

**PRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN KIKUYU FILM: A CASE STUDY OF *MUCHI NI NDOGO*.**

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## DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for examination or award of a degree in any other university.

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Signature.....

This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisors.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my daughter, Wangui Gichuki.

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## TABLE CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	vii
<b>CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Objectives .....	3
1.4 Hypotheses .....	3
1.5 Justification.....	4
1.6 Literature Review.....	4
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	16
1.8 Methodology.....	19
1.9 Scope and Limitation .....	19
<b>CHAPTER TWO:CHARACTERISATION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN <i>MUCHI NI</i></b>	
<b><i>NDOGO</i> .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Domesticated Characters. ....	22
2.3 Dependent Characters .....	28
2.4 Sex Objects .....	32
2.5 Conclusion .....	39

<b>CHAPTER THREE: CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES IN <i>MUCII NI NDOGO</i>.....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	40
3.2 Physiognomy of Characters in <i>Mucii Ni Ndogo</i> .....	40
3.2.1 Gestures .....	41
3.2.2 Personal Space.....	46
3.3 Characterisation of film spaces in <i>Mucii Ni Ndogo</i> .....	48
3.3.1 Costume.....	49
3.3.2 Props.....	52
3.3.3 Make up.....	55
3.3.4 Setting and Set.....	56
3.4 Cinematography .....	58
3.4.1 Lighting .....	58
3.4.2 Colour.....	59
3.4.3 Conclusion.....	60
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: POINT OF VIEW IN <i>MUCII NI NDOGO</i> .....</b>	<b>62</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	62
4.1 Point of View in <i>Mucii ni Ndogo</i> .....	62
4.2 Point of View and Camera Angles.....	65
4.2.1 High Camera Angle.....	66
4.2.2 Low Camera Angle .....	68
4.2.3 Over the Shoulder Shot .....	69
4.4 Point of View and Camera Shots .....	70
4.4.1 Extreme Close up Shot.....	70

4.4.2 Close up Shot .....	71
4.4.3 Medium Shot .....	73
4.4.4 Long medium shot.....	74
4.4.5 Long shot.....	75
4.4.6 Extreme long shot.....	76
4.5 Point of View and Camera Movements .....	76
4.5.1 Panning shot .....	77
4.5.2 Tilt shot .....	77
4.6 Conclusion .....	78
<b>CHAPTER FIVE:CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>79</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	79
5.2 Summary of Findings and Conclusion.....	79
<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>88</b>
Appendix: A. Gestures and Camera angles. ....	88
Appendix B. Copyrights permission.....	93

## **ABSTRACT**

This study analyses presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. It investigates the character roles women characters are accorded and the strategies used by the filmmaker to depict the women characters. The study is guided by the formalist and the feminist film theories. The formalist film theory helps to study the visual elements like the camera angles, shots, movements and mise-en scene (colour, lighting, costume and props, make-up and setting). The feminist film theory on the other hand analyses the stereotypical presentation of women characters in the film. The overall methodology used is close textual analysis.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Women have been involved in the filmmaking industry since its inception. They have been participating as writers, producers, directors, co-directors, cinematographers and as actresses (which has been a main role). They have been painted stereotypically. In the Kikuyu language the name used to denote women is stereotypical. A woman is referred to in some dialects as *mutumia* meaning “one who should be silent”. This name seems to suggest how a woman should behave in the society. This picture can still be seen in films today.

Character roles like sex objects and dependents were employed in women characters in early films. Women characters were also underrepresented in these films. This research project investigates whether such character roles that present women as dependent, domesticated, destructive sex objects and properties are employed in women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

*Mucii ni Ndogo* is a film in Kikuyu language. The film starts as Wa Muthoni is feeding her children as she reprimands them for pouring food on the table. Then a man, Oley, arrives and asks her to see Nyare urgently. She is afraid of leaving the children alone or what might happen if her husband get in the house before her yet it is late in the evening and thus she hesitates. Meanwhile her husband, Kioi is intercepted on the way home by his friend, Kiongero (Baba Shiku), who insists that they must have a drink. They arrive at the drinking spot when Kabuthi, the bar owner is flirting with one of his bar attendants (Shiru). As Kioi and Kiongero order for the drinks, Mojo arrives and confesses that they were hired by Wa Muthoni together with Oley and Nyare to rob Kiongero and spread the rumor that he has an affair with Keziah.

At Nyare's house, Wa Muthoni is given new demands - that she has to pay Nyare and Oley extra Ksh. 50,000 and have sex with them once a month. She accepts the first demand but refuses the second demand. They start to touch her inappropriately because of this, she tries to defend herself but the two are too strong for her. She slaps Nyare who retaliates by slapping her back and then demands for an apology. When Kioi gets home he finds out that Wa Muthoni, his wife, locked the children in the house to meet Nyare. He then goes to Nyare's house where his wife is being harassed by Nyare and Oley.

Though he rescues her from the two, he asks her to pack her belongings and leave his house. Having no money and shelter she spends the night at Nyare's helped by Oley to carry the luggage. The following morning, she goes to Kabuthi's bar to apply for a job as bar attendant. She swears to make her husband jealous and that is the reason she specifically wants this job. She does not manage to get the job but Kabuthi makes her his mistress and together they plan to take revenge on Wa Muthoni's in-laws by killing them and taking their land. As Wa Muthoni plots her revenge, she attempts to beautify herself by wearing make-up and putting on short, revealing clothes to make her husband even more jealous. Back at home Keziah, her sister-in-law takes care of her children, something that earns her respect and favour from her in-laws and friends. It is then revealed that Wa Muthoni is responsible for Jimmy's disappearance. Keziah puts up a search for him and persuades him to come back home.

Separately Gatuta visits Wa Shiku and finds her crying. She claims that she needs money to buy food for her children since her husband does not provide. Wa Shiku looks at her suspiciously since she is dressed in revealing clothes which Wa Shiku claims make her look like a prostitute and persuades her to reconsider leaving her children behind as much as she needs to start working. The film ends as the family reconciles after they find out that it is Wa Muthoni who has

been the cause of all their problems. They are happy that she is no longer part of the family. Wa Muthoni does not manage to take the revenge.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The research investigates the presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. By focusing on the women characters, the study evaluates the role assigned to the female characters and the strategies applied in their characterisation to either challenge or perpetuate social-cultural stereotypes that relate to the female gender.

## **1.3 Objectives**

1. To examine the role women characters are accorded in *Mucii ni Ndogo*
2. To analyse the strategies the filmmaker uses to create women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

## **1.4 Hypotheses**

1. Women characters are accorded roles that present them as subordinates to the male characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.
2. The filmmaker uses strategies that depict women characters negatively in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

## **1.5 Justification**

The project researches *Mucii ni Ndogo* because the film tells the story about women characters' presentation using mise-en scene elements and camera shot and angles which brings out clearly the interconnectedness between visual media and culture in encoding and perpetuating the negative stereotypes against women characters.

Setting, costumes, props, gestures, camera shot and angles are deliberately selected and manipulated to portray the stereotypes against women characters. This kind of presentation of female character cuts across African creative arts.

## **1.6 Literature Review**

This section reviews films and different literature written on how women are presented in films and the roles they are given. Amber Topping in "Becoming Human: The Evolution of Female Characters in Media" argues that female characterisation in film in the early twentieth century took a step backward at the time when female characterisation in literature was ahead of the game from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. 1920 was also the time when the American women were getting the right to vote but on the big screen women were portrayed as objects, literal stock character that did not have real characterisation behind them or depth. The study shows the variations and growth of women's roles in movies from the 1940's through the 1990's. The study claims that in 1940's through 1990's women did not have major roles in movies and when they did have a leading role; they were either portrayed as unintelligent and beautiful, or as conniving or beautiful but a woman was always beautiful in film. She observes that this changed in the 1990's when films were not only written and directed by women, but leading roles were also held by older and unattractive women.

Lindsey Linda in *Gender Roles: A sociological perspective* observes that gender stereotype remains a film staple. She then quotes Silva et al: 1993 who observes that in mainstream cinema women should be portrayed as victims of patriarchy, conquerors against mighty odds, or burnt-out employees and bad moms. The stereotype is not only observed in the Hollywood films but also in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Women characters seem to play roles described above especially Wa Muthoni and Gatuta who play the role of bad mothers. Other women like Keziah and Wa Shiku play the roles of the victims of patriarchy.

Danya Espinosa in “Gender Roles in the Media and Debunking Society’s Stereotypes Glee as a Pop-Culture Reflection” writes that gender roles are prevalent in media and often present women as nurturing, gentle, cooperative, concerned with appearance, and sensitive to others compared to men who are viewed as logical, competitive, independent, assertive, financial providers and skilled in business (Foss, 1989; Wood & Reich, 2006). Danya further asserts that women are presented in more ambiguous, domestic, and decorative scenes (5).

Butler, Andrew in *The Pocket Essentials Film Studies* observes that film represents the wider notion of the culture that women only have an existence in relation to men. A woman is therefore expected to be domestic, a man’s sex object and dependent. Butler further observes that culturally a woman should be dependent. She must be under the authority of a man; maybe a father, brother or husband (86).

In his essay, *Film Noir's Progressive Portrayal of women*, John Blasser through the concept of *femme fatale* notes that women in film have continued to be depicted as sex objects and dependent on men. He explains that in *film noirs* women use their sexual attractiveness and ruthless cunning to manipulate men to gain power, independence, money or all three. He further

adds that they use this sexual attractiveness to struggle for independence to respond to the restrictions that men have placed them. However they end up not only destroying the men associated with them but also destroying their own lives.

Hellen Hanson in *Hollywood Heroines: Women in Film Noir and the Female Gothic Film*, makes similar observations. She quotes Christine Glendhill who states that women in films are presented in two ways: the first kind of women in film is *femme fatales*: bar-flies, night-club singers, expensive mistresses, ruthless gold diggers who marry and murder rich old men for their money. While the other kinds of women in films are wives, long-suffering girlfriends, would-be fiancés who are victims of male crime, who are objects of the hero's protection and often points of vulnerability in his masculine armour. She then refers to Janey Place who divides women into two poles of female archetypes – 'vice-virtue', a dark lady and her sister (or alter ego) the virgin... the redeemer' (3) The 'vice-virtue' kind of women are seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo* where some women like Keziah and Wa Shiku play the role of good wives and victims of male crime while other women particularly Wa Muthoni play the role of expensive mistresses.

Hellen Hanson seems to suggest that women in films are presented as either bad or good, where the bad ones are depicted as *femme fatale* who are 'sexy' but morally loose and irresponsible while the good kind of women are depicted as gullible and vulnerable who depend upon the male characters to come to their rescue. This can be said of Wa Muthoni in *Mucii ni Ndogo* she is the bad kind, the *femme fatale* of the film who is morally loose. She abandons her family for another man (she becomes Kabuthi's mistress) while Keziah is the good kind. She is not only dependent but also submissive on the male characters.

Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin in chapter eleven of *America on Film: Representing Race, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* observe that in Hollywood, form alone tells about women regardless of the storyline. They note that women in cinema just like in portraiture and advertising are not pictured realistically. Instead they are transformed from actual women to objects; this is objectification. They also refer to John Berger's book, *Ways of Seeing* who says that the concept to picture women as an object come from the fact that in the earlier days women were considered men's property since they were handed over from fathers to husband as part of a business transaction.

The statement above thus creates the picture painted of women characters as characters ideally expected to be the responsibility of a man, father, husband or even brother who would control them. This can be seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo* where women are expected to be under the responsibility of a man. The notion that a woman is owned by a man is seen when Kioi hears that his wife is responsible for robbing Kiongero, his friend. He reacts by exclaiming, "*Wa Muthoni wakwa!*" ("My wife, Wa Muthoni?") an expression which suggests he owns her; that she is his property.

