes and exposing the effects thereof in the goal to advance a film story. This assertion is corroborated by Sonnenschein (2001, p. 198) who postulates that,
At the heart of storytelling is the classic structure of goal-conflict-resolution. In its most contributive form, sound design supports this dramatic evolution by developing themes and rhythms that underscore this narrative structure.

As such, plot devising being a character of music, SFX, ambience, and silence implies that the events of a narrative and their linkage is therefore embedded and embodied in the significations of the sound, and their inter-deployments with other elements of the cinematic form. Plotting therefore, can be related and explained using the various elements of its dynamic construction including exposition, complication, resolution and denouement; the elements of Aristotelian plot structure.

The non-verbal sound elements thus gain a hold of this characteristic by signifying the exact points of plot shoves, bends, hops, skips and jumps. This is achieved by linking different points of the storyline, by fostering continuity and unity, and by providing a foot hold of the overall story by covering unseen spaces events and objects. Music in the films under study exudes the plot device characteristic by creating smooth transitions, narration and linking events and story sequences in motifs.

5.1.1 Music and Plot

Sonnenschein (2001, p. 155) notes that music imports its own structure to aid in the unification of a film and supporting the narrative, by employing repetition, variation and counterpoint. As such the musical fades, crescendos, and climaxes, tone the film differently throughout the narrative in parallel and contrapuntal deployments, where it reflects the energy and tone of a scene or contrasts it, thereby giving different meanings. Also music deploys leitmotifs to connect spatially and periodically
different shots and scenes to reflect events, characters or phenomena, relevant in the narrative.

In *Nairobi Half Life* for instance, the transition between Gathanji to Nairobi, Mwas's journey to the city, is advanced by music, interplaying with a visual montage of the minibus Mwas takes to the city, cruising through the highway to Nairobi. As an event in the storyline of *Nairobi Half Life*, Mwas's journey to the city symbolizes his ambition and dreams to make it as an actor. His journey to Nairobi therefore, being the singular action that lands him to Nairobi, the den of halves, double lives and distinctive binarisms in social standings and amenities, would then be considered to be the mistake that invites the much travail that he faces throughout the storyline. *Hodi Nairobi* therefore, the music track deployed in the journey sequence would be considered a symbol of Mwas's hamartia thereby marking the first important milestone of *Nairobi Half Life*'s plot.

*Ndege Ruka* plays in the sequence where Mwas after a temporary and wrongful incarceration, gains employment as a do it all fellow in makeshift downtown restaurant. A montage of Mwas slicing vegetables, taking orders, serving, washing up utensils and crockery, culminates in an out of option Mwas sleeping on a cold wooden table under the restaurant leaking roof in a cold stormy night. This sequence though exposing a resilient, stubborn Mwas taking the vagaries of his new abode with his chin up, marks the end of the forthright, naïve character exposed in the narrative; to reveal an impulsive, crafty, go-getter. The new odyssey for Mwas begins when he leaves Mama Akinyi’s utensils unwashed, deserts his job and follows Oti. The transformation on Mwas reveals and shifts the storyline to a new gear, as he, with blind aplomb, dives into the murky waters of Nairobi’s
uncertainties. Mwas by following Oti simply trudges into the world of crime leaving behind a lowly but a decent restaurant job just like he unhinged himself from his job as a movie seller in the village. Ndege Ruka therefore marks this vital transition and continuity in Mwas’s tragic story.

The instrumental score deployed in the scene where Oti and his gang are at Waya’s black-market spare store, underscores the successful sale via Mwas's creative and confident bargaining. Stemming from constant exploitation by Waya, who previously gives Oti no chance to bargain, and paying them a mere two thousand shillings for a load of spare parts that would perhaps fetch more, Mwas in a moment of shrewd business dexterity unleashes a bout of theatrics, pulling a stage acting scene. In his charade, he creatively warns Waya that they would rather sell to his neighbour for a better price. The effect thereof, Waya paying much more that his initial offer is caused by Mwas’s bargain. His theatrics are reinforced by the music track that accentuates the rhythm and impact of the scene, enhancing Mwas’s creative dramatics that capture the attention of his comrades and Waya, deeply sending his message and thus expressing the impact of his bargain. This implies that the music signifies the cause for Waya’s decision, which in the narrative catapults Mwas’s chutzpah and endears him more to the gang, cementing his first victory in the crime world.

Ha He by Just a band is a popular track whose video enjoyed a viral following upon its release in the music scene, carried with it mind image of the fictional superhero “Makmende”. Deployed in Mwas’s ‘first assignment’ which was ferrying vandalized spare parts in a handcart on a dimly lit street, with a scary venture of facing patrol officers who appear in their cruiser. With his thieving comrades ducked
into the darkness, and faced with a daunting task of facing the policemen, Mwas feigns religious lunacy, singing *Parapanda italia* (The Trumpet shall sound) easing his way off the police hook, with a large loot in tow. As the policemen drive away, Oti and the others emerge from the darkness, celebrating, ushering Mwas to their good books. This scene, reinforced with the “Makmende” theme, by the song *Ha He*, shows us Mwas in his initial heroics, earning him trust with the thugs, thus foreboding the life of robbery, dodging bullets, and pushing stolen loot that Mwas resorts to. *Ha He* therefore marks a vital milestone in the expansion of *Nairobi Half Life* plot.

The *in medias res* beginning of *From a Whisper* is characterized by the mellow acapella chant, which plays along the flashback scene of Sam, Joyce and little Tamani going to the city. Oblivious to them, they are headed the same direction, and to the same vicinity with Fareed and his suicide bomber counterparts. The preparations and departures of the two sets of characters and their journeys to the city are covered in the opening montage, which interplays with the music. The continuous music helps in creating continuity among the sequences according them unity. Also the soulful melody which is contrapuntal to the blissful gaiety and life in Sam’s car, the traffic atmosphere and the stoic Fareed, foreshadows that something bad is going to happen; the bomb blast that comes later in the film. So, the music not only aids in smoothening the exposition of characters but in linking the narrative events.

The indistinct music playing in Tamani’s headsets as she sits defiantly precedes the broiling confrontation between her and Sam in *From a Whisper*. The instrumental music that plays from an audio cassette in Abu’s car when the nervous Tamani loads
the cassette in the car stereo is a motif, which is also deployed when Fareed, in Abu’s flashback borrows the car. Irked by the music and quickly ejecting the tape with no explanation, Abu, as it is revealed in a later flashback scene, remembers how much Fareed loved the song thereby creating a connection between him and Fareed and consequently his past that he wishes to forget. The cause of his anger sparked by Tamani playing music form the tape is thus explained by the flashback scene, which is connected by the music motif.

_Uko Wapi_ the music track in _From a Whisper_ marks, in the plot, the point of death, destruction, devastation and desperation; the climax of the film and the zenith of the films conflicts. Deployed in the aftermath of the bomb blast scene, the soulful rendition, melody and rhythm, reinforce the devastation of the scene, suspending time to accentuate the moment. The lyrics of the song spell out the happenings of the moment and implications of the events.

_Niliuskia mlipuko wa wimbi_ I heard an explosion of a wave  
_Na uhai ulirejea barabarani_ And life returned to the road  
_Mvua ya kioo ilinyesha ikakusomba_ The glass rain poured and swept you

The poetry of the song lyrics, explains the physical effects of the blast; booming sounds, a forceful wave, a rain of glass and dust sweeping the drowning innocent lives including Joyce, Tamani’s mother whose corpse, Sam discovers among strewn rubble, burning cars in the deathly scene. This scene represents the core from which the story radiates and revolves as the source of many conflicts within the story and their ultimate peak. It is at this point that the plot connects little and grown up Tamani and it is an instance aptly characterized by _Uko Wapi_.

_Zingatia_ on the hand captures, and deepens the period of falling action after the climax. After the blast, Abu goes to the mosque, removes his shoes and bloodied
shirt and proceeds to perform his ritual ablution then into the mosque for prayer. *Zingatia* also plays through a montage of his worried wife awaiting him, when he arrives home, and a deeply sad Sam seated holding a sleeping little Tamani in his arms. The montage then proceeds with a cloudy evening skyline of Nairobi, which morphs to a scene of Abu taking older Tamani home, in his car through streets bustling with life. Bridging the space and time, *Zingatia* stokes the embers of the emotions as events of the devastating blast dim out, and the storyline eases into a calm that goes through to a resolution between father and daughter and Abu with his conscience. The poetic commentary of the song captures the moment and need for reconciliation and goes thus,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doe</th>
<th>Mkurira</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upendo ndio utatudumisha</td>
<td>Love is what will sustain us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umoja,mwanangu weka nia</td>
<td>Unity my child aim at it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubinafsi si nia ya kupitia</td>
<td>Selfishness is not the way to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwanangu sikia</td>
<td>Listen my child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The emphasis on peace, love, unity, perseverance, forgiveness and fortitude as important pillars of life in the song ushers the story into the moment in which the said virtues are exuded; finally, good triumphing against evil. The music ushers in a sequence of reconciliation. Abu coming to terms, that he needs to move on and forgive Fareed; and convinces Tamani to let go of her bitterness and forge a better relationship with her father. Thus as a narrative tool, music marks and signifies the dénouement in *From A Whisper's* storyline, which is then marked by the mellow chant that is deployed in the bomb blast memorial park scene. In the scene, Tamani and Sam take a detour on their way to the airport and where they come to an understanding as the film fades out with them embracing, Abu watching from a distance with a smile. The music track takes the characteristic of the scene and
wields it, capturing the rhythm, emotion and tone of the moment of reconciliation, thus marking the film’s resolution and denouement.

The music in *Formula X* and *Killer Necklace* also exudes dispositions of the milestones, bridges, and channels of the narratives thereof. Salvation the music track in the opening montage sequence of *Formula X* is interplayed with an animated sequence that provides a synoptic teaser of the whole film plot, followed by the instrumental score that plays through the introductory scenes of Frank unveiling his drug to a plenary. The tension-inducing track forebodes the intrigues the scene invites to Frank’s life. As the track plays through shot cuts and montages in segue, the continuity thereof and the unity forged in the sequence, unveils, by the uninterrupted continuum of the music, the main elements of the story composition. This, hence, accords the music the character of the sequence as an expository catalyst.

