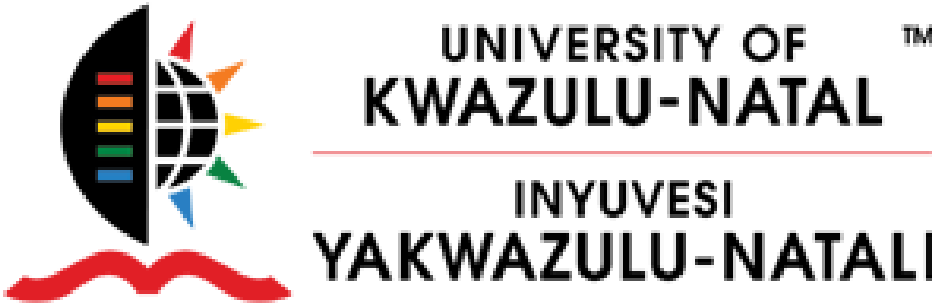

Examining the evolving representation of female characters in Zimbabwean films: A case study of Neria (1993) and Sinners (2013)

Isabel Pasipanodya

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Master of Social Sciences

2020

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ABSTRACT

The broad research question for this study was to investigate if the advocation for females' equality globally has produced any positive results towards the upliftment of females from the restrictive political and social inferioties impacted on them by patriarchal societies in Zimbabwe. The thesis investigates the positive transition in the way females are portrayed in Zimbabwe between the 1993s and the 2013 period using a case study of two films *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013). The films where shot in different socio-economic contexts of Zimbabwe, but both films were based on true life events. In an attempt to map out the evolving representation of females in Zimbabwe, the thesis pays specific attention to how female lead actresses are represented in the two case studies selected. Drawing a comparative analysis of the manner in which female lead actresses are portrayed on screen between the different decades in which the films where produced. In order to achieve the goals of the study a qualitative method was applied. The research is centred within the Feminist Film Theory which proposes, critiques and acknowledges that females are represented as objects for male gratification. Who are naturally immoral, intellectually inferior to men, malicious and weak. The Feminist Film Theory is rooted within the ahistoricism thinking which is built upon semiotics, psychoanalysis and monolithic concepts of ideology defined as patriarchal and predicated upon rigid binary oppositions. Which evidently shows that females' recognition and character is outlined in relation to that of males. The project's data was collected mainly from watching the purposively selected scenes from the two case studies selected. A semiotic analysis was used to analyse the data as it explores and discovers the arrangement and use of content bringing out what it communicates (Ballaster, 1991:29). Together with the semiotic analysis, textual analysis was also applied to analyse the data. This is so because films make use of a sophisticated and knowledgeable style that is dominated by many ways like the mis-en-scene, narrative structure, lightning and sound.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BPFA	Beijing Declaration on the Platform for Action
CAFU	Central African Film Union
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
SDGEA	Solemn Declaration on Gender and Equality in Africa

Contents

CHAPTER 1 12
INTRODUCTION 12
1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY 12
1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY 14
1.4 RESEARCH AIM 16
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES 16
1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 17
CASE STUDIES FOR THE RESEARCH 17
1.7 SYNOPSIS AND A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE FILM *NERIA* (1993) 17
SYNOPSIS AND A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE FILM SINNERS 19
1.8 METHODOLOGY 19
1.9 STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS 20
CHAPTER 2 20
LITERATURE REVIEW 21
2.1 Introduction 21
2.2 Global Perspective on Female Representation in Film 21
2.3 A Short History of Women on Representation in African and Zimbabwean Film Industry 24
2.4 Women in Film in Zimbabwe 25
2.5 The Male Gaze 27
2.6 The Identity of Women in Culture and in Film Media in Zimbabwe 31
2.7 Conclusion 33
CHAPTER 3 34
THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK 34
3.1 Introduction 34
3.1 UNPACKING FEMINISM 34
3.3 FEMINIST FILM THEORY 35
3.4 FEMINIST FILM THEORY FIRST STAGE 36
3.5 PSYCHOANALYSIS , POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND SEMIOTICS 37
3.6 FEMINIST FILM THEORY SECOND STAGE 38
3.7 FEMINIST FILM THEORY THIRD WAVE 39
3.8 Conclusion 42
CHAPTER 4 43
METHODOLOGY CHAPTER 43
INTRODUCTION 43

4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH 43
4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN 44
4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM 45
4.4 SAMPLING 45
4.5 DATA COLLECTION 46
4.6 DATA ANALYSIS 49
TEXTUAL ANALYSIS 49
4.7 SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS 50
CONCLUSION` 52
CHAPTER 5 53
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS CHAPTER 53
INTRODUCTION 53
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ON HOW FEMALES ARE REPRESENTED IN *NERIA* (1993) AND *SINNERS* (2013) 53
5.1 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS HOUSEWIVES IN *NERIA* 53
5.2 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS INFERIOR IN *NERIA* 55
5.3 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS *COMMODITIES* 60
IN NERIA 60
II. IN SINNERS 62
5.4 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS EVIL 63
IN NERIA 63
II. IN *SINNERS* 65
5.5 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS OBJECTS OF SEXUAL DESIRE (GRATIFICATION) 66
IN NERIA 66
II. IN SINNERS 68
5.6 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS THE “OTHER” 71
IN NERIA 71
II. IN SINNERS 73
5.7 SOLIDARITY AND UNITY AMONGST FEMALE CHARACTERS 74
IN NERIA 74
II. IN SINNERS 75
5.8 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS SPIRITUAL 77
IN NERIA 77
5.9 IDOLIZATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS 79
IN NERIA 79
5.10 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS STRONG 80
IN NERIA 80

5.11 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS INDEPENDENT 82
IN SINNERS 82
SECTION II 86
5.12 THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LEAD FEMALE CHARACTERS 86
5.13 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 13-20 FOCUS GROUP 86
5.14 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 21-35 FOCUS GROUP 87
5.15 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ELDERLY FOCUS GROUP 90
III. CONCLUSION 91
CHAPTER 6 92
CONCLUSION 93
THE EVOLVING REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ZIMBABWE 93
6.1 THEMES BROUGHT OUT BETWEEN THE TWO FILMS 93
6.2 MISE-EN-SCENE BETWEEN THE TWO FILMS 95
6.3 20-Year-Old Gap (1993 and 2013) 97

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We live in a world of things seen; a world that is visual, and we expend much of our physical and emotional energy on that act of seeing (Dutt, 2014:11). Many real-life societal struggles are documented in the form of unwritten and written modes of communication that use visuals, words, colour, sound and light. In many Madzimbabwe cultures of Zimbabwe, music, storytelling, dance and drama has been used as a communication tool to address different societal issues. During the Liberation struggle many black Zimbabweans like Thomas Mapfumo and the late Cde Chinx took music and drama as channels of addressing colonial injustices, rejecting the treatment of Africans by their colonisers. They used theatre and indigenous performances reassuring Zimbabweans as active intellectuals. With the coming of independence, as compared to colonial times, a lot of black people in Zimbabwe were able to venture into the film industry to tell their stories. Van de Werfhorst (2010:157 as quoted by (Rwafa, 2014:106) notes that Zimbabwean filmmakers possess "cultural capitals" linked to, derived or resourced from their own African 'traditional' values, shifted from colonial socialisation and also produced as a result of creative experimentation with the film camera. In other words, it implies that many filmmakers in Zimbabwe address societal issues as realistic as they are in their societies without adding a lot of fiction. Hence, filmmaking in Zimbabwe is frequently a direct and unvarnished portrayal or mirror of the Zimbabwean society in as much: as it is a form of entertainment, film in Zimbabwe is a documentation of the people's struggles. Film characters exploit the shifting nature of verbal and non-verbal cues created within their bodies to disrupt, challenge or revolt against the dominant regimes of interpreting social reality (Fuery and Fuery, 2003:55). This imply meant that actors have the potential to raise questions of the unseen and the buried aspects of traditions. When impersonating stories actors use their physical abilities to represent internal contradictions of the dominant and subservient cultures.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Spurred on by the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), the 1970s decade launched a call to action in all areas of females' lives, thereby according females unprecedented global attention. This evolved into universal movements for the promotion of females' rights and of feminist activism. The decade aided in heightening the African's consciousness on the ideals of gender and social relations of power (Sakarombe, 2018:21). In 1980 the new Zimbabwean regime, after gaining its independence nullified some of the British colonial strict laws, took proactive measures to address females' issues and problems (Chitando and Matevake, 2012:42). This was due to the historical legacy, partly as a result of the active females' involvement in the struggle for the nation's liberation (Rwafa, 2014:104). The 1982 era marked a life-changing phase for females in Zimbabwe, as the regime passed the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) law. The LAMA legally positioned females as adults and ended the colonial customarily law which had relegated them as minors (Peters, 2000:124). This placed females on an equal footing with males, giving females the legal capacity, allowing females to enter into any contract, open bank accounts, own businesses, be guardians of their children irrespective of whether these children were born in or out of wedlock, accepted females to contract or terminate a marriage if they so wished without the need for parental or family consent, permitted them to sue and be sued as individuals, allowed them the right to vote and purchase and acquire properties in their own right. The Zimbabwean Republic Police had in the past initiated campaigns where unaccompanied females were arrested arbitrarily in raids conducted at night, such as Operation '*Chipo Chiroorwa*' (Chipo, a female's name, get married). Concurrently, in 1983 females across the Zimbabwean nation voiced their strong opposition to "Operation *Chinyavada* (scorpion)", a law which prohibited females to be

outdoors after 8 o'clock in the evening, in pain of being arrested (Rupiya, 2005:117). The fundamental patriarchal hypothesis by the Zimbabwean government were clear: "every female must submit to patriarchal dictates by getting married". 1983 marked a new beginning for females to emancipate themselves from the social, economic and political bondages of patriarchy in Zimbabwe. As in that same year, 25 organizations were formed addressing issues relating to gender violence and many other issues pertinent to females (Rupiya, 2005:118).

Since its independence the Zimbabwean government actively signed international, local declarations, treaties, implemented and amended legislative laws, policies and regulatory measures in support of women's rights. In 1991 the Zimbabwean government joined the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Popularly considered as the women's bill of rights, CEDAW's main task was to end discrimination and create institutions that safeguard females. In 1995 Zimbabwe became part of the Beijing Declaration on the Platform for Action (BPFA) with the aim of advancing awareness against females oppression. Thus, the BPFA was an impetus needed to upgrade the existing actions towards gender equality. Zimbabwe became part of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. In 2004 the government joined many other countries in Africa and became part of the Solemn Declaration on Gender and Equality in Africa in a bid to ensure gender equality to new generations (SDGEA) (Zungura and Nyemba, 2013:206). Again in 2009 the country became part of the Southern Africa Development Community Protocol on Gender and Development family. All these efforts by the government have been done to further greater opportunities for females, as they have been cut loose from participating in major spheres of influence by patriarchal societies.

In Zimbabwe a lot of campaigns and amendments have been undertaken by the government to erase inequality and the discrimination against females in their private and public lives. In 2004, under Robert Gabriel Mugabe's rule, the Zimbabwean government set an example by appointing its first female vice president, Joyce Mujuru (2004-2014). This move marked a big transition for a lot of females' lives in Zimbabwe, as more and more females nationwide were appointed as heads of departments, schools and companies, positions which previously were considered male domains. The Zimbabwean government has a ministry that specifically focuses on females, which was established in 2005 and was known as the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development. However, ever since it was ratified and became its own ministry, separate from the ministry of gender, it has been headed by females. The month of June in Zimbabwe is known as the women's movement month, where local broadcasting radios and televisions stream visuals that carry strong educational messages that can help in emancipating females. Act 17 of the country's constitution makes it mandatory for the state of Zimbabwe to promote gender balance particularly the participation of females in all societal, economic and political spheres of the country. Section 70, 79 and 80 of the country's 2013 constitution clearly states that every female has full and equal dignities like men, hence should be granted the same opportunities in all activities as males. Section 56 of the 2013 constitution states that females have the right and equal protection and should not be taken advantage of based on their gender. Section 80 of the country's 2013 constitution abolished all laws, customs, traditions and cultural practices that infringe females and were declared void and illegal.

Many non-governmental organizations have used films such as *Neria* (1993) for educational purposes, streaming them to viewers and using them as a means of communicating their message (Zungura and Nyemba, 2013:209). Encouraging them to fight for themselves against patriarchal societies that suppress their potentials. Some non-governmental organizations hold public campaigns

during which they distribute t-shirts, caps and pens to the crowds. These items have strong educational messages that motivate and fight against the oppression of females. But despite laws aimed at enhancing and empowering females, they are still disadvantaged (United Nations Population Fund Zimbabwe 20 April 2018). According to a United Nations Zimbabwe report (3 March 2019) one in three females in Zimbabwe has experienced physical violence and one in four has been sexually assaulted. Films have been produced in Zimbabwe to try and tackle this phenomenon and to empower females. But in present-day Zimbabwe even after all the effort from women's organizations on stopping females' abuse; there are still cases of gender violence.

The cinema developed in Paris from the mid-1890s, and spread quickly to Africa, arriving in South Africa before 1900 and debuting in parts of British and French West Africa by 1903 (Burns, 2002:130). And that is how film was introduced in Zimbabwe. Film proved to be the best means of transmitting information, taking over many African theatrical modes of communication. Its advantage is that it is dynamic and gives access to a wide audience. Rwafa (2014:104) accredited film as a communication medium which has the ability to synthesise verbal and audio-visual elements of communication, making it possible for the medium to create multiple narratives and different perspectives of exploring the challenges. Cinematic codes in film construct meaning not only through visual images but also through the film's ability to control the dimensions of time and space, through choice of shots, framing, editing and narrative pace (Thornham, 1999:307). Films in Zimbabwe have been used as an educational tool just like storytelling and other theatrical performances that were undertaken before that (Mboti, 2015:2). Films, as noted by Rwafa (2014:105), reflect certain societies therefore, they play a major role in providing visibility, legitimacy and credibility to an issue. The government of Zimbabwe has worked and joined forces with non-governmental organizations to fight for the equalisation between males and females. Mhiripiri (2000:24) notes that it is very important to acknowledge film as the most capital intensive of all media, considering the origination and processing material as basic resources to shoot a film specifically in the Zimbabwean context. As noted by the above scholars, film is a reflection of different cultures and societies thereby, making it an important tool in the country's development hence, this study made use of *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) as its case studies. The findings from the two films will conclude if governmental and non-governmental measures employed by the two parties in trying to emancipate females have yielded any results in Zimbabwe.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In 1890, the British South Africa Company headed by Cecil John Rhodes demarcated the territory now known as Zimbabwe, before it became a British colony in 1923 being named Southern Rhodesia (Burns, 2002:15). This marked the beginning of moving pictures in Zimbabwe, as the British brought mobile film projection units which they broadcasted in the rural areas. According to Baudrillard (1991:12 in Rwafa, 2012:314), television acts as a type of a mirror for reality, therefore media products such as films seeks not only to depict social reality but also to influence how audiences perceive this reality. The camera was developed in order to accurately reproduce reality and safeguard the bourgeois notion of realism, which was being replaced in painting, it grasps the natural world of the dominant ideology (Thornham, 1999: 307). Films are a product of social, historical, cultural, political and economic forces, making them powerful mediums that in many ways reflect, and shape society and its culture (Rwafa, 2014:107). Additionally, Good and Godfrey (2007 as quoted by Ureke, 2016:18) acknowledged to this thought noting film as a representational system that communicates concepts and feelings. In other words, film is an essential mode of communication as it is an excellent phenomenon of art in which the signifier co-exists with the signified (Metz, 1974:44). Many cultural constructions, societal norms, fantasies and historical moments are conveyed and

understood through films (Ibbi, 2017:54). Thus, this study made use of films as case studies because films are born out of culture and reflect culture, which opens doors for analysis of the developments of gender equality.

Females, for centuries, across space and time and from culture to culture, have been consistently treated with ambivalence, misogyny and subordination (Nobee, 2018:2). They have suffered denigration and subjugation in virtually all cultures where man is the carrier. Culture delineates the subjective sphere of human exercise pronounced by the ideas of self-expression and particularity. Culture is characterized by standardized forms which carry the illusion of shared values and matters in the aspects of the real and contentious divisions that survive among race, ethnic tribes, classes and gender (Rwafa, 2008:188). Zimbabwean society is replete with different cultural practices that have been mediated through film language.

Representation of females in the media is a critical, historical issue in Zimbabwe which has captured the interests of scholars, literary critics and the media (Mhiripiri, 2013:99). Conceptualised in the 1950s and 1960s, African cinema was parallel to a lot of independence movements and females where represented as heroines (Smith and Walker, 1992:63). However, Fayida Ayari (1996:3) argued that the image of African females in African cinema remains essentially created by men. In the media, females are still being represented as second-class citizens dependent on males and as sexual objects at the disposal of males (Chari, 2008:94). The research thus, explored if Zimbabwean films have taken any progressive steps in tackling issues of female emancipation. The Zimbabwean government joined forces with other countries in trying to liberate females from traditional chains. The socio-political films of Africa have been favouring social reform of the female identity (Mboti, 2016:197). Dovey (2007:144) argued that gender roles in films are evolving and males are becoming more compassionate, which this research aimed to prove by tackling the politics of gender representation on screen. With the existing studies on female representations in film in Zimbabwe since 1980, this study seeks to fill in the gap by outlining if female representation has improved in a positive manner in Zimbabwe.

The study sets out to establish the evolution of regimes of visual representation of females by examining female representation in two historically disparate Zimbabwean films *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013). By critically analysing whether the global focus on female rights and female emancipation has influenced the way films portray females, particularly within a Zimbabwean context. The two films are key to the research because the film *Neria* was produced two years after the government of Zimbabwe had joined the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Which meant that Zimbabwe was at its birth stage of adopting and incorporating feminism nationwide. Thus, the film *Neria* was produced as a developmental oriented film which carried supporting themes of female emancipation. As noted by Phoebe Sakarombe (2018:28), a lot of viewers understood the message and felt that the film *Neria* precipitated changes in their beliefs and attitudes. Additionally, the Media for Development Trust report (1989) reported that almost half of the viewers felt the need to write a will as soon as possible after watching the movie. Solanas & Getino (2000:285 quoted in Rwafa, 2008:151) pointed out that Neria's (female lead character) cultural significance is that within her central character are r/evolutionary values that not only illustrate and document the generic elements of a problem but also suggest ways of solving it whose ideological thrust focuses on promoting females' legal rights. These rights are pitted against traditional values, which are breaking down under the burden of modern legal laws that promote the rights of females to own material resources (Rwafa, 2008:152).

And two decades later, after the production of *Neria* which represented the dichotomized "*other*" out of a grand narrative of patriarchy that favoured male dominance over females in some of Zimbabwe's traditional societies. The film *Sinners* was produced and in an interview about the film Davis Guzha, the producer noted that *"we don't talk about feminism, we do it, it is not just about the females' stories but also about the power of females, which seems to be increasing"*. As evidenced above *Neria* was a revolutionary film, crying for the equal rights of females. Then 20 years later, *Sinners,* a film for the female gaze, was produced which boasted about reflecting feminism and not just talking about it. Hence, the difference between the age gap of the two films makes it flexible for the critical analysis of the adjustments and similarities between the representation of female characters in Zimbabwe. The fact that *Neria* was a guide in the construction of feminism in Zimbabwe and *Sinners* being a product of it qualifies both films as significant case studies. Which then leads to rich valuable findings of the comparative research as a lot of transitions took place between 1993 and 2013 in Zimbabwe.

Neria and *Sinner*s are key elements to the research because their storylines are based on real life true events which targeted females' political, economic, traditional challenges in a broader manner. *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) both have females in central roles and females in power and status which aided in comparing the evolution of female characters in Zimbabwe. They both include the youth, middle-aged and elderly group characters in their films, in other words there is a variation of the age range amongst their female characters. The two films mirrored the tumults and victories won by females in particular as compared to other films produced in Zimbabwe after its independence, which focused on other themes. Films that where produced in the 1980s decade mainly focused on the liberation struggle themes, the country's freedom and economic challenges themes such as *After the Hunger and Drought* (1988), *Corridors of Freedom* (1987), The *Sanctions Debate (*1990). The 1990 decade was hit by many films, which drifted from focusing on the liberation struggle to societal challenges as a whole such as *More Time* (1993) which focused on the AIDs theme, *Everyone's Child* (1996) which tackled the struggles of orphans who have lost their parents to AIDs, *Flame* (1994) tackled the abuse of female liberation fighters during the liberation struggle, *Yellow Card* (2000) tackled teen issues and *Tanyaradzwa* (2005) focused on social issues like teen issues. *Neria* and *Sinners* distinctly focus on the struggle of Zimbabwean females' journeys of re-defining their identity in the context of global turmoils within African cultures. Cinema in Africa has a very feminist foundation and base but is has not been explored or highlighted much in scholarship similarly, more studies are needed to document and exhibit the growth of gender equality in the cinema (Nobee, 2018:4). Therefore, this study will add on scholarship by exploring the evolution of gender equality in Zimbabwe paying attention to the positive differences between the lead female characters in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) which display aspects of gender equality

1.4 RESEARCH AIM

The primary aim is, using two Zimbabwean-made films as a vehicle of analysis, to understand if the global efforts to improve women's rights has in the past two decades borne fruit in Zimbabwe. The study aims to assess whether the female-male portrayals in locally made films have changed in Zimbabwe, and what is the extent and nature of that change?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the changing depiction of females in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).
2. To understand how sexual differences are encoded in the visual and narrative structure of *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).
3. To compare the representation and reproduction of myths about females and femininity in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).

4. To identify the filmic devices used to depict females in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How and in which ways are females represented in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) films?

2. How has the sexual difference encoded the visual and narrative structure of the two films?

3. Is there any difference in the representation and reproduction of myths about females and femininity in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013)?

4. How were the filmic styles used to represent females?

CASE STUDIES FOR THE RESEARCH

1.7 SYNOPSIS AND A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE FILM *NERIA* (1993)

This section describes the synopsis and discusses the two key case studies. The film *Neria* became very popular and is still one of the most talked about movies in Zimbabwe even after two decades because of its complex and diverse layers of reality surrounding the African female in the post-colonial dispensation (Nembaware, 2014:3). According to Heather Hill (1993:65) the film *Neria* drew one of the most challenging topics in Zimbabwe as it showed that an African woman can fight back through the courts and win, and that tradition can be adapted to fit a changing world. She further stated that it was an encouraging and uplifting proposal, one that has obviously found a receptive audience among both females and males who identify with the victim of this insidious problem rather than with the villainous brother-in-law who perpetrates it (Hill, 1993:64). Rwafa (2014:105) noted that the film *Neria* was created to support and safeguard female's rights. *Neria* (1993) was Zimbabwe's biggest blockbuster, breaking box office records and out grossed *Terminator 2*. The film *Neria* (1993) was shot in Harare and Domboshava, and it runs for 103 minutes. It tells a story of a happily 35-year-old married female in the urban suburbs of Harare who loses her husband to a bicycle accident. Simply described, the film's narrative explicitly challenges patriarchal modes of oppressing females engendered by the cultural habits of inheritance. Neria falls prey to her greedy brother in-law who takes all her belongings. She is caught in between fighting for her own rights and fighting against her culture. The character Neria from the film *Neria* became the chosen, the figurehead and the possible sacrifice for females as the film made use of female lead actresses, to represent an empowering movement (Mukwasi, 2016:102).

It was directed by Godwin Mawuru a male and written by a female, Tsitsi Dangarembga. Together they managed to pull out the strengths of females through Neria's character (Kempley, 1993). Godwin Mawuru won an award for being the best director in 1993 for his role in *Neria*. Tsitsi Dangarembga, a noted novelist, had previously won an award from Commonwealth for her novel Nervous Conditions (1988). According to the Media for Development Trust Interim Report Overview of June 1989, Godwin Mawuru approached John Riber to help him fulfil his dream of making a film about the struggles widows go through under patriarchal societies. The development of the script focused on widows and it began in March 1989. On 4 April that same year, the Media for Development Trust received an amount of $15 000 U.S dollars to design the script (Hungwe, 2005:84). Together with a group of 12 expects including the producers, lawyers from females' ministry, writers and filmmakers advised the scriptwriter on legal and cultural activities on women's rights and inheritance (Hungwe, 2005; Riber, 2001). The film, *Neria* got about a quarter million U.S dollars in support from different fifteen donors

(Locksley, 2009; Sakarombe, 2018; Thompson, 2013). It was released in theatres and cinema halls in Kenya, Lesotho, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Ghana, Australia, South Africa and The United States of America (Riber, 2001 ; Thompson, 2013). It won a lot of awards internationally such as the Best Foreign Film, Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame 1993, Special Mention Catholic Commission on Human Rights award 1993, Best of First Feature Cinevue 1994, Public Prize Milan award 1993, MNET third best film1994 (Hungwe, 2005:85). *Neria* was eventually seen by one in three Zimbabweans, including people from the rural areas who do not normally attend movies but who made pilgrimages to the cities where it played or organized carpools for the drive-in shows (Hill, 1993:65). Identically, Sakarombe noted that in that same year about a million people were shown the movie in rural areas all over Zimbabwe via the mobile unit (Sakarombe, 2018:24). The film *Neria* was used by a lot of human rights non-governmental organizations for their campaigns in many areas not only in Zimbabwe but in other African Countries such as Tanzania (Riber, 2001).

Neria involved elements of oral culture and performance, including the participation of famous musicians, many of whom are also local heroes associated with the liberation struggle, helped the film to attract an audience, particularly amongst rural peoples who, though often illiterate, have vibrant traditions of oral performance (Lund, 1999:222). Additionally, Lund (1999: 228) further noted that the film used the power of cinema as well as the power of music to give voice to the otherwise voiceless and to draw the community together into a harmonious national whole. It foregrounded quality music sang by Oliver Mtukudzi which was indispensable in situations where individuals are unable to speak for themselves or to make themselves heard. The song Neria made headlines and became one of the most popular songs even up to date. In an interview in February 2018 by Sakarombe, Oliver Mtukudzi reported that he still got requests at almost every local concert to play the film's signature song Neria.

According to Sakarombe (2018:26) the film *Neria* makes valid points about the need for society to respect females in general, and widows and orphans in particular. The film attempts to be a bridge between customary law and common law and to make men conscientious and appreciative of widows' position in society. For this, the film *Neria* must be commended. However, Sakarombe (2018:32) further argues that the film is weak in its attempt to normatively characterize society's problems as being caused by people like Phineas, it deflects attention from larger, systemic forces that destroy family cohesion and social fabric such as capitalist pressures and exploitative economic relations. There is no attempt in the film to link the view of the backward cruel male to colonial stereotypes, and no attempt to question the rationale behind behaviour change interventions. Mawuru's film ends up, through showing Phineas as incapable of changing, not only as a mere African male bashing but as an attack on certain perceived African male genetic traits. Mawuru's characterisation relies on excess or heaping negativity and villainy on Phineas (Sakarombe, 2018:32). In Sakarombe's view the film *Neria* collectively diminishes and tarnishes, the male gender in the African context in favour of vision of social change. Nembaware further viewed the film *Neria* as a sterling attempt within the feminist tradition which advocated for females' rights under harsh patriarchal societies. Shadreck Nembaware (2014:52) noted that Dangarembga's adoption of a significantly feminist tone that culminated in the climax of the protagonist's penultimate self-assertion with no fear and not apologetic was vividly shown in *Neria*. This is also noted by Thompson (2013:74) who asserts that the film *Neria* was frequently viewed and received as authored by Dangarembga to assert its feminist perspectives through a post-colonial African lens.

As stated above the film *Neria* was an inspiring proposal which got a receptive audience thus, this study seeks to understand if the Zimbabwean society has been responsive practically to the issues addressed in the film *Neria* drawing a comparative analysis from the film *Sinners*.

SYNOPSIS AND A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE FILM SINNERS

In 2011 a perplexing phenomenon drew the national attention in which three Gweru (3rd capital city of Zimbabwe) females were arrested and charged with raping close to two dozens of men and harvesting their semen for what was suspected to be for ritual purposes (The *Sunday Mail*, 25 April 2011). According to the British Broadcasting Corporation, the women were arrested and charged on 17 accounts of aggravated indecent assault after they were found with 31 used condoms in their car (Ureke, 2016:155). The unusual rape incidents reportedly inspired a 2014 Hollywood series episode, Being Mary Jane Season 1 (*Financial Gazette*, 17 April 2014). The film, *Sinners* (2013) is based on this true story narrative of female rapists who made headlines in 2011. It started off as a theoretical performance, running about 16 performances at Roof Centre in Harare and for the Mwenzi Walda festival which was held on 12 August 2012 in Malawi (Nehanda Radio, 15 September 2013). The film *Sinners* is about a group of females who started off as sex workers and with due cause, expanded their business to raping men, collecting their sperms for traditional purposes in return of huge profits. The film *Sinners* runs for 71 minutes.

It is a low budget film as noted by Daves Guzha the producer. In an interview in 2013, he noted that the film costed about $12 000 US dollars and of this total, about $8-9000 U.S dollars was from his personal investments, which he enthuses as private not donor-funded unlike the feature film *Neria* (Ureke, 2016:154). He further noted that about 90% of the film was shot at the former Rooftop premises and at Daves Guzha‘s friend's house. This is due to the lack of funding which has left a lot of filmmakers in Zimbabwe to resort to short films with low budgets. This however has not managed to last for long as high rates of inflation, political instability has led to many economy shutdowns in Zimbabwe. The video film was shot on a Sony HVR-ZI High Definition Video camera which at the time was regarded as outdated as compared to *Neria* which was shot on 35mm (Ureke, 2016:156). *Sinners* broke many Zimbabwean boundaries in terms of its subject matter and graphic content which went beyond general analysis of social and economic systems of Zimbabwean females (Mboti,2016:168, *The Herald*, 14 September 2013). The politics of production, distribution and marketing made the distribution of the film *Sinners* to be difficult to be accessed as compared to the film *Neria*. With the above literature, this study will add on the literature as it will evaluate whether the originality and ingenuity of females' difficulties shown in the film *Sinners* indicates a transition from the film *Neria* which according to the above literature helped heighten the African consciousness on the ideals of gender and social relations of power in Zimbabwe. *Sinners* deliberately positions female figures in leading roles in the cast as well as the technical crew.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

This research used the qualitative research method in order to investigate the evolving representation of females in Zimbabwe. The qualitative method was used because of its explanatory potential that brings in new dimensions and nuances to the original problem that any one individual might not have thought of (Rubin and Rubin, 1995:140 as quoted in Mushore, 2016:96). Qualitative methods make use of the open coding technique which can be interpreted as the search for information relating to films that are being analysed (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 499 as quoted in Rwafa, 2014:106). The qualitative manner allows the analyses of films, permitting film critics to describe with words and expressions hence, it was utilised in the research. Men's actions cannot be objectively measured but remain convenient classifications by traditions and communities thus, the qualitative method was applied in order to achieve the aim of the research. The qualitative strategy was chosen over the quantitative approach because it is attached on the belief that there is no one objective reality which

can be observed and neutrally quantified (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). It is an approach that is descriptive in nature that accounts for researches that cannot be instrumentally measured such as speech, feelings, behaviours, thoughts and traditions. Thus, the researcher chose this approach in order to explore the heterogeneous nature of human beings in interpreting film texts as the qualitative approach believes that human beings are not homogenous who can be simply classified.