Benshoff and Griffin then observes that Hollywood narrative form shows that it is men's birthright to do things while women remain passive in order to be objects of male gaze. Cinema being one arm of mass media has created an idealized visual image of women by objectifying and packaging them into commodities that can be sold by the way they are costumed. The woman image is displayed for the pleasure on a male-dominated society for better sales of film just like in adverts.

Benshoff and Griffin quotes Laura Mulvey article where she gives an example of the character, Bugs Bunny who dresses up as a beautiful woman to distract Elmer Fudd from hunting “wabbits” just as princess Jasmine in the film *Aladdin*, uses sexual allure to distract her villain by kissing him making all other characters to gaze at her and as such placing herself on the display.

Benshoff and Griffin further note that camera shots have also been used in Hollywood to support the male gaze where the male characters do the looking while the female characters are usually the ones being looked at and hence they are objectified from the male character’s point of view. They cite an example from a 1903 film, *As Seen through the Telescope* where an elderly man is shown peering through the telescope then followed by subjective shot of what he is looking at- an ankle of a female cycling.

They make the statement from an observation that woman bodies are treated as objects that can be sculpted and remade into some supposed ideal form. They write that with the help of fashion, make up and cosmetics industries and even health and fitness industries, women are made to feel they are not perfect unless they wear the make-up, have a certain body figure and dress in a certain fashion . This is seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo* when Wa Muthoni deliberately changes her dress to short skirts and tight trouser to make her looks more attractive to men as part of revenge against her husband and as such she supports the male gaze.

A 2015 report by the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, which examined the 100 top-grossing fictional films from 2012 revealed that women in film are still underrepresented and hypersexualized. The researchers found out that 31.6 percent of female characters were shown wearing stereotypically "sexy" clothing, compared to 7 percent of male characters, and 31 percent of these women were shown partially



nude, compared to 9.4 percent of the men. Female characters between the age of 13 and 20 were the most likely to be sexualized.

Ceulemans, Mieke and Fauconnier, Guido in *Mass Media the Image, Role, and Social Conditions of Women*, similarly observe that women have continuously been presented as a sex object. They observe that contrary to what happens in the modern world where a woman is liberated, in North American films women are increasingly trivialized, and progressively relegated to sex-objects (28).

The above authors are of the opinion that women in film are shown as objects and have no problem abiding to sexual advances made by men towards them. The way these women characters are dressed is purposefully to attract the men. This is revealed through dresses like bikinis, short skirts, tight trousers and revealing tops. This gives a suggestion that men are only interested in receiving sexual pleasure from women and not anything else.

Ceulemans and Fauconnier make another observation that European as well as American films continue to present stereotyped images of women as passive, anxious victims, trapped in a culture whose institutions are seldom exposed as the source of women's damaged personalities. This shows that women are like helpless victims who cannot help themselves instead they wait for men to help them (29).

Even the animations targeting children are not spared either from this negative stereotype. According to Maria Menegakis in *Portrayal of Women in Disney Films*, Disney has continued to portray the image of women characters as weak, dependent and passive figures who sit around waiting to be saved by a man. In three Western Europe fairy tales: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, Maria observes that in all the three fairy tales, the three

princesses: Snow White, Cinderella and Aurora respectively are punished to be domestic servants by their stepmothers for their beauty until a powerful Prince, a male rescues them. Thus these fairy princesses are portrayed as helpless, submissive and dependent women who simply wait to be rescued by a man.

Maria further notes that women characters are still depicted as dependent on the male characters even in the fairy tales where women are assertive and not as gullible as the above mentioned. She gives an example from the film, *Aladdin* where Jasmine could not rule the castle without a husband. In addition, according to Maria, princess Jasmine is also dependent on a man as she is seeking adventure through a man and later on waits to be saved by this man when she is taken prisoner.

Charlotte Martin in “Women in Media Are Portrayed as Being Dependent on Men” supports this argument by stating that though male dominance is becoming weak, in films the stereotype of the men being stronger than women still exists. This author goes on to assert that films create an impression that women need men in their lives. This reinforces a stereotype that women need men emotionally, financially and for protection and safety and therefore weak. In addition, he suggests that in such films men are seen as masculine making them more powerful than women hence propagating the notion that they are strong.

Andy Ofori-Birikorang and Dorcas Anima Donkor in ““Woman, I have told you not to speak’: Portrayals of Women in Popular Ghanaian Movies” concludes that the image of women presented in Ghanaian films reinforces the stereotyping of women and mirror the traditional settings in which their role, performances and subjectivities in real society are situated. They further observe that though women are well represented unlike in earlier films, but they are still

portrayed as vituperative, dependent, domestic, diabolic, sex objects, accommodating, enduring, and gullible. They cite a UNESCO report (Global Status for Women, 2009) which alleges that with the current rate of progress on stereotyping women, it will take another seventy-five years to achieve gender equality in the media. However Andy Ofori-Birikorang and Dorcas Anima Donkor further quotes the same report which acknowledges that portrayals of women in television and film have changed over the last few decades because of feminist movements (42).

Manthia Diawara in *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* notes that Sembene, whom he considers as not only the father of African film but also a significant feminist who advocates for women rights, does not satisfactorily present women in his films notably *Emitai* and *Ceddo*. Sembene directly connects the women characters to sexual oppression alongside political and economic oppression. He blames these forms of oppressions on the patriarchal imperialism of Islamic/Arab and Christian/ European colonialism, which attempted to displace the traditional matriarchal forces and diminish the importance of women in African society.

Gorham H. Kindem and Martha Steele in *Emitai and Ceddo Women in Sembene's Films* examine the aspects of female characterization in Ousmane Sembene's films, in *Emitai* (1971) and *Ceddo* (1976). They note that Sembene presents women in his films as players of crucial roles in the African development. Moreover, Sembene makes his women characters a necessary connection between the past and the future, the traditional and the contemporary, the individual and the community. In addition, the two authors observe that unlike Hollywood films, Sembene's films do not uncritically portray women as passive objects of male desires nevertheless they are still depicted as dependent characters and sex objects whether passive or active.

In Consultancy with the African Intelligence paper, *Nollywood and the Femme Fatale: The Portrayal of Women in Nigerian English language films (2011)*, Aidan Prinsloo asserts that women in Nigerian films reinforce rather than challenge, the patriarchal standards of longstanding African, Christian and Muslim narratives in Nigeria. Women are portrayed as psychologically disempowered. Even when these women are portrayed in positions of physical or economic power, this power is often displayed as corrupting and subverting the 'natural order.'

Sheila Petty in *Images of Women and Oppression in 'Francophone' West African Film* argues that the way women are depicted in Francophone films is linked with the history of Africa and the expansion of western capitalism. Sheila refers to Bilal Fall's work which observes that the desire of the filmmakers in the African cinema seems to glorify and subsequently rehabilitate traditional societal values since these films are not meant to entertain but rather to educate. Fall however notes that women characters in African cinema face double oppression. First, they are oppressed by the traditions where they are subordinate to; and secondly they are oppressed by modernism where women are reduced to sex objects. In examining the images of women in the African film, Fall explains that the portrayal of African women's social status in film has been reduced to that of male dominance and female dependence in both traditional and modern society; that in both pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa, women have been dependent on men (18).

Aidan Prinsloo seems to suggest that women can never be true heroines in films and are meant to be dependent and submissive to men. In their quest for power, they are dependent on men to climb the ladder of success but they fail at the end, forcing them to be subservient to their

husbands once again. Aidan refers to Agatha Ukata paper, 'Conflicting Framings of Women in Nollywood Videos' (2010), where she analyses two Nollywood film to conclude that they are highly exaggerated to reinforce traditional conceptions of power relations in society. In *Omata Women* (2003) the four greedy women, Chinasa, Ijiele, Ifeoma and Nkechi are depicted as dependent on men to improve their financial status and are ready to do anything including being their objects of pleasure to get money from them. Chinasa kills both her husband and her lover to inherit their money. She even steals more money from a new young lover before she is struck dead by a goddess Ogunwu for swearing by an oath that she had not stolen. Likewise Ifeoma is depicted as both a sex object and dependent on men since she defies both her parents and Ogunwu to have an affair with a drug lord. In the other film, *More Than a Woman* (2005), Ukata notes that *femme fatale* has been used to highlight the character of Trechia just like in many Nollywood films. Though beautiful, her power is wicked and she uses it to manipulate the male characters in her criminal activities.

Audrey Gadzekpo in *The Image of Women in African Media* refer to Laura Mulvey's article, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' particularly on the Male-gaze theory where she observes that there is asymmetric power between the viewer, that is the male and the viewed in this case the female. She goes on to explain that films image normally sexually objectify and exploit women. Audrey quotes Johannessen (2009) who argues that as Tanzania was transiting from socialism to capitalism the media, particularly film, became an arena for conflict and cultural contestation. This resulted in increased coverage of sensational stories of women as victims of gender violence, sexual abuse, as well as persisting images of women as prostitutes and gold-diggers (391).

Women characters in Kenyan film are presented in similar way. Beti Ellerson's in her blog "A Glance at Kenyan Women in Cinema" interviews Ann Mungai who states that her motivation to make the film, *Saikati*, was out of concern for how women were presented in the Kenyan films. She claims that in Kenyan cinemas and television programmes, women always play roles that present them as very weak characters who are always in trouble. She elaborates that women characters are always cooks, servants to somebody, mistresses to somebody, slaves or someone who is always crying.

These roles are evident in Kenyan films, *Nairobi Half Life* (2010), the few women characters have roles that present them as either sex objects, domesticated or dependent. Whereas Ruth and Amina are prostitutes, Mwas's mother plays the role of a housewife. In *Malooned* (2007), Di, a female character objectifies herself when she assumes that Luther is in the toilet to molest her. She later on explains to him that once she gets married she will have to stop working to take care of family business since her prospective in-laws are very conservative. In yet another Kenyan film, *House of Lungula* (2013), women characters are explicitly depicted as sex objects from their costuming, makeup, camera shots and even dialogue. Mrs. Taylor opts to have an affair with Alex because her husband has a mistress, Chichi. Charity dresses seductively to have the attention of her boyfriend, Harrison.

Women characters in some Kenyan films are directly or indirectly presented as both dependent on the male characters and sex objects. Though Beatrice Wanjiku Mukora, in "Disrupting Binary Divisions: Representation of Identity in *Saikati* and *Battle of the Sacred Tree*" states that what is important to African woman is to have their own self-perceptions since it is they, who have to define their own freedom and their self-determination, it is evident in the two films she analyses that women characters are presented as sex objects and subservient.

In *Saikati*(1992) and *The Battle of the Sacred Tree*(1994) by Ann Mungai and Wanjiru Kinyajui respectively, women are presented as if they ought to be sex objects and dependent on men. Mukora observes that in *The Battle of the Sacred Tree* the main character, Mumbi, is dismissed by both her father and the Christian women union members after she leaves her husband because of his drunkenness to be independent. Her father refers to her search for independence as being 'proud' while the Christian union women think she is a prostitute who goes against Christian values by dishonouring the institution of marriage. Mumbi in this film seems also to be depicted as a sex object because after she is offered a job at a local bar everybody sees her as promiscuous.

*Saikati* is mainly about the resilience of a Kenyan woman seen through a clash between tradition and modernity, the film nevertheless does not escape to present women as sex objects and dependent. Saikati is married off to the chief's son at a tender age before she is rescued from this marriage by her cousin Monica who moves with her to Nairobi. While in Nairobi, Monica preplans for her a job in the sex industry. At the end, Saikati is saved by Alex a British tourist who gives her drive back to Mara (53).

Beti Ellerson in *Sisters of the Screen* interviews Catherine Muigai who observes that women are portrayed as lesser beings compared to men. They are portrayed as weaklings, sex symbols, dumb, not focused, always just sitting in the house, among other negative aspects.

*Mucii ni Ndogo* is in Kikuyu language produced by Roseansa production. The name of the film, *Mucii ni Ndogo* is a Kikuyu idiom which means every home has its own share of problems. In this film, Kariuki's family has many problems which can be traced to one woman, Wa Muthoni.