*Songa Mbele*, *Kilio*, and *Salari* are deployed in the flashbacks, marking the zeitgeist of the scenes. *Songa Mbele* and *Kilio* are used in Juma’s explanation of his journey into his wanton crime ways; and *Salari* during Lisa's explanation of hers and Frank’s affair characterizing the flashback scenes of the film. The disposition accrued by the music from the scenic identity built by the nexus of the plot point and the music, encodes the music as a landmark in the story complication, providing a salient simulacra for the individual scenes.

In the final scene of *Formula X, Too Far From Home* by Eric Wainaina interplays with intercut images of Juma executing his escape plan out of Frank’s house, his hostages in tow at gunpoint as human shields and on the other side, a contingent of
policemen approaching in their cruiser, the siren blaring. As the policemen enter the compound, Juma and his hostages make their way outside through the main door, the film fades out. The song is deployed in the entire scene, building on the dramatic suspense as the film lives through its climatic episode and a dénouement for Juma the burglar. The lyrics of *Too Far From Home*, express regret and the finality of the scene, as Juma approaches the door to a compound full of gun totting policemen, intent on sending him to destruction as the film fades out. In a part of the song, the lyrics go thus,

But I know,
There is no turning around
I’m too far from home
Hata vile nilikuwa mchaji Mungu 
Even though I was God fearing
Sina Sali itakayoweza kuniokoa 
I have no prayer that can redeem me

The persona in the music lyrics expresses the grim situation in the scene, a sense of hopelessness and despair, and a metaphoric spelling of the end. The lyrics suggest a tragic end perhaps for either of the opposing characters mostly Juma, whom odds in the situation, tilt awkwardly against. *Too Far From Home*, therefore takes the shape, acquires the essence and wields the characteristics of the climatic end of *Formula X* and embodying the dramatic suspense of the plot zenith.

Cucu, Mbugua’s grandmother in *Killer Necklace* sings a melancholic Gikuyu hymn that subtly narrates the story of the sequence where Mbugua, like a hapless bull headed for slaughter heads to Jonah’s house to accept his evil demands of joining him in robbery. Cucu like a clairvoyant seer sings of idolatry in her hymn;

Mombire Ngai ya Muhianano     They created an idol god
Makiruga iruga mamigoce     They prepared a feast to praise it
Magiiikara thii kuria na kunyua     They sat down to eat and drink
Magicoka magiukira kuina     Then they rose to sing and dance
The lyrics narrate a biblical anecdote of Israelites, who resorted to idol worship during their period of hardships in the wilderness, in order to find solutions, they felt the god they worshiped was not providing. Cucu’s song allegorically demystifies the veil of desires clouding Mbugua's visions and rule Jonah’s world. The quick success, the constantly flowing cash, the ornate pearls, expensive phones, and the eponymous golden necklace, an object of desire for Noni, who in turn makes Mbugua sell his soul to crime to afford the golden necklace are the issues signified by the idol gods that Cucu’s song speaks about. The music therefore, in the scene it is deployed, takes that characteristic of the storyteller of 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. The song therefore, characterizes and denotes the peripety in the storyline of *Killer Necklace*.

The reverberating percussions on the other hand drive the storyline deeper to the climax, creating and enhancing suspense and anticipation as Mbugua convinced by Jonah’s whims and threats, acquiesces to engage in robbery and pounces on an unsuspecting Mama Bessie. The instruments continue as Mbugua steals from her and callously slips away as she lies motionless on the tarmac. In addition, in the sequence, a pastor who tries to save Mbugua is lynched by his murderous congregation in Mbugua’s place. The transition from the Mbugua in dilemma to the cold, bloodthirsty gangster of the ungoverned yore is aptly characterized by the percussive music deployed in the scene.
5.1.2 Silence and Storyline

Silence also extends the plotting disposition in various ways that span from its idiosyncratic characteristics and in the interstices between it and other elements of the film form. Silence marks and exudes qualities of different points, milestones and building blocks of the narrative structure expressing them and thereby indicating the various dispositions lined in the film storyline.

Fareed in *From a Whisper* after reading the terrorist statement swallows hard, his expression betraying some worry and anxiety. The silence in that moment draws the attention closer to his face, in an instance that he finally seems to take seize of the magnitude of his undertaking. Lured into the throes of religious extremism and terrorist violence, Fareed throughout the plot seems to be surfing a mammoth wave, gliding excitedly in a carte blanche fashion, but in this particular moment, he betrays some reflection as the discovery of what he is committed himself to, seems to lucidly dawn on him. The moment of clarity thereof then, is captured and is deeply reinforced by the silence that magnifies his physiognomy and consequently exposes that moment of anagnorisis.

In a later scene, relative silence reigns as Sam sits still, deep in thought after a broiling confrontation with his daughter Tamani. The story in *From a Whisper* revolves around the concealment of the truth about Joyce Kezio's death from Tamani. Taken aback by the discovery of her mother's death, and seething in anger, Tamani barges into her father’s office and accosts him bitterly, then storms out in a huff. After the incident, Sam sits alone reeling in the spinning of the confrontation. This moment in the story is one of the turning points from where the acrimonious
fallout between father and daughter is eased, by the calming of time, the pair
thawing for each other gradually, towards a conciliatory ending. Silence therefore,
draws attention to the salient moments in the narrative, accentuates the preceding
and proceeding actions and thus fostering unity in the progressing narrative sections.

Silence also makes important narrative transitions, fostering drastic changes in
narrative space and time while maintaining coherence in the continuum of the
storyline. For instance in *Formula X*, Cindy’s flashback as she ascends the staircase
is transitioned with silence. Her footsteps on the stairs, the sound of the TV and the
room tone are abruptly cut, as Cindy recalls who Lisa is. The silence thereby acts as
the tie that binds the two scenes and a device that calms everything down, to delve
into Cindy’s mind and unveil her thoughts and perspective in the story. The
flashback reveals Cindy’s awareness of the on-going affair between Frank and Lisa,
which further explains the strained relationship between her and her husband.
Silence in this context therefore in its calming effect, draws us into the reflection and
connects the broken coherence in the narrative as the plot transits from present to a
conditional past.

Silence as a plot device is also evident in *Killer Necklace* when Mbugua gets a gun
from Jonah. In a cut-in, close-up shot of Jonah’s and Mbugua’s hands holding on to
the gun, the film deploys silence drawing attention to the scene of Mbugua, a newly
graduated criminal yearning for violence and Jonah trying to slow him down. The
silence props up the action, embedding it as an important point in Mbugua’s
journey, as an agent of the story. Also aside from emphasizing the moment of
struggle and decision, (a turning point for Mbugua) the silence draws attention to the
proceeding dialogue of Jonah warning Mbugua of the finality of violent crime,
which reveals, Mbugua’s choice and ultimately the story after the film ends. Therefore, silence draws attention to important narrative details like twists and turns that drive the story forward.

Silence is also deployed as a narrative motif, signifying various important aspects of the storyline. A leitmotif is defined by Boggs (1996) as a signifying element that is used at particular points in the story, denoting certain events, actions, characters and phenomenon. A leitmotif of impending doom and looming danger is created with silence in *Nairobi Half Life*, severally in the abandoned house as Oti, Mwas, Waf, Mose and Kyalo sit quietly and mull over their situation. In one instance, after the silence, Waf is shot dead, in the second instance Kyalo, Mose, Oti and two policemen die under a hail of bullets. The silence therefore acts as the lull before the explosion, by contrast elevating the intensity and violence of the proceeding actions. Affirming this assertion, Gianneti (2001, p. 218) avers that,

> Like absolute stasis, absolute silence in a sound film tends to call attention to itself. Any significant stretch of silence creates an eerie vacuum—a sense of something impending, about to burst.

The film storyline is laden with a myriad of dynamics akin to a river that snakes its way through, slow, deep channels, fast, violent rapids and dizzying cataracts, cutting through rocks, in deltas and estuaries. The dynamics of the story are built and embellished by audio-visual parallelism and contrapuntal designs like silence cut from sound or sound rising from silence. This renders silence as a vital storytelling tool as it creates and emphasizes a dramatic suspense, surprise and tension in the plot as deployed in the *Nairobi Half Life* instance.
5.1.3 Ambience and Plot

Ambience is also an important element of plotting in the sampled film narratives. Film narratives happen in time and space, two parameters that are characterized by their soundscapes in film scenes (Sonnenschein, 2001). The provision of more information about diegetic environments depicted in the film by ambience goes a long way in creating connections between events, phenomenon and episodes in film. Balazs (1952, p. 198) explains that,

The sound film will teach us to analyse even chaotic noise with our ear and read the score of life's symphony. Our ear will hear the different voices in the general babble and distinguish their character as manifestations of individual life.

In line with Balazs’s assertion ambience, in characteristic is not just formless sound, but the hums, chatters, whistles, and roars, of the activities of an environment. In this view, ambience then helps to expose the depth of the story, or the details of the story that are not captured in the synchronous blends that are seen on screen. Ambience befits as an important agent of plotting a film narrative and exudes the eponymous disposition by exposing time of day and creating narrative unity by linking otherwise unrelated scenes and sequences. Holman (2010, p. 148) recognizes the narrative disposition of ambience when he posits that,

Ambience has a particular storytelling effect. In the language of semiotics, the study of signs and how they work (which includes aural experiences), certain effects, many of them ambient ones, are “signifiers.” That is, such sounds have near instantaneous accepted meaning, shorthand for describing the “signified.”

For instance, the night sounds (the crickets and howling dogs) and characteristic daytime sounds (birds chirping, traffic sounds, children playing) are vital in the
progression of the story, as the plot is woven through time in given spaces. The cited sounds are vital in the different parts of the film narrative as they ground particular actions and events in specific times and thereby contributing to the coherence of the narrative.

Ambient sounds are also important in signifying certain elements of the film narrative like exposition, denouement, turning point, and conflict. The traffic sounds in the beginning sequence of *From a Whisper* expose the city, as a busy place, the characters in the film; Sam and his family and Fareed and the terrorists, together in traffic to the city and therefore creating a connection between them. The montage of the traffic in synergy with the ambience unveils the main protagonists and antagonist in the story in the same traffic situation and helps in binding their destinies in the storyline.