The structure of inquiry employed by this study to trace the evolving representation of females in Zimbabwe was a multi case study design of two films. These two films selected enabled the researcher to answer the research questions as, films do not only concern themselves with representing experience through language but with experiencing language through a destruction of representation. Destruction of representation in film is achieved by or through a subversive interpretation of film against the "totalising rationalist progressivism" (Brink, 2007:342). Therefore, film reflects on itself in the act of telling "pointing towards endlessly displaced, deferred and different meanings and supplements to meanings, that produce a palimpsest in which earlier or alternative meanings are never completely obliterated (Brink, 2007: 335). The image of objects and people in film and theatre, painting or on television is seen not for what it is, but for what it is to the interpreting subjects/audiences. Hence, the study used a textual and semiotic analysis to analyse the data.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: The first chapter of the thesis is the introduction to the thesis. It briefs up the research's strategy. Giving a detailed outline of what is in the dissertation. It provides the background to study, significance of study, study aims, study objectives and the research questions. It justifies the significance of the study and explains the theoretical framework to be used. It also outlines the methodological approach to be used. Giving a brief synopsis of the two films selected.

Chapter 2: The second chapter tackles and reviews the existing literature on the personification of females in Zimbabwe and globally. It reviews and weighs the perspectives that have been provided by the existing written literature on selected films. The reviewing of literature traces the origins of the representation of females in film.

Chapter 3: The third chapter contextualises the chosen theoretical framework for the study in details. It outlines its power use for the research.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter is the methodology chapter. It clearly states, defines and discusses the thesis's steps in conducting the research. It gives in-depth information about the research approach, design, case studies, data collection methods and data analysis.

Chapter 5: With the guide of the feminist film theory an in depth textual and semiotic analysis is applied on the chosen scenes. Providing a review of the thesis. It presents, discusses and draws a comparative analysis of the findings of the study. The findings reported in this chapter are specific to the two films.

Chapter 6: The sixth chapter is the conclusion chapter of the whole thesis. It summarises and concludes the arguments generated from the analysis of the evolving representation of females in Zimbabwe. Based on the findings of the study, the chapter also offers recommendations on possible future research areas related to the representation of females in the Zimbabwean context.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Shaka and Uchendu (2012:1) state that in the early 19th century, the hunger and request for equal rights between females and males met with sporadic protests and attracted little to no attention from the majority of people. This is so because most females did not possess economic and educational resources that would equip them to protest social orders thus, females were generally left with no option but to involuntarily accept their inferior status. Thus, this chapter reviews existing literature on Zimbabwean film production and history, representation of females in film. It explores extant literature on the representation of females in films and television productions in Zimbabwe, the identity of the black African female as expected from the Zimbabwean tradition, representation of females in films internationally, the percentage of females in the film industry both locally and internationally and the existing literature on the two case studies selected for the research which are *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).

2.2 Global Perspective on Female Representation in Film

Media is defined as an agent of social control which conveys stereotypical and ideological values about females and femininity (Gill, 2007:147). Contemporary films and television productions are mostly dominated by male producers, directors or editors (Murphy, 2015). Females only account for 2% producers, 19% executive producers, 16% of editors, 11% of writers, 11% of directors and 4% of cinematographers (Michallon, 2018). Therefore, a film is told from a male perspective as they dominate more as compared to females thus, they give an impression that females are unable to act as independent human beings (Smelik, 2016:5). From another angle the low number of females in film industries (behind the scenes) can be because of patriarchal cultures which undermine females' power therefore directing a film would mean, in most cases, to direct a mostly male crew, which could be a challenge for many females and as a result they step back. According to Gilpatric (2010:3) 15.3% of action heroines were portrayed as the main character in films while 58.6 % were depicted to be submissive to male protagonists. Smith (2018) noted that females remained vastly underrepresented when it came to both speaking and co-leading parts in films. Murphy (2015:1) noted that in 2013 females comprised less than a third of speaking parts in the top grossing domestic films and only 15% were protagonists. In her study in 2015 Tanaya Guha Che-Wei Huan concluded that females comprised only of 20-30% in all speaking characters in all movies and the on-screening time for females was 41.06% (2015). Looking at the top movies of 2017 in Hollywood females' speaking roles took up 30% to 31% (Smith, 2017). According to the study of the top 100 grossing domestic films, the percentage of films featuring female protagonists increased to 40% in 2019, up from 31% from the previous year (Kelley, 2020).

Films do not construct collective identity, but merely represents it (Gauntlett, 2002). Therefore, films are accused of being sexist towards the representation of females reinforcing the structures of capitalist's patriarchy that tend to subordinate females (Lumby, 1997:12). Unquestionable, film industries face a continuous struggle to find suitable methods to balance both the sexualisation and empowerment of strong females (Brown, 2004:5). Kelley (2020) noted that Hollywood had been trying to become more female-friendly producing movies that represented females as not being only passive but indomitable such as Kill Bill, Salt, Hunger Games and Wonder Woman who had female characters

that graced the screen. It is now a commonplace to see female action characters engage in hand-to-hand combat, wield swords, shoot machine guns and employ high-tech weaponry to destroy people and property, behaviours which were once reserved for the exclusive male domain action heroes (Shaka and Uchendu, 2012:12). Again, Sutherland and Ferlty also credits action stars in films as empowered, self-determining and intelligent, representing in terms of both gender and race (2017: 620). Hill (2010:23 cited in Mushore, 2016:84) also suggested that the view of females being depicted as successful in recent years than in decades in the past was maybe due to the influence of film feminist movements. Females must be strong, aggressive, but still be beautiful and sexy, but this so-called tough female is a testament to a still male-dominant society's own contradictory responses to females' demands for equal treatment (Ross, 2006 cited in Dutt, 2014:10). Stasia (2004 quoted in Smelik, 2009:180) critiqued that the costumes which are worn by female lead actresses (heroines) remind the audience that even though these female stars are strong they are still there for erotic pleasure. The New York Film Academy in 2017 outlined that 28.8% of females wore sexually revealing clothes, as opposed to 7% of men and 26.2% of females, got partially naked as compared to males (9.4%). While the percentage of teenage females depicted with some nudity had increased to 32.5% from 2007 to 2012. Kaplan (1983:89) suggested that shots of a female on a trapeze, first clothed then naked suggests freedom, spirituality, joy as well as sheer sensuality. However, Fol argues that Hollywood supports the global dissemination and perpetuation of the powerful patriarchal discourse which continually reinforces stereotypes about femininity, including sexuality, appearance and appropriate behaviour (Fol, 2004:6). Thus, in a Hollywood film text which is composed of a variety of different discourses the structural coherence arises from the interrelations of its discourses while ideological hegemony is gained by the power of the discourse carrying the dominant patriarchal ideology meaning, within patriarchal cultures the various discourses that interweave through a specific (Hollywood) film text are organised along gender lines as to give priority to the male (patriarchal) discourse (Fol, 2004:7).

In Zimbabwe a generation of female film professionals emerged in the 1990s (Nembaware, 2014:2). In an interview Dangarembga noted that females in film made up to 10% of film directors and less than 15% of screenwriters in Zimbabwe. International Images Festival for Women based in Harare Zimbabwe revealed that in the period between 2013 and 2017, 17% of documentaries with a running time of 45 minutes or longer were made by females and 14 % of fiction films with a running time of 45 minutes or longer that were screened in the same period were made by African females. Although females have become more prominent in the industry being created as creative and complex characters at the forefront, there is still a conspicuous statistic in the creating of these films with the ongoing inequality between men and females (Mushore, 2016:85). This is so because males still dominate the film industry hence, males can never positively represent females the way females would. The work of male directors has been crucial in challenging western colonialist ideologies, which typically evoked the African female as either an exotic being or silent victim, many female film theorists and practitioners would claim that the male vision can never fully represent the female experience (Bisschoff, 2012:169). African females' films construct a paradigm, which consists of speaking from within and attempting to compose a rich and varied portrait of the African woman via canonical modification and revisionism (Ukadike, 1996:170). Female filmmakers not only provide alternatives to representations of African females in the western media and patriarchal African discourse, but they are also developing innovative forms of indigenous feminist aesthetics that offer examples of how females can integrate into modern societies (Bisschoff, 2012:171). Furthermore Bisschoff (2012) alludes that representations of identity and subjectivity become multiple, fragmented and evolving, as female filmmakers deal with the effects of societal changes forged by the influences of modernity, globalization, migration and immigration vividly in their films.

Thornham (1999:308) argues that females in films provide trouble or sexual interludes for the male characters or are not present at all, even when a female is the central character she is generally shown as confused or helpless and in danger or passive, or as a purely sexual being. Further classifying that "it just seems odd that these few images, and others like them, are all we see of women in almost every film since very few filmmakers have given much thought to their habits of sex-role stereotyping, even a film which has one strong female character will revert to cliché motivations and actions for the rest" (Thornham, 1999). It is the film's hero who advances the story, controlling events, the female and the erotic gaze while the female, in contrast, functions as an erotic spectacle, interrupting rather than advancing the narrative (Lauretis, 1984). Commercial films habitually see the female characters centered in themes of self-sacrifice, defined in relationship to children or to men, and have encouraged the female audience to identify either with female figures on screen who were powerless or victimized, or with active *male* heroes (Montgomery, 1984:39). Married or single, females generally work as homemakers, entertainers, prostitutes, many hardly seem to work at anything, some are forceful characters who devour men on sight, while others are sweet and meek, often sexually innocent and easily victimized by predatory men or uncontrollable social forces (Dittmar, 2008). Such norms are set by almost all feature films distributed and they speak more to male fantasies about womanhood than to our day-to-day experience page. Female character design is coined by a male view of the world and amongst that characterization, female characters are frequently designed and represented in a way that gives an overall impression that females would be unable to act as independent human beings (Stutterheim, 2015). They could be neither able to act as directors nor as female characters embedded in a story that do more than acting as a secretary, nurse, housewife, shopkeeper or sex worker. Those females' characters often lack a name or intelligent dialogue lines. In other words, female characters are characterized as that of the weak female or if is characterized as a strong female, she represents the male glance towards females and inherits dominant conditions of power and the structure of the society (Stutterheim, 2015).

Gauntlett (2002:247) examined that the traditional views of a female as a housewife or low-status worker had been kicked-boxed out of the picture by the feisty, successful girl power icons. Gaunlett further stated that in contemporary society gender roles are more complex and the media reflects this as female roles most today are often of glamorous, successful in a way that they were previously not (Gauntlett, 2011). Ibbi (2017:58) argued that research was still revealing that females are overwhelmingly valued in the film based on their identification as a mother, wife or lover. Dutt (2014:122) goes on to say that although females have made great strides in all aspects of life, their depiction on screen has been stuck to patriarchal stereotypes and normative ideologies that do not reflect reality. Therefore, in the face of making personal choices, females in film are caught between competing demands to be strong and independent while retaining their femininity (Ferris and Young, 2006:9 cited in Gauntlett, 2011). Murphy (2015) correspondingly noted that most female characters in films have exaggeratedly feminine bodies, even though they are strong, tough and intelligent they are still there for erotic pleasure. Ahmid (2016:7) notes that "it is a bitter fact and reality that females have overlapped workforce more than men during the last few decades but females' portrayal in films is still stereotypical which is just focused on physical portrayal of females in cinema". Hence, this study aims to draw an analysis between *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) with a bid to show if traditional views of females as housewives had been kick boxed out of the picture or if the trend was still being followed within the Zimbabwean context. However, it can also be noted that the audience demand is part of the reason why females are still sexualised in action films.

The above studies show that females are represented in a different way than males. However, the film industry is also a business which is dominated by males mostly and therefore it must meet its

customer's demands thus, combining sex and violence to appease its male audience. Skylar (1994:12 as cited in Rwafa, 2014:109) argued that mainstream movies are made to attract a large audience and it would be wise to stick to time tested gender stereotypes to maintain its appeal. Goode (1992:287 cited in Mushore, 2016:86) noted that men enjoy an exploitative position that yields unearned profits, money and prestige. Hence, when the female directors produce movies, they also represent females in a different way as compared to the male counterparts to appease the female viewers because mostly females will be their target market like the film *Wonder Woman* (2017) which was directed by a female. Hence, the films *Neria (1993)* and *Sinners* (2013) were purposively selected as they were produced by females who made it clear that the motive behind the films was to empower females and be their voice since the patriarchal society had silenced them. Most studies focus on the negative aspects of females' portrayal and the research seeks to fill in the gap by examining the extent in which Zimbabwean filmmakers represent females in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013).

2.3 A Short History on Female Representation in African and Zimbabwean Film Industry

African cinema reappropiated the camera as a tool of colonial gaze which had dominated the visual representation of Africa in the 1950s and 1960s (Burns, 2002:110; Hungwe, 1991:22; Mboti, 2015,3; Ureke, 2016:198). Zimbabwean film originated in a colonial context, with films based on racial stereotypes (Burns, 2002:115). Film was used as an educational tool, extending western ideology and entrenching colonial rule in Southern Rhodesia (Burns, 2003:104; Hungwe, 2005:83; Rwafa, 2012:313; Thompson, 2013:3). Audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the film industry, but they also shape their reality on it (McCombs and Shaw, 1972). Diawara (1987:3) restates that film in Africa was an experiment to educate adult Africans to understand and adapt to new western conditions and cultures. In 1935 the Bantu Educational Kinema Experiment (BEKE) was formed, they used mobile film units to reach the rural areas (Hungwe, 1991:230; Mboti, 2015:18; Monda, 2014). Followed by the Colonial Film Unit in 1939 (CFU) which created films that explained Britain's role in the First World War in order to inflict support of colonial subjects. At the end of the Second World War, the initiative shifted from war propaganda to development in the colonies to educating Africans more about hygiene and farming. Central African Film Unit (CAFU) was formed in 1945 and 40 % of its funds came from the British government and the rest from contributions from the territorial governments that made up the federation government (Burns, 2002:116).

Burns (2002:133) further asserts that it was the most prolific colonial filmmaking unit ever created which between 1948 and 1963 produced hundreds of films. Films produced in 1948 were instructional oriented for Africans in Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland and Rhodesia (Hungwe, 1991). After the phasing out of the British government, there was a shift in priority to making films that promoted the federation and encourage white immigration. The new Rhodesian rule as colonial administrators believed that film was able to disseminate favourable portrayals of whites, while also being a conduit for promoting 'development,' such as western patterns of agriculture, work practices and codes of conduct amongst black primitives (Burns, 2002:114).The first executive producer of CAFU was Alan Izod who in a radio broadcast in 1950 outlined that the broad perspective of CAFU was based on the goal to make educational films that were presented for entertainment, with strong moral messages (Hungwe, 1991:230, Burns, 2002:106). They were development oriented focusing on issues such as agriculture, health and safety among others (Burns, 2003:130; Hungwe, 1991:230). The new Zimbabwe in 1980 inherited a film industry formerly used by the colonial government for didactic purposes and to market the country (Thompson; 2013:4). This is also noted by Kavanagh who in

1986 concluded that the Zimbabwean film system had inherited a capitalist film distribution system from its pre-revolutionary society.

The Zimbabwean film industry has witnessed many drastic changes since its independence in 1980. Immediately after its independence in 1980, the newly elected government saw the industry as a potential priority sector for economic growth which was worthy of investment (Mboti, 2016:145). It invested directly into film production and sought the development of a flourishing local and international production film scene (Hungwe, 2001). In pursuing the objective of having a favourable film industry in the continent, a partnership with Universal Pictures and Cannon films was struck (Hungwe, 1991 :232). Hollywood films such as King Solomon's Mines (1985) and Lost City of Gold (1987) were shot in Zimbabwe. According to Ukadike (1996:195), Zimbabwe by that period was the African Hollywood although he questioned the extent to which the industry at that time could be called African. The government of Zimbabwe injected 5.5 million U.S dollars to produce Cry Freedom (1986) hoping to invest out of it but it did not receive a return on its investment (Hungwe, 2005:85, Mboti, 2016:147; Thompson, 2001). This resulted in the government ceasing its initiatives in the film industry and left a funding room in the 1990s (Hungwe, 2005:91). The room was mostly filled by foreign donors and non-governmental organizations who later moved from Zimbabwe after the 2001 violent land reform and political instability (Burns, 2003:134; Hungwe, 2005:92). When foreign donors and non-governmental organizations moved out of Zimbabwe it resulted in the film industry's collapse as most of these organizations had the rightful resources and equipment for film productions. After this the Zimbabwean film industry shifted to short films which did not last due to the national economic crisis. Due to the economic and political turbulence in Zimbabwe over the past few years, the feature film production has ground to a halt as indigenous companies can no longer afford the costs involved with such an undertaking and negative press which discourages filmmakers and investors from locating their films in Zimbabwe (Mhiripiri, 2010:93). Ureke (2018:148) describes the current film industry in Zimbabwe as a "kiya kiya" or a "fembera- fembera" (skimping) industry. Fembera –fembera is both a desperate and disorderly genre which is common in many developing countries like Zimbabwe (Ureke, 2018:149). This genre hybridity gives the story a fluid identity and can be described as a drasofi, a combination of drama, soap opera and film. It is a genre of both context and convenience. However, this does not make the genre illegitimate, but it addresses the future and present production of the film in Zimbabwe in which *Sinners* is part of (Ureke, 2018:149).

2.4 Females in Film in Zimbabwe

Females in Zimbabwe started featuring in films during the mid-1950s. They were projected as people of little economic value to the economy who only featured conducting work in women's clubs (Jenje, 2016). Females were not presented positively in Zimbabwean colonial films as they were seen as being responsible for cooking and maintaining their homes (Vambe, Chikonzo and Khan, 2008:113). According to Mattelart (1996:411) as cited in (Vambe Chikonzo and Khan, 2008:114), females in colonial films were not rewarded and their efforts were not valued hence the devaluation of black females' economic contribution to live hoods of their families and African communities had the effect of conceding their status in society. Matterlart (1996) further outlined that females in colonial films were assigned reproductive labour while males were assigned productive labour. Females in the colonial Zimbabwean film were represented as having no value in decision making, simple and existed as objects through which the prosperity of black men was measured, while the males were portrayed as the ones who should have a status in society and should own wealth (Vambe, Chikonzo and Khan, 2008:115). Africans began adapting to British cultures which valued females as objects of

desire. However, Vambe, Chikonzo and Khan (2008:118) further argue that the Zimbabwean woman's identity which was shown in films and their depiction as subordinate to black men was not entirely a colonial imposition but rather it was the Africans who desired to control the African female sexuality and even petitioned native colonial administrators not to permit what African men perceived as too much freedom to the African females. Most probably males wanted films to maintain their status quo as being more superior to females.

Elizabeth Cowie (1997) notes three connected issues that transpire in the representation of females in films which are the social definition, the perspective of identity and females' identity as a construction or process and not as a fixed achievement. Zimbabwe is a Christian country and most of its norms which are used to position females as second-class citizens are referenced from, Colossians 3vs 8 which states that wives, be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Therefore, Zimbabwean films define females in accordance with Colossians 3vs 8. Their representation is limited only to their gender roles thus, females respond to the clarities given to them by the society in which they function. Hence, ideological and legal changes that challenge the status quo and facilitate the empowerment of females and gender equality are depicted as Eurocentric and destructive so as to promote patriarchy (Mashiri, 1998). This can be dated back to the colonization era when Roman Dutch Laws were used to place men as the heads of households and main decision makers and limited females' rights to properties. Rwafa (2014:108) noted two dominant identities of female representation in Zimbabwean films, the educated modern working female and the uneducated traditional female. Further noting that the two dominant representations are used as symbols of morals. The literate modern female is characterized as either promiscuous, signifying cultural decay. She is represented as the destabilizer of family institutions and her ability to challenge the super eminence of the cultural orthodoxies of male dominance is represented as a disgrace to the community (Jenje, 2016). The illiterate traditional female is the barometer of morality. She is the idealized mother-wife symbol that signifies cultural authenticity and is used to strengthen the ideology of female domesticity (Rwafa, 2014:109). On the other hand, Ellerson (2012) noted that African females of the screen have become dynamic, changing, evolving and plural, as the standpoint theory of African females in cinema proposes and recognizes female perspectives as being shaped by their social, cultural and political experiences and histories.

Joyce Jenje (2016) describes film in Zimbabwe as a way of telling social stories in a more dynamic way. In Zimbabwe females behind the scenes took roles of assistant producers, directors, set designers, camera operators and editors because of the technicalities which were involved in these sections during the early post-colonial era (Jenje, 2016). These technicalities were preserved for males. Additionally, Bisschoff (2012:157) noted that the majority of females who work in the African film industry and this is certainly also true internationally, stay within stereotypically female roles, such as production managers, wardrobe and make-up assistants, editors and continuity assistants as directing and technical roles such as camerawork are conventionally regarded as a male preserve. It can also be argued that females in Zimbabwe took these assistant jobs because during that era females were expected/encouraged to stay in the village and discouraged to advance with their studies hence, as a result they did not have the skill, experience and acquired knowledge to do the main jobs. This however has changed with time as tertiary institutions began welcoming females and as a result, they became involved as the main producers, directors, set designers and editors. Most of the females who became producers or directors stated that they wanted to portray positive images of females as the male directors portrayed them as weak people always and failed to represent them as indomitable human beings (Jenje, 2016). Stephen Chigorimbo popularly known as the father of film in Zimbabwe in an interview by Joyce Jenje (2016) attributed the lack of females participation in film

particularly by the time he got in film and theatre in the late 1960s to the late 1990s as being caused by the confused number of religious dynamics in the African family structure which oppressed females. Hence, it can also be argued that during this time Zimbabwe was still under the colonial regime and females were encouraged to stay behind in the rural areas while the males worked in industries in the cities which limited their exposure, participation in most of the productions and limited their careers.

The representation of females in film is consequent upon the way the society and culture take them thus, the audiences have the same ideology as the films that are produced for them; they fill the cinemas, and that is how the machine keeps turning (Metz, 1985:544). In line with the Zimbabwean context females discouraged themselves to participate in films as it was viewed as a loose female's job hence, they feared the discrimination of being labelled as prostitutes or rebellious. A good Zimbabwean female was one who appeared reserved, self-effacing, respectful, unquestioning and resided in the rural areas (Rwafa, 2008:152). Thus, a lot of females in Zimbabwe during this era were disadvantaged while the few who stayed in urban areas had the opportunity to venture in the film industry. However, with time it changed as evidenced by the likes of Lina Mataka, Kubi Indi, Susan Chenjerai, Jesesi Mungoshi, Margret Indi Mhlanga, MaryAnn Mandishona, Sitembeni Makawa, Prudence Katomeni-Mbofana, Marion Kunonga, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Anne Holmes, Dorothy Chidzawo, Ingrid Sinclair, Jack Chai, Angeline Domingo, Dorothy Meck, Prudence Uriri, Agnes Gwatiringa, Sizakele Mkwedini, Tandiwe Jenje, Rumbi Katedza, Mirriam Patsanza, Rhodha Mandaza, Gamu Tavengwa, Bev Matherson, Carine Tredgold, Heather Cameron, Cathline Tavagwisa and Teridah Sewera who participated in Zimbabwean films as directors, producers, set designers, lead actresses, costume designers and camera operators (Jenje, 2016). Jenje (2016) further asserted that some of these females who were filmed include the likes of Mrs Mutsvairo, Muriel Rosin, Tsitsi Munyati, and Rachel Hlazo. A few coloured (mixed race of black and white decent) and black females were involved in films in different genres from the 1960s to the 1970s to represent black females to the international community. Most people were overjoyed to see people of their race in films (Hungwe, 1991:238). The 1970s eras witnessed the first Zimbabwean woman Kubi Indi starring in a James Bond film "Live and Let Die" in 1973 an international movie (Jenje, 2016). When Zimbabwe attained independence new television series like Mukadota were produced which carried the black people's stories. Susan Chenjerai featured in this earliest post independent television series in Zimbabwe as an obedient and subordinate wife with the stage name of "amai Rwizi". During this decade the art of film was progressing, and females began to use film to address their gender imbalances and societal struggles (Jenje, 2016). Television series like Mukadota continued to depict females as passive human beings in societies.

2.5 The Male Gaze

Representation means using language to say something meaningful it involves understanding how language, the system of knowledge and production work together to produce and circulate meanings between members of a culture (Hall, 2013:15). Furthermore, Hall alludes that, for meaning to be produced it involves the use of language, signs and images as these elements play an important role in shaping and developing what people perceive as reality which develops their identity. McDougall (2012: 52 as quoted in Ibbi, 2017:56) defines representation as the sum of various micro parts, stating that it relates to the broader theories of collective identity, cultivation and ideology. Hence, to say that film is a representation is presumably to say that it represents something (Schummer, 2013 as quoted in Mushore, 2016:88). Radford Reuther (1993:160) outlines that at the intersection of gender and other social marginalization females in media are representatives of the oppressed. Films only present a stereotype of the social status of females (Humm, 1992:13). Bussey and Bandura (1999)

noted that rather than for the media to provide sensible representations, men and females tend to be depicted in a hyper-traditional maintain which maintains stereotypes of personality traits, capabilities and aspirations. The representation of females for the male gaze has been supported by several scholars as indicated by Smelik (1999) who noted that, in the past years, females have been represented on screen with negative stereotypes, being subjected to the male gaze. From another angle males are depicted in a hyper traditional manner because cinema reflects the society thus, they are taking their roles based on the societies they come from. However, Rwafa (2014:133) states that in films there are existing characteristics of female representation in contemporary societies which are influenced by ideologies of gender, class and race.

In 1975 Laura Mulvey outlined the male gaze view in films. The male gaze is the act of depicting females in visual arts from a masculine, heterosexual perspective. Mulvey noted that females view themselves through the eyes of males. Presenting females as images or spectacles and males as bearers of the look (Mulvey, 1975:27). Perceptions of a female's body are created, constructed and imposed through cultural norms (Butler, 2002:8). Hence, Mulvey (1975:33) argued that the cinematic codes of popular films are obsessively subordinated to the neurotic needs of the male ego. Films present men as active, controlling subjects and treat females as passive objects of desire for males in both the story and in the audience, while not allowing females to be desiring sexual objects in their own right. Mulvey (1999:833) states that films produce images of females which arouse pleasure from males and refers to this as active male and passive female. Film narratives render the female as an image that is non-threatening through two basic approaches which are associating them with voyeurism and sadism and pleasure lying in ascertaining guilt. It involves asserting control on females subjecting them as a guilty person (Mulvey, 1975:34). Mulvey speaks out that females' characters have no significant positions in films except as objects which are presented as spectacles for males. Females, in any fully human form, have almost completely been left out of film as the role of a females in a film almost always revolves around her physical attraction and the mating games she plays with the male characters (Thornham, 1999 :309). Rich (1978: 87 as quoted by Butler, 2002:5) notes that females are a process of displacement who are not visible on the screen but are merely surrogates for the male phallus, signifiers for something else. On the other hand, this may be due to the fact that social and political powers between males and females control social forces in the cinematic representations of the sexes. Therefore, it is probably true to say that despite the enormous emphasis placed on females as spectacle in the cinema, females as females are largely absent. In line with the African context films produce females as illiterate, housewives and subordinate which arouse the male ego (Rwafa, 2012:319). The male gaze relates to the research as it will help add literature on how sexual differences are portrayed in the visual and narrative structure of the two films *Neria* and *Sinners*.

The study of the representation cannot be separated from two important aspects, those of spectators and those of spectacles (Modleski, 1988:87). The male gaze has three perspectives the man behind the camera, male characters within the film's cinematic representations and the spectator gazing at the image. In the sense that the camera films from the opinion of the male character when looking at a female, the audience adopt the male position and look at the female through the eyes of the male character bringing about a threefold male gaze: the camera, character and spectator (Mulvey, 1975:35). The implied male viewer seeks erotic pleasure in the image of the beautiful female. Her image holds the male gaze captive; however, any threat her agency may pose (as other, as phallic lack, as symbol of castration) is disarmed by an imposed silence-she says little or nothing of consequence (McLeod, 2011:81). In the latter, it is the look of the central male character, which is privileged, so that we see events largely through his eyes and identify with his gaze (Thornham, 1999:314). Thus, the hero's narrative power to control events coincides with the 'active power of the

erotic look', the two together providing for the male spectator a satisfying sense of omnipotence (Thornham, 1999:315). Thornham (1999:316) further notes a solution by suggesting that countering this male pleasure will have to involve the destruction of conventional cinematic pleasure and the conceiving of a new language of desire. However, Kaplan (1983:43) argued that the gaze could be adopted also by female subjects as the male is not always the controlling subject nor is the female always the passive object. However, Kaplan ignored that all most all presiding images are male set ups which leave a small percentage for the female to be a dominant object. Lauretis (1984:22) asserts that the female spectator does not simply adopt a masculine spectator position but is always involved with both the passive and active subject positions.

Mulvey further proposes that what people see on television, see it as real and thus copy it within their lives (1975). As film has the power to represent and modify what is socially acceptable. According to Montgomery (1984:39) films and counter cinema present the female characters centred in themes of self-sacrifice, defined in relation with children or males and have encouraged the female audience to identify either with female figures on screen who were powerless or victimized or with active male heroes. Haskell (1987:14) views images of females in film as the vehicle of male fantasies and the scapegoat of males' fears. However, later on Haskell rejected an analysis that viewed films as rich fields for mining female stereotypes (Haskell, 1987:39). Therefore, to evaluate cinematic images of females in terms of their greater or lesser truth is a distortion this is so because what must be examined is how the sign woman operates within a specific film text, what meaning is made to bear and what desires and fantasies it carries than to compare film stereotypes of females with the reality of females' lives (Johnston, 1975:123). As the sign female in film is one constructed by and for a patriarchal culture, enabling man to live out his fantasies and obsessions by imposing them on the silent image of a female (Johnston, 1975). In Africa cinema remains men's business, with the technical matters of filmmaking as well as directing regarded as a male preserve.

Mulvey (1975) according to Freeland (2003:2) did not look at issues raised by different females amongst their differences and phenomena like the male masochism or genres that function in distinctive ways such as comedy, melodrama and horror. It can be argued that the representation of females in different genres does not count because females in comedies, horrors or melodramas are still females and are filmed by male characters mostly as males dominant the film industry. Hanwalt (2017:1) argued that there is a tendency for comedy films to view comedy characters as inherently male unless there is something specific about them. Hence, in most film genres the negative portrayal of females does not change but what only changes is their body structure. Kaplan (1983:33) asserts that the male gaze argued that the denial was a prerequisite for freedom but did not go into the problems involved. Freeland (2003:6) concluded that the male gaze by Laura Mulvey did not permit the positive side of a female as a cognizing human who does not simply absorb or react to ideological effects but has also the ability to critique. Ashley Connor (2018:12) noted that the male gaze seeks to devour and control while the female gaze is more a frame of mind where the approach to the subject is more emotional and disrespectful.