She picks a quarrel with everyone – her in-laws, husband, children and she does not even have a true friend.

The women characters in this film are Wa Muthoni, her mother-in-law, Keziah, Shiru, Wa Shiku, Gatuta and Muthoni. These women have character roles that show them doing household chores. The film starts as Wa Muthoni is feeding her two children and she is shown as a harsh mother by the way she reprimands them for pouring food. Both her mother-in-law and Keziah, her sister-in-law are given the same role acting as housewives. When Wa Muthoni leaves, her husband takes the children to his mother but the children instead stay with his sister-in-law, Keziah who is shown serving them breakfast and even helping them wear clothes as they go to school. Wa Shiku though does not appear for long in the film is also a housewife; this can be explained by her costume, tying of a *leso* around her waist. Gatuta on the other hand seems to have been given the same role. She is a housewife who depends on her husband to provide and when he fails to do so we see her at Wa Shiku's house borrowing money for her children's food.

The women characters who do not take on the roles of cooking, taking care of children or even cleaning are given character roles that present them as morally loose and pariah's. A good example is Shiru who is a bar attendant, she gets sexual advancement from her boss, Kabuthi and even clients like Kiongero. Wa Muthoni also hopes to get the same job as a bar attendant after her break up with the husband.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

Formalist film theory guides this study in interrogating how women have been presented in *Mucii ni Ndogo* particularly by use of visual elements like camera angles, light, colour, body movements and shots, point of view and mise-en-scene. The theory can be traced to Serge



Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim and Bela Balazs who developed this film theory in Russia during the First World War. According to Dennis Dennito in *Film: Form and Feeling*, the theory tenets lie in form of medium in film (mise-en-scene) that is the reason this theory is also called Aesthetic Theory (90). While Bill Nichols in *Movies and Methods* actually refers to this theory as Mise-en-scene because it uses visual sense (composition, lighting and texture) and visual communicative sense -gestures, action and camera movement (311).

Bela Balazs is credited for his emphasis on camerawork particularly the importance of close up shots in film among his many contributions to film. In *Early Film Theory* translated by Rodney Livingstone, Bela Balazs refers to close up as the magnifying glass of cinematography that brings the audience closer to the individual cell of life allowing the audience to feel the texture and substance of life in concrete details (38). While Mast, Gerald in *Film Theory and Criticism*, quotes Bela Balazs who says that close up has not only widened our vision of life but has deepened it as well; he goes on to explain that close ups are dramatic revelations of what happens under the surface of appearance (185).

Hanssen, Eirik Frisvold in *Early Discourse on Colour and Cinema: Origins, Functions and Meanings* describes Eisenstein's contribution to film as historical and theoretical prism that binds separate institutions and notions about colour and discloses the differences and oppositions about them. He asserts that colour has an aesthetic function besides creating realism in film (89).

Rudolf Arnheim emphasized on the aesthetics of film. In *Art and Visual Perception*, has discussed in depth the importance of light, colour, form and movement, the aspects that contribute to film aesthetics. Dario Saftich, in a journal article, 'Arnheim's Theory of Aesthetics and Figures of Speech' writes that the Germany scientist is remembered not only for his

opposition to exclude film from dominion of art but for also treating film as an absolutely visual means of expression.

Feminism film theory is the other theory that aids the study in probing the presentation of women in *Mucii ni Ndogo* particularly by the roles they play in the film. Anneke Smelik in *The Cinema Book* states that feminist film theory was started as a call to change the fixed and endlessly stereotypical images of women in Hollywood films. Anneke observes that Laura Mulvey uses psychoanalysis in her article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative in Cinema* to explain that sex is a drive that keeps the audience glued to the silver screen. She calls this scopophilia (desire to see). Laura emphasises that films are tailor-made for male audience by presenting women characters as sex objects (492).

Patricia Erens in *Issue in Feminist Film Criticism* holds similar opinion when she refers to Laura Mulvey's article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative in Cinema* to elaborate that men are the bearers of the look while women are the object to be looked at. Laura goes on to state that the female characters' appearances are coded for strong visual and erotic impact to connote to-be-looked-at-ness (xx).

According to this theory a woman is seen as a sexual object, her role being to satisfy the erotic desires of men. This is what leads to the characters wearing revealing costumes and make ups to ensure they look as attractive and beautiful as possible to entice and get the viewership of the male audience. This seems to suggest that women do not exist for themselves but for men. This is probably what Claire Johnston noted in *Women Cinema as Counter-Cinema* to assert that 'woman' is a code that can be analysed as a code, structure or a convention. That in relation to

herself she is 'no-thing' she is represented as 'not a man' thus in film 'woman-as-woman' is absent in the text of film (26).

Besides being presented as sex objects, women characters are also presented dependent on the male characters and cannot live by themselves; at some point they have to need the help of a man. The female characters are also depicted as willing to abide sexual pressures from men. Women characters are also presented as making themselves attractive to sexually allure men in exchange for their help. In feminist film theory therefore this study is more interested in the roles women characters play in the film, which demonstrates the way women characters are presented.

### **1.8 Methodology**

This research undertakes a close textual analysis of the film, *Mucii ni Ndogo*. The study critically observes and questions strategic elements used by the filmmaker to present women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. The study is library based. Internet is used to download relevant material for the study.

### **1.9 Scope and Limitation**

The study is confined to assessing the presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Though the film can be analysed from other aspects like how the female characters relate with male characters, the film setting alone, the camerawork alone, characters' costumes or even the storyline itself. This research project is limited to investigating the presentation of women and how mise-en scene elements present them in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. It also studies cinematography and point of view in the film.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHARACTERISATION OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN *MUCII NI NDOGO*

#### 2.1 Introduction

Love, resilience, nurturing and the importance of family values are among the themes evident in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. These roles are clearly seen through characterization which plays a major role in presenting women characters as housewives/domesticated, dependent, passive and sex objects. Love is seen through Keziah who holds no grudge even to those who have hurt her but instead she helps everyone. She dearly loves her husband who physically abuses her and does not support the family. Keziah and Wa Shiku believe that being resilient is what makes a good home. Wa Shiku advises Gatuta to be patient and resilient when she complains that her marriage does not seem to be working since her husband does not provide. Gatuta is also advised to be nurturing when Wa Shiku asks her whom she intend to leave her children with.

In an American TV show aired in the 1970's, *Good Times*, James Evan, one of the male characters, is quoted telling his wife, Florida, that a woman has two places- in the kitchen and in the bedroom. This negative stereotype is carried on in the film through the roles that women characters play. This chapter interrogates how these roles present women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Wa Muthoni character role shifts from a stay at home mother and wife to an obsessed, uncaring and immoral woman. All these features fix a woman to a stereotypically positioned character in the film. The others like Keziah, Kioi's mother, Gatuta and Wa Shiku are given roles that present them as housewives and dependent. Women are expected to be nurturing, gentle and sensitive. The features are noted in some women characters who are seen as cooperative and take

in men's advice seriously. Male characters on the other hand, are presented as logical, competitive, independent, assertive, financial providers, and skilled in business.

Men in the film are in-charge; they control the women characters either as their husbands or bosses. Women characters are dependent on men for financial help. The filmmaker depicts men as the only ones who are owners of money which they give to the women characters in the film at will. Kioi is shown giving money to his mother and Jimmy to Keziah while Kabuthi offer financial help to Wa Muthoni by buying her clothes.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, women characters like Wa Shiku, Keziah and her mother-in-law are presented as emotional, warmer, tentative, affectionate, sensitive and frail. This is shown by their kind gesture towards other characters. They offer help to those in need like when Gatuta claim her children have nothing to eat, Wa Shiku lends her some money to buy food. While Keziah adopts Wa Muthoni's children after she left them behind.

Those who are not within these descriptions are then presented as troublesome and complaining. Wa Muthoni and Gatuta are ever complaining of their situation. Gatuta is always lamenting that her husband does not provide while Wa Muthoni is ever complaining of how much she hates her in-laws. It is out of this hatred that she causes trouble to everyone by spreading false rumors about her sister-in-law, Keziah.

Julia Wood seems to hold the same thoughts as Amanda et al in the above sentiments by stating that cultural views on gender consistently depict women as sex objects who are usually young, thin, beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb. She also adds that female characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people (33). While Andrew Butler in *The Pocket Essential for Film Studies* asserts

that feminine is social construction just like masculinity. He then lists qualities of femininity which include passivity, modesty, nurturing and feelings (81). For a woman to be accepted as a good woman therefore she has to exhibit these feminine features and if she defies them, then she is labeled socially unstable or any other unpleasing name. This description therefore guides in the role the women characters play in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

This chapter investigates characterization of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo* under four sub-topics. The first sub-topic analyses domestication of women characters in this film where women characters do not have any formal employment instead they just stay at home doing domestic work like cooking, cleaning and taking care of children and husbands. From the film, the only role that women characters' play is that of taking care of their children and husbands, cooking and cleaning. Women are further presented as dependent. Their dependency arises from their weak character and as such they need men for physical, psychological and financial need.

## **2.2 Domesticated Characters.**

One of the roles that women play in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is one that presents them as domesticated characters. Domesticated women are housewives who do not have any formal employment instead they stay at home taking care of their families. The filmmaker gives women characters' roles that limit them to domestic chores like cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children and husbands as the men work. This seems to be a portrayal of what was happening in various societies in the past but still continues to be perpetuated in the present society even though the stereotypes are fading away as presented in the paragraph below on how Jennifer Holts views this practice.

In *The Ideal Woman*, Holts writes that, in 1950s women were considered domestic caregivers with sole responsibility for the home and child rearing while men ‘brought home the bacon’. This stereotype continues even today and women identities were constructed around it and were expected to emulate this gender role. She adds that despite the emergence of women movements in the 1960s which were aimed at liberating women from this domestic ideals, women still find it is necessary to adhere to them in order to maintain their identity as “good women, mothers, and wives” and the media particularly the magazines and film were used to transmit this stereotype of male superiority and feminine domesticity.

Domestication is a role that is only specified to women since *Mucii ni Ndogo* filmmaker presents the male characters as busy working to get money and when it comes to rearing the children they delegate the role. This perception is observed by Horovitz as quoted by Hannah Loo who points out that men are typically shown as uninterested in and incompetent at homemaking, cooking, and child care. He adds that whenever someone is shown taking care of a child, ‘it is’ usually the mother, not the father (84). This then explains why Kioi cannot take care of his own children in the absence of his wife. He instead takes the children to his mother who then takes them to Keziah- his sister-in-law. His action reinforces a belief that a woman is meant to take care of the children and not the men. Kioi himself works outside home. He cannot even prepare a meal for himself; he eats from a hotel as shown in the film.

Domestication thus is one of the major roles that women play in the film. In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, even Wa Muthoni who is presented as an independent individual with a strong personality is also domesticated at some point. When the film begins we see her as a domesticated woman although she cannot be defined as a nurturing mother, she still has some feeling for her children and husband as seen in the first few scenes of the film. She is a housewife whose work is to take care

of her children and husband. This is evident since we see her feeding the children and when Oley tells that she is being called by Nyare she is afraid of whom to leave her children with and what might happen in case her husband arrives back home before she does because as a mother and wife she is supposed to be at home taking care of her family and waiting for the husband.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* Keziah is a housewife with an angelic character trait. She holds no grudge when offended as demonstrated in the film. She is so caring that she takes care of Wa Muthoni's after the latter separates with her husband and she is actually excited to take care of them. She is seen serving them breakfast and even dressing them up to go to school. She also takes care of Kioi, her brother-in-law when he is wounded despite him having slapped and insulted her earlier.

This angelic feature is further seen when she plays a role of a mediator who reconciles and brings family members back together. She is shown persuading Wa Muthoni to come back to her matrimonial home to take care of her husband and children. While her husband ran away from home, she does not rest until she traces him and makes efforts to bring him back.