5.1.4 Sound effects and Plot

Sound effects are also very important elements of advancing a film storyline. In the contexts of their deployment, sound effects symbolize and mark important milestones and landmarks in a film narrative (Holman, 2010). For instance, the shattering glass in *From a Whisper* marks the turning point of the story, parallel with the earth shaking bomb blast sound. The two sounds deployed at the zenith of the parallel conflicts (the past and the present) mark the peak of the rising conflicts, from whence calm and resolutions begin forging. In the former, Tamani seething with rage after discovering her mother’s demise, a fact hidden from her by Sam up to her adulthood, storms into her father’s office engages him in a bitter confrontation. She then throws an object at the family portrait, smashing the glass, which breaks with a shrill sound. After the shattering sound, the story advances to falling action as
the characters find ways to reconcile. The latter sound also bears the same magnitude, and hence reinforces sound as a signifier of peripety.

Sound effects also mark important moments or actions that catalyse a character's discovery or anagnorisis. For example, the gunshot sound in *Formula X* marks Cindy's discovery of the real goings on in her house. On her arrival Cindy is greeted by a strange facade that Juma, Lisa and Frank are in the house for a business meeting, and despite the strangeness of the explanation, she shrugs off and ascends the stairs only to recall who Lisa was, and turns to accost her. Her attack on Lisa, who she identifies as Frank's mistress reveals that she jumps on the red herring and misses the clue that a robbery is in progress under her nose. It takes the gunshot to jolt her to the realization of the situation at hand.

Sound effects also express the build-up of a story momentum by adducing dramatic suspense and anticipation. For instance, the wailing siren of the police cruiser as the police officers drive to Frank's home in response to a distress call from his neighbour, builds the climactic momentum in *Formula X*, as the police approach the compound and Juma attempts his escape. The siren, interlaced with music and slow motion visuals, seems to suspend time, and drag the action, building the suspense and anticipation, as the film draws to a suspended fade out. This scene engenders the expressions of the sound effects signalling movement and actions of the characters.

Referring to this disposition of sound effects, Kamau (personal communication, July 13, 2015) explains that, sound effects help to create suspense by tactfully dominating in a scene. To elaborate further, he gives an example of the sound of a train, hooting and chugging as it hurtles past a scene of characters engaged in an
important conversation. The loud sound of the train muzzles the dialogue for a moment and as it fades out, the characters end their conversation in a seeming agreement. With an important piece of information in the dialogue muffled by the passing train, questions arising as to what was agreed upon by the characters, then linger, as dramatic suspense escalates. The sounds therefore create an even flow of information, staggering the episodes, building buffers and bridges as the narrative progresses.

Sound effects also foreshadow events and direction of the narrative by symbolic expressions that reflect continuity, or discontinuity of present circumstances. Manyara (Personal communication, April 17, 2015) affirms this with an example from Saikati (1992), a film in which he served as the soundman, relating sounds of croaking frogs to the dwindling fortunes of the main protagonist Saikati. He explains that when Saikati runs out of the hotel from her exploiters, she stops outside on a lush lawn and flower garden, and the soundtrack elevates the sound of frogs. With no pond, river or swamp in the vicinity, Manyara observes that the sound of frogs then contrasts with the visuals. The contrapuntal nexus of the image and sound therefore signifies that Saikati has entered a new swampy (troublesome) phase in her odyssey, where she is at risk of sinking (Ibid). This example and the explanation thereof further deepen the argument that the significations of sound effects create a forecast of proceeding story events and circumstances. Sound effects therefore are important signifiers of story milestones, conflicts and other vital components of the causal progress of the film storyline. The expressions by SFX that build the plot and catalyse its development are thus the characteristics that are in this section codified as plotting.
Music, silence, ambience and SFX as demonstrated in this section accrue the disposition of plotting as they express, reflect and prop, the film story by marking important story points and creating a tie that binds the narrative together. The individual indications and the expressions spanning from the interstices between the elements of the film audio-visual structure, reinforces the non-speech sounds as plotting building blocks, and catalysts. The next section discusses how the non-speech elements construct thematic concerns in the selected films.

5.2 THEMATIC RENDITION

Themes are defined as the unifying central concerns of a film, or the special focus that unifies the work (Boggs, 1996, p. 10). The word theme connotes an idea—the central idea, the point, the message, or the statement made by the work as a whole (Ibid). Various messages and thematic concerns have been depicted and explored in the sampled films. Ranging from urban violence, crime, deception, hopelessness, reconciliation, corruption and other societal concerns, the films deploy their visual and aural elements to stimulate and reinforce their specific messages in a variety of ways, including the deployment of the non-verbal sound elements to create blends that radiate these messages. The themes are expressed through symbolic signification arising from individual sound elements and through the blended plurality of the cinematic sound design.
5.2.1 Crime

a.) Sound effects and Crime

Sound effects are very important ingredient in revealing the themes of deception, hopelessness and societal ambivalence as reflected in the microcosms presented in the films. The theme of crime or urban violence which is central in *Formula X* and *Nairobi Half Life* is in various ways adumbrated by the sound effects deployed. The gunshot sound in *Formula X*, deployed when Juma discharges his weapon to stop the scuffle between Lisa and Cindy is a sign of violent crime, which as we learn later from Juma’s flashback, is the weapon of choice for the marauding carjackers terrorizing the residents, and giving security authorities sleepless nights.

In *Nairobi Half Life*, several scenes are deployed with the gunshot sounds as gangs rob innocent civilians, civilians returning fire to the looming criminals, in gang fights, and in murders most foul, committed by gangs and policemen against each other. Depicted as the ultimate weapon of choice for criminals in the films, the gun sounds therefore, go a long way in laying emphasis on crime as a vital message in the films and depiction of the urban violence.

b.) Music and Crime

The crime theme is also constructed by music with significations spanning from genre typification, poetic narration by didactic lyrics, by images, and concepts related to the music. *Ha He* by Just a band for instance emphasizes the theme of crime, as it is interplayed with a montage of images of Oti and his gang, vandalizing and transporting the stolen wares under the nose of security authorities. *Ha He*, a
popular track in the Kenyan music scene, yields a brand image of “Makmende” a legendary fictional superhero in Kenya. “Makmende amerudi” (“Makmende” is back), was a viral campaign to promote the song, depicting “Makmende” the superhero in their music video, as an infallible, indestructible hero, who wrung his foes in a twist, beating them to a pulp with admirable ease. With the superhero image, the dare devilry, the sheer gut, and chutzpah exhibited by the criminals, Ha He builds the image and silhouette of the criminal legend and aptly imports it to the scene, reinforcing its major concern, which is crime.

c.) Ambience in Crime

The theme of crime is also branded by ambient sounds deployed in the sampled films. Ambience reveals the unseen details in a sonic scene and thereby provides information that exposes, and bolsters the central and peripheral issues a film seeks to tackle. The indistinct chatter and other sounds characterize the ambience of central police jail where Mwas is locked up in Nairobi Half Life. The sounds reveal not only a packed jail, but also a place full of people who are active, engaged and comfortable with the environment. The sea of humanity lining the corridors of the cells, and the upbeat Walla, reveals a city full of criminals whose confidence is not dimmed by the cell bars. As seen later in the scene, Oti receives a stash of illicit goods in his cell revealing a system ridden with corruption and crime. The sound of the jail presents a place of no worry for criminals and thus reinforces the theme of crime.
d.) Silence and Crime

Silence in *Killer Necklace* exudes the theme of crime when it draws attention to a gun as a metaphor of crime. When Mbugua takes the golden necklace to Noni, he finds father trying to assault her sexually and he heads to Jonah’s place and grabs a gun from the table. As Jonah holds on to the gun there is a moment of silence, as the two characters tussle for the gun. Interplayed with a close up image of the gun in their hands, the silence draws attention to the physiognomy of the gun and thus bolsters the potent imagery of past present and impeding crime. Silence therefore shares the allegorical image of the gun in the film, as the image and sound interact and elevate each other.

The clinking keys in *Formula X*, gun cocking and crashing sounds in *Killer Necklace* are other sound effects that also capture the theme of crime. Juma's large bunch of keys clinks as he attempts to open Frank’s house drawing attention to the "master keys" a ubiquitous tool for burglars as depicted in Juma’s character. The keys and the sound thereof then help in building an image of a crime in progress typified by the clinking, as he tries different keys, one after the other. The breaking and crashing sounds are a motif that appears in *Nairobi Half Life*, typifying a vandalism session by Oti's gang. The sounds, heard as the gang hit, knock, and crank spare parts off from people’s cars, typify and create a simulacra of the criminal activities of the gang, which enhances the theme of crime.

5.2.2 Deception

Deception is another important theme addressed in *Killer Necklace* and *Nairobi Half Life*. Lies, half-truths and pretences, are lined out in the two films and are revealed
and enhanced by various visual and aural techniques as shall be discussed in this section.

a.) Sound effects and Deception

When Mwas’s phone rings in *Nairobi Half Life* in the middle of the merry making with Oti and his gang, it reveals an important issue that the film seeks to grapple with; the deception, dishonesty, secretive ambivalence, and lies. Mwas behind his comrades’ backs is cast for a role in a play by the Phoenix Theatre group, and seeks to explore the opportunity in secret. Indeed, the whole gang dies without knowledge of Mwas’s thespian activities. The phone call, signalled by the ringing phone reinforces this dimension, and it signifies Mwas’s dishonesty with his partners about his ‘half-life’.