However, the male gaze did not consider filmic techniques used to establish and develop a character such as the mis-en-scene and editing techniques. The study seeks to add literature on how filmic techniques were used to depict women in both films *Neria* and *Sinners*. The male gaze theory as proposed by Laura Mulvey in 1975 did not put into consideration the fact that if more females would be hired behind the camera, then they would be a diverse crew and cast to tell these more inclusive stories. Bell Hooks (1993:295) contends that in the effort to understand the inferior status accorded females under patriarchy, the male gaze orthodoxy silenced and even erased non-white females from

film analysis as it claimed the right to speak for them as though it speaks about females when in actuality it speaks only about white females. Bell Hooks (1993:295) entails the idea that the black female has no corporate other within orthodox binary structures, she is the institutional other to the black male, but she has no other for herself. Additionally, Hooks argues that white supremacist patriarchy is institutionalized through the maintenance of derogatory stereotypes that continue to oppress and exploit all black people (Hooks,1993). Doane (1991:231) notes that the category of females is usually used to refer to white females, while the category of blacks often really means black males hence, a black female's position becomes quite peculiar and oppressively unique in terms of oppression as she is both black and a female in terms of theory.

Films have contributed to spreading and strengthening a sense of patriarchal culture in the spectator's minds (Rohman, 2013:175). In Africa cinema remains men's business, with the technical matters of filmmaking as well as directing regarded as a male preserve (Ayari, 1996:181). Hence, in African films females are constructed within the visionary of the males who make the films. Men look at females and females watch themselves being looked at, this determines not only most relations between men and women, but also the relation of women to themselves. Thus, she turns herself into an object most particularly an object of vision or sight (Berger, 1972:47 as quoted by Butler, 2002:4). In turn this gendered active/passive notion divides and structures film narratives, with the male hero advancing the story and the female acting as an image disrupting narrative movements, freezing the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. Frederickson and Roberts (1997:11 as cited in Rwafa, 2012:318) acknowledged that being female usually creates a shared social experience in that females are constantly exposed to the objectification of the female body and often internalize the observer's gaze. Fol (2004:18), contends that African females are present experiencing a double oppression: firstly, that of tradition where females are subordinate to males and secondly, that of modernism where females are reduced to sex objects.

Sheila Petty (1996:185) outlines a number of trends within African filmmaking at the end of the 1980s, identifying a revisionist cinema attempting to challenge traditional Eurocentric interpretations of African history with an Afrocentric sensitivity, which incorporates deeply feminist commitment to human and equal rights for both genders. Furthermore, Petty (1996:185) describes this trend as an attempt to recover an African past and recontextualizes it within present-day Africa. Umar Nobbee (2018) notes that since the inception of African cinema in the 1960s many of the films produced on the continent have boasted creative and complex female characters at the forefront. African filmmakers have found innovative ways, thematically and stylistically, of resisting objectification and putting emancipated and self-aware female subjects at the centre of their films (re)claiming their agency and subjectivity in creating and representing their own images of themselves which are important representations aimed at enabling African females to own their bodies (Bisschoff, 2009:78). Likewise, many male African directors have through their depictions of female characters and the gender critiques embedded in their films put forward a vision of female emancipation as inextricably linked to African development in the postcolonial era (Bisschoff, 2012:160). However, Nobbee (2018) further critiques that females in African films are symbols of male cinematic productions who are represented as heroines or victims as their image in African cinema is as a result of a male gaze at a mostly male society. African female characters are often those who reject the established order and in allowing females to express their dissatisfaction and through promoting for instance monogamy or intellectualism, filmmakers are challenging certain foundations of society (Barlet, 1996:103 cited in Bisschoff, 2009:78). Fayida Yari (1996:182) posits that African films although modest, do present us with a fairly representative kaleidoscope of female figures, however, these are females fabricated within the imaginary of the men who make the films, regardless of how close to reality this imaginary at times may be, the image of females in African cinema is the result of a male gaze at a mostly male

society. In African film, individual heroines are quite rare and when they are present, they do not always dominate the action of the film rather African directors tend to emphasize a collective heroism in their films and heroines often depict the social group, cultural identity or collective consciousness (Fol, 2004). Further on, Fol (2004) notes that closeups of objects such as cooking utensils and agricultural tools are fairly frequent and shot in females talking time. In the Zimbabwean context film production was a man's job and females were given minor roles. With the gender equality campaigns done since the government's independence in Zimbabwe, several females entered the film industry. Thus, with the above literature this study will add on by examining whether films in Zimbabwe have exhibited gender equality or are still being produced for the male gaze.

2.6 The Identity of Women in Culture and in Film Media in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has more than 16 official languages, is made up of different ethnic groups but, the Shona people make up to more than half of the country (Ravengai, 2013:2). John Mbiti (1991:59) proposed that females in most cultures in Zimbabwe are valued and at the same time are not as their oppression is social and systematic which has influenced their broad scale of oppression. The patriarchal nature of the Shona society has shaped and perpetuated gender inequality and male cruelty to the extent of allowing male domination hence paving the way to female subordination (Chirimuuta, 2006 quoted in Sakarombe, 2018:24). In the Zimbabwean culture women are constantly defined in relation to men as dependent and subordinate to them (McDowell and Pringle, 1992 cited in Rwafa, 2012:323). Females are comparatively disadvantaged in and by a patriarchal culture, which makes their positions in patriarchy to be asymmetrical and dependent (Knight, 1995:40). Correspondingly in Zimbabwean cultures, men define the female just as they define nearly everything else, all male-identified ideals of females are premised on the basic assumptions that females are and ought to be completely defined and understood within their biological, sexual and reproductive capacities (Matewa, 2003:21). Once girls in most parts of Zimbabwe reach puberty all teachings are directed on pleasing their future husbands (Kambarami, 2017:22). They are taught to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller, to have an ambition but not too much, to aim to be successful but not too successful otherwise they will threaten men, if she becomes the breadwinner in the relationship she should pretend that she is not especially in public, otherwise she will emasculate him (Adichie, 2012:12).

Obioma Nnaemeka (2005:31) describes African females' lives as a balancing act, subject to internally imposed patriarchal structures and externally engineered imperialistic contexts. Further, arguing that it is within the complex context of the persistence of traditional patriarchal gender structures, gender patterns introduced by Islamisation and colonial oppression, as well as the modification of gender roles under neo-colonialism and continuing Western cultural imperialism, that contemporary African females are shaping their identities and subjectivities (Nnaemeka, 2005). Gaidzanwa (1985:44) critiques that the domestication of females in Zimbabwe is due to the country's colonization by the British. The advent of colonialism and the monetization of African economy had disastrous effects on females' economic independence as capitalism resulted in the reinforcement of patriarchal values and the hierarchization of labour (Sutherland and Fertly, 2017:620). Therefore, different values were placed on male and female labour and contrary to subsistence economy, the production unit was based on the individual rather than the family and new wage labour systems introduced under capitalism favoured male labour over female labour (Sutherland and Fertly, 2017). Elson (1995:54) as quoted in Matewa (2003:18) critiqued that "colonization affected black females as members of an oppressed people, but the effects on them were quite different from those on African males. In the

reserves, the colonial administration attempted to consolidate the customary or tribal tenure system for instance, by emphasizing the role of chiefs or headmen in land allocation and by allowing Africans to continue to marry under customary procedures. The system created was, of course, not the same as the tribal system had been but, rather, was a distortion of it. Their general and customary laws placed males as the heads of the households and as the main decision makers which limited females' rights. Mukwara (2016:44) justifies the notion that states that the colonial western ideologies reshaped the African notion of females' subordination noting that colonials used biased laws, regulations, and dispute systems towards Africans.

In precolonial times females had a status and had their own patches of land which they augmented family income through the sale of agricultural products from their lands (Vambe, Chikonzo and Khan, 2008:134). Before colonization females held strong positions such as the great medium Mbuya Nehanda, but when the missionaries came, they did not see these powerful roles all they saw was an African woman who needed civilization (Magirosa, 2015:3). Strong positions females held all stopped when the British colonized them as they prohibited women to collect money from agricultural produce at the market and allowed men only (Vambe, Chikonzo and Khan, 2008). Western discourse did not recognize the productive and creative role of women in the society (Matewa, 2003:22). This refusal relegated women to divisions of labour that kept them in positions of subordination. Females were, therefore, recipients of home-economics not agricultural extension services.

During colonization, females would neither represent themselves anywhere nor open a bank account as they had to do it via their husbands or male guardian therefore colonial laws in Zimbabwe gave the control of females to males (Matewa, 2003:47). Along with Matewa, Bisschoff critiques that the racist gender values enforced under colonialism commodified African females in a process that degraded the legal status of females as imperialism advanced, African females continued to be underrepresented in positions of influence in socio-political, cultural and economic spheres, including the film industry (Bisschoff,2009:16). The Victorian ideal virtuous wife, selfless mother and tidy industrious housekeeper was the goal for which all African females were taught to strive for (Schmidt, 1992:145). Thus, this led to females normalizing childbearing roles in the Zimbabwean context. Additionally, the portrayal of black female characters largely resonates with traditional expectations that confine them to roles that limit the range of their experiences and capabilities, such as the home, where they raise children with very little at their disposal (Motsaathebe, 2018:13). Furthermore, female position is precarious in a society that has made them a source of cheap labour (Motsaathebe, 2018:13). Subsequently, Schmidt stresses that the origins of African females' subordination are not solely the results of policies imposed by foreign capitals and the colonial state but are rather indigenous and European structures of patriarchal control reinforced and transformed one another evolving into new structures and forms of domination (Schmidt, 1992:198).

Females as expected by the Zimbabwean culture should be obedient and require men in order to be of societal value (Dune, 2014:15). Females in Zimbabwean cultures are referred to as "*mutorwa*" meaning stranger while men are referred to as "*ishewangu*" meaning my master or my lord. Males are accredited more respect as they will carry on the family's lineage. It is also assumed that girls will grow up to marry and have children, at some stage of their lives becoming wives and mothers. In this respect, domestic work is therefore seen as something towards which females are naturally inclined too. Families often choose to invest in boys as the future earners and caretakers of the family, which enables boys to grow up with higher status in the household than girls, and better income-generating opportunities (Mushore, 2016:85). As a result, the root of the domestication and humiliation of females

is found in traditional norms. It is this suffocating character of tradition and its effects on females that females have known in their daily lives is the lower self-esteem that is attendant upon cultural depreciation, the humiliation of sexual objectification, the troubled relationship to a socially interiorized body, the confusions and even the anguish that come in the wake of incompatible social definitions of womanhood (McLeod, 2011:81). Mushore (2016:87) alludes that most male-identified ideals of females rest on one basic presupposition: that females are and ought to be completely defined and understood within their biological, sexual or reproductive capacities. Furthermore, Mushore (2016) notes that negative stereotypes are meant to make females subordinate for instance, females are stereotyped as being more sensitive and emotional, more likely to get upset or scared, more likely to cry. They are also stereotyped as being sensitive in another sense of the term that is, they are more aware of other people's feelings and more caring towards others. Above all the stereotypical roles assigned to females that of the homemaker is the most prevalent, it is imperative for a female to put her family's welfare before her own; she is loving, compassionate, caring, nurturing, emotional and sympathetic. The male's role, on the other hand, is to be the provider; he is expected to be assertive, competitive, independent, aggressive, courageous, rational, career oriented and pragmatic (Mushore, 2016:86).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed existing literature that helps to put this study into focus as they connect to the analytical outcomes. Looking at the representation of females in film in Hollywood and Zimbabwe. Special attention was accredited to Hollywood as compared to other film productions because it is ranked as best in the world for producing standard films. Hollywood films are dominating all over the world. Their global broadcasting is due to their economic resources, excellent marketing skills and strategies and celebrity publicity. To sum up, Hollywood films, predominantly box-office hits all over the world, are undoubtedly most effective in perpetuating the dominant patriarchal ideology and dissemination of traditional female gender roles, which contribute to the limitation of the ways in which females are depicted in culture and society (Knight, 1995). This chapter identified, assessed and presented a number of literatures that are in the field. They is not much research on the representation of females in Zimbabwean produced films because feature films were lastly produced in the late 1990s and early 2000 due to lack of funding, economic and political instabilities which has witnessed many potential film production companies and filmmakers fleeing the country for greener pastures. Filmmakers and intellectuals acknowledge that in many countries females remain sexual objects in a culture of misogyny, chauvinism and patriarchal oppression (Bisschoff, 2012). Furthermore, Bisschoff (2012) notes that an African feminist discourse in cinema has to include a critique of the norms of traditional African societies that have oppressed and continue to oppress females. Therefore, this research will draw a comparative analysis and add on literature showing whether *Sinners* has drawn justice towards female representation as noted by Guzha who asserted that he does not speak feminism but acts on it.

CHAPTER 3

THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 of this study discussed the literature on the representation of females in films globally then narrowed it down to the specifities with a focus centring within the context of Zimbabwe. The key aim of this chapter is to explore the prevailing contemporary theoretical framework of this research. This dissertation uses theoretical lenses of the feminist film theory to frame an investigation into the manner in which lead female characters in *Neria* and *Sinners* conform to or challenge patriarchy. Consequently, this chapter will engage in a discussion detailing the efficacious of feminist film theory. In understanding female representation in film theory makes a lasting impact on the wider fields of visual culture and cultural studies especially within the study of a female as an image of desire (Smelik, 2009). Feminist film theory is built upon different boarders such as psychoanalysis, queer theory, post-colonialism, film studies and post structuralism. Feminist film theory was much dominated by thoughts of Freudian and Lacanian's psychoanalysis that grounded its gendered subjectivity, desire and visual pleasure. This theory operates with females' images that are created and circulated within dominant cultures which are defined by patriarchy and heterosexuality. The feminist film theory is of great value to this investigation because it provides the kind of ideology against which films are produced.

Feminist film theory will be discussed in this chapter as it creates a foundation against which female characters should be examined in the films used in the study in order to draw a comparative analysis of the evolving representation of female characters in Zimbabwe. This is so because *Neria* was produced during the early 1990s when Zimbabwe was at the earliest age of introducing feminism. It is, therefore prudent to examine it with a theory that was influential in the 1980s because the theory's psychoanalytic approaches such as voyeurism, narcissism and oedipal narrative structures that were being advocated against by the theory powerfully contributed to the way in which *Neria* was constructed. The theory's objectives advocated for what was happening during the 1980s and1990s era thus, it will be unfair to view *Neria* within the lens of other current theories as current theories mainly focus on the current happenings taking place. Looking on the other side of the research feminist film theory is of great significance in the analysis of the film *Sinners* because what the theory advocated for and desired in its third stage is what was happening in Zimbabwe when the film was produced. Thus, the theory's different stages will help in balancing the comparative study. For the purposes of completeness this chapter will begin with a brief engagement with definitions of feminism. The discussion does not in any way seek to add to definitional debates, but it provides a background to ensuing issues.

3.1 UNPACKING FEMINISM

Feminism is generally premised from an imperative to reengineer how the society sees and relates with females. It seeks to redress the othered and minored position of females which is perpetuated by patriarchy and heterosexuality. Simone de Beauvoir (1984:295) noted that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, no biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society, it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as the other explains that one is not born a woman but becomes one and that

cinema is a key carrier of contemporary cultural myths (McCabe, 2004:10). Essentially, the argument here is that all forms of othering are social constructions which can be deliberately reversed. Jaggar (1983:5) posits that, feminism historically, as far back as the 19th century included various groups of females who aimed at advancing the position of females in society. Similarly, feminism is defined by Parry and Karam (2001:395) as the advocacy of the rights of females ranging from political rights of women's equality, oppression and sexual autonomy. It is important however, to note that feminism is not one but many perspectives, attempts or theories to describe strategies for females' liberation (McCabe, 2004:44).

Often the representation of the world, is the work of men and they describe it from their point of view which they confuse with absolute truth that females must also inevitably see themselves through these representations (Kaplan, 1983:23). Cinema is taken by feminists to be a cultural practice which represents myths about females and femininity, as well as about men and masculinity (Smelik, 1999). As a result, feminism encourages and challenges females to critically evaluate power relations and to view and imagine the world differently not as to patriarchal views. The pursuit for a feministic world can be achieved through debunking myths found in religions, traditions, language, songs and movies that material existence is viewed and lived (De Beauvoir, 1984). Thus, feminist film discourses were born out of the female's desire to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema, while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which females are given favourable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists. Moreover, in their bid to counter the masculine-oriented cinema, feminists even delved into criticism of the mainstream media representation of females, such as in television programs, films, newspapers, and magazines.

3.3 FEMINIST FILM THEORY

Feminist film theory was greatly influenced by the second wave feminism in the early 1970s with the aim of understanding cinema as a cultural practise that represents and reproduces myths about females and femininity (Smelik, 2016:2). Its roots steeped in the second wave feminism which blamed patriarchy for the representation of females in cinema. Again, Mulvey (1975) noted that early feminist film theory can be said to have initiated a field of study that revealed how patriarchal discourse knows gender as well, as the ways in which the image of a "female" in patriarchal representation refers more readily to its connotations with the male conscious. Since then, several American feminists have been exploring the representation of female sexuality in arts such as films, television programmes and paintings (Kaplan, 1983:23). The lens of feminist film theory is however not limited to interrogating American films only. The feminist film theory is a philosophy which urges females to tell their own stories from their own perspective because the perspective of females as real in historical subjects may not be reducible to the images of females projected within patriarchy (Mayne, 1990:11). Similarly, feminist film discourses were born out of the female's desire to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema, while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which females are given favourable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists (Yahaya, 2017:585).

Scholars and film critics like Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* 1975) propounded the feminist film theory. Modleski (1979: 14) outlined Laura Mulvey's theory as the founding document of the feminist film theory as it provided the theoretical grounds for the rejection of film industries and its pleasures. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema concludes that the female characters exist in relation to the male. Johnston, Cook and Mulvey adopted a methodology that was still entirely textually based in that, like the images of females approach it proposed close analysis of individual film texts but it conceived of itself as moving beyond the simple enumeration of stereotypes of

females presented in films to an analysis of how films work ideologically to construct females as signs in a complex textual system that supports and even naturalizes patriarchal ideology by defining females as other to men (Hollinger, 2012:10). These scholars viewed film as a manufacturer, contemplative of patriarchal structures. Feminist film theory's aim is to break patriarchal pleasures and conceive a new language of desire (McCabe, 2004: 34).This is so because patriarchal culture is somehow responsible for generating and circulating self-confirming parameters that institute gender hierarchies and sexual inequalities (McCabe, 2004). Patriarchal knowledge instead relentlessly constructs an idea or a myth of a female as a projection of male fantasies and anxieties of phallocentric otherness and masculine lack (De Beauvoir, 1984:179). Johnston (1976:207) assessed a myth as a form of speech or discourse which represents the major means in which females have been used in cinema. Johnston further, asserted that patriarchal myths about females transformed and transmitted ideologies of sexism and rendered invisible, when they were made visible and they evaporated becoming normal.

3.4 FEMINIST FILM THEORY FIRST STAGE

The first wave of feminist film theory adopted a broadly sociological approach looking at sex roles females played or occupied in various imaginative works from high art to low mass entertainment. Gender identity became elided in favour of a broader ideological agenda that reference sexual difference in terms of male power and female subordination. Early feminist criticism in the 1960s was directed at sexist images of females in classical Hollywood films. This first wave of the feminist film theory criticised classical cinema for its stereotyped representation of females. Stereotyping presides to establish an image of the other; it is achieved by commencing knowledge that oscillates between what is already known and somehow fixed and something which must be anxiously and compulsively duplicated in order to maintain credibility. Females were portrayed as passive, sex objects or fixed in stereotypes fluctuating between the mother "Maria", the virgin and the whore "Eve" (Kaplan, 1983:36, Smelik, 2016:4). Mayne (1990:19) argued that early film was mostly about men and offered bold demonstrations of the voyeuristic pleasure that has been central to virtually every contemporary theory of the cinema. Feminist film theory was highly influential in the 1970s and 1980s, making a lasting impact on the wider fields of visual culture and cultural studies, especially with the study of females as images and the male gaze. Endlessly repeated images of females were considered to be objectionable distortions which would harm the female spectator. Constance Penley (1976:206 as cited in Oghale, 2018:99) evaluated that the female has been characterized in the same image throughout the history of films that have been produced; and that the female has been seen in diverse negative forms as victim, temptress, evil incarnate and earth mother. Hence this will provide a guideline for the in depth analysis of how females are represented in the two films chosen as case studies for the study and if they have been any positive changes or if there are still oscillating as the 'virgin Maria' and the 'whore Eve' .

Feminist film theory scholars such as Claire Johnston critiqued that:

> "Iconography as a specific kind of sign or cluster of signs based on certain conventions within the Hollywood genres has been partly responsible for the stereotyping of females within the commercial cinema in general, but the fact that there is a far greater differentiation of men's roles than of women's roles in the history of the cinema relates to sexist ideology itself, and the basic opposition which places man inside history, and woman as a historic and eternal. As the cinema developed, the stereotyping of man was increasingly interpreted as contravening the

> realization of the notion of 'character'; in the case of females, this was not the case; the dominant ideology presented her as eternal and unchanging, except for modifications in terms of fashion" (Johnston, 1976:209).

They first focused on film images of females and the disparity with females' actual lives. This wave's major aim was rejecting the stereotyping of the female's image in film. It outlined possibilities for a woman's cinema that allowed for representations of female subjectivity and desire. It was prompted by the emergence of females' film festivals. And had a wider sociological approach in studying film audiences and the position of females in the film industry, ranging from actresses, producers, technicians and directors. The ambitions of the feminist film theory as noted by Butler (2002) were narrowed to the exercises of female narrative agency objectives, female desires and female gazes.

The Feminist film theory upgraded from reading the meaning of a film which was based on poststructuralism perspectives to analysing the deep structures of how meaning is constructed, assessed roles as positive or negative (passive or active) and the length of screen time allotted to females. Marxist feminist analysis could not conceive of categories beyond those defined by a strict binary structure which is the male/female, active/passive. Their argument is centred on the notion that proposes that sexual difference or gender is paramount to creating meaning in the film. It generated its insights from the interests of a Marxist critique of ideology, semiotics, psychoanalysis, textual analyses and deconstruction (Mayne, 1988:1). Feminist film theory asserts that cinema is more than just a reflection of social relations. As it gives attention to how meaning is produced in films rather than the content (Kaplan, 1983:23). Feminist film theory proposes that films actively construct the meaning of sexual differences and sexuality.

3.5 PSYCHOANALYSIS , POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND SEMIOTICS

Psychoanalysis became the dominant paradigm for feminist film theory in 1980, producing and focusing on pertinent readings of many Hollywood genres like melodrama, film noir, horror, science fiction and action movies. Psychoanalysis has been used as a tool by feminist film theorists in their quest to analyse the cinema, although its use has been challenged by some of them, because it employs patriarchal language and concepts (Johnston, 1990:71). Kaplan accredited psychoanalysis as an important tool that feminists can use to understand the patriarchal underpinnings of films and to show how they oppress females (Kaplan, 1983:124). In other words, Psychoanalysis theory offers feminists a chance to change patriarchal practices and their situation of the feminine (Shaka and Uchendu, 2012).

Psychoanalytic theory was used by Mulvey to develop a new theory about identification, visual pleasure, the male gaze and female subjectivity and desire (McCabe, 2004:35). Psychoanalytic theory thus, appropriated as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form (Mulvey, 1975). Psychoanalysis introduced the famous notion of the male gaze (Kuhn, 1984: 21). Similarly, McCabe (2004:25) further asserts that Psychoanalytic theory shifted from a semiotic and post structuralism concern with the text to consider instead the unconscious processes involved in how the spectator is positioned in and through the film text. Females are depicted in a quite different way from males not because the feminine is different from the masculine but because the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the female is designed to flatter him (Berger, 1972:64). Females are the objects against which the male must differentiate for the female to attain subjectivity. This theory interprets films as mediums that stimulate visual pleasure by mixing structures of voyeurism and narcissistic into the story and the

image thus, it provides a base for the semiotic and textual examination of the study (Smelik, 2016:2). Voyeuristic visual pleasure is produced by looking at another whereas narcisstic visual pleasure can be derived as the self-identification with the figure of the image. The voyeuristic gaze and narcissistic identification draw their meaning upon the controlling power of the male character and on the objectified representation of the female character.

Several feminists have not always agreed about the usefulness of psychoanalysis, there has been however general agreements about the limitations of an exclusive focus on sexual difference such as the reproduction of a male or female that needs to be deconstructed. According to Kaplan (1983:24) psychoanalysis discourse may indeed have oppressed females, in the sense of bringing females to accept a positioning that is inherently antithetical to be a subject and autonomy. In addition, other scholars condemned the psychoanalytic approach for its deficiencies as a methodology to account for complex historical encounters involving gender and race (Bobo, 1989 as cited in McCabe, 2004:66). Manlove (2007,84 quoted in Hollinger, 2012:11) critiqued that Mulvey's account of the visual drive in psychoanalysis exaggerated the role of pleasure and misinterpreted Lacan who never described the gaze as gendered. Furthermore, Hollinger (2012) states that Lacan proposed that everyone looks not just at men and fears castration.

Using semiotics and psychoanalysis, Mulvey argues that classical Hollywood cinematic practice places females on the screen for the benefit of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989:15). Poststructuralism and semiotics opened the way for feminists to conduct a more theoretically rigorous analysis of how a film's ideological operations constructed the idea of a female within its textual practices. Poststructuralism turned a "female" into a sign, liable to semiological analysis. Semiotics named the female with no sort of referent; she was a signifier, whose meaning (or meaning effect) was said to be produced discursively. Semiology made signs central and began to gestate subjectivity in terms of? and as? (McCabe, 2004). Feminist film theory drew the insight that cinema veils its ideological construction by hiding its means of production. Hence, film passes off the sign "female" as natural or realistic, while she is in fact a structure, code, or convention who carries an ideological meaning (Smelik, 2009). Feminist semiology made a "female" a sign and proceeded to scrutinize her marginality as subject. Poststructuralism and semiotics focus on how the text produces females as the other, then psychoanalytic based theories proceed to describe the psychic processes involved in constituting that meaning within spectating practices. All these three were applied by the feminist film theory. Thus, feminist film theory is applicable to this study as feminists rooted in semiotic and psychoanalytic approaches understand spectatorship as being about textual address with meaning produced by the text and spectator in which meaning is made in the act of readership (McCabe, 2004:63).

3.6 FEMINIST FILM THEORY SECOND STAGE

The Feminist film theory moved away from a binary understanding of sexual difference to multiple perspectives, hybrid identities and possible spectatorships in the 1990s. It resulted in an increasing concern with questions of ethnicity, masculinity and queer sexualities. Mayne (1990:7) restated that the claims for a unique "female's" perceptive in feminist film theory resulted from the belief that there is a genuine female identity that has been repressed by patriarchy and which emerges through feminist practice. This representation of females' image in cinema has been blamed on male directors, writers and artists who are guilty of this "emotional, physical and intellectual crippling of females" (Smelik, 2016). Feminists then called for positive images of females in cinema and a reversal of sexist schemes. With the advent of structuralism, positive images were not enough to

change underlying structures in cinema. Hollywood cinema with its history of sexualized stereotypes of females and violence against females demanded a deeper understanding of its pernicious structures (Smelik, 2013). Its theoretical frameworks which focused on critiques of ideology, semiotics, psychoanalysis and deconstruction proved more productive in analysing how sexual difference is encoded in the visual and narrative structure of the film. Feminist film theory's textual analyses focused on ruptured texts to look for signs of ideological and formal contestation in relation to dominant film representations of females (McCabe, 2004:33). Feminist film theory trained considerable attention on reading classical Hollywood films to uncover what dominant ideology concealed in the process of producing patriarchal knowledge. Although it focused on Hollywood, film in Zimbabwe evolves around Hollywood traits as Hollywood has managed to conquer many parts of the world. Therefore, this theoretical framework used in critiquing films is an essential tool to the study as it provided steps for the researcher to examine and analyse the ways in which lead female characters in the films selected for the study conform to or challenge patriarchy.

According to Nasta (1991:13) "in countries with a history of colonialism females' quest for emancipation, self-identity and fulfilment can be seen to represent a traitorous act, a betrayal not simply of traditional codes of practice and belief but of a wider struggle for liberation and nationalism". Zimbabwe was a British colony and as noted by Magirosa (2015:2) missionaries formed females' groups known as *ruwadzano/women's fellowship* and relentlessly preached about the virtue of the European womanhood and how that would somehow get transferred to the lives of African females. Hollywood as noted by Haskell (1987:374) produced female myths of subjection and sacrifice from the Victorian virgins of the 1910s and 1920s to the deified sex goddesses and sultry (and diabolical) femme fatales of traditional male fantasies. Which Zimbabwean females were taught to strive for. Zimbabwe's culture is greatly influenced and shaped by the British culture as the British reinforced their culture as a clever and smarter one as compared to the African one through their films such as *Tiki Goes to Town* which they showcased in rural areas through mobile units popularly known as *bhaisikopo*.

Most content used to create African films is influenced by the West especially since Zimbabwe was a British colony (Mabweazara, 2002 cited in Matewa, 2003:24). And all major theorists of cinefeminism were all British, these include Claire Johnston, Pam Cook and Laura Mulvey (Hollinger, 2012:10). Although the feminist film theory was alluded by the whites, it has a great impact in Zimbabwe as Zimbabwe has continued to share the same patriarchal culture with its colonizers. Nnaemeka, (1998,),posits that the negative image of the African female is purely created and promoted by the Western media, and sadly enough, has been internalized, reproduced, and disseminated by Africans themselves. The multiple and diverse experiences of African females in a multi-cultural world through processes such as urbanisation, migration and immigration leads to the identification of some points of convergence between Western and African feminism (Bisschoff, 2009:38). Hence feminist film theory is appropriate for the research as it guides the study on examining the impacts cultural practises in the analyses of the reproduction and representation of myths about femininity in the two films. Likewise, feminist film theory was noted by Western scholars, but it is also relevant in Africa because the representation of women's lives in film stems from the media's perpetuation of Western codes of dualism (Beck, 1998:140 in Sutherland and Fertly, 2017:619).

3.7 FEMINIST FILM THEORY THIRD WAVE

Feminist film theory moved from an initial emphasis to understanding the alternative forms of film production through detailed and increasingly sophisticated textual exploration (Tasker, 2002:199).

Feminist film theory drew the insight that cinema veils its ideological construction by hiding its means of production from semiotics. The film passes of the sign a “woman” as natural or realistic while it is, in fact, a structure, code or convention carrying an ideological meaning. In patriarchal ideology, the image of a female only signifies anything that concerns men. The sign “female” is thus negatively represented as not man. This means that a female as a female is absent from the film (Smelik, 2009). Feminist film theory drifted away from a naïve understanding of stereotypes of females to the structures of gendered representation in visual culture due to semiotic analysis.

Feminist film theory advocated for the female spectator who could adopt the masochism of over-identification or the narcissism entailed in becoming one's own subject of desire. Feminist film theory moved the debate on from an understanding of the textual spectator to a consideration of the continuity between females’ interpellation as spectators and their status as spectators and their status as a social audience (Kuhn, 1992:310). In this notion, both the female character and the female spectator had to turn their active desire into a passive desire to be the desired object (Doane, 1987:18). Cinema is considered an important means of constructing certain positions for female subjectivity by inscribing desire into the codes and conventions of the imagery and the narrative. Feminist film theory considered the female subject in cinema as an impossibility in the 1980s this is so because in Hollywood women functioned as a sign within the Oedipal narrative in which she could not be subject of desire but would be represented as representation (Laurates, 1987: 22). The narrative and visual staging of the cinematic desire relies, as most theoretical accounts would have it, on the massive disavowal of sexual difference and the subsequent alignment of cinematic representation with the male-centred scenarios (Mayne, 1990:92). It then led to it building a paradox of the unrepresentability of females as the subject of desire which has been applied in Zimbabwe by many filmmakers who have advocated for the representation of females in a realistic form and not as objects of desire. As noted above by Davis Guzha (*Sinners* producer) who in an interview stated that we do not talk feminism but act on it.