Wa Shiku is the other woman character in *Mucii ni Ndogo* who is also domesticated. She is a housewife who is open hearted and warm since her arms are open to all who need her help. Besides, she plays an angelic woman role as well since she does not fall short of constructive ideas to give to her visitors each time we meet her.

When Gatuta tells Wa Shiku that she wants to leave her matrimonial home, Wa Shiku's major concern is who will take care of the children. This remark brings up the stereotype that one of the women's responsibilities is to take care of children. From the conversation that the two have, it is possible to tell that Gatuta is another domesticated wife who stays at home waiting for her



husband to provide and when he fails to do so sufficiently, she tells Wa Shiku that she wants to start doing something that will bring in an income.

When she claims to be tired of a married life, Wa Shiku is quick to correct her and instead tell her the importance of taking care of her family particularly the children and husband yet the same husband does not provide. Gatuta dresses in revealing clothes like a very short skirt and a top with a very long V that makes Wa Shiku concerned leading her to claim that only prostitutes should dress in such a manner so as to attract men's attention.

Similarly, when Keziah goes to seek her advice, she does not only advice but also comforts her for the hard times she is going through. Wa Shiku does not take the rumor going round that Keziah has an affair with her husband seriously since she helps her regardless of it.

The only woman who is not domesticated is Shiru, who works as a bar maid. As much as she works it does not skip the mind of other characters like Kabuthi who reminds her that she is supposed to be at home. This is evident when he tells her that if she would accept to have an affair with him, she would not have to work since he is ready to provide for her. This statement thus suggests that she should stay at home cleaning, cooking and taking care of children and a husband and wait to be taken care of.

Ronald Dotterer and Susan Bowers in *Sexuality, the Female Gaze and the Art* observe that mainstream cinema only presents women sexuality as either domesticated or as violently suppressed. They elaborate that women characters are expressed in a domestic sphere within marriage and those who defy this stereotype are presented as irrational with unstable societal elements (65). They give an illustration of a young woman character in the film, *Gaslight*, who relinquishes her power in search for happiness and protection from a man and when she does not

get the happiness and protection she becomes mad then dies in an asylum (68). They further analyze another film, *Fatal Attraction* to conclude that the Reagan-era reactionary return in 1980s resulted to the return of family values that endorsed domestication of female sexuality in marriage while those outside were depicted as obsessed, irrational and mad (70).

This stereotype started long time ago and it is clearly seen even in Disney films as the women characters in the fairy tales are also domesticated. It all started with Snow White in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first Disney fairy tale and it seems to purport that women are only limited to domestic roles no matter their social status. Snow White is a princess, she would have been presented playing the role of running the palace or giving orders to the palace subjects but instead we have her doing domestic roles ought to be done by her servants and she does it well like picking the fruits and cleaning. This proves to be helpful especially when she hides in the seven dwarfs' cabin she does the work perfectly meaning it is something she has been doing.

According Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas and Laura Sells in *From Mouse to Mermaid the Politics of Film, Gender and Culture* both Walt Disney and Grimms brothers have women characters who are domesticated. They state that women characters retain key ideological features that reinforce the patriarchal notions. They give an example from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a film worked on by both Walt Disney and Grimms brothers to present Snow White as a domesticated woman. Bell et al asserts that when she arrives at the cabin of the Seven Dwarfs, she immediately starts doing domestic works when she finds the cabin dirty. She does the work hoping the dwarfs will allow her to stay with them. With the help of the animals, they not only clean the cabin but also wash their dishes and mend their clothes. Therefore, Bell et al interprets the seven dwarfs (all are men) as determined employees who work hoping to succeed while women stay and home to keep it clean (37).

Ewa Mazierska and Elbieta Ostrowska observe this in *Women in Polish Cinema* to state that women in polish cinema are enduring. They are as well presented in equal occupancy as men in public space but are domesticated in private space (41). They go on to imply that in addition to the polish women being domesticated in private they are as well so motherly. This is one of the features of a domesticated woman- a nurturing mother- they ought to take care of their children among other responsibilities (42).

Just like the polish women in cinema, *Mucii ni Ndogo* carries the same idea that a woman's place is at home cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children and the husband. This has been demonstrated by the role women characters play in *Mucii ni Ndogo* and this is not just in *Mucii ni Ndogo* but also in *Malooned* where Di, a woman character and a Maseno University graduate is about to get married to a Somali husband. Di has already resigned to the fact that once she gets married, she will have to resign from her formal employment in order to take care of the family work. Even the persuading she gets from Luther does not work, she claims that her prospective in-laws are very conservative and thus will not allow her to work and hence she has accepted to be a domesticated wife and she is not willing to change the status quo.

Butler describes one role that women characters are mostly given as that of the angelic mother. He states that this is a conception of the angel of the house, who stays at home, rears children and she is the solid rock of the hearth (82). The film *Mucii ni Ndogo* seems to be in support of this perception because it exalts domesticated women by making them better than those who act contrary. This is seen by the praise they get from other characters like Kioi, his mother and Kiongero who agree that they are caring and responsible. Thus they have a better personality compared to Shiru, Wa Muthoni and Gatuta. Actually in this film a domesticated woman seems to have good morals as it is seen when everyone is praising Keziah for taking good care of Wa

Muthoni's children. Same to Wa Shiku, being a housewife we see both Keziah and Gatuta consulting her on different issues meaning they view her as a role model. She is also not for the idea of Gatuta seeking for means to earn an income claiming she should think of children first.

### **2.3 Dependent Characters**

Women characters are often presented as weak and as such they have to depend on male characters to help them and therefore the character roles set for them bring out their weakness and dependence. Similarly, just like in domestication of women characters in film, a good woman is as expected to be submissive and dependent on the male character. If a woman plays a role that depicts her as strong and independent, people begin to question her character and as such she gets to be labelled bad or immoral. Wa Muthoni is one character who is labelled as bad and her character is questioned due to her strong personality which has made everyone to misinterpret her even where she stands up strongly for what she believes in. Even when marriage does not seem to work and men do not provide, women are still encouraged to depend on them like Gatuta is told by Wa Shiku.

Women characters are stereotypically presented as weak and inferior to men in *Mucii ni Ndogo* and as such they depend on male characters for identity. Though she is a very manipulative woman who is just the cause of every one misfortune, Wa Muthoni is a woman with self-identity challenges that she has to associate herself with some men to find her true bearing. She depends on male characters to get what she wants done. She hires Nyare, Oley and Mojo (all of them are men) to beat up people particularly Baba Shiku and take money from him. Ironically, though she is the boss, she is weaker than her hired gang. This is first seen when Nyare and Oley start to blackmail her in order to get extra 50,000 shillings from her and she gives in. She is then

portrayed as vulnerable particularly when Oley is about to sexually molest her. She becomes defenseless as her commanding voice does not stop them from beating her. Again, in an attempt to defend herself she slaps Nyare once but she is overpowered and she is beaten up mercilessly and forced to apologize while kneeling and the first sequel ends when her husband saves her. This proves the fact that she cannot get an accomplishment done without the presence of a man.

The next sequel starts when Wa Muthoni is sent packing by her husband with no money and a shelter. She is in need of Oley's emotional help which is demonstrated by him holding her closely to console her though she does not seem comfortable with it since she pushes him away but only to beg him back because she is in need of help from him. This time she needs physical help from him. She needs him to carry her luggage which is too heavy for her. She is thus presented as weak to carry her own belongings and as such dependent on a man for help. After a short while we see him carrying them for her to Nyare's place where she spends the night.

Later on she has to identify herself with Kabuthi by becoming his mistress to be able not only to take revenge on her in-laws but also for survival. She is in need of his help to get a job and although she doesn't get the job she gets accommodation, food, clothes and even emotional support. She seems happier now that she has an affair with Kabuthi.

Shiru, a bar attendant at Kabuthi's bar is yet another woman given a role that presents her as weak and dependent. While cleaning the bar, she is unable to lift a small table to clean beneath and asks for Kabuthi's help to lift up the table. This gives Kabuthi a chance to declare that he is interested in her and if she would accept him. Kabuthi seems to insinuate that if Shiru becomes his mistress she would be dependent on him for physical, financial and emotional needs as well.

Women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo* have been given roles which make them not only weaker but also inferior to men. This is seen when the two women, Keziah and Wa Muthoni depend on a male character, Mojo, for information. Keziah wants to know the whereabouts of her husband Jimmy to bring him back home while Wa Muthoni wants to know when he is coming back to the village so that she can kill him. Mojo thus has power to do what these two women cannot do by themselves. Mojo is in a better position to do jobs like gathering information since most of the time he is in the shopping centre as compared to the two who would be mainly in the house.

Dan Li in *Grand Hotel Portrayal of Women in Golden Age Hollywood* asserts that people believe that true women should be passive creatures dependent upon men for protection and support. In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, women seem to hold this stereotype that they should be passive creatures who are dependent on men for protection. This is seen when Gatuta abandons her marriage to join prostitution. As a prostitute she wants to get the support from other men that she does not get from her husband. Having men around gives women characters some security and that is the reason that motivates Keziah to look for her husband even though he does not provide for her since his presence saves her from ridicule from Wa Muthoni. Keziah thus needs emotional support from him.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* good women are those who are not only passive but dependent as well. The most passive women in the film are Wa Shiku and Keziah yet they are the most praised. They believe that staying in a marriage with their husbands even if they are abused and neglected like Gatuta whose husband does not provide yet Wa Shiku insists that it is not a good idea for her to start earning an income. They do little to change the situation they are in since they believe their husbands are still in control and without them there can be no marriage. They are actually dependent on their husbands to change the situation.

Amanda Yerby, Samantha Baron and Youjin Lee in “Gender Roles in Disney Animation”, observes that in *Lion King*, when Simba's father (the king) is killed, he runs away and Scar takes over. The lionesses are shown to be very weak and they have to wait for Simba to return and save them and hence they are presented as too weak to defend themselves. The lionesses thus depend on Simba for defense and protection.

Just like the lionesses, the women characters in the film believe that they need a man to defend them and a prince charming to change their lives for better like it is observed in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Similarly, in *Mucii ni Ndogo* Keziah believes that without Jimmy she cannot be happy. The same man would come home drunk and physically abuse her for asking a simple question. She depends on him for happiness. She believes that she will be happy with her husband at home since the family will be complete. Kabuthi believes that Shiru can live a better life if she becomes his mistress because he will provide for her. He thus seems to hold on the thought that men’s work is to provide as women stay at home waiting for men’s provisions.

Ewa Mazierska and Elbieta Ostrowska in *Women in Polish Cinema* seems suggests that women are dependent on men to succeed otherwise they cannot do it on their own. They therefore depend on men for survival and even the rising up of their social status.

Charlotte Martin and Andrew Butler observe that a good woman is the one who is dependent and even what she can do by herself she still needs to ask for help as a good woman should not be too able. Shiru can lift the table by herself yet she has to ask Kabuthi for help the same way Wa Shiku is opposed to Gatuta’s idea of earning herself an income, instead she wants Gatuta to stay at home and depend on the same husband who does not even provide. Wa Muthoni becomes a

victim when she goes to Nyare's house and she is beaten up by him though she is their boss, she is unable to defend herself and it is not until her husband comes to her rescue.

Film are made for male spectators to watch women characters. An argument that Laura says is usually styled according to enhance their "to-be looked-at-ness" for the male spectators. The more beautiful a woman looks the more men are likely to watch the film according to Laura. This suggests that the female characters do not seem to have an important role in film viewing since they are the ones to be viewed in the film and thus filmmakers do not have women viewers in mind when making film and if they do it is for different reasons. This again brings the notion of passivity of the woman both as the characters and spectators.

Looking beautiful is the way to get the attention of the men. Gatuta and Wa Muthoni have mastered this art very well and it seems to work for them. They are shown on several episodes wearing make up to prove that indeed a woman has to look good to catch men's attention.