Deception is a vital theme in *Killer Necklace*, woven around Mbugua’s and Noni’s pretences and lies to each other. When the couple is driven to Noni’s work place, Mbugua haughtily slams the car door and barks instructions to Jonah, and then quickly apologizes when Noni gains some distance. Later, when Mbugua leaves the compound, he gently closes the car door, in contrast with his earlier violent slamming. The car door sounds, reveal a vital element of the deception going on in the film narrative, as Mbugua pretends to be wealthy and important to impress, and win over the girl he believes is the daughter of a rich couple. This is also reinforced by the creaking corkscrew, as Mbugua nervously fidgets with it, clueless on how it works. In a later scene, the sound of the peeling “yellow line” (a standard for Kenyan public service vehicles) sticker, after the escapade at Noni's reveals that Noni has been and is being fooled, further building on to the theme of deception.
b.) Music and Deception

Music is also a vital ingredient in the construction of themes in film narratives. To advance the theme of deception, music is exploited for the didactic qualities of its lyrics, the symbols it portrays in its interaction with other elements and its mode of deployment. Parapanda, the hymn song sung by Mwas when he meets patrol officers while towing a handcart full of stolen car parts unveils a deceptive, pretentious wave that fuels crime in Nairobi Half Life. Mwas, left alone to face the officers in his first criminal assignment, resorts to singing a hymn to feign salvation or lunacy, both of which effectively provide a red herring that gets him off the hook of the police. The pretences that Parapanda uncovers, replenish the stock of the film, as it seeks to grapple with the issues of deception. The music therefore, presents a religious or spiritual person, fooling policemen to drive away as other criminal slips away from the grip of law enforcers, and the theme of deception is as such elevated.

Nairobi Half Life also tackles deception as a theme, by highlighting individual and societal ambivalence and ‘half-lives’ of people who live double lives to sustain themselves and achieve some superficial ends. Twice in the film Mose, one of the gang members in Oti’s fold sings his composition Songa kando mpango wa kando (move aside clandestine lover). The lyrics of the song refer to a “mpango wa kando” (clandestine lover), who represents a lie, dishonesty and marital cheating. The symbol accrued from the “mpango wa kando” then relates to the characters in the film, that live double lives. Mwas doubles as an actor and criminal; Mose is an aspiring singer, juggling up as a criminal; Amina the beauty college student who doubles as a prostitute; and Cedric, Mwas’s co-actor in the phoenix theatre play who
is a closeted homosexual. The image created by music therefore radiates elements of the larger message that the film seeks to tackle.

Music also expresses the theme of a film narrative by its interaction with the image and its points of deployments. For instance highlife instrumental music is deployed in *Killer Necklace*, when Noni, after pampering herself heads to the market where she meets Mbugua and sees the necklace; and when Mbugua after robbing mama Bessie buys the golden necklace. The two scenes reflect the two characters in their element as they present their pretence facades, Noni as the lass from affluence, and Mbugua as well to do chap who can afford the golden chain. The instrumental music deployed in both scenes, thus acts as a motif of their pretences, marking the point in the narrative when their hoity-toity airs are in full bloom, and thus contributes to the rendition of the message of deception in the film.

c.) Deception and Silence

The theme of deception is communicated by the image of the counterfeit golden necklace sold to Mbugua by the trickster in the seedy slum bar. The silence deployed therein elevates the metaphor of the image; lies and con-artistry, which are vital rudiments in building the theme of deception in the films. Silence by drawing attention to the image which presents a simulacra of the deception that takes place in the scene, hence works towards building the message of deception in the film.

5.2.3 Hopelessness

Hopelessness or societal despair is another theme that also recurs in some of the selected narratives; in *Nairobi Half Life*, *Killer Necklace* and *Formula X*. The theme is woven around a frame of characters in despair and in hopelessness, desperate
situations, traversing in the narratives. The theme is expressed by a blend of the audio-visual amalgam that primarily draws from the significations, suggestions and simulations by individual elements of the visual and aural track. Music and sound effects directly and remotely underscore this theme in the following ways.

a.) Sound effects and Hopelessness

The gunshot sound that rings off-screen in the abandoned house scene in Nairobi Half Life, signalling the cold blooded killing of Waf by the policemen builds a semblance of hopelessness. The shot rings as images of Waf’s comrades sitting quietly, each leaning on the wall staring blankly run. They all exhibit their despair with their reactions, Mose hanging his head, Oti clenching his jaw and throwing his head back, Kyalo breaking down and Mwas’s face betraying terror. Locked in, with no one’s knowledge, with no way to defend themselves, they only sit awaiting death, defeated by its grim reality. The gunshot reinforces the apathy and hopelessness and thus advancing the theme. The signification of cornered beings, is also reflected when Mwas spends the night in a makeshift shack in his initial days in the city. Thunder and rain sounds provide the symbol of hopelessness expressing Mwas’s bleak options, as he has nowhere to go and next day, and he haplessly follows Oti to a “better” life of crime which in the end siphons off, all his life.

Killer Necklace also deploys a slapping sound and a bubbling hookah sound as expressive agents of the hopelessness it address. The whacking sound of a slap rings, when mother angrily and conceitedly slaps Noni across the face with no explanations or sympathy. The façade that the narrative presents to us about Noni, preceding that incident is shattered as Noni is only left to clutch her face in pain,
with a defeated look. The slap not only serves to physically hurt her but reeks of the effort to ‘put her back in her place’. After all, she is a mere domestic servant. This expresses hopelessness for poor servants like her and ultimately advances the theme.

This is also replicated when Mbugua stands awkwardly looking helpless and out of options, as Jonah rants his piece, belittles him, and punctuates his commentary with a deep puff of his shisha pipe. Looking beaten, Mbugua’s face is a deadpan as he takes instructions from Jonah, listening even to the bubbling, as Jonah smokes his tobacco. The scene, which ends up with Mbugua acquiescing to taking up crime therefore, displays hopelessness and helplessness and the sound effect reinforces it further, prolonging the moments.

b.) Music and Hopelessness

Songa kando, sang by Mose the aspiring singer among Oti’s gang, reflects societal despair in many levels. Being one among many in the Nairobi microcosm depicted in Nairobi Half Life; Mwas the aspiring actor in robbery to fend for himself; Amina in prostitution to get her college fees and the policemen collaborating with criminals to supplement their pay, Mose’s singing reflects the paradox of the ambition and the scarce ways to explore it. In their conversation, the gang comrades accede that you should have ‘connections’ to make it, with crooked connections like Jose the con artist littered all over. As the film progresses to its tragic climax, Mose sings the song in an apathetic tune as he, and his gang comrades sit quietly in an abandoned house awaiting to be blown to eternity by corrupt cops and their bodies used as exhibits of crimes they were not involved in. As he sings, the sense of despair is
deeply advanced as it indeed occurs that his singing ambitions would end up to naught in front of a gun muzzle.

5.2.4 Other themes

a.) Music and Urban Youth Struggles

*Kilio* and *Songa Mbele* adumbrate the theme of urban youth struggles in *Formula X*. Deployed in Juma’s flashback detailing his unsuccessful stints as an insurance broker and a small business merchant, the music reinforces the message of the struggles. As the images show Juma waltzing through different jobs and trades with unenviable failure and disappointment, the song’s lyrics express a hope that barely exists. *Kilio*’s lyrics express the cry of the people, add that God has heard it and *Songa Mbele* speaks of the society that castigates shall finally go to sleep, and presses the listener to go on. The messages in the two music tracks, lay emphasis on moving on, and thereby reinforce the message of the struggles, more.

b.) Music, Ambience and Reconciliation

The theme of reconciliation in *From a Whisper* is built on the foundation of truth, healing, forgiveness and moving on from niggles of the past. To advance this theme the film deploys *Zingatia* whose lyrics express the message of love, peace, unity and harmony and derides the vices of selfishness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upendo, ndio utatudumisha</th>
<th>Love will keep us going</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umoja, mwanangu weka nia</td>
<td>Unity, my child aim at it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubinafsi, si njia ya kupitia</td>
<td>Selfishness is not the way to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwanangu sikia</td>
<td>Listen my child</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The lyrics constitute an advisory, a caution, a rallying call to adopt, inculcate and share the virtues of love, harmony and selflessness. The music therefore, by directly addressing this issues and seeking to impart them, as agents of good standing, order and peace, in parallel with the visual scenes of Abu in his ritual Muslim ablution and a time lapse montage, reinforces the message of reconciliation.

The natural sounds deployed when Tamani and her father are in the memorial park; the vehicles, the birds, the chatter add a bright sense and feeling that elevates their moment of reconciliation, as they embrace in a synchronized understanding. The sounds therefore build into the theme of reconciliation.

In summation, the numerous messages addressed in the sampled films have been, as evidenced by the foregoing analysis, exposed, signified and bolstered in their expression by non-speech sound elements. The expressions are pegged in a multicourse network of communications by the different elements, and in the effective combinations of aural and visual elements cusped in the progression of the narrative. The next section discusses how the non-speech sounds also reflect narrative setting and space, codified as location disposition.

5.3 LOCATION

Location in the context of this chapter is regarded as the direct synonym of narrative setting. Boggs (1996, p.67) defines setting as the place and time in which a film story takes place. From this definition, location encompasses the geographical locales, spatial dimensions, acoustic locations and properties, sociological characters of the particular settings and the periodical historicity of the said space. Conceptually, in the discussions of this chapter, location refers to a narrative
disposition of music, sound effects, ambience and silence that defines their expression of the elements of the diegetic space or narrative setting.

*Killer Necklace, Formula X, From a Whisper and Nairobi Half Life* tell their stories across various settings covering a range of acoustic locations and geographical spaces; from cities, estates, slums, suburbs, bars, theatres, police cells, roads streets, markets, car interiors, rural areas and so on. Such settings though, do not necessarily conform to the conventional sonic characteristics of the like spaces in the real world. The soundtrack constructs the diegetic worlds, and builds their acoustic qualities. Belton (1992, p. 326) captures this observation in his argument when he posits that,

The soundtrack does not duplicate the world set before it; it realizes an imaginary world, endowing the space and objects within the story space with another dimension that complements their temporal and spatial existence as representations.

To adequately portray the spaces, the films blend images of the spaces and corresponding soundscapes. The soundscapes blend in non-speech sounds like music, silence, sound effects and natural sounds to build the cosmic qualities of the depicted settings.

**5.3.1 Sound effects and Location**

Sound effects express narrative settings, characterize acoustic spaces, their properties and signify salient qualities of particular geographical locales. Giving credence to this argument, Whittington (2007, p. 95) postulates that,

In the process of constructing the soundtrack, specific sound designs often elaborate upon or play with spatial considerations. By doing so, the sound effects gain an authenticity in relation to the image and
establish emotional resonance as they relay narrative information and anchor audiences in the story world.