Feminist film theory suggested for a counter cinema that was rooted in the avant –guide film practice. Their idea was that only a deconstruction of classical visual and narrative codes and conventions could allow for an exploration of female subjectivity desire and gaze. The counter cinema was to disrupt mainstream film practice both on the narrative and formal levels by telling stories differently and presenting visually in new ways (Hollinger, 2012:13). Gradually female filmmakers started to develop female films within the framework of popular cinema. So as to create new forms of visual and narrative pleasure (Smelik, 2009). Although the feminist film theory no longer has the explanatory force of understanding the complexity and contemporary visual culture, which has changed rapidly because of styles like post modernism, developments in digital technology, new media and new forms of cinematic aesthetics are breaking through the classical oedipal structures of representation and narration (Smelik, 2016:4). It is relevant in the Zimbabwean context as Zimbabwe is still logging behind in terms of its development and film technology. After the call for a counter cinema, Mulvey went on to suggest for a radical filmmaking practice that breaks down the structures of mainstream cinema especially the voyeuristic-scopophilic look and destroys cinematic pleasures. This destruction would divorce the view of the camera and position of the spectator from identification with look of the film’s male characters and free them into a passionate detachment that would in turn allow for a more critical and thoughtful experience (Mulvey, 1989:26). Mulvey noted that feminists would not just abandon mainstream filmmaking but would infiltrate and adjust mainstream filmmaking in order to combat female desire and fantasy into film texts (Thornham, 1997:309).

However, some critiques believe that the feminist film theory seemed initially unable to conceive representation outside heterosexuality. It focused more and failed to deal with racial and different ethnic groups in the world. It resulted in an increasing concern with questions of ethnicity, masculinity and queer sexualities. Hooks (1986:128) critiqued Mulvey's male gaze theory as limiting since it did not give an explanation for the male figure as an object of the gaze. Most mainstream feminist media approaches do not account for the side-lining of black females and females of colour that extends beyond sexual and economic identity (Gaines, 1988:295). Additionally, Gaines asserted that issues of race, form an essential part on black females and females of colour's identity which has largely been omitted for, in universal feminist discourses (ibid). The silencing of black females can be dated back to centuries ago in the days of slavery, thus from another angle feminist film theory's ignorance of classifying all races in particular and defining females as a whole as suggested by Bell Hooks cannot be validated as a disadvantage of the theory as the issue of colour still causes stir up to date. Possibly, females of colour may feel more akin to men of their racial grouping than they do to white females, thus resulting in an anomalous category that Lévi-Strauss alluded to where the boundary between the binary is blurred (Fiske, 1990:118). Adeyami and Ajibe (2009:1) highlighted that there is no place in the world where females do not face challenges from men in either families, societies or education institutions thus, feminist film theory did not specifically distinguish females in terms of their race, age, class and sexual differences as females from different continents suffer from the same difficulties.

There has been criticism levelled against feminist film theory for its homogenization of females and its lack of acknowledgement of multiple subjectivities in femininity (Gaines, 1988:293). Therefore, the feminist film theory falls prey to replicating the same *machismo* and *marianismo* binary between females from different backgrounds and sexual orientations (Gaines, 1988:294). Williams (2004:128 quoted in Hollinger, 2012:13) stresses out that Mulvey's argument does not really get at the enormous appeal mainstream film has for males and females alike. As argued by Smelik (2016:2) within the dichotomous categories of psychoanalytic theory it is virtually impossible to address female spectatorship as her desire carries no power. The female spectator is a concept not a person and as a result Mulvey proposed between masculine and feminine poles of spectator positioning (Hollinger, 2012:14). Hence, at a certain extent it can be argued that feminist film theory did not pay attention into female desire as it does not exist in their guide (psychoanalysis). Again, mainstream film offers a female spectatorship position that allows females only one alternative which is narcissistic over identification with the image of their like projected on the screen (Hollinger, 2012:14). Thus, this is precisely the function of the language of patriarchy, its role is to reduce complex social phenomena into categorizations of simple binaries (paradigms) through which myth can penetrate.

In spite of these serious objections, Mulvey's argument is still important at least as a polemical gesture that stimulated thinking about the gender division within film (Hollinger, 2012:12). Although the concept of the male gaze may be limiting, it still raised important questions about the encounter between films and their spectators and how sexual differences organize this encounter (Kuhn, 2004:126). Scholars like Rich perceived that the feminist theory died in the 1990s when it lost its connection to political activism of the women movement and was overrun by queer studies, multiculturalism and cultural studies (McCabe, 2004:110). Feminist film theory is still alive but has in fact become much more heterogeneous, dynamic and open in scope, encompassing not just film analysis but also television and new media studies, responding to the need to include issues of race, ethnicity and class in its analysis, adopting a more global reach and becoming more pluralistic electric in its theoretical framework and critical praxis (Hollinger, 2012:19).

3.8 Conclusion

Feminist film theory is grounded in the paradox of the unrepresentability of the feminine (McCabe, 2004:35). Feminist film theory boosted its credibility and increased its own critical authority to speak by invoking its political, philosophy, semiotic and psychoanalysis discourses whose intellectual importance went unquestioned thus, it was enforced for the study. Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey felt that the female absence within the signifying processes of mainstream patriarchal cinema was lamentable (McCabe, 2004:65). It is of its strengths that this theory was applied for the study although like any other factor it has its disadvantages. Feminist film theory scholars uncovered the origins of misrepresentation and took further steps to perfect the female image and deconstruct the image of the female in films. As a comparative study this theory will aid and guide the analysis of the two case studies to trace if *Sinners (2013)* which was produced after the theory's third phase and after Zimbabwe had advocated for the emancipation of females, has deconstructed the negative image of females.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers in-depth steps of how the study was carried up. Offering a write-up of the schemata to be employed in recognizing and reiterating experiences that best answer research questions (Ureke, 2016:89). Thus, providing a clear description and discussing the methods employed in carrying out the study. These include the research approach, research paradigm, research design, sampling procedure, data collection and data analysis. This chapter will also further outline the steps conducted in order to best answer its research objectives which are to examine the changing depiction of females in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013), to understand how sexual differences are encoded in the visual and narrative structure of *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013), to compare the representation and reproduction of myths about females and femininity in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013) and to identify the filmic devices used to depict females in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013). The study is a comparative analysis of two films made in Zimbabwe with an age gap of twenty years, with the aim of exploring the evolution of the representation of female characters in Zimbabwe.

4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative approach was used for the research because it involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials such as case studies, personal experiences, introspections, life stories, interviews, cultural texts and productions, and visual texts that describe the routine and the problematic moments and meanings to individual's lives (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:3). The qualitative method is an interpretive endeavour in which researchers study things in their natural settings and attempt to interpret them in relation to the meanings people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:8). The qualitative approach was adopted for the study as it is more flexible, emergent, often nonlinear and non-sequential in the aspect of operationalism (Kumar, 2011:11). The qualitative approach relies merely on human perception and understanding (Stake, 2010:11). Which means that it allows the researcher to analyse data from personal experiences. Thus, the qualitative approach was employed for this study because of its ability to better answer the study's aim, which seeks to investigate if the global efforts to emancipate females have borne any fruit in Zimbabwe. Creswell (2013: 246) also defines the qualitative approach as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

The study will investigate and highlight how the subjective interpretations of individuals and groups shape objectives of a society being guided by the qualitative approach (Bryman, 2001:12). Films are produced by human beings and the research process for the study entails examining people's experiences through the audio-visuals and filmic styles shown in the two films selected. And therefore, the research employed the qualitative method which is rooted in the social constructivist paradigm. The qualitative research is surrounded by a complex of interrelated family of expressions, concepts and assumptions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:15). It can also be summed up as experience – based, situational and personalistic (Stake, 2010:31). Neuman (2014:22) proposes that the qualitative approach takes into account the context within which social actors engage in their activity as well as

reasons for acting that way. The qualitative approach can be concluded as an approach which targets to understand actions and events in distinguished settings rather than seeking generalizations. It depends on some inter subjective reality and its subject matter is about meaningful relations to be understood (Kvale, 2007:11, Ureke, 2016:79). Thus, the qualitative research approach is suitable and was adopted as compared to other research approaches for the research because the study aims to examine the evolving representations of female characters in films made in Zimbabwe. With the above guidelines the researcher will break the film into scenes and pay attention to the parts that will provide the most credible data.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design can be attributed as a plan or as a structure of how a research is to be completed. Kerlinger (1986:279) also suggests that a research design is a plan, structure and strategy of the investigation to obtain answers to research questions or problems. The case study design will be adopted for the research as it involves the study of a phenomenon within a bounded system of setting or context (Creswell, 2007:73). According to Creswell (2013:97) a case study design explores a real-life contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems cases over time, through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports cases, descriptions and case themes. A case study design is defined as a systematic inquiry into a set of related events which target to describe and explain the phenomena of interest (Bromley, 1991:302). Another similar definition is that a case study is an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, as it is an analysis of systems that are studied with a comprehensive view by either one or several methods with the aim of generalizing several units (Gustafsson, 2017:14). The case study design will structure and strategize the investigation to obtain answers for the above-mentioned research questions and research problems (Thyer, 1993:94). The case study research design was employed to allow the use of films and archival sources for the collection of qualitative and historical data as its sole function is to make sure that the evidence obtained permits the researcher to address the key research questions as clear as possible.

A case in case studies is the object of study or unit of analysis (Yin, 2012:10). And in this research the unit of analysis will be based on audio-visual scenes and film texts from two disparate films made in Zimbabwe *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013). The two films chosen as case studies enable the research to be explored in detail since it is a comparative study. Each case comprises of different properties which gives full and deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Ureke, 2016:72). The multiple case study design plan was selected for the research because it allows multiple sources of evidence to be used in one study when collecting data which include archival records, documents, physical artefacts, direct and participant observation (Yin, 2012:11). In addition, multiple case studies was used to either augur contrasting results for expected reasons or either augur similar results in the study (Yin, 2003). These converging lines of evidence will make the findings to be more compelling because the more the cases involved in a study, the greater the certainty in its findings. As a multiple case study allows the analysis of data both within each situation and across situations. Other advantages of multiple case studies are that they create a more convincing theory when the suggestions are more intensely grounded in several empirical evidence thus, multiple cases allow wider exploring of research questions and theoretical evolution (Gustafsson, 2017:15).

To complete the research in a compelling manner the multiple case study design was implemented to enhance an understanding of the evolution of the representation of females in Zimbabwe over a

twenty-year-old (1993-2013) period in Zimbabwe. When the case studies are differentiated between each other the researcher can also contribute literature with an important influence from the contrasts and similarities obtained. The selected case studies will aid an understanding of the changes that have taken place in the way females are represented. The two case studies will provide the data for the research as the image in films stand for what they represent and the efforts that produced it, thus films reflect our societies.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The study was guided by the social constructivist paradigm as the approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world (Crotty, 2003:67). And the methods employed in the qualitative approach to collect the data and the sources from which the data was collected from, play within the social constructivist paradigm. The social constructivist paradigm supports meaning as being socially constructed, subjective and may change (Wayhuni, 2012:7). In line with Wayhuni, Good (2008) noted that social constructivism is an ontological viewpoint harbouring the basic idea that the world has a social foundation suggesting that the world is socially constructed thus, it is about the social order on how people perceive the world and how they distinguish between right and wrong. It influenced the study as it suggests that realities exist in the form of multiple and intangible mental constructions that are based on experience, local and specific in nature and dependent for their form of content on the persons or groups holding the constructions (Guba and Lincoln, 2003:273). They further stated that the social constructivism paradigm leans towards an anti-foundational understanding of truth, rejecting any permanent standards by which truth can be universally unknown.

Under the social constructivism paradigm realities are local, specific, constructed as they are socially and experientially based as they depend on the individuals groups holding them (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:11). Thus, reality is constructed through the interaction between language and various aspects of an independent world while actual words of individuals become the evidence of multiple realities (Creswell, 2007:73). Broadly its epistemology focuses upon subjective meanings, social phenomena, details of a situation, the reality behind these details and motivating actions. Hence the social constructivist paradigm influenced the research as the research is making a comparative analysis on the representation of “female” characters in Zimbabwe. Since the government of Zimbabwe has joined a lot of global efforts to fight for the equal representation of females and locally the government has put forward laws and campaigns for the equality of females in the country. Females have been critiqued as being underrepresented by a lot of scholars such as Laura Mulvey (1975).

4.4 SAMPLING

The two case studies selected to be used in the study, *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013), were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling can also be called judgemental, selective or subjective sampling. Samples are theoretically informed as they should be selected strategically in line with the phenomenon to be studied (Gunter, 2000). Purposive sampling was exercised to specifically pick information rich cases on the basis of their matched criteria to answer the research questions for the research being asked (Bloor and Wood, 2006:2). Unlike random sampling which deliberately includes a diverse section of ages, backgrounds and cultures, the idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will better be able to assist with the relevant research (Mukwara, 2015:62). Thus, the films *Neria* and *Sinners* were purposively selected based on the fact that both films focus on “females” as they both significantly address the struggles females go

through under the norm of societal and cultural values. And the study focuses on the evolution of female characters. The two films were made and produced by Zimbabweans, thus the context in which a film is made determines how it is made as every film draws from the culture of which it is part of thus, both films have a lesser percentage of biasness. The two films have different genders that wrote and directed the films thus, the way a female portrays a male is different from the way a male portrays a male hence the basis of their production will help in vividly drawing the analysis. The two films were produced in different socio-political and economic eras in Zimbabwe spanning over a two-decade gap between them. *Sinners* (1993) was produced when Zimbabwe had turned from being the breadbasket of Africa to being one of the poorest countries in Africa. Their age gap will aid in identifying the changes if they is any because a lot of transitions took place during this period. The above evidence serves as proof that both films are information rich and will provide greatest insights to research questions hence, they were purposively selected (Yin, 2011:4).

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection determines the quality, quantity, adequacy and appropriateness of data to the research work (Pawar, 2004:3). Hence the forms of collecting data are selected accordingly to the basis of research objectives, research problems and research questions (Pawar, 2004:3). Within a film movement certain patterns are created, and this study will adopt the audio-visual method to collect the data from watching the two purposively sampled case studies (Gabriel, 1989). A film is composed of a series of codified signs, articulated in accordance with syntactic rules therefore its typology, the way it is organised and the meaning of all its elements results in a semantic structure that the spectator deconstructs in order to understand the meaning of the text (Gustafsson, 2017:16). Moreover, films reflect their different cultural context, including their attitudes and ways of looking at the world (Harries, 1995:30). The audio–visual method of collecting data includes paying attention to the sound, music, images, mis-en scene, special effects and these will constitute the focus of the research. This is so because an audio-visual text is a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning. This is so because an audio-visual text is a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning (Gustafsson, 2017:16). According to Klenke (2008:36) audio- video viewing is considered as an image-based research which considers in addition to video the music, dance drama, photographs and computer -generated graphics that can be utilised as sources of data to create new knowledge. Klenke further notes that in a film characters are generally the research participants portrayed by actors.

The researcher attended to the actors and their actions as related to the films. According to Robson (1993:191) one major advantage of the audio-visual method is its directness as the researcher does not have to ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes, but watches what they do and listen to what they say. The audio-visual method of collecting data enabled the researcher to observe the objects of study more effectively as the researcher was able to watch the same events repeatedly. The data was collected from watching the two remembrance films (indigenous) with folkloric features. Within their films they tackle issues that will lead to an in-detailed analysis in the evolving representation of females in film. The researcher broke down each film into three scenes. *Neria* runs for 1 hour 43 minutes and scene one will be from 00.00 to 34:30, scene two was from 34.00 to 1-hour 8 minutes 6 seconds and scene three was from 1 hour 8 minutes 7 seconds till the end. The film *Sinners* runs for 1 hour 11 minutes, the first scene will be from 00:00-24:00, the second scene will be from 24:01-48:00 and the third scene will be from 48:01 till the end. Hobson (2003:68) states that “the

connotations of the reading of the visuals are part of the characterization". Thus, characters were selected based on their ability to answer the study's research questions. The selection of the three scenes used for the study was determined by the significant presence of three main categories of females which are the girl child which included teenagers and adolescents between the ages of 13 to 19, the active middle aged females which comprised of both married and unmarried females between the ages of 20 and 40 and the elderly females which included the mature females in societies (those that have adult children and have passed their childbearing years).

These three scenes had the introduction and important shots which provided a base for the analysis of the study. The order of the first scenes selected from both films provided solid background information about the female protagonists in the films (introduction). The first scenes selected can also be called the expositions or rising scenes of a film. The second scenes purposively chosen where chosen on the basis of their helpful information for the study, where the development of a situation (storyline) arises or the complications of the situation (storyline) stipulate. The development of storylines in the second scenes can also be called the climax of a film. The last scenes selected which are the third scenes had incredible information for a great analysis for the study. They answered the questions that had arisen from the second scenes selected. The targeted three categories of females and their roles they play helped the researcher to collect and gain an in-depth analysis of the evolving representation of female characters in Zimbabwe.

The specific scenes from which the data was collected from were purposively chosen based on females' power-to "sense of personal control", "power-over" and "power-with" strengths that had female protagonists and female to female talking time (Sutherland and Feltey, 2017:619). The female to female talking time included female characters talking to each other about something other than men. "**Power-with**" strengths are characterized by scenes which show females struggling within the hindrances of oppressive systems, females coming to realize the extent of their oppression and working together to challenge an oppressive system. Likewise, "power with" looks at the social definitions of females: how females respond to the definitions given to them by society and whether lead female characters identified their experiences as something imposed from the outside or resisted it.In their talking time power-to "**sense of personal control**" strength focuses on scenes where females first experience life, culture and traditions as restrictive which bounds their ambitions and desires. Within this power-to "sense of personal control" females later on discover some agency where there was none, survive without males and no longer need to be dependent upon males. In the power-to "sense of personal control" scenes the researcher looked at whether female roles in both films where only limited to their gender roles and was their identity construction as a process or a fixed achieved identity (Cowie, 1997:4). "**Power over**" strengths are found in scenes where females become dominant by adopting masculine characteristics and where females are physically strong but are often highly sexualized. Data was collected from the specifically chosen scenes that showed a high percentage of naturalism and had a connection between the moving images and the spoken word. The scenes that were selected for the data collection were also based on their authenticity, meaning scenes with real people in real situations such as their age and geographical locations. The specifically chosen scenes for the data collection were also selected based on their diegesis which refers to the originality and quality between what happened in real life and what is being shown. Additionally, data was also collected from scenes that also had parts of the man to man talk. Another advantage of the audio-visual method as a way of collecting data is that the repeated viewing of scenes often leads to new discoveries and new sights as it is flexible.

"Power-to, Power-over and Power-with" Strength Shots from the film *Neria*

Scene	Talking time	Topic
1	11:58- 12:25	Patrick and Phineas
1	18:43- 22:17	Jarimukaranga folktale
1	39:05- 39:39	Patrick's funeral
2	43:16- 44:33	Maria And Phineas
2	48:00- 49:00	Neria's property taken
2	52:18- 53:05	Neria and Connie
3	1:05:00- 1:06:27	Neria and her lawyer
3	1:31:45-1:33:39	Neria at the village

"Power-to, Power-over and Power-with" Strength Shots from the film *Sinners*

Scene	Talking time	Topic
1	03:52 - 04:37	Samantha and Uncle Shaya
1	09:21 - 10:04	Samantha on the streets
1	12:09 - 16:00	Chipo and Simba
2	22:43 - 26:46	Samantha and her aunt
2	25:20 – 25:41	Samantha and Patie

Female to Female Talk Shots from the film *Neria*

Scene	Talking Time	Topic
1	09:36 - 10:40	Neria and her workmates
1	22:23 - 23:57	Neria and Maria
1	28:02 - 28:57	Neria and her workmates
2	48:16- 49:00	Neria and her diplomats

Female to Female Talk Shots from the film *Sinners*

Scene	Talking Time	Topic
1	07:37 - 10:00	Samantha, Patie and Kere
1	15:54 - 17:02	Georgina, Kere and Patie
2	25:46 - 26:53	Vero, Kere, Chipo
2	28:39 - 30:53	Kere and Chipo
2	32:40 - 35:10	Patie, Chipo, Samantha, Kere

Man to Man Talk Shots from the film *Neria*

Scene	Talking Time	Topic
1	11:59	Patrick and Phineas
1	14:40	Phineas and Patrick
1	16:15-18:19	Patrick at Jethro's show

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Films can be understood as mediums of communication and therefore, their analysis was based on their systematic structure of film texts (Rwafa, 2014:105). The analysis of a film requires a critical evaluation of words, phrases and images within their specific contexts. Language communicates ideas, norms, values, attitudes, prejudices and perspectives (Rwafa, 2008:189). The sequence of individual images that constitute the essence of film in their chronological, linear succession formed the core for the data analysis. The researcher used audio-visual analysis to analyse the data. Audio visual analysis ensures validity and authenticity and the researcher watched what was happening and interpreted the content objectively (Robson, 1993:199). However, directly watching what is under study does not guarantee an objective interpretation of the content. The researcher followed certain stages of analysis such as defining the audio-visuals, describing, interpreting them and made conclusions. All forms and systems of signs used by audio-visual media were up for investigation, in terms of the structure of texts. It was achieved by arranging the collected data under its texts and mis-en-scene, then analysed it. Film texts are open towards their social communication and their practical appreciation, therefore at the core of analysis is how these texts contribute to the meaningful constructions of a social world (Easthope, 1993:6).

Textual analysis was employed to analyse the data which was collected from watching the two chosen films. Text refers to what is being interpreted for the purpose of generating meaning such as films, photographs and books (McKee, 2003:11). Fairclough (2003:21) defines texts as elements or parts of social events which motivate change through meaning-making which can be in the form of photography, design or speech. Furthermore, Gustafsson (2017:15) clarifies textual analysis as a general type of qualitative analysis which goes beyond the manifest contents of media, focusing on underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text. Textual analysis was adopted because of its ability to analyse film language with an aspect of establishing the extent to which language is used by filmmakers to censor alternative ways of perceiving social realities (Rwafa, 2012:314). In other words, textual analysis permits the researcher to place judgements based on the dialects of the film as meaning is not always easily discernible. Furthermore, textual analysis is founded on an understanding of texts as constructs, as structured by the work of ideology, while at the same time naturalizing that work embodying in other words, denial or effacement of the operation of ideology (Kuhn, 1985:84). Denzin and Lincoln (2011:9) argued that textual analysis from a feminist and cultural perspective interprets a text in terms of its position within a historical moment marked by a gender, race or ideology. Textual analysis was applied to describe and interpret the characteristics of audio-visual messages as a text refers to any cultural object or form that has potential meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Hence, it was carried out to uncover the process involved not only in the production of textual meaning but also in the relationship between text and spectator.

The utilisation of textual analysis in this study was due to its ability, which allows the researcher to make educated guesses at some of the likely interpretations and attain a sense of the ways in which people make sense of the world around them from the data findings (McKee, 2003:10). Textual analysis is embedded and rooted in the hermeneutic tradition of textual interpretation and has been organized around the procedures implied by semiotics (Scott, 2006:297). Textual analysis involves a prolonged engagement of the chosen text using semiotic, narrative, genre or rhetorical approaches to qualitative analysis (Hall, 1975:15). Textual analysis was applied to the research because films are

classified as hybrid texts which combine linguistic and semiological elements to make meaning (Fairclough, 2003). Hence it typically results in a judicious presentation of analysed text as the evidence for the overall argument. Textual analysis was conducted on the scenes selected that had female protagonists dealing with socio-economic issues, body issues, male and female interactions and sex to examine how they are portrayed. The textual analysis allowed the investigation to scope the mediated reality and its relationship to ideology and social change from the sequence of images, sound and the dialogue in the scenes (Fiske, 1987:21). I used textual analysis to gain an understanding and compare how the production crews of the two case studies represented the evolution of female characteristics in the films. Textual analysis is appropriate for the analysis of data because the research is not looking at the audience reception but the context underlying messages in the films (Fiske, 1990).

4.7 SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

The study also applied the semiotic analysis to analyse the mis-en-scenes in the two films to gain in depth information as audio-visual analysis derives its concepts from the disciplines of semiotics (Ali, 2004:2). Semiotic analysis was employed to analyse the meaning of texts so as to critically gain a deep analysis for the comparative research which examined the evolving representation of female characters in Zimbabwe. This is so because textual analysis on film only pays attention to the sequence of images, sound and dialogue which leaves a gap into what is in a film scene which is known as the mis-en-scene. Such as signs which are social constructs because they are created and interpreted by people in order to generate meaning in everyday life. Film is a semiotic representation of reality as the image shown is an effect of a photochemical process caused by what it represents (Easthope, 1993:6).

Mis-en-scene can be referred as all the elements of a film that are shown in front of the camera, the way they are arranged and how they relate to each other (Bordwell and Thompson, 2003:12). Mis-en-scene involves visual, composition, movement position on screen and the properties set as part of the stage design (Barsam and Monohan, 2010:3). Mis-en-scene can also be described as the means of communication in the film and the ways in which they work out an expressive narrative pattern (Gibbs, 2002:2). Mis-en-scenes in films include the plot narrative which is made up of the characters, their development and character complexity (Cassidy, 2013:4). The staging or the composition, cinematography, costume, editing, sound, sound effects, background music, music score and the soundtrack in the scenes are grouped under the mis-en-scene. Music in films play a significant role as musical lyrics are signifiers of meaning which help in asserting monolithic visions in society, cultural fixities and feelings of resistance or differences. Moreover, music and sound are based on culturally agreed associations between sound and emotion (Berger, 2012:14). The music score is the music used in a film to support the action which also falls under the mis-en-scene category. They are two different types of sounds in films the diegesis sound and the non-diegetic sound (Rwafa, 2008:156). Film sounds are an example of meta language which use highly complexed paralinguistic codes or signs to construct and mediate socio-cultural realities. The diegesis sound is the original sound in a film like the sound of birds singing and the non-diegetic sounds are the added sounds such as the sound of blows in a fist fight.

Semiotic analysis is a method of textual analysis, but it involves both the theory and analysis of signs, codes and signifying practices (Chandler, 2002:259). Visual signs and images, even when they bear a close resemblance to the things to which they refer, are still signs: they carry meaning and thus have

to be interpreted" (Hall et al, 2013: 5). Rwafa (2012:137) argues that a sign is an inseparable combination of a concept of a sound image which if further divided into two equally weighed components produces the signifier or sound-image and the signified concept. According to Deacon (2007:141) semiotics are one of the most interpretive methods of analysing texts and its success of failure relies on how well researchers express and articulate their interpretation of the text (Stokes, 2012:71). Semiotic analysis aided the researcher to think analytically about how texts work and what their implications are for the broader culture in which they are produced and disseminated (Deacon, 2007:144). This is so because a costume, dressing and make-up further help to depict a character's personality to the audience so as to enable them to clearly understand the personality of the character portrayed and how they develop from stage to stage (Hobson, 2003:68). Likewise, a costume includes the makeup and the way in which someone dresses which is a collection of signs that alert and inform others about that person. Semiotic analysis was conducted on the selected scenes in the films accordingly, to the meanings of the used signs both in a denotative and connotative meaning. With the aim of evaluating the differences in the representation and reproduction of females as films are specific signifying systems where messages are created and communicated (McRobie, 1978:91).

It is through the camera that aesthetic designs of the setting, lighting and actor movement make sense (Butler, 2007: 158). Semiotic analysis is less concerned with what meaning is, but it examines how signs come to mean and have meaning (Shepperson and Tomaselli, 1991:325). Thus, the researcher looked at different properties which add up to a mis-en-scene as they constitute the focus of the research such as the plot narrative, composition and the typage. The plot narrative involves the characters or protagonists, their development and their complexity towards the character they portray. The structure of the film from the exposition to the rising action to the crisis to the resolution and finally the denouement all fall under the plot narrative. The composition of a film constitutes of the mood, atmosphere, setting, and lighting and which is also known as the staging. The cinematography of a film also falls under the mis-en-scene category this is made up of the camera shots, camera angles and the camera distance. Thus, semiotic analysis was used to identify the relevant signs amongst the mis-en-scene that constitute a film.

Character's behaviours functioned as the main resources for the researcher to construct predictions about character's traits. As emotions and the entire narrative structures are substantially mediated by characters (Smith, 1995:82). The character's alignment which falls under the mis-en-scene is mediated by a wide variety of filmic resources in different dimensions. Semiotic analysis was used on the character's actions both in the visual track and expressed in the verbal text. Eder (2010: 21) outlined that the unravelling and understanding of how characters are interpreted involves levels of description which I used when I was conducting the semiotic analysis on the characters. These levels of description according to (Eder, 2010:22) include the artefact which refers to how characters are represented textually and stylistically. The fictional being which is the formation of socially contextualised character traits and the features possessed by the characters in the fictional world. The symbol which involves describing and interpreting what the characters stand for. The symptom which are the effects produced by the characters. Thus, semiotic analysis was applied for the patterning of filmic character's actions and interactions.

The semiotic analysis was applied according to the socio-economic, cultural and political contexts of Zimbabwe as the selected films exist in Zimbabwe and where produced by Zimbabweans. As it considers the social context and cultural meanings of images, texts or signs thus, it was applied (Rose, 2001:96). The analysis of the context of the films using the semiotic approach includes the

analysis of the culture, the period when the film was produced and the place of the creation (Fiske, 1987:34). This helped in understanding the basis of female myths from their designated cultural societies in the two films analysed. As noted by Iversen (1991:6) the context of a group affects the actions and attitudes of the individuals who belong to that group and in film the socio-political context plays a role on actions and attitudes of the individuals who produce films. The analysis of the context of the films aided the researcher to answer the way in which women are portrayed in both films as it focuses on the "why" the films were produced, "who" created the films and "what" was the society like when the films were produced (Hyun, 2013:3).

According to Tseng (2013:588) four types of signs and codes exist in the semiotic analysis of film and these are the indexical signs which are the most basic of signs in film and they indirectly point to a certain meaning, the symbolic code which denotes something they have nothing to do with but only because the code exists and is used in a certain society, the iconic sign which appear as they are and the enigma code which exist as a mystery within a text that is not immediately answered. An audio-visual text is a semiotic construct comprising several signifying codes that operate simultaneously in the production of meaning. A film is composed of a series of codified signs articulated in accordance with syntactic. According to Hyun (2013:153) analysis of a film begins by viewing the semiotic system of a film form and the content as an arena of ideological struggle permitting open reading and even subversive interpretation to dominant regimes of signification. Symbols used infuse people's view thus symbolic meanings are important in the audio-visual analysis as films use symbols to help understand social definitions. The researcher followed the following steps when she was conducting the semiotic analysis. These include firstly defining the object of analysis which are the two films purposively selected, *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013). Secondly gathering the texts, describing them and interpreting them. The researcher pulled out the cultural codes from the texts then generalized and concluded them. The conclusions are based on the study's aims and research questions. As Ballaster (1994:29) notes semiotic analysis explores the arrangements and development of content and encourages researchers to focus on formal features of text and their meaning. Semiotic analysis was applied because it provides a framework for a precise discussion of how signs and objects work to convey meaning (Bignell, 2002:26). However, Slater (1998:238) also argues that semiotics is all theory and very little method, providing a powerful framework for analysis and very few practical guidelines for rigorously employing it.