Inequality is observed in the film through, first of all, dependency which makes the male characters superior over their women counterparts. Men give the orders since they are in charge while the women are passively expected to obey since they are the providence of men.

## **2.4 Sex Objects**

The element of women being treated as sex objects is seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Their main aim is to please men by making themselves beautiful. Men characters need them to satisfy their sexual needs. Nyare, Oley and Kabuthi need Wa Muthoni in bed although at the end it is only Kabuthi who wins. The only thing that is pre-dominantly evident in the male characters conversations is



sex that they seem to get from women. Shiru does her work well at Kabuthi's bar but still he is not satisfied and he wants her for a mistress and he keeps insisting on that.

Right from the beginning as a bar attendant, Shiru is touched inappropriately by her boss, Kabuthi. Oley plans to blackmail Wa Muthoni to get both the money and sex from her. When she gets to their hide out, Nyare starts touching her thighs, she gets his hand off her but Oley puts his hands on her shoulders. When she tries to run away they sandwich her. The film ends when she is Kabuthi's mistress.

Wa Muthoni does it deliberately as part of a revenge plan against her husband. Gatuta is does the same thing after her husband fails to provide. Shiru on the other hand, though she refuses men to take advantage of her body language shows she envies Wa Muthoni because of her position as Kabuthi's mistress. She is hurt when he buys her clothes and when she finds them in a room they end up fighting.

A picture of a half-naked woman seems to elicit the same feelings. This is evident when Kioi and Kiongero go to the bar and later choose a specific table only for Kioi to realise that Kiongero is attracted to the picture of a half-naked American singer.

Laura Mulvey in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* states that in films the female figure is styled accordingly to enhance the male gaze. She adds that the role of woman is to be looked at and be displayed with their appearances coded for strong visual and erotic impact for them (women) to be said to connote "to-be-looked-at-ness" (62). This achieves "to-be-looked-at-ness", Annette Kuhn then explains that cosmetics have to be applied in women bodies to enhance their existing qualities to have a glamour picture (13).

Self-objectification can be seen in local films where women see themselves as objects to be used for sex by men. In Bob Nyanja's, *Malooned*, when Di realises that she is locked up in a toilet with a man (Luther) the first thing that comes up in her mind is that Luther has trapped her so that he can be intimate with her. This is seen when she tries to shield herself with a broom when Luther tries to get close to her.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* the women characters have self-objectified themselves in addition to being treated as sex objects by the male characters. When Wa Muthoni separates from her husband, she decides to present herself as a sex object when she says that she has to change her dress code to short skirts and tight trousers that would be revealing her body with the intention of making her husband jealous. The other female character who decides to self-objectify is Gatuta, she deliberately wears short revealing clothes and make-up when she wants to leave her husband after he fails to provide. Her wearing of make-up is to enhance her "to-be-looked-at-ness" that is, she enhances her beauty to ensure that men admire her. When she tells Wa Shiku that she wants to start something else to do, it is not difficult to tell the kind of job she wants to start with her dressing and make up. She definitely gets into prostitution to earn an income to support her children and thus she has to look beautiful for her to get more clients. She hence makes herself a sex object.

Norma Manatu in *African American women and sexuality in the cinema* notes that media presents women as sex objects only and nothing positive about them. She adds that media which includes film does not present black women outside sexuality. Instead media has persistently presented the black women as oversexed Jezebel, prostitute, superwoman, aggressive and an intimidating bitch. When they are not depicted as men seducers, they are then shown hunting for a man (9).

The dowry men take to the bride's parents is mistaken for buying them hence treating them like property. The treatment of women as property in traditional and even in our modern society brings a perception that a woman cannot live freely as her own boss but has to be always under the authority of a man- be it their father or brother before moving to their husband. This perception is carried on in film and even exaggerated.

Probably this is what Butler had noted when he wrote in his book, *The Pocket Essentials Film Studies*, that women are properties of their father until they marry, when they become property of their husbands (86). Women thus become part of the properties their fathers and husbands were exchanging and as such they ceased to be seen as human beings but as properties. This stereotype is magnified in film.

Treatment of women as property is seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo* where some men characters make decisions for women without asking for their consent since they own them. Kioi's expression when he is told that his wife is involved in beating and robbing his friend Kiongero shows that he owns his wife and can dispose her off at will without even seeking her opinion or her side of story. Similarly, when Nyare and Oley plan to blackmail her, they do not discuss her as a human, they impose on her what they want from her and they do not give her a second alternative. They need money and sex from her and she should not negotiate.

In the same film women are also treated like property that can be bought. This is seen with Kabuthi trying to buy off her bar attendant, Shiru with a proposal that if she accepts to be his mistress she would not have to strain to work because he would provide for everything for her. Besides Gatuta sex objectifying herself, she also makes herself a commodity that can be used in exchange for money by deciding to be a prostitute.

The role they play as destructive women is similar that of the American 1940s *femme fatale*. According to Butler the *femme fatale* overlaps with the whore adding that both are powerful, self-assured women who can turn the hero's life upside down. Often cold and apparently emotionless, the *femme fatale* is the object of sexual attraction for the male (85). Wa Muthoni is a perfect example of a *femme fatale*, she is self-assured, powerful, ready to turn anybody's life upside down, as she uses sexual attraction to entice the men.

Hannah Loo in "Agatha: The Subversion and Reflection of The 1940's *Femmes Fatales* in the Neo-Noir Film *Minority Report*" defines *femme fatale* as "fatal woman" She notes that the main feature of *femme fatales* is their physical beauty and the often glamorous or high-end accessories they wear. The *femme fatales* use the beauty gained from these attire and jewels to help them get what they want (66). This is a relevant feature in *Mucii ni Ndogo* particularly in relevance to Wa Muthoni's character. Wa Muthoni uses her physical beauty to signify the change of her character roles. Beauty transforms her from a domesticated woman to a destructive woman. The idea of using beauty to manipulate people gets to her head when she separates with her husband, Kioi.

She uses her new look to manipulate men to get what she want. Kabuthi is the one who buys her the miniskirts and other tight sleeveless top and dresses when she becomes his mistress. She is also seen cat walking, posing and turning around showing off for Kabuthi to see her beauty. Kabuthi even holds her hand to see her better all round and even offer suggestion that would make her even more beautiful. Mojo, another man, notices her new look and acknowledges that her new look would make men kill each other.

The other female character that seems to play the role of *femme fatale* is Gatuta. She dresses in revealing clothes just like Wa Muthoni when she visits Mama Shiku claiming that she is tired of

being in a marriage since her husband does not provide for her and the children. Besides the revealing clothes, she wears make up to look beautiful for the new job she need to use her physical beauty to earn a living. It therefore becomes clear that according to the two characters, Wa Muthoni and Gatuta, physical beauty determines what they get from men besides using their beauty to manipulate and lure men with sex and in return they get what they want. Wa Muthoni gets shelter, clothes besides being helped to take revenge against her in-laws.

The other role women characters play in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is that of destruction. They are presented as beautiful but dangerous characters who are responsible for other characters down fall and destruction. Destructive women, use their physical beauty to get what they want from men in exchange of sex and the more beautiful a woman character looks, the more likely she is to attract men. Richard Rushton and Gary Bettinson write that women characters are given roles that present them as the objects of pleasure whose role in the structure is that of being looked at (72). The two suggest that in film, women characters have to look as 'sexy' as possible to arouse an erotic feeling for both male characters and audience. This is what Laura Murvey in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" refers to as Scopophilia 'pleasure in looking'.

Secondly, Hannah Loo highlights that the *femme fatales* lack predominant ideas of femininity and instead bring more of a sense of androgyny and asexual character which creates a mystery character. She gives an example of Agatha's lack of any sense of prevailing ideas of femininity when she claims that *femme fatales* may even represent a suppression of her sexuality as well. This mystery character trait of *femme fatale* is referred to by Mary Ann Doane in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, and Psychoanalysis* as the "unknowable". While according to Jacob Witz as quoted by Loo, *femme fatales* are the embodiment of male repressed desires (154).

To suppress her sexuality Wa Muthoni is always in company of men as noted by Hannah about the *femme fatales*. She does not get along with even a single woman character in the film instead she is always in a company of men the likes of Nyare and Oley as they plan on how to rob Kiongero before they short change each other and the men start to blackmail her. Later on she starts an affair with Kabuthi as they plan on how to grab Kariuki's family land. Mojo and Jimmy also believe in her and take her opinion serious. Her character trait therefore in this film suppresses her sexuality as feminine to being masculine since she does more of what men do like being a gang leader as opposed to being a nurturing, motherly and gentle.

*Mucii ni Ndogo* start as Wa Muthoni is feeding her children and what is notable about her is that she lacks the women stereotypical character traits that defines a women like mothering, nurturing, affectionate, gentle and emotional. Instead she is presented as very rough with her children demonstrated by the scores she gives them when they pour food on the table and fail to finish it. She does not show any motherly affection or a nurturing care towards her children. Even when she is sent packing by her husband, children are the least of concerns and she does not seem to be bothered by the fact that she has left them behind. This description is therefore fit to call her asexual.

Barbara Hales essay "Projecting Trauma: The *Femme Fatale* in Weimar and Hollywood Film Noir" note that *femme fatale* are also defined by their criminality besides using their sexual attractiveness and having asexual features. He describes the *femme fatale* as psychotic criminal with a monstrous sexual entity who lies, steals, and murders (232).

She is also a liar. She has used lies to manipulate everyone resulting to turning all lives upside down. It all starts when Mojo confess that besides Wa Muthoni sending them to beat up

Kiongero, she also has a hand in spreading rumors that Kiongero has an affair with Keziah. This romours causes a foul relationship between Keziah her husband Jimmy since Wa Muthoni also alleged that their son, Kariuki is not Jimmy's but Kiongero's since the former cannot bear children out of his drunkenness. This still cost her (Keziah) a good relationship with her in-laws who get to hate her in favour of Wa Muthoni. Worst still, in an effort to eliminate Kariuki's family, Wa Muthoni lies to Jimmy that Kiongero is after his life and hence she offers to help him run away by giving him bus fare.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the stereotypical roles that women characters play in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. From being domesticated to being weak and dependent and then weak and sex objects all these character traits present women negatively and as unequal to men. These traits exaggerate their sexuality and carry on with the stereotypes which have been passed by time.

This chapter has revealed that a good woman has to accept to be domesticated, does not present herself as strong and is willing to bow down to men's sexual pressure. A woman who refuses to stay at home is seen as uncaring and irresponsible.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES IN *MUCII NI NDOGO*

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the way cinematic techniques present women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Film as a visual art does not depend on the dialogue only to tell the story but instead narrates it by showing. This chapter thus shows how women characters are stereotypically presented by use of visual elements.

The chapter extensively looks at how different cinematic techniques show the presentation of women. The chapter is divided into three broad sections which include: physiognomy of characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*, Characterisation of film spaces in *Mucii Ni Ndogo* and lastly cinematography.

#### 3.2 Physiognomy of Characters in *Mucii Ni Ndogo*

Characters' physiognomy involves creating characters' traits and roles from the way the characters look and interact with others. Physiognomy in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is the means by which the audience understand the characters and enable them share their feelings and experiences in addition to understanding the presentation of women characters in the film. Bela Balazs statement below explains that character appearance in film is much more important than words. Nonverbal cues play a very crucial role in any good film because unlike theatre, film relies heavily on actions and not necessarily words. Bela Balazs says "... and how much more personality the expression of a face than words that others too may use! And how much more



concrete and unambiguous is physiognomy than concepts, which are always abstract and general!” (33).

The film audiences then deduce meaning from what they watch rather than what the characters say. Communication in film is more on non-verbal cues and little in dialogue which is also important in reinforcing the action. Gesture, body language and movement, personal space, facial expressions and other nonverbal cues play a vital role in film to pass the message to the audience. With even modern technology these aspects are still vital since film relies more on the action. Actually, Butler makes a similar observation by saying that delivery of dialogue, body language and movement can all add meaning to a performance (30).