The important thing to note from the assertion is that the sound effects do not necessarily reflect what is visible in an image but suggest, asynchronously what is beyond the composition of the frame but is constituted in the spatial dimensions of the diegetic world. The sounds therefore reflect the qualities of the depicted spaces and the objects endemic to the given space. Citing reverberation as a vital spatial quality in unveiling narrative setting, Sonnenschein (2001, p.161) notes that,

The acoustic size and shape of a space represented by the reverb level and echo can also contribute to a more narrative aspect of the scene. For example, the sound of a very large single room with hard walls will evoke the spiritual sense of being in a cathedral.

For instance the phone ringing in Frank’s house as Juma attempts to enter; Juma’s footprint sounds as he goes into the house in *Formula X* resonate with an echo revealing the reverberant acoustics of the house. Of primary importance, the reverberant sounds exude the characteristics of an interior space and suggest close barriers (walls) which definitely reveals a house and furthers suggesting that the house is sparsely furnished, factors that support the live acoustics colouring the footsteps and the phone ring. This is also reflected in *Nairobi Half Life*’s footsteps on the Phoenix theatre proscenium stage. The footsteps are characteristically on a resonant wooden surface, sounding like the casing of a hollow object, which is the quality of the stage, which is built on top of a storage basement that serves as the resonator for the booming footsteps.

The reverberation and resonation also reveals setting with the accentuation of slamming metal door of the abandoned house in *Nairobi Half Life*. The banging
door rings with a delay effect, the sound reflections revealing the expanse of the house and that it is an empty house, further reinforcing the idea that it is an abandoned house turned a killing haven for the beastly officers. This is also elevated by the gunshot sounds that are reflected in the house and ring with an echo, when Waf is shot and when a gun fight that wipes out Oti, Mose, Kyalo and the beasts ensues.

Sound effects also reveal specific acoustic spaces by the deployment of sounds that are characteristic to the locations. A muffled engine hum in *From a Whisper* as Abu drives Tamani home signals the interior of a car, both in cruise mode and in idle distinguished by the revving engine and the continuous unchanged hum when in idle Abu, sits in the static car thinking. The typewriter sounds in *From a Whisper* deployed when Abu sifts attentively through a sheaf of documents, from where he demystifies the enigma of Joyce Kezio, a pattern obsession he notices on Tamani’s paintings, reveal a busy office. Deployed off-screen, the typing sounds reveal a typical office with a secretary in the vicinity of the space, unseen in the visuals. The sound effect therefore not only typifies the space but also reveals its dimension, by signalling that there is more space beyond the visual frame.

Sound effects also typify geographical locales and dwellings by characterizing the sounds thereof. For instance, few, far spaced sounds of vehicles zooming past signal occasional vehicles using what should be a busy road. The sparse traffic this signifies a rural area; Gathanji, where Mwas hails from. Contrasting with the hooting, revving, blasting car stereos in the traffic snarl up in *From a Whisper* and the light, but busy traffic in *Formula X* and comparing positively with the occasional car in the suburb depicted in *Killer Necklace*, the sounds therefore reveal the
characteristics of the traffic. The traffic sounds in turn, provide semblance of particular setting like; heavy/light traffic in urban roads and occasional car on the road in rural and peri-urban settings.

5.3.2 Music and Location

Film music indicates setting by characterizing certain locations by tapping into the popularity of the music in the said settings, the origin of the music, and the sociological suggestions of the said music. By exuding one or several of the aforementioned factors, music then augurs with the spaces depicted and thus is able to communicate in its element, the qualities of a particular diegetic space. Shapaya (2013) relates reggae music deployed in the film Tamani to the setting and states that the music reflects an informal settlement since most youth from the said areas associate with the genre. This position is affirmed by Kalinak (2010) who states that, music can among other things, establish setting, specifying time and place and Gianneti (2001, p. 222) who postulates that certain kinds of music can suggest locales, classes, or ethnic groups. As such, music mirrors setting in the selected films in the following ways;

*Fanya Tena* in *Killer Necklace* signals the low-income area territory, when Mbugua and Jonah drive from Noni’s suburb home. *Fanya Tena* is a popular track in the Kenyan music scene by artists from the Ukoo Flani Maumau Group. The group, which mostly produces and performs Hip-hop music brings together different solo and ensemble artists like Kalamashaka, Wenyeki, Mashifta, Wakamba Wawili, Oteraw, G-Rongi Matigari, Kimya, Cannibal among others who hail from low income neighbourhoods of Nairobi and Mombasa like Dandora, Bangladesh and
Kariobangi (Amateshe, 2012). The neighbourhoods are mostly ridden with poverty, crime and unemployment and typically, the music by the Ukoo Flani Maumau artists tackle issues such as societal struggles, poverty, crime, drug abuse and police brutality. *Fanya Tena* therefore, given this background as a genre, style of music and the artists that perform it, creates a semblance of the setting as a low income area, ridden with poverty, crime, drug abuse and other urban afflictions; issues that are spread in the film and images that are also portrayed visually as the pair drives through the ghetto streets.

The loud disco instrumental music deployed in *Killer Necklace* when Mbugua is taken to a dingy bar to purchase a golden necklace from a conniving con typifies the bar setting. Typical to local bars in Kenya as is Rhumba music, the disco music blends well with the scene, reinforcing the image depiction of the setting, as Mbugua enters the dark room full of chattering, billiards shooting men. The association of music to particular settings is also exploited with the musical rendition of the Islamic “salat” (prayer), deployed in *From a Whisper* when Abu, Fareed, and other Muslim faithfuls are in a prayer session in a mosque. The music grounds the scene in a mosque even without a visual establishment. Music therefore, by association, typifies particular settings, accruing location as a narrative disposition.

In the opening scene of *Nairobi Half Life*, while Mwas runs after the truck loudly announcing the public theatre show in Gathanji market, instrumental music from a stringed instrument is deployed. The instrument sounds like the indigenous lyre, Nyatiti, a traditional instrument of the Luo community. Found in several communities in the same design but played and tuned differently, the lyre is called “Litungu” among the Abaluhya and “Obokano” among the Abagusii. Therefore, the
sound of the Nyatiti, lucidly translates to tradition and by extension infers a setting typified by indigenous culture, which is in this case is rural Kenya. Hence the music deployed grounds, the film to the rural setting, which, then is contrasted by Nairobi, the quintessential urban setting in the *Nairobi Half Life* microcosm.

Nairobi is mirrored by music tracks such as *Ganji* performed by P-unit, *Hip-Hop Halisi* by Ukoo Flani Maumau, and *Ha He* by Just a band. The music tracks, are not only urban genres, produced in Nairobi by Nairobi based artists but are performed in ‘Sheng’ an urban slang, featuring a dialect mostly associated with Nairobi and its neighbourhoods. Thus, the tracks, which are interplayed with images of scenes taking place in different sections of Nairobi and interwoven in a dialogue almost purely spoken in sheng, contribute towards construction of the geographical and sociological locale of Nairobi.

### 5.3.3 Ambience and Location

Natural sounds are another important element of the cinematic sound design that expresse identifying qualities of a diegetic space. Made up of sounds endemic to a sonic environment, ambience directly reflects particular environment and suggests properties of the setting, like spatial dimensions, and acoustic qualities. The sounds will however vary with time and season as noted by Sonnenschein (2001, p. 186) who notes that,

> Within one location there can be a variation of soundscape as signals according to weather, and time of day, or season.

For instance, the vibrant sounds of busy urban traffic, a multitude of footsteps, and a din of indistinct chatter characterizes the sounds in the city depicted in *Nairobi Half*
Life and From a Whisper. The sounds deployed in different scenes as Mwas traverses the city streets and when Sam and his family are in the middle of the city typify the setting and thus colouring the narrative deposition of location on ambience.

The clinking glasses, billiards knocking and walla sounds characterize the bar scenes in Nairobi Half Life and Killer Necklace. The sounds are distinct to the bar activities of moving bottles and glasses, revellers exchanging banter and others enjoying billiard games and are therefore typical to the bar. Therefore, the sounds characterize and equally acquire the qualities of the environment and contribute towards the aural construction of the location in the narrative.

The cacophony of ambient singing birds, chirping crickets and buzzing of other insects clouds the sonic environment of Tamani’s makeshift home and gallery. Originally, a clean house standing on a well-manicured compound meant to be Joyce Kezio’s art gallery, the mass of insect and bird sounds signal its state after years of neglect. Its derelict walls and floor and an overgrowth of weeds, provide an ample habitat for the insects, which is reflected by the sounds thereof. The ambience in the scene therefore, not only reveals the sonic scape but also the condition of the location.

5.3.4 Silence and Location

Silence in its actual or implied form also contributes to the depiction of a narrative setting in film. When silence in a scene implies a quiet environment, then it gives an indication on the type of environment or the composition of the environment.
For instance the silence deployed in *Nairobi Half Life* when Mwas and Amina sit quietly savouring the moments after a film ends and other audiences walk out of the theatre, mirrors the silence of the movie theatre. Typically, the theatres are fitted with sound deadening materials that prevent sound from outside from infiltrating the space. Therefore, the silence, punctuated by their brief dialogue, reflects the acoustical properties of the movie theatre.

The reigning silence at dawn, characterized by a distant chirping cricket in *From a Whisper* when Fareed wakes Abu for prayer suggests several things about the environment. One is that the estate is far from the main road, where by then, vehicles would be audible. Secondly there are few or no trees signalled by absence of bird sounds idiosyncratic to dawn. These implicative factors then, as suggested by silence, define the environment ideally as a gated community and Abu living in a flat house. Therefore, silence as noted, employs its expressive qualities and partners with the image to weave a tapestry defining the location in which the film story takes place.