4.8 CONCLUSION

With the aim of answering the research's aims and objectives. This chapter provided a clear description of the selected methodology used by the researcher and the steps taken in order to conduct the research. Data was collected comparatively in light of the literature review and the theoretical framework that underpinned the study. The researcher watched the selected scenes under study and identified the various visual styles, approaches motifs and techniques exhibited within the films. The next chapter will present the analysis of the data and its findings which contain a textual analysis and a semiotic analysis on the mis-en-scenes of the scenes chosen. However, this specific analysis of scenes can, also be further supported by screening these scenes to a contemporary audience of females only and males only. Again, a questionnaire can be supplied to the audience, asking if they felt the characters had an agency such as how they felt on how the characters were physically represented in terms of makeup or clothes.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of popular representations of females in films locally and globally as discussed in the literature review chapter (2) and the theoretical chapter (3). Looking at the physical characteristics females are represented as weak, childish, concerned with meaningless things, slow to action and their physical bodies are men's toys. Psychologically females are represented as unreasonable, bad organizers, controlled by emotion rather than reason, poor decision makers, emotionally weak, too religious, preoccupied with present and to please males. In terms of leadership females are represented as less principled and need guidance from men, they cannot withstand pressure and lack tact. Females in films are portrayed from a masculine, and heterosexual perspective which has been discussed at length by Laura Mulvey (1975). Films present males as active, controlling subjects while treating females as passive objects of desire for males and the audience. This chapter is divided into sections, the first section will examine the "how" and "what" part of the study by examining how females are represented in *Neria* and *Sinners.* And the second section will identify the differences and similarities between the two films and how they portray their female characters.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS ON HOW FEMALES ARE REPRESENTED IN *NERIA* (1993) AND *SINNERS* (2013)

5.1 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS HOUSEWIVES IN *NERIA*

Nelmes (2003:227) notes that media misrepresents females, portraying them in a stereotypical manner, denigrating them and always showing them in the home and subordinate to males. Female characters in the film *Neria* are portrayed negatively as people who are linked to household chores and should not cross that borderline. Neria is seen being loyal and submissive to her husband as she performs her feminine duties diligently. This is quoted by Connie (Neria's best friend and colleague) in scene one, (3:02 - 3:12) who says:

> *"don't you ever get tired, but how do you do it? After work I will be so tired, I just want to sleep"*

Neria's character is used to applaud loyal, submissive and hardworking females, who put their household chores as their first priority as the perfect definitions of cultured and traditional married females. And single females like Connie are depicted as lazy, who should learn the proper ideals of femininity from married females.

In scene one (6:03- 6:15) an establishing shot is used to establish Mavis in the kitchen with her mother Neria. Mavis is only thirteen years old, who is captured preparing a meal for the whole family with excitement. She is eager to display her good cooking skills to her grandmother and uncle. While in the kitchen Neria says:

> *"when there is not enough food in the home, is it ever the father's fault never!!!!!!! It is always the mother's fault".*

Neria's advice towards her daughter replaces the scopophilic gaze on females as objects of sexual desire in cinemas according to Laura Mulvey (1975) with the idealization of females as housewives. A

full shot is used by the director to capture Mavis's vulnerability in a prostrate position serving the elders (scene one 8:34 – 9:12). Mavis's body is stylized and fragmented by a close-up shot for the recipients of the spectator's looks as she is shown kneeling down while serving them food. Mavis's gesture of kneeling down equates females to slaves who are not fit to serve males standing as males are more superior than them. Ambuya (Patrick's mother) who is dressed in a decent way with a head wrap (*dhuku*) and a wrap around her waist (*zambiya*) according to the Shona culture cheerfully praises Mavis's gesture of submitting herself as a female before the males. The film normalizes females' subordination as a close-up shot is directed at Ambuya's face which shows great delight at her granddaughter's behaviour. Grandmothers hold a big role in many Zimbabwean cultures because they are considered as the guardians of cultural norms hence, if a gesture is applauded by a grandmother it indicates that one is well mannered and shows there will be continuity which Mavis represents as quoted by Ambuya:

> *"uhmmm Mavis muzukuru/ uhmmm Mavis my granddaughter with cooking like this, one day you will be able to catch a good husband as good as your father".*

Ambuya's compliment leaves Patrick smiling. The film *Neria* hardly shows Mavis playing with other children like any other normal thirteen-year-old could or studying. Rather the director shows Mavis glued to domestic chores, tidily dressed and behaving in a particular manner that is mutually accepted from females. Mavis's aim is to please males imposing and limiting her from realizing other aspirations elsewhere. *Neria* constructs Mavis in a manner that reflects patriarchal needs whose goal is to be a perfect housewife and aim a good suitor. Thus, the construction of Mavis's character represents females as humans who exist within the delineations of males as housewives. On the other hand, it can be noted that in the Zimbabwean culture when young ones are serving or greeting an elder person they kneel down as a form of respect thus, probably Mavis's gesture was not aligned to female subjectivity. Ambuya is always filmed sleeping or performing her duties as a female. Throughout her talking time in the film, Ambuya is never heard of advising her grandchildren about other issues such as getting good professions when they grow up. Instead she is always talking about household chores and how females should behave and act to the extent of hating Neria because she was going to work which in her eyes was wrong as a female should always stay at her matrimonial home doing her duties while the males work. However, it can also be argued that the construction of Ambuya shows one who had never lived in the city before therefore she never understood the city life. During the colonial era females who stayed in the cities were labelled as prostitutes. Thus, it is fair to argue that Ambuya had not yet adjusted to the new era and still viewed females like Neria as promiscuous. She did not see any good in females breaking the boundaries of the *housewife* tittle because she herself had never surpassed it. She gave advice in line with her specialty which was being a housewife.

Commercial films habitually see female characters centered in themes of self-sacrifice, defined in relationship to children or to men and have encouraged the female audience to identify either with female figures on screen who were powerless or victimized, or with active *male* heroes (Montgomery, 1984:39). The film *Neria* constructed its female characters in themes of self-sacrifice as evidenced in scene one, (09:36- 10:39) which shows Chipo (Neria's workmate) at her workplace with her colleagues discussing about their weekend plans. The camera zooms in at Chipo's face who affectionally responds to Neria and Fransisca in a low sad voice saying:

> *"Ï will be locked at home with the kids as usual".*

The film uses Chipo's response to represent the stereotyping of females as childbearing machines who should not explore or enjoy their world but confine to their motherly duties. Chipo's response is of a bitter female whose aspirations have been shunned by patriarchal values. Chipo's personality stresses on the reality of females as the "*other"* whose feelings and encounters are not important, but their bodies are. In this glance, *Neria* ascribes Chipo's cultural inferior identity as a means of forbidding her full actualization to change her discriminated life. Chipo cannot go out and refresh herself like her other two co-workers because she is a housewife. In that same scene Neria discloses her weekend plan of visiting her husband 's village. A close-up shot is directed at Fransisca (Neria's co-worker) who fervidly wishes if she was the one travelling. Fransisca's costume and the style she used to wrap her head wrap (*dhuku*) vividly paints her as a humble wife as expected by the Zimbabwean tradition. These co-workers are staged as compliant inert females. Fransisca stands in as the object of desire for the male gaze as she is the definition of a righteous female as expected by the Zimbabwean culture. During that era, it was mandatory for a lot of housewives to stay behind in the village while their husbands worked in cities.

The film always captured Maria (Neria' sister in-law) in two positions either sewing or conducting her household chores. Her character does not exceed the fence of her matrimonial home. Females in the film *Neria* are illustrated in a Zimbabwean and global traditional manner which maintains stereotypes of personality traits, capabilities and aspirations of males. Maria was always filmed in the home setting because that was her area of expertise as she lacked the educational and economic resources that would enable her to engage in other prevailing spheres, thus she accepted her inferior status as her only purpose.

5.2 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS INFERIOR IN *NERIA*

Myers argues that females had been represented as beautiful and passively feminine, silent objects to be visually pleasing to a male audience and lacking a potentially offensive identity of their own in films. The film *Neria* opens with a close-up camera shot on Connie who is having a bad dream. An evil walla of screams and laughs is heard from the background. It is accompanied by a musical score of drums and rattles, establishing the setting. While Neria and her husband Patrick are painting their home showing their hardworking characteristic. Both are wearing blue indicating trust and unity in their home. Neria's overcoat is light blue in colour which is linked to her passivity. Both are doing the same chore, but Patrick was on a ladder while Neria was on the ground. Patrick being on top of the ladder may also be linked to his position in the family as the head of the family. While Neria being the subordinate one, stood on the ground. However, it can also be suggested that Patrick as a loving and caring husband took an extra precaution and risked himself climbing up the ladder so that if the worst happens, he would rather get injured rather than for Neria to. The director of the film uses the opening scene to clarify the gender struggles within the societies, even though both genders can do same chores they are never viewed as equal in societies.

In scene one (09:36-10:39) a long shot captures a beaming morning sunburn light casting upon Neria and Connie arriving at their workplace. The long shot is used to establish their occupations. Two women are showcased hanging clothes outside which they sell. Neria and Connie along with other women work at a craft shop where they sew clothes, weave mats, crotch and knit for a megre living. The film *Neria* consigns females to menial posts that are a reproduction of those jobs that females are familiar with at home. Neria's workplace does not require reasoning capacities but rather requires their hands. In the whole film only one female has a better nurturing job, the doctor who attends to Mavis. The film supersedes Zimbabwean gender roles which believe that only a few females have the

brains of a male and can pursue males' careers. The majority of females in *Neria* do not exceed the bridges of household chores which do not require intellectual thinking. Which is the opposite of the occupations allocated to male characters in this film. The lawyers and the judge are males, Phineas was a businessman and Neria' husband had a formal job. Males are depicted as people who were born to be leaders and have the final say as the male judge gives the final judgement while females are only subordinates who listen and act to what males say. Additionally, the common belief that females are shrewdly inferior led most societies to restrict females' education to learning only domestic skills while males were accorded the opportunity to use their mental energies. Hence men were capable to acquire solid economic foundations and upper-class male-controlled positions of employment and power in society. Thus, the film *Neria* represents its female characters in line with the African context which produces females as illiterate.

Scene one (11:58 – 12:25) shows Patrick and his family travelling to the village. Neria is pictured positioned at the backseat of her car. Neria has denied herself the right to enjoy the comfort of her car. As interpreted by her gesture of opting to sit at the backseat while offering her front seat to her brother in-law (Phineas). Neria is represented in an adverse manner who behaves, self-censors herself in line with the social relations of glorifying males. The film *Neria* places females in second positions as Neria and Ambuya are captured sitting at the back (females) while Patrick and Phineas (males) are sitting at the front seats. The film implies that males are the heads of households while females are their subordinates. Ambuya and Neria are both captured wearing head wraps and dull coloured clothes which highlights their obedience to the patriarchal culture. Neria and Ambuya's costumes fully represent their subordination to patriarchy.

On their way to the village the camera zooms in at Phineas's face, roaring in anger flaunting it towards Patrick's response who had suggested that he will have to consult with Neria first before deciding. Patrick's response shows that not all males believe in stereotypes which undermine female power. Phineas is shown being highly disenchanted in Patrick's decision of consulting Neria as he mockingly calls him three times, indicating his disbelief towards Patrick's behaviour of treasuring females. This is so because in his view Phineas believes that females are subordinates who should not be consulted but should be instructed. The camera places Neria's facial expression in a close-up shot showing her pain as she suddenly wears a sad face and slowly faces down as she cannot pour out her emotions or say anything about it. Neria as a female is portrayed as one who has accepted her inferior place in the patriarchal society thus, she is obliged to emotional abuse and should live with it because she is a weak subject who is designed to simultaneous ways of oppression. Phineas as a male in a patriarchal society does not believe that females are intelligent to make major decisions for the family hence, he shamelessly does not hide his objection towards Patrick's decision of consulting Neria, in her presence. Phineas's character encodes a gender imbalance within ways of seeing, in which the dominant power is split between Patrick the active male and Neria the passive female. However, it can also be argued that Phineas purposively hurt Neria's feelings because of his personal vendetta towards her as he and Ambuya did not understand her modern lifestyle.

In scene one (25:06 – 25:55) the camera in movement zooms in at Patrick convincing Neria to buy the bull for his family which Phineas had requested earlier in the car. Neria does not critique her husband's idea but as a passive human as required by tradition agrees to it. Likewise, there is the never protesting, docile, submissive, accepting and quiet model of a female in Neria's response. Which is a fantasy for most males in a patriarchal community. Patrick had other brothers who would afford to buy the bull but because Phineas bullied Patrick, who was in debt, Neria complied with the

idea sacrificing her other needs. Neria conforms to patriarchy which positions females as goalkeepers who just receive balls (silent object). She is forced to agree at her expense just to please her in-laws as patriarchy demands a married female to please her in-laws first. Her behaviour goes in line with the stereotype where females sacrifice themselves for others. Contrastingly it is debatable to categorize Neria's gesture as a manner of passiveness as it is possible to note that Neria's response was maybe a way of trying to strengthen the family's unity.

Males tell a story from a male perspective thus they give an imitation of females that are not able to act and survive as self-sufficient human beings (Smelik, 2016:5). Godwin Mawuru (male film director) portrayed married females in this film as passive human beings. While at the well in scene one (22:23 – 22:57) Maria is captured (Phineas's wife) hesitating to visit Neria alone at the city as she is afraid that Phineas will divorce her, if she goes against his rule which prohibits her from travelling to the city. Maria cannot travel to her sister in law's place as Phineas hates it and if she does so, she will have nowhere to go. The scene is shot at a well and by this setting the film aligns females' value in societies to domestic chores. Maria talks about Phineas's other mistresses in the city, but she is not bothered as she generalizes the issue and does not show a displeased face about her husband's unfaithfulness to her. The film uses Maria's character to show rural married females as downtrodden who lack independence, who survive in abusive marriages in fear of divorce shadows. This is so because of Maria's response which limits her to travel to the city because her husband Phineas does not find pleasure in her mixing with modern females in the city. She is afraid to cross Phineas as she cannot live outside her marital home another dependency syndrome which the film normalizes. The film *Neria* displays the depraved identities and nature suggested for females by males who run the market as they are the ones who pay lobola. Maria says:

> "*if Phineas throws me away where will I go ndiregei zvangu ini /leave me alone*".

Maria's character is degraded to a thoughtless female who is socialized in a manner which fits her into a relationship of being subordinate to males. Maria cannot act outside her marital home and sacrifices to be confined to it. Because the moment she becomes independent she becomes a scorn to herself and her family. The film defines their clothing in relation with the male's definition of a married female as both females have headwraps and waist wraps (zambiya). Maria is victimized for being a female and hides her pain in the name of being called decent, subjugating herself from her desires and other aspirations just like Chipo. The film *Neria* normalizes it through her facial expression which shows no sorrow and the natural background sound of the nature. Maria and Chipo's inability to speak is presented as a subordinate prerequisite for keeping marriages, which negatively presents females as people who are prone to emotional abuse. However, on the other hand Maria's dependency syndrome can be because of her rural upbringing. The majority of females in rural areas do not get many opportunities to advance themselves as compared to females in urban areas. Most of them marriage, is the only achievement they are aware of.

In scene one (18:43 -22:07) Ambuya the griot is filmed in her rural home with her grandchildren telling them about the Jarimukaranga folktale. Again, Ambuya's role as a griot immortalizes the invisibility of females in the film. Ambuya marks her connection to tradition and heritage by employing oral culture to tell a story, recite an historical myth and passing on wisdom to another generation. By this *Neria* makes use of a folktale to spread ethnic knowledge about societal rules and principles, as folktales play a socio educational role in the Zimbabwean context. The Jarimukaranga folktale serves as an allegory for the larger themes in Neria. Jarimukaranga is a narrative of a psychological negotiation of gender inequalities fought over through a female's body. The folktale is about a man who realizes

how his wife has worked hard and has managed to acquire a great fortune. And decides to marry a second wife with the hard earnings of his first wife. The first wife is represented as an object whose destiny is determined by her husband. Jari is a blanket that was common during the colonial days and was highly regarded during that era as people used sacks or animal skins as blankets. Thus, a *jari* was bought by the rich and was treasurable. The first wife in the folktale laments about her husband's cruel behaviour in a song which Ambuya leads:

> Ambuya: *wogotengera Jari Mukaranga ko iniwo/ How can you buy a new blanket for your new wife only and not buy for me also.*
>
> Chorus: *Jari Mukaranga.*
>
> Ambuya: *wakanganwa nhamo yako iya yemugota/you have forgotten the hardships of your bachelorhood.*
>
> Chorus: *Jari Mukaranga.*
>
> Ambuya: *Ndini ndakakubvisa munhamo yemugota/Iam the one who helped you through your bachelorhood hardships.*
>
> Chorus: *Jari Mukaranga.*
>
> Ambuya: t*akarima munda wedu tiri vaviri/ we started our own family from humble beginnings*
>
> *with nothing but just being the two of us.*
>
> Ambuya: *tichidya kanyama kematunhu/ struggling to survive in shackles of poverty.*
>
> Chorus: *Jari Mukaranga.*
>
> Ambuya*: nhasi uno wagara wotora mumwe mukadzi/ today I have acquired a fortune and you now decide to marry another wife.*
>
> Chorus: *Jari Mukaranga.*
>
> Ambuya: *Ini mukadzi mukuru ndini ndakaita zvose tiri munhamo/ I as the first wife struggled from humble beginnings and did everything in my power for us to be rich and have a fortune today.*
>
> Ambuya: *chokwadi watadza/honestly you have wronged me.*

The first wife is depicted as a hard worker who works tirelessly and creates wealth in a field dominated by males but is unable to control it. She acts as the "other" who males can toy with as she has no rights. In other words, she is represented as a passive silent object who accepts oppression to please her husband's needs at the expense of her happiness. The first wife in the folktale is built in a specific manner that mirrors patriarchal needs which need to be revised. The song raises an awareness about the traditional rules which look down upon females' capacity as career people who can manage their wealth. Similarly, the Jari Mukaranga song attests the dreadful reality that a female stands in a patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out fantasies by imposing them on the silent image of a female still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not a maker of meaning" (Mulvey, 1988:58).

In scene two (39:10-40:28) Patrick's belongings are showcased being shared amongst his relatives and close friends. This is a popular customary practice performed in Zimbabwe soon after one dies. His or her clothes and belongings are divided amongst close relatives and friends in remembrance of the deceased. Neria confined to patriarchy as a subordinate daughter in-law who left her brother and her male in-laws to decide everything about her husband's funeral without consulting her as his beloved wife. Her male in-laws made decisions for her because she is regarded as not worthy to contribute anything because she is the passive "other". Females in the film *Neria* are not accepted as leaders who can think thus, anything that is not linked to motherhood is left for the males to decide. Neria is captured wearing a black head wrap and black clothes seated quietly without contributing anything. The male elder of the family decides to give Ambuya, Patrick and Neria's wedding photograph; she is shocked and hurt as she valued her photograph. She as a female is not allowed to object. She slowly watches in agony as Ambuya is handed the photograph against her wish and leaves while the ceremony is still in progress. Again, in scene two at Patrick's funeral the camera in motion always pictured Neria and other females seated on the floor while the males seated on benches and stools (32:00-39:08). This order of sitting arrangement shown in the film groups females as the inferior group hence, they should be under lower positions not higher or equal to men.

In scene two (47:00-47:43) Neria returns to her home in the city a month later after her husband's death. She is captured wearing black clothing from head to toe. After one's husband passes on in the Zimbabwean culture, one is expected to wear all black from the headwrap to the shoes for a full year to show that she is still mourning her husband. During this period a female's hair is not allowed to be uncovered and she is considered to be unclean spiritually. This only implies to females who are perceived to be emotionally weak and hence require a full year to get back at their feet. Patriarchy spares males as the rule applies to females only. Neria is seen throughout the movie after her husband's death wearing all black which is called a "*sorry"* within the Zimbabwean context. The camera gazes at her face which is full of shock as she looks around her empty house restless. Neria does not take any action against her in-laws for taking her furniture against her will. Neria accepts her position as a female who cannot own big properties as evidenced by scene two (48:16 – 49:06). Neria is angled in a close-up shot admitting in a depressed helpless voice saying:

> *"I will have to start again all my savings and Patrick's are out of my control".*

Neria turns down Connie's advice to take Phineas to court arguing that she cannot fight her children's blood. Allowing patriarchy to control her hardworking earnings. Therida a single woman who fights back to any kind of oppression offers her help to teach Phineas a lesson as she knows some people who can beat Phineas on her behalf, but Neria refuses. Instead Neria listens to Chipo who suggests that she should write a letter asking for her bankbooks and properties which Phineas forcefully grabbed from her. She submits and degrades herself by asking her money and property back even though Connie warns her that he will not return it. She confines to patriarchy which bullies her into believing that she has no right to claim what is rightfully hers. Through Neria's decision of opting to write a letter to Phineas, the film shows that females are at the mercy of the males. The camera captures Fransisca in a close up shot who sees nothing wrong with Phineas taking over Neria's property and hard earnings as tradition gives him the authority to act in that manner. Fransisca being the eldest among them all agrees with the practice. Instead of her to help Neria fight her battle she willingly endorses the view that females are inferior to males as she says:

> "that *is how it has always been the property remains with the husband's family; Iam sure they are ready to take care of you back there in the village".*

In her opinion she proposes Neria to act according to her in law's rules who want her to abandon her life in the city and stay in the rural area as subordinate daughter-in-laws should. In her view Fransisca as a devoted disciple of patriarchy agrees and believes that widows like Neria ought not to be independent but should be inherited by their deceased husband's brothers, as they paid bride prizes. Instead of Neria to fight for what rightfully belongs to her she opts to start over, preferring to stick to notions that allow her to be oppressed over her sweat. The film normalizes females' slow intellectual makeup as in that shot three females support her decision of starting over than claiming and fighting for her properties. The idea is only opposed by one person (Connie) against four other females which pictures it as the best solution. Connie's brave reasoning capacity is depicted as unmannered and shallow as it becomes four against one. Identically, independent females like Connie and Therida who do not follow to induced conventions of patriarchy are depicted as unacceptable and a threat to patriarchy. By outnumbering Therida and Connie's advice, the film *Neria* entices other females to be silent recipients. Neria together with the other ladies at her workplace are represented as slow to make sensible decisions. They use emotions when reasoning. Neria is so slow to think about her future and how she is going to raise all the money required to start over while she was failing to pay school fees for her children and paying her bills like electricity. She allows her emotions to control her instead of reasoning practically. She is ready to start over meaning that she will need a lot more years as it took thirteen years to acquire her property with her husband. Neria the lead actress is pictured in a negative way of being an insensible female. Neria conforms to patriarchy which allows her in-laws to rule over her as they own her. Neria's struggle can be likened to the Jarimukaranga folktale. Neria's actions were unreasonable just like the first wife in the folktale, they secured their positions as objects that can be acted upon by males. Neria and the first wife in the folktale are represented as weak who both fight their battles with tears and prefer to be oppressed than fight for their properties in order for them to be labelled as mannered housewives. However, their slow thinking capacity can be blamed upon patriarchy which has positioned females to own simple paraphernalia as property and lack entitlements to big properties such as land, cattle and houses.

Likewise, in scene three (1:18:17- 1:31:17) another shot shows Neria being interrogated in court for not reporting Phineas or taking any measures to secure back her bankbooks and money which he had stolen during Patrick's funeral. But Neria justifies her actions saying that she thought that he wanted to help fearing that it will anger the ancestors. Neria as a passive daughter in-law did not want to tarnish her brother in-law's image as she knew that the society would label Phineas as the victim. Because in patriarchal societies males are always given the first preferences hence Neria was doomed to lose the case if she had voiced against Phineas in the traditional court. Therefore, she self-restricted herself as one who does not have rights and left Phineas to party with her properties. The film uses Neria's defence in court to negatively stereotype females as dull people who always need a males' guidance always.

5.3 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS *COMMODITIES*

IN NERIA

Again, the film *Neria* grants males all rights over females stripping them of their rights and freedom when they pay their bride price (*marooro/lobola*). Females are presented in a negative manner as commodities who are purchased through the traditional norm of *lobola*. *Lobola/marooro* is a common

cultural custom in many African countries. This process requires bridegrooms to pay a bride price that includes cattle and money as a token of appreciation for raising the bride or as a sign of the marriage commitment. In scene one again (14:00 – 14:58) Phineas and Patrick are captured in a long short standing at a kraal. In many African societies cattle are symbols of wealth therefore the positioning of the scene setting associates and presents males as the dominate humans who can own wealth. Phineas asks again for Patrick to buy a bull for the family, but he restates that he will have to speak to Neria first. Patrick takes a different turn from patriarchal values as he must consult Neria because to him she provides the same way as he does and sometimes even more than him thus, she has the right to be consulted. A close-up shot is drawn at Phineas who shows resentment as he changes his tone from a begging tone to a commanding tone when he says:

> *"listen!!!!!!!!!! man she is our wife this paddock paid for her, since when do you ask your wife permission for anything. Patrick when did you start to be controlled by Neria'?".*

As a patriarchal society Zimbabwe is historically and culturally characterized by the exclusion of females from the participation of major decision-making structures and processes and from ownership of critical productive resources (Zuidberg, McFadden and Chigudu, 2004 as quoted by Mushore, 2016). Hence, in Phineas's understanding only a bewitched man *(kudyiswa*) who is turned into a puppet behaves in Patrick's manner. Phineas uses demeaning vocabularies when talking about females because to him it is unacceptable to value females as they are commodities. By using Phineas to demean Neria, the film *Neria* establishes male authority to dominate over females politically, economically and socially just because they are commodities. From another angle it can also be argued that the film shows that females' stereotype as objects in cinema is purely a conscious manipulation that is strategically engrafted into cinematic narratives of male filmmakers to disparage females because in reality females also own cattle.

The Shona patriarchal tribe has greatly moulded and conserved gender imbalances and male brutality to the degree of permitting male domination which paves way for female commodification (Chirimuuta, 2006 quoted in Sakarombe, 2018:24). In scene one (24:48- 25:07) Phineas is pictured reminding Patrick that some profits from his shop helped pay Neria's bride price. Alternatively, from a different angle, the harsh pitch used by Phineas to answer back when he is asked about the loses of the shop can be suggested as a form of blackmailing Patrick so that he will not ask further questions about the misuse of the shop's funds. In scene two (43:16 – 44:33) Maria is seen interrogating Phineas about his plans of taking over Neria but he silences her with an angry high pitch voice putting an emphasis on the fact that Neria and the house belong to him as he helped in paying her bride price. The court scene films Phineas justifying his actions towards Neria stating that according to tradition, he has the right to take all her properties and children because she as a female cannot handle properties and that he owns her because he helped in paying her bride prize. The film places males in a position where they can inherit land and females as they equally consider them as their acquired property just like Jarimukaranga in the folktale who used his first wife's wealth to marry a second wife. Phineas's repeatedly justification towards his behaviour is used by the film to depict females' positions in societies as culturally negotiated and compromised by the dominant males who purchase them. Phineas throughout the film repeatedly mentioned about paying the bride price thus, the film illustrates females as properties elevating males to positions of power and authority. As the film begins and ends Neria's mother is only mentioned once at Patrick's funeral and is captured seated alongside Neria in court and at the inheritance ceremony. Neria is never heard talking about her family or taking care of her mother as she did to Patrick's. The film marginalizes married females as earth mothers or virgin Marys who are now under male's full ownership the moment, he pays the

bride price hence, their relationships with their maternal families is controlled by their husbands and in-laws.

In scene two (43:16 – 44:33) Maria is captured sewing, questioning her husband's intentions of taking over Neria and her property but she is silenced by a beating. As clarified by Phineas who suddenly stops his dry bath and walks towards her saying "*you are asking for a beating woman*". She does not defend herself but only screams for Phineas to release her as she is physically weak. As the discussion continued Maria adopted a different tone accompanied with a shivering voice, facing down shielding her body from another beating. Phineas does not show any remorse over his actions but threatens to kick her out of his house as evidenced by his statement which says:

> "*if you don not behave and continue interfering, I will throw you in the gutter where you belong".*

Maria thoroughly grasped the ways of housewifery as she censored and placed herself in a corner as a sign of self-discipline. Admitting that she has 'gone over the line' by answering back to her husband, her gesture of self-censoring herself depicts her as a victim of psychological maltreatment as she has whole-heartedly internalized intimations of inferiority. Marriage is depicted as the chief vehicle for the perpetuation of the oppression of females; it is through the role of a wife that the subjugation of females is maintained. Maria allows her husband to exercise his authority allowing him to determine and define the extent in which she should be involved in his life as she is his property. Maria's self-restriction is an indication of accepting herself as a property who has no rights of her own. The film normalizes the domestic abuse towards Maria because as a commodity the violence against her is regarded as a form of discipline.

II. IN SINNERS

In scene one (22:46-25:09) a full wide shot pictures Samantha and her aunt Tete sitted outside her room. Her aunt, a traditional female is shown dressed decently with a head wrap as expected by the society. She stands in as a family messenger as required by the traditional custom. In the Zimbabwean tradition an aunt (father's sister) plays a big role in the family. She is the head advisor for her brothers' children on how they should behave. She negotiates for many family arrangements like bride price ceremonies or family disputes. And if her brothers have queries about their children's behaviour, they inform their sisters who then corrects their nieces. Samantha's facial expression shows how extremely disgusted she is by her aunt's presence. The director uses Samantha's facial expression to question the oppressive nature of patriarchy towards females. Samantha's aunt opens the dialogue by saying:

> *"vaShaya vanga vachigonera mhuri yekwedu/ Mr Shaya was being of good use to our family". "imi mobva maramba makati gada chimboratidza kugadzirisa pfungwa dzako pamusoro pavaShaya/ but you are here in the city instead of coming back to the village to your husband please try to reconsider your marriage and fate with Mr Shaya".*

Samantha had been married off/*kuzvarirwa* to Uncle Shaya by her father when she was young. It was a common Zimbabwean traditional practice for many years until it was prohibited by the country's constitutional law in 1995 (Act 21 of 1995 prohibited child marriages). However, some rural impoverished communities and Apostolic Churches (Mapositori) in Zimbabwe still practice it. *Kuzvarirwa* is when a poor family give off their daughter to a rich man as a wife in exchange for food or financial debts or favours. In some cases, kuzvarirwa/married off involves giving off a female for

marriage to pay off a debt or crime like *ngozi/avenging spirits.* The daughter can be of any age and is not allowed to query, in some cases the man can even take her before she even reaches the reproduction stage. The film *Sinners* also presents the commercialization of females as a way of stifling their career options. Tete (Chipo's aunt) believes that females should not concentrate on education since their goal is to be married, objectifying females as housewives. She reminds Samantha that her family cannot survive without Uncle Shaya's help. Tete's strong dependency syndrome is depicted as being primitive and barbaric. Samantha's facial expression does not look bothered, as she no longer finds solace in depending on Uncle Shaya. Tete continues to say:

> *"zvirikunzi ukaramba kudzoka vanotora ichi chawawakasiira zamu Sylvia / if you refuse to come back, he will take your baby sister Sylvia".*

According to many Zimbabwean traditions if one runs away from her husband or dies the husband has the right to take in the young sister as his new wife replacing the elder sister. The film *Sinners* represents Samantha's family as disgusting who commoditize their daughters as they connive with Uncle Shaya to give off Sylvia (Samantha's baby sister) if Samantha refuses to take the ultimatum. The film *Sinners* depicts Samantha's family as awful for their highest form of moral, social and cultural degradation which enslaves females. Samantha is ashamed by her culture's norm which does not see any fault with Sylvia being married off again to Uncle Shaya. *Tete* on the other side does not seem bothered by the custom as she is a defender of traditional custom hence, in her own understanding females should find pleasure in being housewives. However, it can be asserted that Tete did not find it oppressing as she had also gone through that phase.