### **3.2.1 Gestures**

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, gesture first of all presents women characters as sex objects; when Nyare and Oley touch Wa Muthoni's thighs they seem to suggest that they are interested in her sexually. To them then, she is a sex-object. When she starts an affair with Kabuthi, we see him place his hands on her waist and around her neck, a communication to the audience that the two have an affair. They are these gestures that make Kioi divorce Wa Muthoni.

Nicholas Chare and Liz Watkins note that gestures made by characters in films form an integral dimension to *mise-en scène*, a bodily contribution to mood. They quote Kendon who refers to these gestures as *imagistic gestures* because the movements they make are interpreted as depicting the shape of an object, displaying an action of some kind, or representing some pattern of movement. They further quote McNeill who examines how gesture links bodies on screen with the bodies of spectators. He developed these ideas on the relationship of hand gestures and thought processes addressing their usefulness in a film and theatre. He concludes that gestures suggest a triangle that links author, actor and audience.

This study focuses on how gestures particularly on the use of hand to touch have been used in films by men in making sexual advances to women hence have contributed in depiction of women as a sex objects. Besides the facial expressions other gestures also help in presentation of female characters as sex object particularly when we see the bar attendant, Shiru, is touched inappropriately and suggestively (Kabuthi placing his hand on her waist, shoulder and hand) by her boss Kabuthi before he suggests to her that he wants to sleep with her. Then later on after helping her lift the table to clean, Kabuthi once again touches Shiru and tells her that if she accepts him, he will provide everything she will need. Making similar advances is Nyare in his room where he places his hands and start to caress Wa Muthoni's thigh, she removes his hand but on the other hand Oley places his on her shoulders. (See Fig. 1 and 2)

Gestures have been used to demonstrate financial, physical and emotional dependency of women on men. In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, gestures present Wa Muthoni as a weak and thus dependent character especially when she is sent packing by her husband. She calls Oley for help since she has no money and shelter, he holds her closely to console her, she pushes him away but when he is about to go Wa Muthoni in a childlike manner holds him back and begs him to help her with the luggage which we see him carrying later on.

We also see Shiru being helped to lift a table while cleaning the bar by Kabuthi who verbally states that he is willing not only to help her physically but also financially. Besides Kabuthi buys her mini-skirts and tight trousers by Kabuthi, we see him carry the clothes for her. The decision by Keziah to look for Jimmy in Ruiru demonstrates that she needs him. When she meets him, she jumps like a child very happy at some point she even cries as she begs him to go back home with her. All this shows that she is emotionally dependent on him. Later as she was going back home she is given money to cater for her expenses; this makes her financially dependent on him.

### **a) Facial Expressions**

Facial expression is a very important gesture, and it is through it that emotions are communicated. The emotions enable the audience to understand the characters' feeling better than even the words used because they are able demonstrate more than what the characters say to bring out genuinely what is inside of them by making visible what is hidden in their hearts. Bela notes facial expression are vastly more numerous than words because looks they are able to express every shade of feeling far more precisely than a description. Bela compares facial expressions to music stating that words resemble notes of melody but it is the face that displays the emotions just like the chords (33-34).

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, Wa Muthoni's facial expressions are very communicative. They range from anger, revenge, harshness, sarcasm, contempt and finally to joy and excitement. From the moment she meets her lover, Kabuthi, her face brightens up to show happiness, comfort and even submission. She can even afford a smile and even feel shy as Kabuthi flatters her, something that was not seen before in her matrimonial home.

When we are introduced to her as the film starts, we find her as uncaring and an irresponsible character in addition to being a harsh and bitter mother and wife which is well demonstrated by her facial expression used when she is scowling the children. This expression makes the children give another expression which brings them out as terrified individuals who do not even talk. These facial expressions do not give her a character trait of a nurturing mother on the contrary it shows of an irresponsible mother who is unnecessarily harsh to her children by the way she gorges her eyes while asking them to eat.

The above expressions are then followed by facial expressions which suggest that she is a bitter woman who is burning up with revenge after her husband abandons her. The bitterness is revealed by the way her eyes gorges out as she swears what to do to her husband and the shaking of her head. Even after falling in love with Kabuthi, whenever she talks of her former husband and his family, her facial expressions reveals the bitterness and the revenge that has harboured her heart.

Her facial expressions further change when she meets Kabuthi. His love changes her cruel heart to that of a woman in love. She looks happy and can even afford a smile and laughter. She is excited as expressed on the face. Her facial expressions describe her as a cunning and sly woman. She is also able to manipulate and change them according to the impression she wants to give and what she feels about the topic being discussed.

When she is in a room with Kabuthi at the bar flirting, her face brightens up and it is full of joy as she pours her heart out to Kabuthi. She surrenders and submits to him and she ends up telling him what she intends to do with her in-laws (grab their land). Her facial expression is also able to narrate her change of feelings towards different subjects; her facial expressions depict a destructive and sly woman when she makes Jimmy run away from home. She wears a concerned face when convincing him to take off since Kiongero was after him. When Jimmy believes her idea and leaves, she wears totally a different face; a smile followed by a sarcastic laughter probably congratulating herself for the achievement. The smile further seems to tell Jimmy, ‘You are such a fool and gullible, you get cheated so easily!’

It is still the same facial expression that tells the audience of her anger and desire for revenge when her husband tells her to pack and leave the house. Her Facial expressions also reveals her

evil character traits especially the satirical laughter she gives before mocking Keziah for her husband's disappearance and her inability to have more children.

Facial expression enunciates what the characters feel deep down their hearts in their inner being but are manifested on their faces then the audience interprets them to perceive what the characters feels. Murry Smith work in *Evolution, literature and film: A reader* compiled by Boyd et al states that emotions provide a rapid and intensity of response to a changing environment which reason alone cannot provide. He goes on to elaborate that visual landscape of films is dominated by shot in which facial expression is legible (260).

As suggested in the above statement creating appropriate facial expressions in film is similar to creating a setting for a film as both place the characters at the place as the audience making them feel and experience what the characters are experiencing. As such facial expression helps in creating an illusion of reality. Being a bad mother is demonstrated by her facial expressions that makes the children fear. It is the same expression that makes the audience feel contempt for her.

#### **b) Body Movements and Language**

Body movements are important in narrating to the audience the relationship between the characters which in turn aid in women presentation in films. The way they move and interact with other characters in film reveals not just their personality but their feelings as well. Body movement adds meaning to the film as Benyahia et al notes. They assert that interactive movements involving two or more characters and they are carefully choreographed with attention to the details of body language that is designed to communicate a sense of character and/or character relationships to us, the audience (19). Another critic, Julius Fast in *Body Language* asserts that a woman body language is enough to send a message that she is available

for a man by her posture and movement. Consciously or unconsciously the movement of her body, hips and shoulder announce her availability. She may stroke her thighs as she talks or walks with languorous roll to her hips (84).

Body movements thus are important in narrating to the audience the relationship between the characters which in turn aid in the presentation of women in films. The way they move and interact with other characters in the film reveals not only their personality but also their feelings as well.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, Wa Muthoni's body language undoubtedly indicates that she not only accepts Kabuthi's seduction techniques but she has also fallen for them. We see this when she is modelling dressed in the short skirts that Kabuthi has just bought her and he seems to be enjoying it. This outrightly makes her a sex object as she is doing all that to look attractive to him and submissive as she is willing to reduce the fat on her waist to impress him. Body language just like facial expression reveals the character's feelings and hence how characters are presented. Below are some revelations on how women are presented in the film.

### **3.2.2 Personal Space**

The proximity between a character and another tells so much about their relationship. An individual would tend to be comfortable or uncomfortable depending on who is close to them and the relationship with them. Robert Sommer in *Studies in Personal Space* quotes Hediger who in his book, *Studies of the Psychology and Behavior of Animals in Zoos and Circuses* (1955) gives two definition of personal distance. He derives his first definition from a geographical perspective to mean an area with reference to an animal's territory or home. He defines his second personal space as the distance that the organism customarily places between

itself and other organisms. This distance however according to him, may vary from species to species and individual to individual (247).

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, Wa Muthoni is not in any occasion shown as being close to her husband even when he goes to Nyare's house to save her. The distance between the two sends a message of a cold relationship between the two and this is confirmed when they finally end up in separate ways. However, the closeness between her (Wa Muthoni) and most of the male characters (Nyare, Oley and Kabuthi) makes her not just dependent on them but also be presented as a sex object. This first of all is seen when she goes to the house where Nyare and Oley are hiding; she does not keep the canonical distance with these two men. She sits down sandwiched between them on the bed and probably this is what prompts them to touch her inappropriately and make it even more difficult for her to defend herself from them.

The same is seen when she goes to Kabuthi's bar to seek employment. She barely knows the man but she instantly stands very close to him and throughout the film the two are seen close to each other and rarely get separated. Once again the close proximity between the two leads to her leaning on Kabuthi and him cuddling and holding her. There is however no bodily contact between Wa Muthoni and her husband Kioi even when he goes for her in Nyare's hide out. Instead their marriage breaks up as Kioi later gets to accuse her of promiscuity; having an affair with both Nyare and Kabuthi. Though she is a married woman she does not seem to mind getting too close to other men who are not her husband. The personal space between Keziah and Jimmy her husband presents her as a person in love and dependent on him for emotional support. When the two hug and walk as they hold hands it reveals a lot about their relationship to the audience.

### **3.3 Characterisation of film spaces in *Mucii Ni Ndogo***

A film space is characterized by mise-en scene. Mise-en scene includes everything that appears on the scene in the film. The set and the objects placed on the set are deliberately selected and are related to women characters presentation. Fitzsimmons, John Mannion explains that mise-en scene is a French term that literally means ‘put on stage’ meaning everything that is seen in the film frame is carefully selected to create atmosphere, reveal a character and build upon audiences’ expectations that arise out of films genre (38). They include: costumes, make-up, hairstyles, acting styles, props, facial expressions and body language, lighting and colour, setting, positioning of characters and objects (38). Benyahia et al on the other hand define mise-en scene as series of elements of film construction that can be seen within the frame of the individual shot. (17).

Speidel then gives two definitions of mise-en scene both of which will be applicable in this research. In her first definition, she describe mise-en scene as all those elements in the shot which are staged in front of the camera at the time of filming. These elements comprise of setting, costumes and make up and props. The second definition has a broader significance to refer to everything which appears within the frame of the finished film. (9) Thus the second definition includes the visual effects in the film which are usually added in post-production phase.

Mise-en scene therefore narrates the story by ‘showing’ without telling it with a dialogue by showing how the women characters are presented is possible because the audience get to identify the character by the way the characters look, dress and by where they are placed without leaving behind what they are holding or what they are placed with. The audiences are able to know who they are and what their character traits are likely to be. Even where the characters are placed still



narrates how they have been presented. Thus this sub section interrogates the way mise-en scene presents women in *Mucii ni Ndogo*

### **3.3.1 Costume**

Costume is one of conceptual tools used by the filmmakers to present women in films because it gives an insight into who the character is supposed to be. It is through a character's costume that the audience is able to identify characters, their character roles and even the setting of the film. Benyahia et al notes that costume clearly link a character to a particular group and often to a rank or position in that group in addition to announcing a character (23). Costume in the heritage films automatically take the audience to Britain in a particular time in history and tells the story of middle and upper class Britons; similarly costumes in *Mucii ni Ndogo* give different images of women characters besides contributing to spectacle and thus making the film interesting and enjoyable to watch.

Costume in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is not used to merely cover the characters' nakedness but communicate beyond that and as such they become very informative elements in the film since they also aid in creating realism. In addition to this, costume helps to reinforce the role and the personality the characters are given. To start with costume are used to reinforce the roles played by characters like Wa Muthoni, Gatuta, Keziah, Shiru, Wa Shiku and even Keziah's mother-in-law. Sex object is one character roles that costume helps to identify in women characters.