### 5.4 MOOD

Mood is defined by Princeton English dictionary (2006) as a prevalent psychological state. Mood is a very important component of a film narrative. Actually, stories encompass emotional journeys of characters that go through a range of emotions as they seek their ultimate goals (Schellhardt, 2008). As characters experience certain emotions, the story either reflects or contrasts their emotions, which are in turn evoked in the spectator. Through deployment of various technical and aesthetic models, the mood of a narrative is projected by blends and contrasts in the visual.
and audio tracks. Among the blends are non-dialogical sound elements; music, sound effects, ambience and silence, which generate various emotional meanings individually and in partnership in the soundtrack and with the image track. In the sampled films, the non-dialogical elements express mood in the following ways:

5.4.1 Sound effects and Mood

The clinking of crockery, loud, frenetic zipping sound and objects knocking in Cindy’s handbag underscores the uneasiness and palpable tension in Frank’s house as Frank takes his breakfast in Formula X. The sounds, which mirror the clumsy and frantic actions of husband and wife, reveal the tension broiling between them, which resonates through the scene, ending in a bitter confrontation. This is also reflected by the electronic beeps, plastics knocking against each other and audiocassette ejecting sounds in From a Whisper. The sounds are produced by Tamani in Abu’s car, with an awkward tension reigning between them. With no word being exchanged between them, Tamani fidgets with air conditioner buttons, rummaging the centre console storage compartment between the seats, and inserting a tape she gets to the car stereo, which Abu, promptly ejects. Abu, having decided to drive her home by force, and prompted by the uneasy silence, the nervous and restless Tamani starts fidgeting. The sounds therefore reveal and reinforce the tense and awkward mood in the scene.

Sound effects also characterize elevated angry moods in the sampled film sequences. By reflection of agitated actions, sound effects reinforce the mood of a scene revealed by images of characters in action or expressing the anger through dialogue. For instance, the loud door bang, the portrait glass shattering, papers ripping, and
fire crackling characterize Tamani’s tempered actions after she discovers her mother’s death. In anger Tamani storms into her father’s office, rants angrily and then throws an object at the family portrait, breaking the glass, after which she storms out and tears up her paintings and burns the ones in her makeshift gallery. Besides the screaming and frenetic gesticulation, the sounds of the angry actions cement the mood more firmly, painting the scene with an angry tone.

Therefore, sound effects reflect the angry mood, as also reflected in *Nairobi Half Life*, when Mwas walks into a confrontation between his gang and Dingo’s gang. After exchanging bitter words, the angry criminals draw guns on each other and gun-cocking sounds dominate. The confrontation escalates as emotions run high as the gangs accost each other in a Mexican standoff, which is only broken by the policemen. The cocking guns, like the punching, shoving, and kicking sounds in a follow up fight between the gangs, embody the prevailing state of psyche in the feuding gangs and splash the scene with broiling anger.

A mood of blissful excitement reigns when Mwas is in the bus headed to Nairobi from Gathanji for the first time. Besides the joyful smile on his face, the roar of the accelerating engine, coupled with the cheerful music, expresses the mood of the scene. The revving engine sounds mirror Mwas’s excitement, which resonates in the scene. Therefore, sound effects as noted, also significantly contribute in the building of the different moods in a film story by exploitation of the many significations evinced by symbols associated with individual sounds and those expressions created by their collaboration with other elements.
5.4.2 Music and Mood

Music is a very important ingredient of mood in a film narrative. Its rhythms, tempo, tone, melodies, and lyrics suggest different emotions in different parts of the storyline. Interplayed with images in a diegetic, non-diegetic and at times treading the boundary between the two in spatio temporal mode, music not only reinforces or contrasts the prevailing mood of a scene but it also connects with the audience, evoking varied emotions in them. As discussed in chapter two and three, music as captured in studies like Chion (1994), Gorbman (1987), Kassabian (2002), Kalinak (2010) among others is a potent emotional signifier in film. Gianneti (2001) adds that music can also manipulate emotional dynamics in a film scene. As such, music in the sampled films exudes mood as a disposition in the following ways:

Music mirrors the mood of excitement in Killer Necklace and Nairobi Half Life. The highlife instrumental Motif deployed in Killer Necklace, when Noni meets Mbugua in the market and when Mbugua purchases medicine for his grandmother and Noni’s coveted golden necklace, evokes and underscores a feeling of excitement that the characters experience and which reigns in the scenes. In the former scene, the two lovebirds are excited to see each other and this reflects in the brightly played track. In the latter scene, Mbugua with a wad of cash in his pockets that gives him purchasing power, enough to impress Noni, glows with excitement, which is also congruent with the music deployed.

Forever people and Ganji, two music tracks in Nairobi Half Life express the exciting mood in the scenes they are deployed in. Forever people is played in the bar scene, when Cedric, takes Mwas to Westlands, the entertainment capital of
Nairobi for a drink and a dance, capturing the moment of exhilaration for Mwas partaking of the vigorous Nairobi night life for the first time. The music, synchronized with their dance, Mwas taking to the moves like a duck to water, builds and accelerates the excitement in the scene and thus, taking and shaping the quality of the mood in the scene. Ganji plays alongside images of Oti, Mwas and their comrades bouncing in joy after a successful sale of stolen wares for a favourable bargain. They talk animatedly as they head to a local pub to make merry. Their joy and excitement is mirrored by the “Genge” club banger Ganji, which underscores their cheerfulness as they go to celebrate their well-earned day.

Music also characterizes sorrowful, sullen, and gloomy moods in scenes reflecting despair, loss, and helplessness. This is also the case, when a character faces stiff antagonism, or fails to scale an obstacle. When Mose in Nairobi Half Life sings Songa kando mpango wa kando in the abandoned house, the music underscores the dark, gloomy mood in the scene. Shaken, cornered and contemplating death, the gang sits quietly, each engrossed in thought as Mose’s singing rings, his voice bawling, the melody sounding like a dirge. Earlier in the film when he sings the song, he seems to be in rehearsal mode harbouring hope that the music would become better or take him to a better place. However, in the abandoned house, his voice is frail, his energy low, and his expression stoic and distant. Music therefore, when placed in to different contexts creates different meanings. In reference to the contrapuntal use of music, Gianneti (2001, p. 224) explains that, music can also provide ironic contrast. In many cases, the predominant mood of a scene can be neutralized or even reversed with contrasting music.
The ambivalence of meaning exuded by music in view of mood is also evidenced in *From A Whisper* by the music track *Tinga Malo*. Deployed during Tamani’s flashback of her blissful moments with her mother Joyce, and later when Sam hangs his head in anguish after a bitter confrontation with Tamani, the music track evokes two contrasting feelings in the film. In the former scene, little Tamani’s relationship with her mother is demystified; the quiet telepathic moments between mother and daughter, making shapes together, drawing love signs for each other and exhibiting affection for each other. The scene radiates bliss, joy, and a tranquil mood, which contrasts with the latter scene, where *Tinga Malo* plays alongside Sam’s low moment, each note of the song crashing into the pieces of his broken heart. This song hence, evokes two different moods in the two scenes, underscoring the primacy of context in the generation of meaning by music in film.

### 5.4.3 Ambience and Mood

Natural sounds characterize the voice of the environment, which is very vital in increasing and enhancing mood. Ambience creates a mental picture of a bright morning with interalia, singing birds and traffic sounds and a dark gloomy night with low frequency hums, roars, and bangs. By characterizing the energy of the environment, ambience then also contributes to the building of mood in different film sequences. In the sampled films, mood is characterized by ambience in the following ways:

The bar ambience in *Nairobi Half Life*; the city sounds, heard when Mwas and Amina head for a movie date, and the garage sounds, when Oti and his gang walk to Waya’s store to sell him Corolla parts, all exemplify an exciting mood. The bar
scene entails a celebration of the gang with drinks and smokes fuelling their joyous chatter, amidst billiard sounds, glasses and bottles clinking, and shuffling feet. The city sounds, bright, high pitched, blending to a rhythmic din, elevate the excitement of Mwas and Amina, two characters holding true to their real ambitions, heading for a movie date. Mwas, a movie enthusiast and an aspiring actor and Amina, a prostitute being treated like a lady for the first time in the film, are both excited about the film and remotely about each other’s company. The natural sounds of the city therefore amplify their emotions and colour the scene with the exciting theme.

The sounds in the aftermath of the bomb blast in From a Whisper characterize the sad, terrifying, and sullen mood of the scene. The wailing ambulances, the screaming voices, the crackling fire and the chugging helicopters build a dark, gloomy, and deathly mood as Sam looks for Joyce. Rescuers try to get people from the rubble, images of bodies strewn all over the scene and a dark smoke veils the scene like an evil cloud. Ambience therefore not only reveals the expanse and activity of an environment, but also reinforces the emotional tone of a scene in a film.

5.4.4 Silence and Mood

A tense mood is emphasized by silence in From A Whisper, when Fareed sits pensively outside Abu's house. Presented in the film as a bubbly, cheerful character who loves music, Fareed clutches on his Subha prayer beads, a distant cricket chirping. The implied silence deepens his emotion, which rubs tension on the scene, a mood that reigns culminating in a confrontation between him and Abu, before he walks away in a huff. In Nairobi Half Life, an eerie silence dominates the scene as
Oti and his gang sits in despair in the abandoned house. As the boys sit ruminating, beaten, and contemplating death, a sullen, dark mood is reinforced by the silence that seems to suspend time, action, and movement to deepen the emotion of the scene. Silence therefore builds, emphasizes, and characterizes mood in the film scenes, elevating character emotion and in synergy with other aural and other visual elements, construct the dynamic network of moods in the narratives. This argument is captured by Sonnenschein (2001, p. 166), who explains that,

> Sudden cessation of sound can also give rise to a feeling of aesthetic perplexity or emotional anxiety.

As demonstrated in the foregoing discourse, non-speech sound elements communicate the element of mood in film, and signify different moods in the film, and thereby build on to the film dynamic in view of mood. Therefore as per the goal of this section, music, sound effects, ambience and silence accrue the narrative disposition of mood. The next section explores the narrative element of characterization and contextualizes it among the expressions made by non-speech sound elements.

### 5.5 CHARACTERIZATION

Among the principal element of a story is character. Indeed, stories are chronicles of characters in an odyssey and thus, in any attempt to evince rudiments of a narrative discussion of character are very vital. Boggs (1996) defines characters as the human elements in a story. Chatman (1992) discusses characters as important agents of the fiction stories and goes further to define characterization as a process in which characters are assigned traits. As such, this study considers characterization as an important element that is expressed by various significations by the visual and audio
element in film. Further, this study analyses how non-speech sounds element silence ambience, sound effect and music communicate the elements of character in the sampled films and hence alluding to this phenomenon as characterization. Therefore in the context of this study, characterization is a narrative disposition of the element of the sound track under discourse.