5.4 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS EVIL

IN *NERIA*

Another scene (9:10 – 9:20) captures Ambuya drafting an evil plan to embarrass Neria . She wakes up so early in the morning to sweep Neria's yard with the aim of reminding her how she had neglected and failed her gender roles by not being a full-time housewife. Ambuya perceives that careering females like her should be scorned. As an elder she is regarded as an experienced human being for the many experiences and calamities she has weathered but she hates Neria's personality . In the Zimbabwean culture it is unacceptable for a mother in-law to conduct household chores while her daughter in-law is available. The daughter in-law will be humiliated and labelled as an uncultured female. But Ambuya goes ahead with her plan of embarrassing and shaming Neria. In the midst of planning her plan Ambuya clicks her tongue and the "*nxaaaaa*" sound is produced. *Nxaaaaa* in many parts of the African tradition is a sound used to insult another person. It takes hatred, bitterness and venom to be produced the way Ambuya did it. Her evil attitude towards Neria is illustrated in several shots one in which uncle Jethro (Neria's brother) comments about Neria's goodness but she wears a scornful face and looks at Phineas showing her wrath towards Neria. Another shot (33:27 – 33:38) captures Ambuya arriving at Patrick's funeral accusing Neria for killing him as she says:

> *"I won't go inside a witch lives here"*

Ambuya is portrayed as an unethical cruel monster in law who does not appreciate every effort that is done by Neria. Additionally, Ambuya's actions towards Neria can be due to the old cat and mouse age war between mother in-laws and daughters in laws. From another angle it can be attested that Ambuya as a female who grew up in the rural areas, had been brainwashed by the harsh patriarchal society and had never been exposed to the modern world. And so, her typical personality of not

understanding females as valuable human beings who should be blamed for everything can be pardoned. Similarly, it can be attested that Ambuya was jealous of Neria's lifestyle. Ambuya most probably thought that her son was spoiling Neria with material goods and giving her the privilege to decide what she wanted. Ambuya envied Neria's place but secretly hid it labelling Neria's character as insubordinate and unconventional.

In scene one (15:33-18:37) the film uses Phineas's opinion during a discussion with Patrick and friends at Uncle Jethro's show to outline females as diabolic. Phineas openly suspects that their other deceased friend did not die from a heart attack as the other friend confirms but accuses the wife as being responsible for his death as he says:

> *"there is a fishy story there one moment he talks about writing a will and the next thing he is dead; he must have told his wife about the will".*

A close-up shot is directed at Phineas as he justifies his suspicions mentioning that she did it:

> *"for the money of course, you put too much faith in these women"*

He frowns his face strengthening his opinion of classifying women as wicked who kill their husbands for their wealth. Similarly, the film depicts females as husband killers. Phineas uses the word *these* to describe females equating them to random properties. His facial expression explains the degree at which *Neria* negatively stereotypes females as evil doers who can do anything for money. Phineas considers females as evildoers who use black magic or witchcraft to kill and dominate men, previously Phineas had suspected Neria for using black magic on his brother because he valued her. From another angle it can be argued that Phineas was a natural foolish and dull person. This can be interpreted by the music score played by Uncle Jethro which match the current happenings on screen:

> *Ayehwaaa mukoma kani \ stop it, brother please*
>
> *Ayehwaaaa mukoma kani dzoka\ stop it brother, please come be reasonable.*

The lyrics of the song shame and disgrace Phineas' cruelty towards females and his low reasoning capacity. The musical score questions the extent to which females are deformed as gold-diggers. *Ayehwa mukoma\stop it* brother can be interpreted as a cry by the film to advocate against the oppression of females by males in societies. Uncle Jethro uses an emotional tone when he pronounces the words *ayehwa\stop* rebuking the stereotypical view of linking females with evil. Regarding the lyrics of the sound score, it can be observed that Phineas' character is presented as a primitive villainous human who should come back to his senses and be humane again. *Dzoka* (come back to your senses) in this sense raises an awareness of Phineas' awful nature to adopt to the new world which values females. Patrick and the other males disagree with what Phineas said about the conspiracy of their friend's death as they do not value women as harmful. Patrick and the other two friends do not find a reason why the wife would murder her husband because she will not have anyone to take care of her. They believe that females cannot prosper outside marriages and do not have capabilities of being financially independent, thus, the wife would never murder her husband as she would face being poor. Likewise, the film portrays females as dependent by nature whose space is narrowly marked out, as the domestic sphere. Phineas clearly displays how the Zimbabwean patriarchal culture has bullied females over the years into submission.

II. IN *SINNERS*

The film *Sinners* presents females as evil. Even though Vero was a powerful businesswoman. She was a ruthless female who failed to rescue Chipo when she was being assaulted by Simba (her ex-husband). She is captured in scene two (25:55-28:35) recruiting a gang of female rapists to bring semen for her. She would feed on the semen to appease her evil gods. She is captured as one who joins the dark underworld to get rich. In scene three (1:04:19-1:05:47) Romeo a male victim of female rape dies. His death comes as a revelation and a surprise to the female rapists who did not know that all the males they had raped were used as ritual sacrifices. Vero is characterised as an evildoer who sacrifices males for rituals. The camera in motion in scene two (28:38-30:14) films Chipo influencing Kere to join their illegal gang as she says:

> *"for how many years have been men raping us, it is now our turn and let us make money out of it".*

The female rapists are represented as the femme fatales who use men, abuse and manipulate males to get money. Females have in many circumstances fallen prey to men's sexual fantasies. Resulting in many of them being raped which in some instances females are left to blame for being sexually violated. Tables turn in the film *Sinners* as the females are the ones captured raping men, grabbing on a male located consciousness. Chipo and her friends decide to avenge back, defying patriarch as they refuse to remain victims of sexual abuse and go beyond the dominance defined by males as the perpetrators. During their raids they would disguise themselves as innocent people offering males lifts genuinely, depicting females as crooks who should not be trusted. One incident captures Samantha who is dressed in a very short dress standing at a bus stop disguised as someone who is also looking for a lift to attract a man. Males view females as sexual objects: thus, Samantha takes advantage of males' weakness and disguises herself as a loose moral female to lure males. This is evidenced in scene two (37:21-41:00) when one male victim falls prey to her trap. The victim is captured trying to escape but Samantha mocks him for taking her as a fool commanding him to relax since he was hoping to get sex in return for paying her bus fare once they had reached their destination, being represented as a femme fatal. Again, by this act, females are depicted as being aggressive and strong who find pleasure in overpowering males. The female rapists are pictured enjoying the act (hot mourning) while taking turns raping the male. Samantha is represented as an intellectual brighter temptress who uses her body structure and costume to attract males for her benefit. On the contrary the masculine gaze expressed through the male victim at the bus stop is a negative representation of females as it degrades Samantha to an object of desire that should excite the pleasures of voyeurism for the male audiences.

The female rapist gang is depicted as bitter and evil who engage in any activity for the love of money. In scene two (32:44-34:51) Samantha is captured hesitating to join in the raping gang but eventually agrees because she thinks that all men are like Uncle Shaya who should not be spared. They are depicted as people who are hard hearted as evidenced by Samantha's statement which says:

> *"I am in even though I will see how wrong it goes".*

Samantha willingly joins the gang knowing the consequences she would face if they were caught. On the other hand, it can be noted that Samantha became obsessed with the desire of breaking loose from the shackles of social limitations imposed by patriarchal social governance and fictional image construction of the female gender which drove her to join the female rape gang. She and the other females go to the extremes for the sake of money. However, labelling them as money lovers can be

contested as the economic situation in Zimbabwe has been toughening over the past years, which has pushed many people in the country to seek for greener pastures in many neighbouring countries, leaving behind their children, wives, husbands and family. It has resulted in many people engaging in many illegal dealings to provide basics necessities like food and shelter for their dependents. Therefore, the females in *Sinners* saw and grabbed the double opportunity of enjoying themselves sexually and making huge profits out of it as Kere had been offered the job before but took long to agree. In cultural customs, there are lean ways by which a female can break out of the circle of ceaseless poverty. The most popular one is either getting married to a rich man or attaining education which will give one an opportunity to obtain a good job. Kere and Chipo's backgrounds are not described but it can be attested that Kere and Chipo were unable to get quality education because of poor backgrounds thus, their only option was by defying patriarchal societal laws and clutching whatever opportunity that came irrespective of being legal or not.

5.5 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS OBJECTS OF SEXUAL DESIRE (GRATIFICATION) IN *NERIA*

Females are outlined as immoral beings who exist as sexual objects. This is expressed by the young lady who is dressed in a black body top and a gold glittering blazer in scene one again (15:33-18:37) at Uncle Jethro's show. Her heavy makeup, jewellery and costume during that era when the film was produced was classified with females who were promiscuous, extravagant, rich and precious. If equated to this era she would be described as a *"hot chick or boss lady*". She mistakenly confuses Phineas with another man named Charlie. She goes on to apologize but Phineas grabs the chance as he widely smiles and asks her for a dance. She agrees and the other men laugh whilst clapping their hands. This gesture of clapping hands while laughing can be remarked as a sign that shows that someone is truly enjoying the incident and hence applauds it. Or it can be interpreted as a gesture that shows disbelief in someone's behaviour. In this case Phineas is the only one who is chasing after girls while the other four males don't thus, they laugh while clapping their hands showing how they are disgraced towards Phineas' promiscuous behaviour which he does not hide. As an older brother Phineas is supposed to behave in a good exemplary manner but in this case, he acts immaturely leading the other guys to laugh at his childish behaviour. Secondarily it can also be remarked as a means of cheering Phineas for proving that he is a real man who chases after girls as compared to his other companions who enjoy themselves alone without females entertaining them. Their cheering applauds Phineas for acquiring more properties (females) as patriarchy views them as commodities. Thus, the film uses the cheering to define a man by the number of females he has sexual intercourse with.

In the Zimbabwean history real men who were wealthy or who were labelled as men in the community had several wives. The lyrics of the sound score are aligned with the occurrence of the action as they question Phineas's and the young lady's moral values. They read as:

> *haunyare psssss psssss pese pese/Are you not ashamed of asking out ladies everywhere*
>
> *halo pese pese pese/ halo to every stranger everywhere*
>
> *haunyare pose pose/Are you not ashamed of yourself as you display your uncivilized character everywhere.*

The words used in the music played by Uncle Jethro question Phineas' behaviour which defines a real man by the number of girls he has. Earlier on Maria (Phineas' wife) had mentioned that he has

his *"other*" girls in town, not one but many as she used the word other. The word other can be used to define Phineas as a sex addict who considers females as sexual objects. The words in the song disapprove of Phineas' actions of branding females as commodities for male satisfaction. These lyrics pause questions and denounces the sinful character of patriarchal societies which allow females to be for male's fantasies only. Phineas has a wife at home who stands as his childbearing machine and for his household chores while for pleasure he gets any female to fulfil his interests. In the same way "*halo pose pose*" may be said to question the morals of the young lady who just greets any man she sees as she believes that she is born for male desires. Phineas earlier on had flashed his wallet in open trying to attract two ladies with his money thus, it can be interpreted that the young lady did not confuse Phineas with Charlie but as a promiscuous lady she used her tricks to lure Phineas so that she can squander his money which he had flashed earlier on. In parallel to that notion as a precious and independent female the lady most probably made a mistake in identifying Phineas with Charles and as a result agreed to dance with Phineas for fun.

In scene two (40:29-41:47) Neria is pictured seated at her favourite spot with Patrick lamenting her agony. Phineas is seen approaching Neria, he places his hand on Neria's thigh and says:

> *"I know it's too early for you to make decisions, but a house needs a strong intact family with a man".*

Neria removes his hand from her thigh as a sign of disapproval, as she shows him that she does not need a male to take care of her. In many Zimbabwean cultures a thigh is a sacred body part just like the private part which should be touched by one's husband only. Phineas's gesture of placing his hand on Neria's thigh can be interpreted as labelling females as bodies for sexual desires. Patrick had just been buried a few hours ago and Phineas was already thinking of sleeping with Neria. Phineas fails to sympathize with her sister in law displaying a greedy and selfish character. Instead he is interested in targeting Neria as his next prey for his sexual pleasures. On the contrary the Shona culture positions Phineas to watch and care over his younger brother's family as the elder brother and father figure. The Shona culture entitles him to "inherit" Neria, therefore it can be argued that Phineas was conducting his duty as the elder brother in law. Nevertheless, he crossed the boundary and he abused his position for his personal gains. This Shona tradition is underscored in the music pause which raises questions about the inheritance custom as evidenced in the lyrics:

> *kasambo kaya kekuti chako ndechangu/ that exercise of entitling what is yours to be mine*
>
> *pakuzoti paya wako ndewangu/ the notion of viewing my wife as yours*
>
> *unoda kugara nhaka/ you want to inherit.*
>
> *kuita mucheka dzafa/ taking what you did not work for.*

II. IN SINNERS

Figure 1

Laura Mulvey (1975) noted that females in films are for males' fantasies who function as voyeuristic rebels or as temptresses or prostitutes. This is showcased by a full wide shot as illustrated in figure 1, from scene one (09:23 – 09:57), which captures Patie, Samantha and Kere in the streets of Harare (capital city of Zimbabwe) at night. They are captured wearing heels, very short dresses almost half naked as according to the Zimbabwean customs, waiting for men to hire and pay them for their sexual services. They work as sex workers or prostitutes (*hure/amahule*) and their occupation serves to please males' sexual appetites. Many societies in Zimbabwe do not accept somebody dating a sex worker but that same society privately adores and envies the person dating a prostitute for the sole reason that he would be getting good sex from the prostitute. Thus, males privately pay and hire prostitutes at night as they are considered to be professionals in bed, thus the occupation allocated to lead female characters in *Sinners* categorizes them as sexual tools.

As a meta-narrative, the word 'prostitute' can confirm as true and unassailable, the fixed cultural beliefs that females can never stand on their own; they need a male figure-head to support them or otherwise they are doomed to a life of moral degradation (Rwafa, 2012:157). Their bodies are displayed in a negative manner to arouse men's sexual appetite. Kere is captured smoking, wearing a red dress and red heels. The film makes use of her costume to assert her powerful character and strong attitude. She is highly confident as entailed by the blonde colour of her hairstyle. Lead actresses in the film *Sinners* dress in a manner which identifies them as the gaze for the male spectators or the male audience. Patie and Samantha are wearing black dresses because as university students they want to remain anonymous; black being a colour of anonymity. *Sinners* gives an interpretation that even though females are educated they remain as objects for male pleasures. From a different angle their work requires customers to see what they can offer. As such if one dresses formally, she will not be able to get customers. Again, Zimbabwe has been facing a lot of economic challenges since 2001 which up to date (2020) have not been resolved but are getting worse. Zimbabwe serves as a country with one of the highest percentage ratings of unemployment. This stereotyping of young university girls as prostitutes is common as they resort to prostitution in order to survive. Hence, it can be professed that Patie and Samantha had no other source of

livelihood and no capital except to sell their bodies while preparing a better future ahead by earning their degrees. This is evidenced by the slow emotional musical score and its lyrics:

> *Ngahamba edolobeni / I migrated from my rural home to the city*
>
> *Ngiidinga umsebenzi ngawuswela/ hoping to get a job*
>
> *Hakula umsebenzi/ but they are no jobs*
>
> *Ngiyenze jani/ what should I do?*

The music score used by the film represents females as ambitious hard workers who migrate from their maternal homes in search for jobs and a better life. The lyrics of the song depicts females as independent humans who do not desire to be dependent on males but are eager to establish their own careers. However, fate does not fall on their favour and they use their bodies to emancipate themselves from being subordinate to males.

In scene one (03:52 - 04:37) Samantha is pictured opening the door for Uncle Shaya (her husband). *Sekuru/Uncle Shaya* is pictured hurriedly closing the door and forcing himself on Samantha who says:

> *"Ayehwa kani sekuru/ may you stop it Uncle Shaya"*

These words do not mean anything to Uncle Shaya who is concerned with satisfying his sexual appetite. He ignores her request, holds her tightly pushing her to lie down without any sympathy. This is so because in Uncle Shaya's world she exists as a property to quench his sexual thirsts any time as illustrated by his actions. She has no value or deserves no respect as evidenced by his actions. He does not grant her the respect to even greet her or settle down as someone who is coming from a long journey as she is the "other". The representation of Samantha endorses Uncle Shaya as the centre of power who has the authority to toss and control her because he paid her bride price. The film uses Samantha's body as an imaginative site on which masculine power is exercised. The film uses this shot to demonstrate the spectacle of unconscionable masculinity traits that praises qualities of aggressiveness, toughness, hardness as being in control. The film *Sinners* presents married females as sexual objects who should not deny their husbands sex, as it is the main reason why their bride prize was paid. In *Sinners* married females like Samantha and Chipo are subjugated to sex as they are commodities which leads Chipo to divorce her husband who had not managed to make her have an orgasm in their entire 15-year old marriage. On the other hand, Samantha would have tried fighting back but she did not. Most probably because she knew that she had been sold to him by her father hence as his slave she did not have rights to stop him.

"It is this suffocating character of tradition and its effects on females that females have known in their daily lives is the lower self-esteem that is attendant upon cultural depreciation, the humiliation of sexual objectification, the troubled relationship to a socially interiorized body, the confusions and even the anguish that come in the wake of incompatible social definitions of womanhood" (McLeod, 2011:81). Mercy (Kere's sister) is only fifteen years old who is represented as someone who only looks forward to marriage. Although Kere advocates for the education of the girl child as the first major step towards the liberation of females. Mercy is depicted as a young naïve female whose only focus is centred on getting married. Mercy's body acts to serve as an object for male sexual pleasures. The arrogance displayed in Mercy's attitude is rooted within the ideological systems of patriarchal expectations, thus in her eyes marriage is a great achievement. Through the ideological systems of patriarchy males, young and old look at girls with salacity, hunger and thirst in their eyes. Females are daily harassed, distracted and bombarded with flattery on the account of their beauty as

a result a sense of destructive pride in females' sexuality is awakened. At her tender age she is caught red handed in bed with her boyfriend. During the interrogation Mercy is pictured as one who did not know about the act or enjoyed it. But got engaged in the sexual act to satisfy her boyfriend's sexual appetite stating:

> *"ati haasi kuiisa yose/ he said he was not going to fully penetrate".*

The facial expression on Mercy's face during the interrogation indicates that she was tricked and made to believe that her boyfriend was not going to fully penetrate, showing that males force their attention upon females who may not be unaware of their beauty. It also shows that when males view females they see sexual objects thus, they shell females with futile flattery until they can no longer think of any other thing but their beauty. The film *Sinners* blames patriarchy for impacting limiting beliefs amongst females from a very tender age which place female value based on their sexuality. These patriarchal doctrines lock and tie females to mark marriage as the only peek they can and should reach as Mercy says, *"obviously I will get somebody to marry me".* Hence, Mercy tested positive for H.I.V a sexual transmitted disease at the age of 15 due to her own actions and understanding which was greatly influenced by the way she has been raised (in a patriarchal society). Because to her it is every male's right to have sex with her as it is her duty to satisfy them. Moreover, looking from a different angle it can be exclaimed that Mercy as an immature teenager was overshadowed by puppy love hence, she dreamed of a fairy-tale marriage. At 15, Mercy probably felt that she was at the peak of her glory since this might be the only time that males of different ages flock and bow to young females in their infatuation.

In scene one (17:28-19:40) the camera in movement captures Chipo regaining her conscious after being battered by Simba and all she is worried about is a penis and money as she says:

> "give *me a penis and we are into business".*

Her character is depicted as a sex addict who survives to please male sexual fantasies. She is severely battered but in her pain all she can think of is sex. The film objectifies and degrades her as a sexual object. On the other side, Chipo can be classified as a strong determined businesswoman who will not let circumstances hinder her from hustling for money. Thus, in her pain she sensed a business opportunity and grabbed it. Chipo worked in the prostitution industry, thus the more she delayed going in the streets at night the lesser money she gets. Additionally, Chipo is a divorced businesswoman who sells her body to rich men for her own sexual satisfaction. Thus, Chipo was just trying to market her services like any entrepreneur would. On the other hand, Chipo turned into prostitution to satisfy her sexual needs and commercial interests and she is portrayed as the gazer (female gaze). Chipo turned her weakness to her advantage by using men to satisfy her sexual addiction while at the same time paying her (temptress) for her sexual services

In scene three (53:44 – 55:31) the young journalist is captured trying to pursue his story about the female rapists but is turned down by his bosses who prohibit him from pursuing the story since it was impossible for him to prove the case. This is so because no man had come up front to report the incident as it is embarrassing in the Zimbabwean culture for a male to admit that he has been overpowered by a female. His boss is captured mocking him stating:

> *"varikumbo wanikwa kupi ko vakadzi ava ndimbono spakwawo/ where can I find these women so called female rapists so that I can enjoy their services".*

The journalist's boss objectifies females not only for his sexual desire but because of his deep-rooted patriarchal belief which underestimates females as second-class citizens. This points to the objectification of the female body as her worth is in her ability to satisfy men sexually. Similarly, in another shot, Kere before raping a victim boasts about her worth as she says, "you are to be ridden by a veteran", implying that the male victims should relax and enjoy her sexuality. Kere personally places her value by considering the unique sexual styles she performs. The male boss negatively devalues females' dignity and humanity by valuing them as mere sexual objects. The film *Sinners* represents females as objects of sexual desire as evidenced by the journalist's boss who does not find fault in their illegal business. To his understanding the female rapists are innocent who are just conducting their duty, which is to satisfy men's sexual libidos for free. However, it can also be noted that the journalist's boss tried to block him from pursuing his investigation because he did not want to expose Vero as they were in the same cult.

5.6 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS THE "OTHER"

IN NERIA

Laura Mulvey in her work proposes that a female stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out fantasies by imposing them on the silent image of a female still tied to her 'place' as bearer of meaning, not a maker of meaning (Mulvey, 1988:58). Cohen and Kennedy (2007) as quoted by Mushore (2016:89) define patriarchy as a form of oppression that elevates men to positions of power and authority. Leaving females as subjects to forms of domination from males as legitimized by cultural laws. During the production of *Neria* females were not allowed to refresh their selves as they were considered to stay indoors and take care of the children. This is signified by Fransisca in scene one (09:57-10:39) who abhors Connie and Therida's weekend plans. Connie and Therida plan of going to the Queens, a popular nightclub in the city, to refresh themselves. Fransisca shows contempt over their idea and equates them to teenagers as she says:

> "*like you are all 18-year olds*".

Therida and Connie both are independent females who do not believe in or stick to cultural values which forbids and limits them from exploring and adventuring. Connie and Therida are filmed clothed in red blouses, which signify that they are dangerous and poisonous to cultural values which limit them. The red blouses worn by Connie and Therida are used to distinguish and present them as poisonous because they objectify males' definitions of females. Other females in the workshop are dressed in floral and plain colours, but Connie and Therida are dressed in red blouses distinguishing their liberated, fearless characters from the other dependent females. Additionally, it can be noted that when Therida and Connie mentioned their plans, Fransisca the ideal housewife or the chief agent of patriarchal socialization which confers inequality became offended and sarcastically equated them to teenagers. Females are presented as the "other", this is also noted by Neria and Maria who are never heard or pictured showing their interests to join their husbands for Jethro's show. Neria deprived herself from watching her own blood brother perform. As her gender role does not permit her to go out and entertain herself.

Females in the film *Neria* are reflected as the bearers of meaning. This is indicated in scene three (1:16:42-1:18:15) when Neria was going through a rough patch, her workmates are pictured cheering her up with a song reminding her that females' power is signified by their sacrifices. This is also supported by Claire Johnston (1975: 256) who states that "through the mainstream cinema a female

represents not herself, but an extension so deeply embedded in traditional values". The song lyrics read as:

> *Isu madzimai emuZimbabwe takamirira zvakawanda / we as the women of Zimbabwe represent a lot of things*
>
> *Kurema kwazvo kuno madzimai/ every burden requires a woman*
>
> *Hazvina mhosva nyangwe zvorema takamirira zvakawanda/ even though it is hard, we represent a lot of things*

In these lyrics females painfully accept and surrender their fate as the words "*hazvina mhosva/it does not matter anymore*" can be interpreted as someone who has been deeply oppressed and broken and is not in any position to object but only to accept. In many Zimbabwean traditions a popular idiom is used to define females as people who should carry burdens, "*musha mukadzi*" *for a home to be called a home it needs the presence of a female*. This idiom points out that females are born to carry out wishes of humanity and not their individual wishes. Females in *Neria* confine to their fate as subordinates as they boast that every burden needs a woman. However, it can also be interpreted that females do not boast but try to prove a point to male counterparts that females serve positive impacts in life not the negative ones which have been proposed by patriarchy. They try to prove that one cannot solve a problem without a female. Hence, the film used the song to credit females' value in societies. They use the word "we", pointing out that it is a requirement for every female to carry burdens. Then again, it can also be interpreted that they use the word "we" to reemphasize how females stand together for each other not divided as societies have defined them. Patriarchal ideologies that tie females to domesticity are subverted as they decree that *"we stand for a lot of things"*. *We stand for a lot of things* pinpoints several duties females take up in societies. Although they are not named the duties include females as mothers, wives, leaders, experts and workers. The lyrics link a deep meaning to the structure of the film (ideologeme). *Hazvina mhosva nyangwe zvorema takamirira zvakawanda/ even though it is hard we stand in for a lot of things*, these lyrics can be translated as the hardships faced by females within gender struggles to be recognized as "active". Their struggles as females in trying to fight harsh patriarchal customs for a positive change are shown in the happy endings of the film.

In many Zimbabwean societies if one is in Neria's position as a widow, her children can be taken away from her by her in-laws. This is so because patriarchy views females as strangers who are not related to their children but are just their bearers. Hence, the Shona idiom *"mai mutorwa haisi hama yako/ your mother is a stranger she is not your relative* meaning that one has no relationship with her mother or that the mother has no right to own her children. Giving the father the authority to have the final say of anything or decision that pertains children from the naming of the child as he is the owner. In Zimbabwean cultural beliefs one does not carry her mother's blood in their veins but carries her fathers'. Thus, in the case of being orphaned the father's family have full ownership of the child as compared to the mother's family. This is evidenced in scene two (1:00:11-1:04:36) when Phineas flees with Neria's children without consulting her, as she is the "other" who has no rights over her children.

In scene three (1:12:57-1:14:36) during the community court Ambuya and Phineas are pictured shouting at the judge while he is still at the middle of passing his judgement. Ambuya's face is full of anger and disappointment towards the judgement which grants Mavis the power to be the heir of

Patrick's property. Ambuya gets angry because in her tradition a female is not allowed to own properties or make decisions on how things should operate as she is the "other". She as an elder person feels offended by the freedom allocated to Mavis as she feels that females do not have the qualities and right to inherit and own properties. Ambuya prefers her grandchildren to suffer not because she is cruel but because she is the patriarchal embodiment of labelling and side-lining females as the "other". Hence, to her it is an abomination for Mavis to be a ruler and heir apparent to her late father's estate.

II. IN SINNERS

In scene one (12:07 – 14:47) Chipo is pictured at Simba's (her ex-husband) house with a birthday present for her daughter. She goes drunk, singing and causes havoc at his front gate. She refuses to be silenced by Simba who threatens to beat her up, but she takes up the challenge boldly and says:

> "*ehe tinotorwa/ yes let us fight*".

The film *Sinners* portrays females as toothless dogs whose power is in the mouth only. Chipo is pictured in a full length shot clenching her fists getting ready to fight back but when Simba starts punching her, she begs him to leave her alone as she just wants to see her children. She is represented in an unfavourable manner as an empty vessel who is physically weak. In so doing, it can be further noted that Chipo as a depressed female hid her pain in alcohol. Through Simba's character males are naturalized as aggressive, responsible and assertive who are allowed to physically assault females as a way of disciplining them. Chipo is presented as the other, who is denied her rights to see her children. Their father Simba is granted full ownership over her minor children because tradition does not give a female, rights to own anything. This is so because she is a nobody in society as Simba owns her since he paid her *roora/ lobola/bride price*. *Lobola* or *roora/* bride price is paid to make a female subservient to a man (Gaidzanwa,1985). But the majority of males manipulate the system to abuse females. Like Simba who blocks Chipo in every manner he can because to him Chipo is a just a mere child bearer. The film *Sinners* despises the battering of females as a way of disciplining or silencing them when they challenge male masculinities and patriarchal system. Simba is represented as a barbaric coward who uses his physical strength to silence and abuse females. Additionally, the film *Sinners* questions and despises males who do not want to give up their privileged status to allow a more dynamic and active role for females.

5.7 SOLIDARITY AND UNITY AMONGST FEMALE CHARACTERS IN *NERIA*

Figure 2

The above image shows different shots, illustrating solidarity amongst female characters in *Neria*. Media depictions of females' friendships generally reflect the ubiquitous male gaze where females are not shown as friends, but as competitors and rivals, both in the workplace and in relationships with males (Hollinger, 1998:122). Throughout Neria's hostile journey her co-workers and Connie are outlined as organized, united and friendly, breaking the popular Shona proverb *mhandu yemukadzi mukadzi/ a female's greatest enemy is a female.* The African proverb labels females as jealous, unprincipled, disorganized and evil towards each other. The film *Neria* recreates females from a different angle as compared to the negative analogy set by the society. Throughout the movie many plots illustrate females as united standing in to support each other as shown in scene one (32:00-33:08) at Patrick's funeral. Therida is shown sewing a white wrap to cover his coffin while Fransisca and other females support and console Neria at the funeral. At the village in scene two (43:16 – 44:33) Phineas discloses his evil plans of taking over Neria and her house but Maria fights for Neria. Maria is pictured sighting her husband not to subjugate Neria for she was able to take care of herself. Maria further spits saliva on the floor, as a way of showing disgust and embarrassment towards her husband's behaviour. Maria did not find any delight in robbing Neria of her belongings, depicting her as her sister's keeper.

In Scene 3 (1:16:58 – 1:18:00) the camera in motion pictures Therida and other females at the workshop reassuring Neria not to get troubled about being taken to the high court by her brother in-law as they will always be with her. They provide shoulders for Neria to lean on. As witnessed by Therida, Chipo, Connie and Fransisca's statements. Connie is pictured reassuring Neria to ignore her in-laws as they were just trying to scare her. Therida states:

> "*we will be there for you Neria*". While Chipo boosts her confidence saying: "*I know when you walk into that court, I know you are going to stand like a lioness protecting her cubs*".