Wa Muthoni's costume is designed for a different scene depending on prevailing circumstances and the setting. The dresses she wears at Kabuthi's bar are different from the ones she wears in her house while she was with her children. Her change of dressing signifies the change of personality and status; the change to the tight short skirts are signifies the change of not just the

character role but also her morals compared to the long loose clothes she was wearing as a housewife and mother.

Costume therefore transforms Wa Muthoni from a responsible housewife who takes care of her husband and children to a concubine. While she is still married, her long and loose skirts portray her as a responsible mother and wife however when her marriage breaks, her dressing changes to symbolise another character. Though she verbally swears to be wearing short clothes and tight skirts that will make her husband, Kioi jealous, it is not until she actually does it that her costumes have effect. One of the effects is that Kabuthi shows more interest in her than before and he wants to see her more and he even tells her to catwalk for him.(see fig. 3 and 4)

Secondly these short tight skirts have granted her wish to make her husband jealous since when she meets Mojo while wearing one of these dresses he is stunned, he actually tells her that men are going to kill one another for her probably insinuating that each will want to sleep with her. Similarly, when marriage life becomes difficult for Gatuta since her husband does not provide, her dressing alone suggests that she wants to earn some income from prostitution. This is revealed when she visits Mama Shiku to borrow some money, she is dressed in a short tight skirt that exposes her thighs and Mama Shiku tells her that her dressing is embarrassing since she is dressed like a prostitute, a remark that she does not object. The statement seems to suggest that Gatuta must depend on a man for survival; if it is not her husband then it is any man and this is what leads her to prostitution.

Shiru, the bar attendant's dressing encourages the male clients to take advantage of her. Her uniform is a tight black trouser which makes men to turn to look at her whenever she serves

them. Some even go a step further to show that they are sexually interested in her by making sexual advances towards her like Kiongero and even her boss, Kabuthi.

The dressing of Wa Muthoni, Shiru and Gatuta contrasts the dressing of women like Keziah and Wa Shiku and Keziah's mother-in-law. Their modest dressing characterizes them as good and mature housewives who take good care of their families. When Gatuta visits Wa Shiku, she has tied a *leso* round her waist suggesting that at the time she was busy carrying out her household chores. The same is seen with Keziah she dresses in long and loose dresses and so is her mother-in-law. Both Keziah and Wa Shiku have no time to decorate themselves to look attractive for men since they are busy with their works at home and work for their marriages to work.

The roles costume play is demonstrated above in what has been defined by Benyahia et al as a type of uniform that both link a character to a particular group and often to a rank or position within that group and also 'announce' a character, by giving an insight into what this person is supposed to be like. They add that it is worn within any given setting (23).

What Benyahia and his co-authors state is relevant in *Mucii ni Ndogo* since the clothing a character wears in a given location is enough to describe not only the role of that character has been given but also show how that character has been presented.

Judith Butler adds that costumes play a key role in construction of gender codes and expectations. Sarah then extends the argument to comment that in film fashion relates to characterisation, narrative images of the body and audience response (3).

A lady dressed in a long loose dress with a veil in her head seated in church would automatically tell the audience that she is given the role of a nun. A woman dressed the same way at home the

likes of Keziah, Keziah's mother-in-law and even Wa Shiku play the role of good wives and mother. The same way a woman in a short but also tight and revealing dress walking along a poorly lit street would let the audience know that she is a prostitute.

Costume therefore helps to support the idea by Laura Mulvey that women are styled accordingly for male to fantasize on their figure. This is referred to as 'male gaze'. Bill Nichols in *Movies and Methods* Vol. II explains further Laura's idea of 'male gaze' stating it as an erotic attraction of the male viewers for female characters (305).

### **3.3.2 Props**

Props help in setting since some props go a long way towards conveying the time and place of the story. Roberts states that props allow the plot to move forward from one scene to the next. Props still enhance safety of the characters since for instance characters cannot use a real gun but have to improvise and finally and the most important of all props help in atmosphere creation. Suzanne Speidel in *Film Form and Narrative* on the other hand defines props as movable objects within the set and may serve as iconographic demonstration of the genre, drive the narrative forward or even have metaphoric significance (10).

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, a bed is one of the prop used in the film. This prop serves a metaphoric purpose to implicitly present Wa Muthoni as a sex object at the beginning of the film. A bed is the only notable prop in Nyare's room and its presence foreshadows Wa Muthoni's character trait especially when Nyare sends Oley to get her. When she arrives in this house it therefore does not come as a surprise when the two (Nyare and Oley) demand for sex from her.

A bed is also seen in Kabuthi's bar. It is only shown when Wa Muthoni goes there to seek a job. Instead of giving her a job he takes her to a room with only a bed and a chair where the two take

drinks. This conveys to the audience that the two are there to discuss more than how she will get the job or how to take revenge to her in-laws. Actually, much of the action involving the two, takes place in this room as she sits or lies on the bed and there is no one time she is shown sitted on the chair. The bed therefore carries the plot forward in addition to bringing out the film's main message and confirms that Wa Muthoni is a morally loose woman who does not mind sharing a bed with different men. (See figure 5 and 6)

The other prop which enhances the presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is the luggage. When Wa Muthoni is sent packing by her husband she is shown stranded with her belongings which is quite a heavy luggage for her. This luggage forces her to ask for Oley's help. Oley carries it to Nyare's house by himself and without even complaining that it is heavy. This prop (luggage) presents her as weak because she was unable to carry it by herself and hence dependent on a male character (Oley) for help. The other luggage which once again presents her as a dependent character is the clothes that Kabuthi buys for her. When they arrive at the bar, Kabuthi is shown carrying the luggage for her and only hand it over to her when she wants to fit them.

Money is the other prop used in *Mucii ni Ndogo* to mainly present the women characters as dependent. We see Kioi giving his mother money to feed his children and although she is supposed to be taking care of his children, giving her money means that he is technically the one taking care of them while his mother is only assisting otherwise without his help, she cannot do it. Keziah gets money from her husband Jimmy to get the children food, this makes her both surprised and excited to illustrate that she does not need her husband for just emotional support but for financial support as well. Gatuta is other character we see getting money from a fellow character. Her, unlike the other characters who get money from men, she gets it from a woman,

Wa Shiku. This still presents her as dependent since it is with the help of the latter she gets some money to buy her children food.

Men on the other hand are not shown receiving money from women and where they are seen trying, it ends up terrible like when Nyare blackmails Wa Muthoni to give them fifty thousand shillings, he does not receive the money since Kioi shows up, beats him up almost to death which gets him get so scared to contact Wa Muthoni again. The film brings out men as characters who receive money as payment for the services they have offered or ought to offer. Mojo gets money from Wa Muthoni to feed her with information on Jimmy's where about. The other man character who is shown receiving money is Nyare, he receives money from Kabuthi to entice him to work for him.

Props in *Mucii ni Ndogo* have played a major role in complimenting the costumes and the character in addition to contributing to theme of the film. They are hence important parts of the mise-en scene which aids in communicating to the audience by showing the story rather than telling it in a dialogue. Benyahia et al believe that props work to give an authentic sense of place and are also used in more complex ways to suggest important characteristics of particular individuals or even key themes for the whole film (23). The props in *Mucii ni Ndogo* give the film setting and more importantly in reinforcing the theme in the film. Props aid in creating plausibility in film because a certain set would be associated with certain item. A bedroom is expected to have bed, the same way a kitchen must have a fireplace.

### 3.3.3 Make up

The filmmaker has used make-up in *Mucii ni Ndogo* to present women characters in different ways. Make up has been used by characters in this film to make them attractive to men and hence emphasize them as sex objects.

Bretz in his book *Techniques of Television Production*, highlights the following importance of make-up. First of all make-up helps to smoothen the complexion giving a character a healthy skin tone that outline and dramatize the feature. Secondly, he notes that make-up also serves the purpose of correction to suit certain lighting. In addition, make-up is used to correct the age of the character by making them younger in cases that they are older than expected. Moreover, make-up is used to create the personality of a character different from the others and most importantly, Bretz states that make-up is used to make a character more beautiful (324). Corrigan White notes that make-up is applied on the characters' face or body to highlight, disguise or even to distort certain aspects of the face and body (57).

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* when Gatuta leaves her husband to start 'life' as she says, she is seen applying make-up (ponds and lipstick) to look attractive for her potential clients. No wonder Wa Shiku tells her that she looks like a prostitute and that statement makes her a sex object. Gatuta's make-up by extension presents her as dependent. She is wearing a make up to look attractive before men who will be her clients.

Tummy trimmer in this film may also be considered as a make-up because it has been used to enhance the look of the characters. When Kabuthi buys Wa Muthoni the mini-skirts she wanted so much to looks beautiful and make her husband jealous, her new boyfriend, Kabuthi, tells her that she look beautiful except for the fat on her waistline. To complement her beauty and to

impress Kabuthi she hints that she will use certain oil that will help reduce the fat and make her waist thin and even more attractive. This therefore makes her a sex object since she is working hard to improve her looks for men to be interested in her and she does it intentionally.

Make up first of all has been used in *Mucii ni Ndogo* to create characters' personality. It is make up that helps the audience to distinguish the women settled in their marriage and those not settled and are looking for other men to have sex with and get money. Gatuta and Wa Muthoni are keen on how they look and hence use make-up to enhance their beauty and thus look more attractive to attract more men. This is unlike Keziah and Wa Shiku who are shown as interested in beauty. Instead they are interested in their families. Secondly makeup makes the characters look younger. Changing of appearance has made Wa Muthoni look younger than before when she was still a house wife and even Kabuthi confirms it when he say that she looks like a girl.

Bela Balazs asserts that it is important for the characters in film to be beautiful for the audience to make notice of them. He observes that in film, everything internal becomes visible in something external; it follows that everything external testifies to an internal reality. (30) Make-up in *Mucii ni Ndogo* therefore is an external manifestation used by women character to market themselves to men.

### **3.3.4 Setting and Set**

Setting and set are probably the most important elements of mise-en scene. As aforementioned, film heavily relies on visual image hence a believable set is necessary to help in creating an illusion of reality, that is, the scenes should be in such a way that the audience are able to relate it with the actions taking place in the film. Therefore it is necessary to create scenery that will make the situation as believable as possible. Benyahia et al define setting as a series of elements



of film construction that can be seen within the frame of the individual shot (17). They further define setting as fictional and real place where the action and events of the film occur whereas the set is a constructed setting (44).

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* the locale of the set where Wa Muthoni is with men is a bedroom this easily identifies Wa Muthoni as a prostitute since most of the scene she is in a room with a bed together with men who are not her husband. This is seen in several instances one of them being seen going to Nyare's room knowing very well the dangers involved. She complains not being comfortable in the room but she does not leave. She is easily persuaded to get in the room and even sit on the bed between Nyare and Oley. Later that evening when her husband asks her to leave his house yet she has nowhere to go, with the help of Oley she goes back to spend the night in the same room with Nyare and Oley.

Setting therefore gives her a personality of a sex object. Rooms with bed are associated with her because she is the only woman character in bedrooms with men who are not her husband and she is not worried by that. It is finding her in this room that disgusts her husband and makes him even hate her more prompting him to separate with her. Then when she goes to Kabuthi's bar to search for a job, she has no problem going to the room (with a bed) to discuss the matter there. Actually most of the scenes the two are lying in bed with hands around each other.

The other notable setting that now presents domesticated women is home. The women who do not play the role of sex objects are domesticated like Keziah, her mother-in-law and Wa shiku. Most of the actions that involve them are shot in their houses as they carry on with their household chores hence presenting them as nurturing and caring mothers. When Kioi is talking to his mother, she is at her homestead headed to Keziah's house who on the other hand is busy

preparing the children to go to school. The same is seen when Gatuta goes to Wa Shiku's place she is as well busy doing the household chores. Shiru on the other hand is not domesticated and does not sex-objectify herself but the setting which is where she works, a bar, make the clients and her boss treat her as a sex object by showing sexual interest in her.