5.5.1 Silence and Character

Silence as discussed in chapter two, is mostly implied by distant or subtle sounds dominating in a scene or in form of a sparingly deployed absolute silence. Silence in the context of its deployment and as a communicator of character in film, suggests character traits and character relationship in film. For instance, in *From a Whisper* the silence deployed when Sam sits alone in his office thinking deeply exposes Sam as an emotional and patient character. After a bitter confrontation with Tamani who raves madly and causes a scene in his office, Sam instead of bursting up in anger sits quietly and thinks deeply a scene characterized by the silence. His patience towards his daughter and his self-control in the circumstance is emphasized by the silence that provides a calming effect to the scene. The silence therefore, opens up Sam’s inner being, and exposes him to the spectator. Commenting on this ideal of silence, Chion (1994, p. 89) says that,

Varying extension to the point of absolute silence is of course used for achieving effects of subjective sound. The suppression of ambient sounds can create the sense that we are entering into the mind of a character absorbed by her or his personal story.
In *Killer Necklace*, before Mother slaps Noni, there is a brief lull, interplayed with an image of Mother sneering. The silence draws attention to the conceited look on Mother’s face and consequently exposes her scornful, proud, temperamental traits. Further, it reveals her feelings and opinion towards Noni her domestic servant. Silence therefore in synergy with the image and the proceeding whacking slap sound reveals the character traits, opinion and feelings of Mother as a character.

In *From a Whisper*, there is relative silence as Fareed sits outside Abu’s house after their prayers at the mosque. Sited alone outside the main door of the house, Fareed sits pensively clutching his “subha” prayer beads. His action with the beads reveals that he is engaged in a silent prayer, further showing how religious he is. This exposition of his religious nature is reinforced by the silence that magnifies the action in the image.

### 5.5.2 Ambience and Character

As discussed in chapter two, ambience is a mash of various sounds that characterize the sonic environment in a film. As such, individual characters, crowds and whole societies being part of the said environments are also projected by the sounds (Sonneschein, 2001). For instance, the ambience of the Nairobi downtown in *Nairobi Half Life* communicates the occupation of the characters in that environment. The hammering sounds, welding sounds, grinding sounds and indistinct chatter suggest among other trades, car garages are the main business. Therefore, the characters are mainly welders, car mechanics and metal fabricators.

Ambience also reveals the social and emotional traits of a character or a group of characters. This is evidenced by the instance in *Nairobi Half Life* when Mwas is
robbed of all his belongings in a daytime mugging on his arrival to the city. After Mwas is robbed in the middle of an avenue bustling with a multitude of people, the people continue by indifferently as if nothing has happened. Together with the images, the sounds are a continuation of the ambience in the lively Nairobi that Mwas first encounters and is intrigued by. Therefore, the ambience provides a semblance of a city full of nonchalant, unperturbed dwellers that do not relate or care about Mwas’s unfortunate tragedy.

5.5.3 Music and Character

Music is also an important component of building robust, well-rounded characters in film. As listened to by characters, sang by characters and deployed in scenes detailing vital milestones in character journeys or emotional experiences, music reveals key information about a character. Some of the information music infers about a character includes interalia, psychosocial traits, ambitions, emotional levels, social leanings, and habits.

For instance, the Hip-Hop music playing from a car stereo in Sam’s car as he drives his family to the city presents him as an easy-going, playful character. Hip-Hop genre is mostly associated with the youth or young at heart and a culture of “cool”, happy-go-lucky and colourful characters. The Hip-Hop music therefore by association, engenders Sam’s character as per the traits enmeshed in the genre. In a later scene, some indistinct music plays in Tamani’s headsets as she sits in her father’s office. An air tension hangs in the office suggesting some misunderstanding between father and daughter and Tamani’s sitting posture betrays some defiance, which is compounded by the music blaring from her headsets. The apparatus of the
music, sunk deep into her earlobes, blocking any other sound, signals that she does not want to listen to her dad, reinforcing her as a defiant character.

Music also reveals the point of view of particular characters, exposing their views, opinions, thoughts and aspirations. *Uko Wapi* in *From A Whisper* mirrors Tamani’s perspective; her point of view as a witness of the bomb blast and as a victim who suffers loss in the attack. *Uko Wapi*’s lyrics are sang in the first person narration, recounting the magnitude, and effect of the attack and lamenting a loss. The chorus speaks of Tamani’s desire and quest to find her mother.

*Umepotea wapi*  
Mama Uko Wapi  
Rudi kwangu

Where have you disappeared to?  
Where are you mother  
Come back to me

In the song, the persona calls out to her mother, and in the context of the film, Tamani is the one who loses her mother in the attack. Therefore, the music seems to be drawn from her thoughts or reflect words from her mouth. Another instance of music revealing a character’s point of view is the deployment of *Songa Mbele* and *Kilio* in *Formula X*. Deployed in Juma’s flashback, the two music tracks express the feelings of a struggling person and the hope that such a person harbours. The songs reveal self-pity and the excuses Juma cites for his indulgence in violent crime and further expose an escapist and irresponsible character in Juma.

Music in film also works as a character identifier, when used as a character motif. The leitmotif of *Tinga Malo* makes the music a signifier of Joyce’s presence. Deployed when Tamani and Sam remember her in flashbacks about blissful times they had together. The music therefore signals good memories for Sam and Tamani, whose common denominator is Joyce. This is also reflected by the music track *Mola*, whose instrumental track reminds Abu of Fareed. Fareed as depicted in the
film loves the song, which he gladly plays from an audio cassette in Abu’s car. The music is later deployed as pit music, when Fareed is driving to town in a truck loaded with a bomb headed to attack the city. The lyrics, which reflect his mentality, his words and his dogmatic beliefs, go thus,

Mola wa amani wa upendo wa Busara  Lord of peace of love of wisdom  
Nakupa moyo wangu Nafsi yangu  I give you my heart I give you my soul  
Utumie utakavyo  Use it as you want

Deep in the poetry of the lyrics, lies an expose’ of Fareed as a religious bigot, a radicalized Muslim, brainwashed to believe he is killing for a higher purpose. The music therefore not only provides an identity mark for Fareed as a character but also reveals his acquired taste for violence, his naïve and implicit belief in extremist creeds and his troubled soul.

Music also reveals a characters socio-economic background. Fanya Tena a music track discussed in this study as a potent signifier of low class setting in the sampled films also symbolizes the characters living in those dwellings. When Mbugua and Jonah drive into the territory of the slum, the song is deployed signalling that they are home. Interwoven with images of the slum played in slow motion, the blend grounds the characters in the setting, further emphasizing that they are in their home. This is also reflected in Nairobi Half Life, when Forever People is deployed, interwoven with images of cheerful revellers in an up market pub. Unlike the disco music in the slum bar in Killer Necklace, Forever People radiates youth, energy, and no-worries a trait most likely to be found among the wealthy people that throng the up market pubs.
Parapanda Italia provides a glimpse of Mwas’s many theatrics to get what he wants and most importantly his witty cunning and deceptive traits that he employs to win over his adversaries faced by patrolling policemen, with a handcart full of stolen loot, Mwas starts singing a hymn, to present himself as religious or mad. The success of the strategy reveals his characters as a smart, creative, and enterprising person, who slyly slithers away from trouble by pulling unexpected rabbits from his creative hat. Music therefore reveals, builds and affirms character by exposing different character traits, psychosocial qualities, socio-economic background and explaining important details about a character.

5.5.4 Sound effects and Character

Sound effects are also an important element in creating a framework and bolstering characters in a film, by revealing and reinforcing character traits, temperaments and occupations. For instance the gunshot in Formula X and the sound of a banging door, glass shattering and papers ripping in from a whisper reveal irritable, angry and violent character traits in Tamani. Juma in Formula X discharges his weapon only to quell a mere squabble between Lisa and Tamani, although the conflict is barely physical and a gun in the instance is a rather rash and extreme solution. Therefore, the gunshot reveals Juma as an irritable and violent character, further corroborated by his physical attack on Frank and his life as a carjacker. In the other instance, Tamani’s reaction to the discovery of her mother’s death; storming her father’s office, breaking things, banging doors and tearing paintings reveal that she is hot tempered and violent while at it.
Also, sound effects also help in revealing character occupations by reflecting their activities. The snipping shears reveal Njeru’s work as a groundsman in Father’s compound in Killer Necklace. The snipping sounds and the roaring lawn mower, signify Njeru’s activities, and compound the image depiction of his job as a groundsman. The clinking bunch of keys held by Juma in *Formula X*, typifies the tools of trade used by common burglars, which include forged or master keys. The sound of the many keys, some of which Juma tries on Franks padlock ground his character as a burglar.

The crashing roof in *Nairobi Half Life*, exposes Mwas as a resilient character, a go-getter and an ambitious actor. Carried away by the enthusiastic audience, Mwas extends his theatrics to the weak roof of a shack and he crashes with a thud. His fearlessness as he recklessly walks on the roof reveals that he is a resilient character, keen on impressing his audience with no inhibitions, even for his own safety. Therefore the sound of the crash represents the ultimate result of stubborn prodding are a vital rudiment in building character and thereby in their idiosyncratic qualities, and in the audio-visual context of their deployment, exude the narrative disposition hereby referred to as characterization.

### 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the non-speech elements in their innate qualities and in the interstices created between them and dialogue, images and graphics express different rudiments of a film narrative and by extension accruing the characteristics of the elements thereof. In this vein, music, sound
effects, silence and ambience as evidenced characterize plot, setting, mood, character and theme and thereby accrue the eponymous narrative dispositions. The next chapter summarizes the main findings of this study, elucidates the conclusions of thereof and makes recommendations on the practice and study of various issues in film sound design.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the findings and conclusions of this study, and makes recommendations for further studies and practices on film sound design.

6.1 Summary

The narrative dispositions as demonstrated arise from the elemental significations and the contextual expressions arising from the parallel and contrapuntal confluences between and among sound, and visual elements. The narrative being the ultimate apex of the film therefore provides the fulcrum upon which the elements centrifuge and where the meanings from the elements and the compound expressions arising from the dynamic combination of the elements gravitate. This study set out to investigate the types and categories of non-verbal elements of sound design, examine the role that they play in film and the contextual narrative dispositions they accrue anchored on structuralism and semiotics theoretical frameworks. The arguments in this study therefore, revolve around significations by the sound elements, both conventional and contextual and the meanings generated by the dynamic interspersion of the elements of the audio and visual structure.