The film places Neria on an equivalent page with a lioness one of the most fearless and powerful females in the jungle. In so doing, the film drifts away from the norm that presents females as powerless. Fransisca a hardcore loyal, obedient cultural female living according to the do's and don'ts of patriarchal societies goes to the extent of lying to her husband of her whereabouts to support Neria in court. This in many societies is regarded as a taboo in many patriarchal societies and an evil vice. Fransisca's character shifts from being a docile housewife to a smart and intelligent female. When Neria's property is brought back the females from the workshop cheer her up with a song, displaying a positive perspective towards females amongst themselves breaking into a song to celebrate their newfound freedom and victory and the lyrics are read as:

> *Neria ramba wakashinga/ Neria continue being strong*
>
> *Neria ramba wakashinga/ Neria continue being strong*
>
> *Dzamara kumagumo/ till the end.*

After the court session Neria is captured apologizing to her mother in law for going beyond her marital home's territories by reporting them to the modern law. She says:

> "*I am sorry Ambuya it had to come to this*".

Ambuya who never believed and supported Neria for a day congratulates her and identifies her mistakes. Ambuya realizes how the system of patriarchy she supports and stands for demeans and insubordinates women and apologizes to Neria. In her advanced age she is made to acknowledge the wrongs of patriarchy represented by Neria's fight in a court of law. Ambuya transforms from being a hard-staunch advocate of cultural customary laws of inheritance, to one who admires the bestowing of females' independence to be heard and to choose their destinies. Her move of admitting her mistakes shows her move of challenging patriarchy. Ambuya stands with Neria, Connie and Therida who mirror the shifting nature of societal beliefs and cultures as they strive to be independent within the patriarchal public domain. Ambuya rallies behind Neria's fight of challenging patriarchal values seen as the better culture compared with the modern culture which is weighed as giving too much freedom to females.

II. IN *SINNERS*

In scene one (07:37 - 10:00) Samantha is pictured in a sad and hopeless voice narrating her story to Patie and Kere on how she was married off to Uncle Shaya as his sixth wife. Patie is filmed wearing a glittering red dress and red matching shoes which signify her fierce and bold character. *Sinners* depicts the patriarchal cultures of Zimbabwe as imposing and blocking positive options for females as Samantha can no longer think of other aspirations. Kere's facial expression is filled with disgust over Samantha's arranged marriage and her views towards staying in the arranged marriage. Boldly Kere looks at Samantha and advises her not to allow herself to be oppressed at the expense of her happiness and future. Kere encourages her to be independent and not to offer herself unwillingly to Uncle Shaya so that her brothers and father can eat. She is quoted saying:

> "*mainini ka/ my young sister your mother is dead, and your father and your brothers can take care of themselves forget about this old man and start doing small things for yourself be an independent woman*".

A close-up shot is drawn at Samantha who is trapped in her family's decision of marrying her off at a young age but does not think outside the box and unwillingly accepts being a sixth wife. Samantha is a young female who suffers considerably under the throes of patriarchal oppression. The camera films Patie's facial expression filled with anger, shock and sympathy, mocking her rural background and customs for being primitive in the words:

"*inga vanhu vekumusha makasara kwazvo/ people from the rural areas are still backward*".

Patie raises her voice angrily declaring that if she is to sleep with an old man it must be her choice not a custom's choice. Patie's response is used by the film to define females as humans who have the capability to control their sexuality and control their bodies. The film depicts Samantha as an enslaved female, representing girls as commodities who can be bought and sold. Although she is not happy in her forced marriage, she accepts her fate, thus portraying females as docile and dependent. This is revealed in her own statement which praises and supports Uncle Shaya as her backup and reason of being his wife since childhood which says:

"but it is *tradition, he has been paying my school fees* since grade seven".

Although uncle Shaya was wrong, he took Samantha to school, which is a positive action towards the support of female advancement.

The film *Sinners* relinquishes from naturalizing females as fragile from the suffocating norms of patriarch. Kere and Patie become a breakthrough for Samantha's situation. Samantha had never been exposed to other parts of the world as she had grown up in the rural area and got to know of the city when she enrolled at the university. Thus, Kere and Patie expose Samantha to a new world which can free her from her chains. They provided a platform for her to break free from the dependency syndrome and become independent. Patie and Kere stood boldly in solidarity in setting Samantha free from the chains of patriarchy. This is evidenced in scene one (09:22-09:57) when Samantha joins their industry and begins to build a new life as an independent female. On the contrary, the university, Kere and Patie are pictured as of bad influence towards innocent rural girls like Samantha. This is supported by the lyrics of the sound score which uses the word freaky to represent Kere and Patie as poisonous, as they say: "she is too freaky, too freaky ".

Figure 3

Scene two (32:40 - 35:10) as framed in figure 3, films Kere Chipo, Samantha and Patie planning on how they were going to bury their late friend Georgina. Kere is pictured wearing a black jumpsuit with black pantyhose socks and a black boot, while Samantha is wearing a silver mini dress and heels. Their costumes and makeup illustrate how they have liberated themselves from the required dressing expected by patriarchy. Conversely, Kere's thighs are not covered and so are half of her breasts serving as a gaze for male fantasies. If someone dies in many Zimbabwean societies, the deceased's friends impersonate the deceased's dressing or occupation as a send-off of the works that the person did when he or she was still alive. On the contrary, the females can be said that they were wearing what Georgina used to wear while she was still alive. The females manage to raise funds for her transportation to where she is going to be buried, vividly showing how they can go beyond the borders of being passive. Four females pay transport costs for a body to be buried in a rural area which is far from Harare. They even paid her medical bills when she was in hospital and nursed her when she was attacked. Their caring nature goes beyond patriarchal norms which underestimate their potential to provide for one another. Heading of funeral arrangements is a male role in Zimbabwean societies but in the film *Sinners* the lead actresses challenge this assertion as they head and manage funeral arrangements for Georgina. The film *Sinners* moves away from the stereotype of females as weak and socially disorganized by celebrating their power and connection towards each other subverting the objectifying male gaze. This is captured in a statement made by Chipo when she asserts how expensive it is to manage a funeral and transport a dead body from town to rural areas as she says:

> *"vanhu vanomboziva here kuti zvinodhura sei kutakura chitunha/ do people really know how expensive it is to transport a dead body".*

5.8 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS SPIRITUAL

IN NERIA

Connie who is divorced has the gift of telling future events, she is a seer of some sort. As the film begins, Connie is wedged in a close-up shot having a bad dream which is accompanied by evil laughs

and a sad sound foretelling an upcoming danger. A graphical design is used by the film to combine Connie's nightmare with Neria and Patrick's painting scene. Unexpectedly Shingi, who was enjoying his game, mistakenly breaks a window. This coincidence in the Shona tradition is a sign of a happy union being broken up by an unexpected sad incident. Connie is pictured wearing a yellow t-shirt. The yellow colour is associated with wisdom, knowledge and revelation which she personifies in this film. The colour of her t-shirt is used to identify Connie as the wisest female in the film. Many other incidents follow where she foretells upcoming dangers. One in which a snake passes by in front of them on their way to work with Neria and her face suddenly looks troubled accompanied by the same sad sound which is heard from the beginning of the movie (27:38 - 52). In many Zimbabwean cultures steeped in tradition, snakes are associated with evil or bad luck. Some associate them with ancestors thus if it passes in front of you it is a sign that the ancestors have come to take one of their own. Patrick passes by Connie on his way to work (27:20 - 28:11) and her sixth sense of foretelling danger is illustrated by the troubled face she quickly wears soon after waving at Patrick while smiling. While at work children playing outside break a window in the same fashion Shingi did at the beginning of the movie. She jumps of her chair frightened and worry is read all over her face. In all these incidents the same high pitch background sound of people laughing in an evil way accompanied by a timbre sound is used to re-establish Connie as a spiritual female seer. The combination of a timbre sound and close-up shots at Connie label her as a great person who has a precious gift of receiving messages and upcoming incidents from the ancestors. When Patrick gets hit by a car, Connie cries out loud asking those in the winds (*ancestors*) why they had not shown her a clear picture that they were going to take someone close to her. The anointing to foretell upcoming events in the Zimbabwean context does not merely fall upon anyone. It is believed that the ancestors choose one who is brave and has outstanding qualities. The film *Neria* takes a different insight and uses Connie's character to represent females in a positive manner.

In scene two (1:01:19 – 1:01:56) Neria returns home as usual only to find that Phineas had locked her outside her home and forcefully taken her children away from her. She travels to get her children back. She is captured speeding towards Phineas furiously, she erupts at Phineas demanding her children back. She shames him for stealing everything she owned disgracing him in public an action which is highly regarded as a form of disrespect. Phineas uses his male power to silence her for disgracing him as he physically attacks her. Consequently, some males who feel that their power is being eroded can resort to the 'sacredness' of the world of ancestors to intimidate, restrict and prohibit their wives from raising independent ideas because these men argue that raising questions invites the wrath of ancestors. Phineas blackmails Neria by involving the ancestors not proving of her shouting at him in public as he says:

> "*how can you behave like this at your husband's home? You have no respect for our ancestors, you are asking a curse on yourself*".

Immediately Neria lowered her voice censoring herself from her act which is prohibited in the Zimbabwean culture. The abrupt change of her tone vividly displays Neria's level of respect towards her ancestors. In the court room Phineas's lawyer mocks and blames Neria for being docile and reluctant towards her properties. But Neria justifies her decisions arguing that she did not want to anger her ancestors and her deceased husband. Neria is very spiritual, who opts to endure pain for the benefit of her deceased husband and her ancestors' souls. Neria's actions here classified females as actual guardians of spirituality in the African culture and that the African traditional religion is a tool which insubordinates the same guardians.

5.9 IDOLIZATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

IN *NERIA*

In scene (18:38-22:18) Ambuya and Patrick are both presented at the same time but in different locations narrating about the Jarimukaranga folktale. After narrating the folktale, an extreme close-up shot is placed on Patrick's face who emotionally says:

> *"I am not anything big but whatever lam, Neria has made me what I am, never cross Neria because if you do I won't be your brother".*

Patrick's gesture of almost shedding a tear while at the middle of appreciating Neria is used by the director to measure the extent at which Patrick valued his wife. In the Zimbabwean culture males are not allowed to get emotional or cry as it is a sign of weakness which is associated with females. But the film *Neria* showcases Patrick getting emotional to the extent of breaking a number one priority of masculine traits within the Zimbabwean context to illustrate Neria's worthy. Similarly, this is evidenced in scene one (32:20-32:32) where Shingi, a seven years old boy, is captured not shedding a single tear at his father's funeral asserting his masculine power but his mother and other females are shown weeping unmanageable. His high regard towards his wife as a goddess is measured when he threatens to cut ties with Phineas his blood brother if he ever crosses Neria's path. The use of Patrick's emotional response in the film shows that males have an emotional side which society has equated to weakness and therefore demystifying the, perceptions created by the patriarchal societies and apportioned to females only. In scene one (25:11-25:57) Patrick is pictured with Neria appreciating her hard work and her contribution towards his family as he states:

> " You understand everything. *You know lam a lucky man. How many men* have *wives who work so hard and still look very young?"*

In a different manner the film drifts away from the stereotype which classifies females as dependents. The film *Neria* shifts from presenting females as passive to cherishing and appreciating the big roles they play in societies. However, through Patrick's words "you understand everything" also brings out the soft nurturing trait associated with females. Additionally, Ambuya on the other side makes it clear after the folktale that:

> *"wives are to be respected and treated well"*

Ambuya further states that they bring a good fortune, or you always be poor. Inspiring her grandchildren to copy positive social principles. The film uses the folktale to illustrate that females have been branded and are branded as a profit-making business (commodities). Correspondingly, it can be proposed that when Ambuya said that females bring a good fortune, she acknowledged and impacted the young ones to value females as they are a big assert in life which men cannot survive without. The director uses Neria's character and the first wife in the folktale to recreate females as gods who rescue males from poverty and should be bowed too. The director uses Neria's character and the first wife's character in the folktale to recreate females as gods who play many significant roles in societies who should be bowed too.

5.10 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS STRONG IN *NERIA*

Scene one (28:04 -28:07) captures Therida applauding Connie for being brave and strong on her own as she boldly says:

> *"look at you, you are a strong woman on your own"*.

Single women in many parts of Zimbabwe are stigmatized as loose and uncultured and are not accorded respect compared to married women. Many societies stereotype single women as husband snatchers. The film *Neria* represents and showcases single women as strong and independent candidates which is doubted by societies as they believe that no female alone can manage without a man in her life. Connie is depicted as physically strong as demonstrated in scene two (58:00 – 1:00:00) where she slaps Maria for claiming Neria's property. This frightens Phineas who does not raise his voice or hand as he usually does when silencing females but uses a calm steady voice saying:

> *"eeee regai tibve pano/ eeeee its better if we leave this place"*.

Which he surely does as Neria returns from work and finds them gone. Connie plays a big part in Neria's journey as she physically and emotional fights for Neria. She is not only her neighbour but her guardian angel who offers her great advice and stands by her throughout her journey to freedom. Connie's personality highlights a positive representation of females which differs from the negative stereotypes of positioning females in weak or passive positions to strong and active positions in society.

Neria decides to fight back after realizing that it was not worthy suffering at the expense of her happiness and wellbeing. It is showcased in scene three (1:13:14 – 1:14:33) when Neria takes a rebellious step towards her in-laws' actions and asks for the lawyer's number so that she can sue Phineas. She shows disgust over customary law by preferring a modern law which is more considerate and fairer than the domineering patriarchal customary law. Neria is captured taking Phineas to a modern court leaving the local courts, a gesture of challenging patriarchy for its inability to listen to females' difficulties but delights in their oppression. In the Zimbabwean tradition if one has a query, they are local channels which one must go through before reaching modern courts. They are headmen/ *kwasabhuku* courts or local chiefs' courts but Neria did not consult them because they approve the domination of women. Neria bravely attacks patriarchy for making females fear and believe that being independent is shameful. Although initially she, showed signs of doubt and lack of self confidence in scene two (1:05:58 – 1:06:43). This is justified as normal since she was the first one in her circle or area of influence to contest against her in-laws and against the grain. Thus, her fear can be pardoned as she had no reference of someone who had won before. Or it can also be argued that Neria did not have full confidence in herself that she would win because during the conversation with her lawyer she did not even know that she was legally married according to law. The surprise captured on her face shows her level of literacy. Therefore, her limited exposure of how the law fully operates contributed to her doubts towards her own capability.

Neria from the beginning of the film is shown enduring the pain of being hated upon by her in laws while her husband is still alive and being illtreated after his death but remained strong. Neria endures pain, suffering and sleepless nights but as a strong female she refuses to give up on her fight. Neria is

captured in scene two (1:06:47-1:08:13) lamenting the difficulties she had faced as a widow who has no rights to her brother Jethro. Jethro being touched by his sister's situation comforts her but at the same time uses his talent to intervene and cross examine socio-cultural gender issues through the following song:

> *Neria!!!!Neria!!!!Neria!!! wooooo (lamenting)*
>
> *Usaore moyo kani Neria/don't get disheartened by your challenges*
>
> *Mwari anewe kani Newria Mwari anewe/ The Almighty God is with you*
>
> *Kufirwa nemurume hanzvanzi zvinoda moyo wekushinga/ Loosing a husband to death requires a strong and brave heart*
>
> *Upenyu imhindipindu/life changes*
>
> *Ngwarira mhepo dzenyika/be careful of the evil of the world*
>
> *Shingaira kaaa Neria Mwari anewe/ struggle to win Neria the Lord will be with you in all your steps*
>
> *Vanhukadzi vanobatwa senhapwa kungogara senherera/ Females are treated as slaves who live like orphans*
>
> *Usaore moyo kani Neria Mwari anewe/don't get disheartened Neria the Lord is with you*
>
> *Shinga moyo shinga/ be brave and have a strong heart*
>
> *Rufu rune shanje kutora vanodanana/death is jealous as it separates lovers*

Through his lyrics Uncle Jethro interrogates and lays bare the underlying gender issues in Zimbabwe. In this music score females are said to be treated like underdogs, yet they manage and carry out all domestic duties, raise children and sexually please their husbands. He equates their living conditions in life as that of slaves and orphans, criticizing how females are exploited and ill-treated. The words *Mwari anewe/ the Lord is with you*, reminds his sister that she has to be strong and remember that the Almighty Lord is a God of widows and orphans as they are marginalized in societies. From another angle Uncle Jethro's lyrics encourage his sister to lean on the Almighty as males will never change and will never want females to be free from patriarchy. Again, the song points out how other males like Phineas have abused religion which plays a big role in the subordination of females.

Scene three (1:31:41-1:33:55) showcases Neria at her husband's rural home seated next to her mother and in-laws as the inheritance (*kugara nhaka/levirate*) ceremony is being conducted. Neria still continued to go through the ceremony even after winning in court maybe because she wanted to display her independence the cultural way or probably the director of the film wanted to show that despite females occupying resistive positions, they continue being subordinates in dominant cultures because the culture is premised on patriarchy (Mulvey, 1981/1999: 123). *Kugara nhaka* is a popular custom which was practiced by most Zimbabwean cultures, but a few still practice it. During the time when *Neria* was produced it was mandatory but these days not all widows practice it. In many circumstances if a female would turn down a levirate marriage she would be sent back to her maternal home and would be forced to leave her children behind with her in-laws, leaving females with no option but to oblige. In this ceremony the late man's brothers sit in line and the widow is expected to choose one to replace her late husband from them only. She is given a bowel with water,

a wooden stick and a spear. The water in the bowel symbolizes her abilities, to conduct her wifely duties. The wooden stick symbolizes a man's authority as the head of the house. The spears symbolize her protection under her new husband. The widow submits to one of her choice giving him the authority to protect, guide and acknowledging him as the new head of her house. Phineas and Patrick's close relatives are pictured bracing for the bowel, but she hands over the bowel to her son. It is impossible for a son to inherit and perform social obligation to his mother or rule over her. Thus, her gesture serves as an indication that she did not require a male alongside her to survive, representing her as a strong female who challenges patriarchy and stands for her rights by refusing to be defined by males. This becomes the turning switch for Neria's story, where the previously oppressed female begins to interrogate the sources of her oppression, bravely denounces them and claims her independence back. The film *Neria* takes a turnaround from the negative framing of females as people who cannot distinguish themselves, socially and intellectually using their mental faculties as evidenced by the scornful reactions of males who leave before the ceremony ends.

5.11 FEMALE CHARACTERS AS INDEPENDENT

IN SINNERS

In many shots the lead actresses address each other as "*hure/prostitute"*. The word hure/prostitute is used to describe someone who sells her body for money and in many cases, it applies to females while the male accomplices are spared. Samantha, Kere, Patie and Chipo's decision of selling their bodies vividly shows how liberated they are. The attitudes and psyche that define the image of a *hure/prostitute* are male sanctioned and arbitrarily used to label independent females even when they are not prostitutes. Females who refuse to bow down to patriarchal rules are labelled as promiscuous and dangerous hence are referenced as *hure/prostitute*. The demeaning word "*hure*" is used mock and discourage aspiring independent females as its harshness, bullies and steals one's self esteem. Its harshness is rooted in cultural beliefs and laws which restrict spaces females occupy so as to maintain their dependence on males. In scene two (32:40-35:10) Samantha is pictured embracing her liberation saying:

> "*it is better for me to sell my body, be a hure on my own than being sold by my own father and brothers*"

Muponde (2005:25) notes that a prostitute is someone who goes beyond marked territories imagined in rural tradition and defies the pure and innocent order to give pleasure to the man. Patie, Vero, Kere, Samantha and Chipo challenge patriarchy as they are independent thus, they diligently address each other as *hure*. Their goal is to self-govern themselves, hence they address each other as *hure*/ prostitute. The females in the film *Sinners* are independent and hard-working females who pay their bills and are breadwinners in their respective families. This is noted by Kere who says:

> *"I do business with consenting adults who pay me for my services".*

In Zimbabwe marriage is highly consecrated thus, wedded females are treated with respect as compared to single females. For example, in many old Shona cultures a female was supposed to offer her virginity to her husband only and not anyone else, but the male is pardoned. In some societies the night a female gets married she and her husband are supposed to sleep on top of a white sheet. If she is a virgin it will be evidenced by the blood stains on her sheets that really show that her husband broke her hymen. If she was found a virgin the husband was supposed to top up the bride price with a cow (*mombe yechimanda*) thanking the mother of her bride for raising her daughter diligently. On the other hand, if she was not a virgin her in-laws will draw a hole on the sheet, shaming

her for being loose as she slept with other men before. Therefore, unmarried actresses like Patie default this traditional belief as they do not signify the importance of being a virgin or the status of being married. The film represents females as active people who no longer suppress their sexual orientation to be labelled as subordinate, well-mannered or obedient wives by society. They fully own their bodies and do as they please with their bodies crossing the marked boundaries of patriarchy for unmarried females as pure and innocent. The film points out that there can be no immortalized negative representation of females that cannot be contested.

The film *Sinners* uses Vero's character to show that females can go beyond marked traditional boundaries, as she impersonates the role of a mafia boss running an illegal gang and a secret juju clan. Vero runs an illegal business, shattering cultural feminine stereotypes, of occupying nurturing jobs or professions linked to household chores. Her ability of exercising leadership aligned to masculinity without the help of a male vividly shows her independence. Vero's character depicts females as people with a greater discipline and potential who can run illegal businesses better than males. Throughout the film Vero is characterized as powerful, demanding and fierce who never smiles or jokes with anyone but means business. Vero is pictured seated at the backyard of her house smoking, wearing a pink bra, pink sunglasses and a body wrap. She is represented in a positive way as a determined entrepreneur. As evidenced in scene two (25:43 – 26:59) when the camera in motion captures Kere arriving late for her interview, Vero does not greet or introduce herself. She immediately uses an affirming voice saying:

> "let *me get straight to business, someone lost a package of mine"*.

The film *Sinners* delineates females as active and not passive through Vero's character. The film pictures Vero half naked, which can be interpreted as eroticizing her body for the male gaze. However, it can also be noted that since she was pictured in her backyard next to a swimming pool most probably, she was coming from a swim. In many Zimbabwean cultures smoking is for males and it is a taboo for a female to smoke. Her sitting position in many Zimbabwean cultures is associated with authority and pride "*kubhara 4/ crossing of legs"*. Her sitting position is used to depict how she owns and calls the shots in her area of expertise. Vero's pink costume implies that being a female does not define or limit females' spheres of influence, but it is just a differentiation of sex. In that same scene Kere tries to leave while she is still detecting her terms and position as an employer but is ordered to sit which she does in fear. Vero does not negotiate with anyone but only orders and stamps authority. In this regard, the film *Sinners* imputes females' traditional inferior identities as mere boundaries meant to block their potential of changing their discriminated lives. The film uses Vero's character to portray females as humans who intensely embody aspects of empowerment.

In scene one (01:48 – 02:24) Kere and Patie are filmed admiring a fancy car parked outside their compound. Vero and her escort come out of Georgiana's room walking confidently, the firmness of their body movements implies how independent they are. Vero possesses any territory she goes to, defining females as conquerors. This is evidenced by Kere and Patie's dialogue:

> Patie: "*zvainenge mota yemahure/ it seems as if the car is owned by prostitutes*".
> Kere: "isihule *siyabhadala ngiyakutshela being a prostitute pays I tell you*".

Vero has gone beyond the traditional marked territories of a female in many ways which other females like Kere and Patie admire. *Sinners* defines patriarchy as a fluid social practice, which is continually being generated, challenged, and negotiated. Vero represents a culture of discontinuity

and her attitude constitutes the speaking body (Muponde, 2011:389). Her position is used to break walls that limit females from owning properties which are not limited to the home environment only. Vero's dressing tells that she is not married just like her escort's who is also wearing a slighted leopard print mini dress. Vero's dressing defines her as an independent female who dresses as she pleases not as society anticipates as she is not of loose morals. Married females in many Zimbabwean societies are not allowed to wear short dresses as it is viewed as a dressing for loose females who walk around parading their thighs. If one is married her body belongs to her husband only hence, everything she wears should be approved by her husband. A good married Zimbabwean female is expected to appear respectful and reserved. Kere and Patie despise being married because to them if one is married, she will not get the chance to achieve her goals and desires and be able to take care of herself but be a child bearer.

Chipo divorced her husband because he failed to satisfy her and used to physically abuse her for fifteen years when she was married to him. Chipo crosses the line of patriarchy by divorcing her husband an act considered to be done by uncultured females. In some instances, tradition allows the man to go and demand his bride price back as the family failed to raise their daughter accordingly. In many societies married females who are physically abused are advised to stay in abusive marriages for the benefit of their children as they perceive that females cannot bring up children without the help of males. Thus, societies censor females' potential by making them believe that they cannot fend for themselves or their children without the help of males. So, if a female divorces her husband, she is doomed to fall on hard financial consequences, societal degradation and stigmatization. As evidenced by a popular Shona marriage rule:

> *"ndozvinoita dzimba dzakaoma dzinotoshingirirwa asikana/ marriages are not an easy road but it is the duty of a female to strive to make peace and live with the abuse".*

The film uses Chipo's character to show that females have the power to control their sexual libidos. It is a taboo in many Zimbabwean societies for a female to ask for sexual eroticism. Males are stared as the initiators of sex who set the conditions for sexual encounters. Chipo refuses to suppress her sexual libido and challenges Simba's sexual power. This results in Simba taking drastic measures to silence Chipo, but she refuses, defying patriarchy. Chipo is pictured living in a big house with her helper(maid). Chipo's decision of leaving an abusive marriage and starting over clearly depicts her independence.

Again, scene one (22:46-25:09) captures Samantha furiously challenging patriarchy, as she denounces the ultimatum of being a fulltime housewife and chases away Tete with a knife, shouting and threatening to kill her saying:

> *"you are just as guilty as those stupid lazy men; in fact, you are even worse you are a woman you should know better".*

Again, Samantha's gesture of chasing away Tete with a knife and refusing Uncle Shaya's money, signifies Samantha's decision of defying Uncle Shaya's dominating strength and asserting her dignity as an independent female fearlessly. Samantha's gesture also signifies her ability to define and own her space. Illustrating females' ability to decide, control and live outside the diabolical identities suggested for them by the male driven market forces of capitalism that place value on object consumerism. Gaidzanwa (1985:20) argues that, culture changes and it is no longer merely locked in or dictated upon by those traditional modes of thought that restrict and censor difference and heterogeneity in perception and action. *Sinners* uses Samantha's actions to challenge and despise

the commercialization of females exercised by patriarchal societies as the film celebrates her evolution from a hopeless dependent female to a bold fierce independent female.

Scene two (31:06 – 33:16) captures Romeo knocking on Samantha's door, money is seen scattered besides her as she is woken up by the knock. Roughly it amounts to about three hundred U.S dollars which she had made in a night. During the time when the film *Sinners* was produced Zimbabwe was still using multi currencies and the South African rand was equivalent to the U.S dollar. In that case Samantha had amounted about three thousand rand in a night. Romeo offers to help her pay her school fees and accommodation. Which she declines as she reminds him that he was also a student who was still under the responsibility of his parents. She defies tradition which allows males to be the breadwinners. She refuses to be under the mercy of a man as she is capable of providing for herself. Samantha saves some money to cater expenses for her mother's memorial service and for her father and siblings' upkeep. Proving to her family that they did not need Mr Shaya's help as she was capable of providing for them just as Mr Shaya did. Samantha becomes the breadwinner of her family. In this scene the film *Sinners* challenges the stereotype of females as useless, passive objects that patriarchal societies have constructed. The last scene captures Chipo, Samantha and Kere discussing about their next plans of survival after Vero and her escort leave town and amongst them no one suggests of being dependent, but all come up with plans that will continue generating an income.

SECTION II

5.12 THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE LEAD FEMALE CHARACTERS

From birth, females are socialized into the world of men (McLeod, 2011:80). Over the years a lot of traditional practices have evolved especially in many Zimbabwean societies. Anthony Easthope (1986) outlined three bases for considering gender representation which are the biological body, social roles of male and female and the way people internalize and live out those roles. The lead actresses were classified among the young, middle-aged and elderly to express social assumptions about the specific functions of the three different age groups in the two films. These measures in all instances interconnect in the day to day living of people which results in one's point of view over how they identify and act towards each other in societies. Culture and religion play a significant role in distinguishing and regulating gender issues in Zimbabwe. The advancement of technology, the cries for gender equality and human rights just to mention a few have played a great role in the modification of many customary traditional laws in Zimbabwe. The section above provided evidence of the representation of lead female characters in *Neria* and *Sinners*. This section presents the resemblances and differences between the lead characters thus addressing the research question on the differences and similarities between lead female characters in both films.

5.13 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 13-20 FOCUS GROUP

Mavis from *Neria* and Mercy from *Sinners* fall under this group as purposively selected by the researcher. Their characters are framed within the same sphere of influence which is the home. Mavis and Mercy both have been thoroughly propagandized into the belief of females for the home, females to serve man, females to cook, males to eat and males for the public. The film *Neria* represents the mastering of Mavis's nurturing duties at a young age as a great accomplishment. Her strive to be a faultless, obedient and malleable housewife is applauded as the only career option for females. Throughout her character she is branded within the delineations of a proper wife to be as she is always filmed within the home setting. When things get tough, she is pictured selling vegetables, her purpose does not exceed the household premises. Mavis is stereotyped as a sweet and faithful female who is the ideal marriage prospect (Virgin Mary). Mercy from *Sinners* likewise, self objectifies herself as a sexual device who wants to be appraised by her looks that can attract any male. Mercy acknowledges marriage as a passport to a better life. Mercy's self-objectification of authorizing males to have sexual intercourse with her at the expense of her future, results in her contracting H.I.V. (Human Immune Deficiency Virus).

Mercy is presented as an easy target for sexual exploitation by men (whore). Mercy and Mavis both aim to get married to someone who will take care of them, thus under such power relations, females are trained to recognize and internalize those restrictions (marriage) as the norm. Henceforth, their physical and intellectual energies where directed towards attracting husbands. They both have a dependency syndrome which domesticates them as objects of desire. In Mavis's case her good cooking skills will aid her in getting a good suitor while in Mercy's case her beauty and submission of allowing males to taste the forbidden fruit will aid her. In *Sinners*, Mavis's shots capture her conducting her homework or coming from school, she is associated with other aspirations outside domestic duties. *Sinners* slightly adjusts from Mavis's character which standardizes her in the pigeonhole representation of females as tidy housewives and replaces it with education. In *Sinners* education is the first great accomplishment one must aim for. However, it can also be argued that

Mercy's decision to have sex at a tender age formulates independence amongst herself as she is no longer afraid to be labelled a non-virgin.

5.14 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE 21-35 FOCUS GROUP

Many lead characters in both films fall under this age group. Kere from *Sinners* plays a significant role of a good advisor similar to Connie in the film *Neria*. Both characters face the same stigmatization of being labelled dangerous because of their controversial status (single). Their characters conquer and embrace femininity for their own personal gain. Both female actresses are addressed as responsible females who acknowledge the presence of the supernatural realms. This is revealed in Connie's character which is constructed within heavy strong religious beliefs. Their costumes, social status and body embodiment characterizes them as liberated, but their independence does not exceed the marked territories of a female who should be confined to domestic duties. This is evidenced by their occupations, Kere works as a sex worker being objectified for male sexual pleasures while Connie sews being objectified as the other or the inferior one who cannot conduct male professions. Kere is depicted as courageous who goes beyond the marked boundaries of patriarchy when she becomes a gang member of female rapists, while Connie in *Neria* becomes the voice of single females.