To address the objectives of the study the researcher first outlined the basic concepts of sound design; the fundamental technique of sound design like recording, editing and mixing and contextualized the elements of sound design under the codes of
sound design, diegesis and the cinematic soundtrack. In addition, the study also built on the narrative of the development of sound design practice in Kenya, and established that although practiced quite rudimentarily, sound design, supported by advancing technology and passionate personnel is slowly taking root.

In view of the non-speech sounds deployed in Kenyan films, the study established a range of genres and compositions of music are deployed in the selected films including Hip-Hop, “Genge”, “Kapuka”, Funk, “Highlife, Afro-fusion, Disco, instrumental music, and acapella as diegetic, non-diegetic and treading across the diegesis in spatio temporal turntable mode. The music tracks include original film score compositions for the films and popular songs, by artists in the Kenyan and global music scene.

Further a wide range of realistic, expressive, and surreal sound effects have been deployed in the selected film soundtracks, in synch, out of synch, on-screen, off-screen in domination and subtly. Bringing together spot effects, wildtracks, recorded effects and library effects, they include a range of car sounds like humming, revving, hooting, screeching; Footsteps on different surfaces, banging doors, gunshots, clinking glasses, clanking metals. The selected films also deploy actual or non-diegetic silence and implied silence in different scenes, cutting off or fading down sounds or by application of distant and subtle sounds to suggest quiet scenes and environments. The selected films were also found to have deployed lasting and punctual ambient sounds in their soundtracks blending presence sounds and ambient sound effects added during post production.
The second objective of this study was to investigate the role of music, sound effects, ambience and silence in Kenya drama films. It was established that, through direct signification and in the interstices of the complex network of the film structure non-speech sounds function in the following ways in Kenyan drama films;

i. Sound effects play a very vital role in enhancing the particular dramatic actions and activities, revealing emotions by reflecting emotional actions and reactions and building into the emotions in particular scenes. Further, SFX play a connective role between the scenes, sequences, spaces, actions, characters, and time, enhance the element of surprise in the films by creating momentous, split second, shocks and startles, and finally reveal the spatial characteristics of a scene by exposing the dimensions depth, composition and acoustical properties, through the effects of reverberation and sound decay, which connotes distance in external space.

ii. Ambience or natural sounds reveal diegetic locations by reflecting sounds endemic to a particular locale, establish time by deployment of conventionally and contextually time specific sounds like crickets at night, ambient bird sounds in the morning, and traffic sounds during the day. Natural sounds also set the emotional tone on parallel and contrapuntal ways, expressing a mood by their rhythm, pace intensity and density. High-pitched quick paced sounds express positive moods, while low pitch, slower rhythms signify dull and gloomy moods. Ambience further reveals properties of a diegetic space like spatial dimensions, reverberation and finally the natural
sounds function in evening transitions between shots, scenes and sequences in the films.

iii. Music in the selected Kenyan drama films indicates location by revealing acoustical properties of a space and reflecting the sociological make up and culture of a given locale. Further, film music reveals and evokes different emotions in film scenes, creates smooth transitions or segues and enhances dramatic actions by matching, contrasting and enhancing rhythm, and tempo of the actions.

iv. Silence in its actual and implied forms, reveals and evokes different emotions by enhancing the physiognomy of emotional images, and describes sonic spaces as silent and thereby lending meaning to their dimensions and composition. Silence also draws attention to specific details in a film and fosters continuity of time and space in transitive functions.

The third objective sought to explore the narrative dispositions and communicative qualities of non-verbal elements in the sampled Kenyan drama films. To address this objective the researcher propped the arguments on the elements of the film narrative as the skeletal framework, on which the sinews of individual and networked meanings blend to form a meaningful and coherent story. The analysis was therefore broken down into, plotting; which is a disposition of non-dialogical sounds advancing the storyline, thematic rendition; which is the adumbration of the various messages the films grapple with, location; which refers to the reflection of story setting; mood, and characterization or the assignment of traits to characters. As such
the non-dialogical sound elements accrue the narrative dispositions in the following ways.

i. Music, sound effects, ambience and silence characterize plotting by signifying the various plot points like exposition, hamartia, climax, turning point or peripeteia, anagnorisis (discovery), resolution and dénouement. This, as established is achieved also by the creation of narrative continuity and unity in transitions and leitmotifs.

ii. The non-verbal sound elements reflect the central and peripheral messages of the films by creation of conventional and contextual symbols that augur with the said messages and with the application of poetic narration, which is particular to musical lyrics that explicitly point out the issues.

iii. Silence, music, ambience and sound effects adumbrate location or narrative setting by indicating geographical locales, suggesting sociological make-ups and providing acoustical information of a given space.

iv. Mood or the state of mind of characters and emotional tones in scenes and sequences is reflected by the non-verbal sound elements through the enhancement of character emotions, matching of scene rhythms and juxtaposing emotional contexts with deployed sounds.

v. Non-speech sounds in Kenyan drama films exude characterization by use of character specific motifs, exposing a character’s thoughts, fears, traits, emotions, habits and development.
6.2 Conclusions

a) Sound design as a practice is an important process in the creation of a soundtrack that not only exudes pristine technical quality and embellishment, but one that can express meanings that advance the film story in part and as a whole.

b) A range of categories of music, silence, ambience and SFX are widely, creatively and to an extent deliberately and purposefully deployed in Kenyan drama films.

c) The non-speech sound elements play a myriad of important functions in Kenyan drama films, which translate to expression of storytelling elements.

d) The narrative dispositions of non-verbal elements of sound design in Kenyan drama films are; plotting, thematic rendition, location, mood, and characterisation.

6.3 Recommendations

Further Research

- Further research can be done to explore sound design practices of particular film directors, as case studies or comparatively.

- Further research can also be conducted on sound design or the deployment of sound in Kenyan theatre productions.
• An analysis of sound techniques in the Kenyan production environment vis-à-vis the resultant soundtracks.

Film Producers

• The researcher recommends that in order to achieve great audio-visual storytelling, there is need for producers/directors to invest on sound in their productions in crew, equipment.

• Create good rapport and professionally engaging sound crew not just as technicians but as collaborators in telling the film story.

Sound personnel

• Create and assert story telling vision for a production by creating sound design plans and engaging other film departments like directing, production, cinematography and production design in making decisions that affect film sound.

• Research on new equipment and techniques of sound design.

Universities and Colleges Offering Film

• Incorporate sound design and film scoring as part of curricula in order to nurture film sound personnel with a niche for aural storytelling.

• Organize short professional courses and master-class workshops on sound design for industry capacity building.
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Ministry of Information and Communication; (2011). *Draft Kenya Film Policy-MOIC, Nairobi*


Shapaya, A. B. (2013). “Cinematographic techniques In the Kenyan Experimental Films” (MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi Kenya)


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**Filmography**


Coppola, F. (1979): *Apocalypse Now*

Leone, S. (1969): *Once Upon a time in the west*

*Schickel R. (2003): Life and Art of Charlie Chaplin*
APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

1. What constitutes good film sound? And how would you determine that?
2. Which elements of sound do you exploit as a director/ sound editor?
3. At what stage in the making of the film is music, and sound effects given a place in the film?
4. What roles does sound play in a film? And are the roles played independent or dependent on the image? And how is that achieved?
5. To what degree/extent do you regard sound as a storyteller in film and why?
6. Which individual elements of film sound do you identify with in film?
7. How do the different elements function in the film?
8. How would you relate music to story elements like setting, characterization, plot, mood and point of view?
9. How do sound effects help to realize story elements like Setting, characterization, plot, mood and point of view?
10. How does silence reflect mood, setting and tone of a film?
11. How do the natural sounds/ambience reflect mood, setting, rhythm, and transitions in the film story?
12. What motivates your choices in music?
13. Besides complimenting images diegetically, what informs your infusion of sound effects in a film?
14. What does it take to compose (score) for a film?
15. How is the score morphed into the plot?
16. How is theme as a story element exposed and amplified by music and silence?
17. How are other narrative elements like suspense and twists reflected or enhanced with music, ambience, silence, and sound effects?
18. What process do you follow to come up with a full soundtrack?
19. What dictates your choice of particular sounds in a scene?
20. Which equipment do you use in sound recording, and editing?
21. What is the extent of your influence on the final soundtrack in a film?
22. What is silence in film?

Appendix II: Film sound Observation Guide

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<th>No.</th>
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<th>Scene description</th>
<th>Deployment mode</th>
<th>Narrative value</th>
<th>Thesis Notes/Topic</th>
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Appendix III: Research Authorizations

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Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
DATE: 19th April, 2015

TO: Mr. Gabriel Thuku Kimani
C/o Theatre Arts & Film Technology Dept.
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This is to inform you that the Graduate School Board at its meeting of 15th April, 2015 approved your M.A. Research Proposal Entitled “Narrative Disposition of Non-Verbal Elements of Sound Design in Selected Kenyan Drama Films”.

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Principal Secretary, Higher Education, Science and Technology.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking Forms are available at the University’s Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

RUPEN MURUUKI
FOR DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

C.C. Chairman, Theatre Arts & Film Technology Dept.

Supervisors:

1. Dr. John Muga
   C/o Theatre Arts & Film Technology Dept.
   KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

2. Dr. Rachael Diang’a
   C/o Theatre Arts & Film Technology Dept.
   KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

RM/cao
Our Ref: MG66/26354/13

Date: 19th April, 2015

The Principal Secretary,
Higher Education, Science & Technology,
P.O. Box 30040,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MR. GABRIEL T. KIMANI REG. NO. MG66/26354/13

I write to introduce Mr. Kimani who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. He is registered for a M.A. degree programme in the Department of Theatre Arts & Film Technology in the School of Visual & Performing Arts.

Mr. Kimani intends to conduct research for a thesis Proposal entitled “Narrative Disposition of Non-Verbal Elements of Sound Design in Selected Kenyan Drama Films”.

Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

MRS. LUCY & MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

RM/cao