Mulvey as discussed in the previous chapters, asserts that females in patriarchal cultures stand as signifiers for the male other, bound by a symbolic order where men can live out their fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing the silent image of females as bearer, not maker of meaning (Mulvey, 1999:59). In most Zimbabwean cultures females are not given the freedom to divorce their husbands. It is only the husband who is credited and allowed to do so, as females are encouraged to stay and survive abusive marriages "*gonyera uripo/ hang in there*". Connie from *Neria* and Chipo from *Sinners* are characterized as females who are not dependent on patriarchal village traditions, who level up their femininity, emanate their strength and divorce their husbands. Both lead characters are constructed in self-reliant and heroic natures as compared to the popular defenceless and scared representations of females. Connie and Chipo resemble the same courage as they both take charge of their lives, own their bodies and do as they please, subverting global representations of females which suggest that females in films stand as subordinates of male power. In most of their talking time Connie and Chipo neither accept the social weakness associated with females. Connie is portrayed as an intelligent liberate female who resorted to the modern law to settle her divorce and helped Neria with emotional and financial support. Chipo does not go to the modern law but continues being bullied by patriarchy. Her response to her divorce creates a sense of a passive female. Chipo's character is very controversial because it might be argued that since Simba was an influential man probably, he bribed the modern court to get full custody of the children. Her incapability to be on the same financial page with Simba results in her losing her children. Financially, Chipo's status is constructed as inferior to Simba although she owned properties. Connie on the other hand happens to be productive and helps Neria with emotional and financial support but serves as a figure of loneliness which is captured in scene one where she is seen admiring Neria and Patrick's relationship.

The two films as discussed above represent Zimbabwean patriarchal cultures as firmly fixed in a scope of communal processes that mute the desires of females and children, denying a value to their life experiences and consciously misrepresenting them to an extent where they see it as natural and cannot be changed. Samantha and Neria both have the same rural upbringing which plays an important part in many decisions they made. Samantha's victimization as a female who is battered for food by her family can be equated to Neria's situation of the leverage marriage. Samantha's character turns away from Neria's as she is portrayed as an emotional strong female whose foresight is driven

by reality not by emotions like Neria. Unlike Neria who takes long to set herself free after being advised on how too, Samantha takes a few hours to free herself from the dependency mentalities created by patriarchy. Samantha becomes the rebellious female who bravely fights her battles without the help of the law and wins it. Neria delays her freedom with the fear of being labelled unprincipled by her in-laws at the expense of her happiness. Samantha bravely transcends marked boundaries controlled by men usually defined by categories such as wife or daughter as evidenced by her costumes and attitude. The film *Sinners* presents females in a positive way as Samantha is constructed as a university student who has the capability to reach tertiary education. Neria is stacked and piled with several social injustices but her patient, soft response throughout her predicament lays bare her slow intellectual reasoning. Neria is constructed as a dull female who gets to understand that she was legally married after her husband's death. Neria fights patriarchal odds, gains her confidence back and wins her freedom with the help of both females and males which is different from Samantha who was rescued by females only. In other words, Neria still maintained her inferior position as the inferior human.

Figure 4

The film *Neria* decriminalizes male prerogatives, for rationalizing aggression. It classifies females under the subaltern class who are demoralized by patriarchy. Maria stands in as Phineas's figment whose purpose is to fulfil his gratification. Maria serves as Phineas's sexual slave and child bearer whom throughout the movie is ever controlled by Phineas from how she should dress to what she should say. Maria is depicted as a frigid, reserved and weak housewife who is afraid to rise above the social restrictions and controlled myths about her as a female who can fight back as she is always silenced with a beating or threatened to be divorced. She endures and normalizes her abusive marriage with Phineas and accepts herself as the "other" who has no rights. The film *Neria* positions males as humans who are not bounded by any responsibility in relation to maintaining a relationship

with the opposite sex. Chipo in *Sinners* also faces that scenario of being in an abusive marriage. Figure 4 shows Maria and Chipo being physically assaulted. The narrative displayed in both films is that females are demystified and controlled which results in them being punished. Through Phineas and Simba's characters masculinity is associated with being in command and seeing females as lacking. Both female characters are constructed as weak who scream and do not attempt to fight back. Both films still show that females are still victims of physical abuse even after the Zimbabwean government amended laws to stop it. Chipo would have reported Simba to the authorities but she did not, maintaining a subordinate female characteristic. However, Chipo rationalizes males who beat females as cowards. In *Sinners* the beating of females is depicted as inhuman and idiotic which should not be tolerated by any female. Maria's character is constructed as a docile dependent human who maximizes her desires to please her husband to avoid being chased away from her matrimonial home. She prefers to be exploited than being independent as Maria finds security in being married hence, she views her husband as her god. Chipo in *Sinners* moves away from being "silent" to a constructive businesswoman. She breaks the cultural norm by bravely divorcing her abusive husband and becomes an independent female from the way she dresses to how she behaves. On another note both females are constructed as commodities who were purchased under the common traditional custom of paying lobola/pride price. Thus, they were controlled by their husbands, Chipo even after divorcing Simba is pictured still being controlled by him as he boastingly denies her the right to see her children. In *Neria* even though Neria had won her freedom in the modern court she still went on to conduct the leverage marriage ceremony because the Katsandes (in-laws) owned her as Phineas had paid her bride price. Though females from both films try to liberate themselves they somehow continue being passive recipients due to culture and religion which groups them as second-class citizens. By this culture, reasoning and experience has a great influence in how one tackles issues .

In the film *Sinners* Vero's character can be equated to Neria's in the sense that both females are pioneers who venture into something that their female gender has been limited too. However, their personalities differ in that, Neria's character is assiduously constructed, she speaks in "the first-person narrative", which draws readers into a more personalized sense of her oppressed history. Neria braces for a long struggle against patriarchal values that have demoted females to being second class citizens. Neria's outburst introduces a revisionist sensibility which suggests that oppressive values can be contested. Neria is pictured as someone who acquired courage through her journey as a widow. Her situation forced her to conquer patriarchy, which she later defeats as evidenced by her victory at the end of the film. Neria becomes independent at the end of the film unlike Vero who is casted as independent from the exposition to the denouement of *Sinners*. She is asserted as a passive female who fights her battles without vigour. If a female is characterized as a strong female in films, she represents the male glance towards females and inherits dominant conditions of power and the structure of the society (Stutterheim, 2015). This is how Neria's character was constructed it still reflected the male glance as seen in scene three (1:14:10-1:15:00) when Mlauzi (Phineas's friend) is sent to return her property, she is reminded by Therida about the car but her response does not show concern or affection because to her she is a mere female who should own simple properties. However, Neria's fight is not an isolated one, it is every female's struggle for justice and empowerment.

Gauntlett (2002:247) examined that the traditional views of a female as a housewife or low-status worker had been kicked-boxed out of the picture by the feisty, successful girl power icons. *Sinners* constructed its female characters in that same manner as evidenced by Vero's appearance which radiates vitality rather than fecundity. She becomes the opposite of the passive female who is not tied to motherhood, domestic duties or marriage. *Sinners* portrays Vero's character outside of a relationship with a male, denoting a great step forward for females' independence. In *Neria* motherhood is depicted as a vital base for a female which Vero does not even consider or dream of.

Vero defines her own space within the patriarchal community she lives in. Her character is constructed in a positive manner as the "active" one who exercises and imposes her power on both males and females. Vero and her crew exercise power effectively, racing intelligently in the world of illegal dealings as they are never arrested or apprehended for their crime. Vero independently owns asserts in her name which she worked for without the help of males. All in all, Vero is the dread, schemer, demanding and tigress female who used any means, including diabolical means to achieve her ambitions and desires. Vero's personality is a nightmare to most males as she intimidates their ego. However, both female characters are constructed as protagonist who serve for the desire of the male gaze. It can be attested that through Neria's costume and traditional mannerism she served as the submissive heroine. While Vero's costumes and physical structure*/kubatana* (large bust, fair complexion, smooth skin and nice legs) in the contemporary Shona culture define a sexy female. In other words, Vero's fierce bossy lady personality defines her as a temptress making her character contrary to most aspects held by Zimbabwean patriarchal societies towards female characters. Over rally Vero's character in most aspects is not upheld in cognizances of Zimbabwean female characters.

5.15 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ELDERLY FOCUS GROUP

Ambuya and Tete fall under the elderly category who act as carriers, traditional preservers and guardians of the Shona culture and repositories of social and historical memories. They are full of experience, wisdom and intelligence. Mabenga (2000:310 as quoted in Dipio,2014:17) notes that traditional culture has given aged people a role and virtue that makes them genuine protagonist in community life until their deaths. Both females are the oldest female characters in both films. They are looked upon with high respect but are portrayed as docile beings. Tete and Ambuya both live and grew up in the rural settings. Ambuya hopes for Neria to abandon a life she has built in the urban city to come and stay with her in the village. Tete wishes if Samantha would abandon her tertiary studies and be a full-time housewife at the village. There are both portrayed as submissive and transmitters of patriarchal values which places females as subordinates. They lack a deep understanding of the advantages of promoting independence amongst females. They are typified with a poor judgement site which supports their cultural customs but at the same time restricting Samantha and Neria's freedom. They are both represented as passive who cannot reason outside the clarities of being housewives. Ambuya at the end accepts how patriarch has oppressed females while Tete shies away her shame under the curtains of tradition. Tete and Ambuya both dress decently, they wear loose garments which accommodate amplitude. They never remove their headwraps, their hair is hardly seen in the public eye and their physical structures are presented as unattractive. They both do not have a history of living outside the boundaries of being housewives. In Neria, Ambuya is allocated more talking time as compared to Tete in *Sinners*. This is so because *Sinners* is a film which shows the liberation of females thus, those who oppose female emancipation are totally cleared off the picture.

The two films offer them marginal roles like Ambuya who plays as the griot and Tete as the family advisor. In both films they exercise their authority over female descendants only as aunts or mothers, advocating for passivity amongst females. Ambuya and Tete because of their repertoire of experience and their relative freedom of child-rearing developed greater personal autonomy and social sophistication than their younger counterparts. Both females emanate the prosperity and confidence attained through their increased power and status in the family. They have ceased to be sexual objects or potential mothers and can no longer perform hard labour. Fransisca falls under this group, she also dresses decently with her hair being covered always. She has no problem with females being oppressed by tradition because to her just like Tete and Ambuya that is how it has been all these years and should stay that way. Francisca is slightly different from them because she lives in the city but has a deep connection within her rural roots. Tete, Ambuya and Fransisca are consistently

presented in the same primitive way who finds pleasure and pride in associating their gender with obstructions and lack of opportunities. Their behaviour and understanding towards the circumstances of life is gaudily allied to the clarities of subordinate females. However, the film *Sinners* represents elderly females from the rural areas as barbaric. It steps away from *Neria's* representation of females who live in the city as unmannered or as prostitutes. In the film *Sinners* modern females who live in the cities are civilized.

III. CONCLUSION

Feminist film theory provided a vivid ideology against which films represent females. Its central discourse which pays attention to how film texts are worked and constructed to impose patriarchal ideology on females allowed the researcher to detail a textual and semiotic analysis of the representation of females in both films of study. This chapter presented and discussed findings on the representation of female characters in Zimbabwe. And attempted to answer the ways in which females are represented in *Neria* (1993) and *Sinners* (2013), how sexual differences encoded the visual and structure of the two films and the different filmic styles used to represent females. Section two of this chapter identified and outlined the resemblances and differences between the female characters in the two films which carry a 20-year-old gap. As evidenced above the film *Neria* yielded more detailed findings and analysis as compared to *Sinners*. Due to the fact that *Sinners* has limited cinematographic sophistication as it was a cheap and convenient production. Ureke (2016:134) notes that with *Sinners* one must watch while attentively listening to the film for one to discern the plot, the camerawork is distinctly objective and not subjective as expected of most expressionist narratives, there is restricted animation in the camerawork, under pinned by a substantial deployment of medium to long shots and the pro-filmic aspects are *performed* rather than *made.*

The feminist movement in the cinema expressed the necessity to construct females as subjects, rather than as 'objects' (Mulvey, 1989:17). *Neria* and *Sinners* have some similar themes pertaining the representation of females they both maintain. But *Sinners* tries to draw a balance by breaking patriarchal pleasures which favour males and conceives a new representation of female desire. From the above findings the study prevailed that in the talking time allocated to females in *Neria* they were presented in accordance with the traditional social conditions of patriarchy which allow the demeaning definition of females as passive, controlled, dependent, docile, quiet, constrained, accepting and obsequious underdogs. Feminist film discourses were born out of the female's desire to counter and criticize the mainstream cinema, while advocating alternative cinema and filmmaking in which females are given favourable, active, and leading roles as the main protagonists (Yahaya, 2017:585). Which is brought out in *Sinners* as a female gaze representation is developed in the narrative structure of Vero, Samantha, Kere, Patie and Chipo who resist to male objectification and dominance, as articulated through their act of raping men, Kere taking care of her sister, Chipo boasting about divorcing her abusive marriage, Samantha divorcing Uncle Shaya and becoming the breadwinner in her family, Vero becoming a mafia boss.

Through the textual and semiotic analysis, a positive change towards the representation of females was observed in *Sinners* as compared with *Neria*. Female characters in *Sinners* were appraised for their brainpower, independence and strength regularly as compared to *Neria.* More scenes placed their attention on the upliftment of females although some scenes still showed them as the "other" who are important but at the same time not being important as compared to their male counterparts. Female definition in *Sinners* is not limited and tied to cultural gender roles. *Sinners* does not link female characters to nurturing, mothering characteristics only but extends their representations outside domestic areas which Mulvey advocated for. Female characters in *Neria* are frequently shown being oppressed by culture with little hope of being free but in *Sinners* tradition which happens to play

a big role in oppressing females is depicted as something that changes over time and its purpose is to preserve the continuity of people and not to oppress them.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The motive of this research was to examine the evolving representation of female characters in Zimbabwe using two disparate films as case studies with a 20-year-old time gap. The study engaged the feminist film theory which purported that females were depicted as passive and advocated for the active roles of females in film. This chapter will conclude my research as it will relate the findings in the case studies to the research questions and objectives. It will strive to produce an extensive understanding of the meaning(s) obtained in the findings to answer the primary research aim as outlined in chapter one, looking at the changes in how female characters are depicted in the two films. This research was a comparative study, the analysis and findings were discussed within the feminist film theory. Thus, the films were analysed within the active/passive doctrine as proposed by Mulvey (1975) to disclose whether film in Zimbabwe introduced alternative communication within the presiding organizing ideology of patriarchy. As, films accumulate for female causes either through individual roles or social customs, which was examined and lead to the conclusions on how gendered relations were visualized in this research.

THE EVOLVING REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN ZIMBABWE

6.1 THEMES BROUGHT OUT BETWEEN THE TWO FILMS

According to Dutt (2014:3), since the liberation movement in the 1960s, female roles in social, cultural, political and economic life has drastically changed and progressed for the better, seemingly giving females more equal footing to males in aspects of life. This is evidenced by the female characters in *Sinners* who brought out themes that characterized them as "active" and evolved from the docile passive female characters in *Neria*. In *Neria* the obedient, spotless, docile housewife theme is the major theme standardized throughout, from the beginning where Neria is shown in a subordinate position painting her house to the end where she is shown in a subordinate position performing the inheritance ceremony. Females in *Neria* are constructed within Mulvey's notion, born from the psychoanalytic theory which illustrates that, the unconscious of a patriarchal society has structured film form (Mulvey, 1975/ 1999: 833). Female positions in societies as housewives, tidy teenagers, tailors, mothers and guards of culture naturalizes them as second-class citizens as illustrated in *Neria*. The Zimbabwean society is built in line with the patriarchal nature of the society, in other words Zimbabwe is built along patriarchal lines where the female is seen as lesser compared to males. Therefore, there are certain societal roles females are forbidden from participating which is clearly brought out in *Neria.* The housewives exist only to support their husbands and children, unmarried females like Therida and Connie are depicted as failures who should be treated like minors and accorded no respect, while in *Sinners* unmarried females are not victims of social stigmatization but are accorded respect. Females in *Neria* are not treated as ends in their own rights, but as instruments of the ends of males who are agents of family prosperity. This is seen by the jobs females in Neria occupy, instead of*, Neria* to represent female professions as a liability like males' it domesticates their profession guarantying males, some authority on females' bodies and sexuality for the benefit of patriarch. In line with the African context *Neria* produced females as illiterate, housewives and subordinate which aroused the male ego. Hence, by this Godwin Mawuru (the director) undercuts females' confidence as the film labels female's occupations as supportive to those of males, representing males' jobs as a liability. And Phineas who stands in for the patriarchal culture

ends up being forgiven, regardless of the gravity of his offenses as he is spared by the magistrate who says:

> *"Mr Katsande!! you are a very lucky man you were supposed to be jailed*".

Phineas is bestowed with unquestionable prerogatives including the freedom to have multiple sex partners, without the society's disapprobation or discrimination. Such conclusions picture out themes which align females as original constructs borne out of the repressed desires and imaginations of patriarchy.

Lead female characters in *Neria* are directed along the traditional lines of gender hierarchies as they are subjects of males, such that the female seems always to be subject of male vilification, serving more to be seen than heard. This shows that the division between active/male and passive/female, as argued by Mulvey, structured the film narrative for *Neria*. *Neria* celebrates married females, represented as compliant, long suffering, faithful and accommodative. On the other hand, Neria's husband is represented and naturally constructed as the breadwinner and opposite of his wife and passed as complimentary. This leaves females in social traditional positions that group them in passive roles. The presence of lead female characters in *Neria* is absent as noted by Bell Hooks who notes that within a film context, the presence of a black female character is constructed as absent (Hooks, 1993:310). Meaning black female characters like Neria rise to be visible only when they drive stories that serve to elevate other groups and not their fantasises.

Sinners constructs its lead female characters as present whose visibility is not noticed only when they drive stories that serve to elevate other groups. This is so because the themes and storylines brought out in *Sinners* clearly show equal footings between males and females socially and economically. Although females are depicted as caring in *Sinners*, their degree of having a nurturing character (femininity) is not greatly focused on, as compared with *Neria* but is perceived as normal amongst both genders. *Sinners* brings out courageous females who conquer and revisit male favours correcting social injustices. *Sinners* throughout the film prominently emasculates males, while positioning female characters as effective. The liberation of females can only be achieved through economic and social change (Murphy, 2000:126). In many scenes *Sinners* repudiates womanliness and concurrently brings out themes about females liberating themselves from male-controlled bondages, following measures which help towards the liberation of females. Commercial films habitually see the female characters centered in themes of self-sacrifice, defined in relationship to children or to men, and have encouraged the female audience to identify either with female figures on screen who were powerless or victimized or with active *male* heroes (Montgomery, 1984:39). The motherhood, housewife theme is completely wiped off from the film which was one of the themes advocated against by the Feminist Film Theory. Females personalities in *Sinners* move away from the Cinderella complex in *Neria* which assumes that females depend on males in the pursuit of a happy, fulfilling life. *Sinners* produces motherhood, subordinate spotless housewife themes as barriers, which are depicted as the least expected priority amongst females. In other words, *Sinners* depicted the marriage theme as hell, transcending the housewife boundary. *Sinners* critically emphasis the empowered active female protagonist theme amongst its characters. The film *Sinners* makes use of single female's characters as strong and intelligent females moving away from the subordinate dull characters in *Neria*. Strong females who do not also radiate traditionally feminine characteristics such as compassion and sensitivity may be portrayed as successful in non-traditional roles, but they also pay the price in loneliness and isolation (Sutherland and Felrtey, 2017:619). The film *Sinners* shies away from representing independent females within delineations of being lonely and fills in the gap by depicting them as the happiest compared to married females.

6.2 MISE-EN-SCENE BETWEEN THE TWO FILMS

Mise-en-scene refers to the setting, the set or the surroundings of a film. Laura Mulvey argued that in cinema gestures, looks, mise-en-scène, lighting, framing and all the accoutrements of the filming apparatus materializes into a kind of language which objectifies females (Mulvey, 1989). Rural settings do not have countable opportunities for females to achieve, expect marriage which many females in rural areas view as their only accomplishment. Instead *Neria* portrays the village as a paradise for females, as a birthplace of cultural and ancestral glory. In the beginning, the presence of black women in the urban areas was considered by both white settlers and the rural African patriarchy to be problematic for females (Mushore, 2016:85). By contrast, *Sinners* sets its location in the city only, representing it as a breaking free ground of change for females. The city is shined as an area of contemporary ideas of reasoning and living. This is evidenced by Georgina who had not been to her village for 20 years. Smith (2008) was concerned about how females take up half the space in society, yet in films they appear much less frequently than males do. In *Neria* females take up more space and talking time as compared to males, but they are addressed for the male gaze (being merely backdrops for the action). Their talking time is centred on topics that align them to domesticity. *Sinners* is made up of 71 minutes and in those minutes man to man conversations only space up to five minutes. Therefore, many minutes are allocated to females who are showcased either addressing female empowerment topics or celebrating their liberation from patriarchal bondages.

Mulvey in her work states that the female and her beauty have become an object, and "her body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look" (Mulvey, 1989:22). The film *Neria* made use of high angle camera positions which are usually accompanied by close-ups or medium shots on its female characters. These camera angles look down upon subjects, which made the lead female characters in *Neria* to appear vulnerable by nature. Although *Sinners* was shot with an outdated camera as compared to *Neria*, it applied lower angle camera angles accompanied by medium and long shots on its female characters, which made the female lead characters to look more authoritative. *Sinners* did not make use of several music scores rather it shifted from pitting the vulnerability of females through soft sad music scores and sounds by replacing it with one music score and vibrant music sounds.

Female's dress is part of the sphere of male dominated surveillance, command, power and meaning in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean females who dress plainly do so in order to be identified as modest and avoid being harassed or beaten up by males. Conversely, females who display their flesh under this philosophy are considered to be immoral whores who dress to give off sexual messages with the inevitable consequence of provoking an irresistible sexual urge in males. Lead female actresses in *Neria's* costumes, limits and identifies them as modest. Their dress limits them to natural plain humans without any positive impact to society. Female characters in *Sinners*' freedom of choice of dressing accordingly prompt a liberated nature within them as compared to the lead female actresses in *Neria*. *Sinners* takes a further step from *Neria* by exhibiting effective lead female characters who do not sacrifice their desires with the fear of being harassed or beaten up by males, as evidenced by the choice of their costumes. The audacious and insubordinate personalities lead female characters demonstrate in *Sinners* is a positive shift from the weak and docile female characters in *Neria* like Maria who fears to explore their desires with the fear of being beaten or divorced.

Labelling lead female characters in *Sinners* as sexual objects by their choice of costumes which show off flesh is tricky because with the invention of different fashion styles, today's on-screen females need to have it all, the gorgeous upkeep and the magnificent courageous spandex. However, one might argue that the glimpse of female characters in the film *Sinners* triggers sexual pleasure as their

appearance is classified for strong visual and seductive impact whereas those in *Neria* prompt passiveness. Given that the glimpse of representing female characters as sex objects in *Sinners* is difficult to deny*, Sinners* somehow adjusts away from the mere perception of females as silent sex objects to representing them as spectators of desire who engage in sex work for their own sexual fantasies and for revenge. Lead female characters in *Sinners* are not just passive sex objects or silent objects, they are the spectators of intimacy. Female characters' power to get revenge is not only limited to their personal agonies but is a fight against systematic oppressions of patriarchy. Females in *Sinners* return the male gaze look, firmly covering male space and spinning male characters into spectacles for female's attention. And in so doing, they deny abiding to the male gaze rather, throughout the film; the male characters are either left behind, objectified themselves or raped presenting a significant challenge to the male gaze (Mulvey, 1989). *Sinners* upgrades from *Neria* as it uplifts femininity to a level where it is no longer punishable to a life-time servitude to males.

Butler (2007:158) also acknowledged that, it is through the camera that aesthetic designs of the setting, costuming, lighting and actor movement which make sense. Female lead actresses in *Neria* are constantly filmed comfortable in homes settings or conducting duties that aligns them to domesticity. Through lead actresses like Maria, Chipo, Fransisca, Mavis, Ambuya and Neria females are showcased as the "other" who are objects rather than subjects by their traditional costume and being showcased in domestic settings. Their character development and language system was anticipated on patriarchal values. In *Neria* femininity was vividly stationed in ethnocentric gender norms about females being genetically domestic, soft, physically weak and afraid. It was the argument in this study that the representation of female characters in *Neria* was greatly strong-willed by the discourses of patriarchy which was strongly highlighted by Laura Mulvey in 1975. Females in the film *Neria* are illustrated in a Zimbabwean and global traditional manner which maintains stereotypes of personality traits, capabilities and aspirations for males. Films directed by African females provide opportunities for seeing through a female's eyes, a vision that transcends geographies and locations, in which boundaries are blurred and positioning goes beyond nationality, ethnicity and race (Bisschoff, 2012:169). Tavengwa (female director) in *Sinners* creates active, ambitious, strong, intelligent, aggressive, brave and creative female lead actresses, depicting revolutionary capabilities and powers amongst females. Unlike female characters in *Neria* who wore flowered or dull colours, those in Sinners made use of bright coloured costumes reflecting their active, ambitious nature. Females in *Sinners* do not fight their battles with tears but draw better plans on how to overpower their enemies. They are never pictured being glued to domestic chores but are entrepreneurs who use every chance they get to make money out of it. Lead female characters in *Sinners* undoubtedly challenged patriarchal values and survived outside the parameters of the domestic realm. Their idolization is not emphasized by females bearing children or being defined by masculine heteronormative expectations like *Neria.* Rather it transitions from the powerless and vulnerable females to modern educated and sexually liberated females. Although *Sinners* made a positive representation of females by depicting them as "active" it still maintained the dominant representation of males as more superior to females. This is evidenced by the type of occupations males in *Sinners* occupy, they are the journalists, doctors while females hold inferior occupations like prostitutes, counsellors. This is so because the Zimbabwean society feared that if females took up demanding professions, domestic duties would be neglected. Hence, they invented a bottle neck system which somehow has managed to maintain females in inferior professions so that they can balance work and home duties like Neria.

The storyline of the film *Neria* is allied to the traditional oral culture of the Jari Mukaranga folktale. This brings the past into the present while maintaining the profound consciousness of the female as the other. This in turn leads female actresses in *Neria* to strive for self-definition and determination in the face of powerful patriarchal forces. By this *Neria* represents males as the superior character while the females have no significance in themselves. The aim of feminist film theory's intervention was to

change the sexual, textual and political structures that marginalized and disadvantaged females as individuals and as groups in films (Knight, 1995: 40). *Sinners* takes a step forward and emphasizes the multiple and ever shifting roles of females and gender discourses that permeate females' vast opportunities for self-development and realization. The storyline of the film *Sinners* is aligned to the changing dynamic responsibilities females are partaking in Zimbabwe, like Kere Samantha and Patie who become the breadwinners of their families and the female pastor who consoles Kere. Hence, lead female actresses in *Sinners* evolve from striving for self-definition to denoting self-assertiveness personalities which defy patriarchal norms, values and nihilistic prejudices which conspire to hemline femininity. *Sinners* constructs its lead female characters to be makers of meaning who confidently reject to be enveloped in the maelstrom of male domination.

6.3 20-Year-Old Gap (1993 and 2013)

Conclusively as of my findings from the previous chapter, the efforts done by the Zimbabwean government and non-governmental organizations in trying to fight for the equality of males and females in Zimbabwe has borne positive fruits. Due to modernization several oppressive traditional norms towards females have been diluted by the western culture. Back in the early 2000 Robert Mugabe (former president of Zimbabwe 1980-2017) banned Koffi Olomide (a musician from the Democratic Republic of Congo) from performing in Zimbabwe because his dancers wore body tops which exposed their bellybuttons (*guvhuout/croptop*). Koffi' Olomide's female dancers were considered to be half naked however, in 2014, Mugabe invited Koffi Olomide to perform at his daughter's wedding. This shows how modernity has changed Zimbabwean norms between the 1990s decade and 2010s decade because Koffi Olomide's most female dancers hardly dance fully clothed. Other laws which restricted females from achieving their goals have been abolished such as expelling pregnant females at teachers colleges, secondary schools and polytechnic colleges. Currently female students who fall pregnant while at school are given maternity leaves and resume school after giving birth. Hence, the advocation of female emancipation and the exposure of most Zimbabweans to the technological world between the two decades has greatly influenced the positive representation of females in Zimbabwe.

Looking at the 20-year-old gap between *Neria* and *Sinners*, the female character in Zimbabwean films has evolved from a subordinate dreg female to an exceptional active, strong, tough, aggressive and productive female. A notable change is vividly seen in how lead female characters are constructed through the camera angles and frames of both films and by the different themes they bring out, different goals they aim to achieve, the type of language they use and how they handle and tackle their life experiences. *Sinners* displays tough representations of females who step beyond traditional notions of femininity. Therefore, with modernity prevailing all over the world their tough representation stands to be mooted as whether they are empowering images for real females or if they represent the ability of females to draw upon their femininity as a source of power or area kind of post-woman operating outside the boundaries of gender restrictions (Sutherland and Ferlty, 2017:734). With the above findings *Neria's* storyline narrows physical spaces for females, while setting boundaries for lead female characters not to perform duties outside social functions. *Sinners'* storyline allows females to control their own personality through independent survival roles outside male discourses. Its female lead characters deconstruct the patriarchal doctrines which downgrade and oppress them as compared to Neria, Ambuya, Fransisca, Chipo and Maria in *Neria*. Thus, *Sinners* evolves for the positive representation of females as compared with *Neria*.

Female lead characters in *Sinners* substantiate to aspects of empowerment rather than an end to patriarchal power structures and equality rather than difference. Female lead characters in *Neria* are limited to their gender roles only and experience their existence as something imposed from the

outside which they acknowledge and appropriate. Films are always imbued with meanings which extend beyond the simple function of entertainment and are thus an expression of dominant ideological assumptions within culture (Fol, 2004:6). However, females in *Sinners* take a step further from appropriating the existence of females as linked to their gender to resisting it. Lead female characters in *Sinners* evolve from representing female image as a fixed achievement the way *Neria* represents it to an ongoing and shifting process, which indicates the present position of most females in Zimbabwe. Precisely the female gender in *Sinners* is not associated with lack or limitation of opportunities or options like the females in *Neria* who are never applauded for any achievement in their lives but for the achievement they obtain through the pleasures they give to the male gaze.

The feminist film theory's third wave advocated for the positive/active representation of females which is vividly displayed in *Sinners* as, brave and independent personalities are associated with *Sinners'* lead female characters. Therefore, these resilient female representations of females in *Sinners* are due to empowering images of real females. *Neria* only presents a stereotype of the social status of females. Unlike *Neria* which neglected females' sexual fantasies and focused on presenting them in line with social stereotypes, *Sinners* considered females' sexual fantasies and represented them as normal. Female characters in *Sinners*' evolution is not completely inhibited by cultural, social and economic spheres as illustrated in *Neria*, which evidently shows the growth of females in Zimbabwe from a dependent being to an empowered one. Conclusively, *Neria* was a revolutionary film which its main purpose was to help in fighting for female's equality against oppressions of patriarchy and *Sinners* reflects the positive efforts done by the Zimbabwean government to emancipate females. As *Sinners* shows that it is possible for a female to have more control over her life and to flourish according to the intuitions of her femaleness.

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