### **3.4 Cinematography**

#### **3.4.1 Lighting**

Lighting contributes immensely to the interpretation of *Mucii ni Ndogo*. Light is used to not only highlight Wa Muthoni's affair with different men but also to focus on which of these relationships makes her happy or sad. To begin with, light and a lot of it helps in adding more weight to the illicit affair between Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi. Wherever the two are, the scene is brightly lit with no shadow anywhere probably suggesting the romantic affair the two have. It starts when she goes to Kabuthi's bar to seek a job, Kabuthi thinks it wise to discuss the issue in the bedroom and Wa Muthoni accepts. The room is brightly lit even though it is indoors where the light would be limited compared to the outdoors.

Light in this film has also been used to present Wa Muthoni in different angles. The light at Nyare's house is dim; it seems to present her as a sinister character. It is this house that her husband confirms all her evil plans (robbing people). Still it is in this house that we get to know Nyare and Oley plan to force her into a sex affair with them which she is not interested in. The poorly lit scene which is full of shadows as well becomes appropriate to emphasis presentation of Wa Muthoni as a sex object with evil motives. The brightly lit scenes that involve Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi present their affair as open.

### 3.4.2 Colour

Colour has several functions in films. It makes a picture look interesting in addition to creating realism, and just like lighting; colour contributes to creating mood in a film which helps to elicit different feelings to the audience.

In this study, colour serves two major purposes: one to bring realism because in real world everything has colour while the other function is aesthetic both of which guide this section in the way women characters are presented in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

Colour has an important role in film to symbolically present an idea in film besides creating realism. Colour strongly appeals to the viewers' emotion; to make them interpret the film in a particular way.

Blain Brown observes that colour just like lighting has a special power to reach people at a gut emotional level. He adds that colour has the ability to increase an additional layer of meaning to the content of story (8). *Mucii ni Ndogo* is a colored film and therefore meets the first role that colour plays in this film is to bring realism since the characters look as if they are in real life. The use of colour enables us to see the world as it is in this film in addition to spectacle.

Wa Muthoni is dresses in bright coloured clothes especially after she starts her affair with Kabuthi. Her bright coloured dresses make her conspicuous and therefore attract her prospective male friends. The light blue jean skirt and white blouse among other clothes that she has been bought for by Kabuthi makes him take notice of her, an impression that prompts her to catwalk for him to see her better. He even comments that it is the clothes that she had been wearing that were making her look old since the new ones make her beautiful and young.

The same happens to Gatuta, she is dressed in a bright beige short skirt and a white blouse, this makes her stand out. These bright colours make Wa Shiku to quickly notice Gatuta mode of dressing, which she claims makes her look like a prostitute.

Colour grading is noted all through the film since it is one of the editing strategies. However a rich reddish colour grading is very conspicuous over any other colour used in the film's colour grading. It is not accidental that it is particularly used in the scene where Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi are in the room drinking beer and romancing. The rich red colour grading has thus been used to add more weight to the erotic affair the two are having.

### **3.4.3 Conclusion**

This chapter explored how formal elements present the women characters in the film by 'showing' instead of telling the story. The chapter looked at how various elements come together to present the women characters by showing. These elements include character physiognomy, mise-en scene and cinematography.

Physiognomy of Characters in *Mucii Ni Ndogo* first sub-section which explains how character appearance alone has the ability to present women characters in *Mucii Ni Ndogo* using gestures which include facial expressions, body language and movement. Character physiognomy is also seen through personal space among the characters as well. To start with, gestures enrich our understanding in regard to the women have been presented. Movement of any body parts can either depict them as dependent, submissive and even as sex objects. Facial expressions reveal different emotions women characters express in various situations which helps in presenting them. Body language in this film shows how Wa Muthoni is willing to abide and encouraging Kabuthi sexual advances. Personal space helps to present Wa Muthoni as sex object by the

distance she keeps with men who are not her husband. Distance also shows women characters as dependent.

The second part of the chapter interrogated the way film space presents women particularly through mise-en scene. Mise-en scene involves everything seen on stage. Mise-en scene does not just contribute to spectacle but also enhance presentation of women character. Women characters' costumes and make-up, props as well as setting 'show' their character without even announcing it. Change of Wa Muthoni's costumes tells of her transition from a housewife to a concubine and so is Gatuta wearing of make-up. Props enhance women presentation, a bed in a room that Kabuthi directs her to out rightly present her as a sex object and so is the setting.

Lastly the chapter looked at cinematography which demonstrated how colour, light and shadow have been manipulated to strongly to present the women characters in *Mucii Ni Ndogo*. This is because cinematography has the availability to instill desired effects on the audience. The camera angle has been used to present women in *Mucii ni Ndogo* as both weak and inferior. Light in *Mucii ni Ndogo* has not only been used to facilitate filming but has as well brought out various moods like love, honesty and even sadness. Lastly colour has particularly brought out the erotic love affair between Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi besides bringing out realism in the film.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### POINT OF VIEW IN *MUCII NI NDOGO*

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo* through the point of view. Point of view is commonly abbreviated as ‘POV’. This is a way of telling the story from the characters’ perspective. The filmmaker manipulates the camera shots or editing to allow the viewers to see from the perspective of certain characters and hence share the same attitude and ideas. In so doing, the viewers adopt this character’s perception towards the character(s) they are shown on the screen. The point of view in film thus shapes the viewers’ attitude and understanding towards certain character(s) or even idea(s) brought out in the film.

#### 4.1 Point of View in *Mucii ni Ndogo*

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* the viewer first gets to see an objective point of view when Wa Muthoni is on the road walking to Nyare’s house after Oley asks her to see Nyare urgently. From a long shot it gets difficult for the viewers to guess what could be going on in her mind but they are left with a vague idea of the intention of her visit.

An extreme long shot used as an establishment shot in Ruiru when Keziah goes to look for her husband, Jimmy, gives an objective point of view since the audience is only introduced to the location Keziah visits and is not given or directed to specific details of the subject. The viewers are thus left to make their own conclusion as to whether she is excited or not to look for her husband, whether she is worried or looking stranded in searching for Jimmy in an environment she is not familiar with.

A long shot of Kabuthi's bar and Wa Muthoni headed there provides the viewers with information of where she is going but again does not provide them with specific details that would enable the viewers to exactly understand her motives of going there besides applying for a job. The viewers are then contended that she has to look for a job and do not see any sinister motive with that.

Writing on camera shots and how the filmmaker tells the story, Branigan argues that the filmmaker tells the story subjectively by reflecting on a particular side of the character. He also notes that besides the shots, colour as well has the ability to suggest the point of view since it gives a certain perception to the viewers. Branigan claims one way of doing this is by throwing object in the film out of focus (94).

Shiru in *Mucii ni Ndogo* may be a good example for this. Though the frame does not show her disappearing in darkness the fact is, she is thrown out of focus the moment Wa Muthoni steps into Kabuthi's bar. This is because Kabuthi is in need of a mistress and has been approaching her without success. When Wa Muthoni shows up and she is ready to be his mistress, Shiru is thrown out of focus and we see less of her in the bar and more of Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi in the bar. Wa Muthoni is a symbol of a sex object in this film, a stereotype that the film propagates and when Shiru fails to play the role her role is taken over.

Similarly, when Wa Muthoni fails to fit into the stereotypical role of a domesticated, passive and nurturing mother she is thrown out of focus and Keziah who fits the stereotypes takes over. She disappears into the darkness as Branigan suggests on how to throw objects out of focus. Throwing characters out of focus, subjectively and stereotypically present women negatively

since this feature is manipulated to make the viewer believe that women characters can only take certain roles or behave in certain stereotypical ways. The extreme close up shot that fades to a flashback makes the viewers get emotionally involved in Keziah problem which has been created by Wa Muthoni. The expressions on her face are so clear that one can almost feel them. Similarly, when Kabuthi learns of Wa Muthoni's ten acres of land, his shaking of the head gives up what is in his mind. The viewer gets to be aware that he wants it though he doesn't say it. Thus, the camera is manipulated to create the character of Wa Muthoni as a sex object. From the medium shot that shows her sitting between Nyare and Oley with their hands holding her to the close up and the tilting shot that highlight her body.

Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell in "Observations of Film Art" also acknowledge that sounds have the ability to bring out the point of view in film. They state that the viewers might hear an internal voice reporting the character's thoughts, or we might see the character's inner images, representing memory, fantasy, dreams, or hallucinations. They term this as *mental subjectivity*. The duo asserts that flashback is an example of subjective depth in general, even if the flashback unfolds objectively. They explain this in two ways: firstly they state that the flashback comes "from" the character and is assumed to show approximately *what* he or she is remembering. Occasionally the flashback may be a lie rather than objective truth. Secondly, flashbacks tell the viewers of character's memories and some story information that the viewer needs to have even if the character couldn't know about it.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* there are several memories brought about by flashback. The first one is when Wa Muthoni remembers how she tricked Jimmy making him run away. The second flashback is when Keziah remembers the quarrel she had with her husband, Jimmy and the physical abuse she suffered from both her husband and brother-in-law, Kioi. The film does not show instances of



dreams or fantasies. However, Wa Muthoni's monologue plays the similar role to reveal to the audience her next move and the motive behind it.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, a perceptual subjectivity point of view is seen in Kabuthi's bar when Baba Shiku beats up Mojo after he confesses having robbed him. The viewer joins Kabuthi, Shiru and Kioi in the scene to watch the action. The same subjective point of view is seen when Wa Muthoni is fitting the mini skirt Kabuthi has bought her. The medium shots and the long shots used in this scene enable the viewers to see exactly what Kabuthi and Shiru see in her (they are able to see her modelling in revealing clothes).

#### **4.2 POV and Camera Angles**

Camera angles have a very strong ability to create the illusion to the viewers that they are the characters in the film feeling, seeing, hearing and even thinking as the character would. Angles can be manipulated to alter the image of a subject in film by creating an illusion of depth where one object looks lower or higher compared to the other and as such it gives a different presentation and interpretation of the same subject.

Low, high, level camera angle and over the shoulder shot have been used in *Mucii ni Ndogo* to give the viewers an impression of superiority, inferiority and equality among the characters respectively. Though much of the film uses the level camera angle, low and high camera angles are also seen to emphasis on the presentation of women at some particular scenes and as such contribute to swaying the viewers to take a particular perspective.

Butler states that the direction the camera point distorts the image of what is being filmed. He explains that looking down it (image) can suggest an air of vulnerability or smallness, or looking

upward, power and privilege (23). This section thus looks at the way angle creates point of view besides presenting the women characters. The angles include: high camera angle, low camera angle and the over the shoulder shot.

#### **4.2.1 High Camera Angle**

High camera angle is mainly used on women characters though rarely on men characters even when sitted. This angle presents women characters in the film as inferior and it is particularly used when women characters are subdued by the men characters. This camera angle is used to present the women characters in this film first of all weaker characters and then dependent compared to the men characters in the film. The angle enhances the story by making the viewers feel and understand the weakness of the women characters in the film.

A high camera angle is used in *Mucii ni Ndogo*, to focus at Wa Muthoni at the scene where Nyare beats her up demanding that she apologizes for having slapped him. At this point Wa Muthoni is subdued kneeling and begging for mercy and thus a high camera angle is used to emphasize on her submissiveness. (See fig.7) From the viewers perspective, this angle thus presents her not only vulnerable but also weak at the moment. The same angle is used to focus at Keziah when talking to her husband Jimmy at the scene which she insist they have to address issues affecting their marriage. (See fig. 8) The high camera angle used gives the viewers a point of view that makes her inferior compared to her husband. The angle also aids to create an illusion that she is weaker and helpless and cannot do anything to defend herself considering what is happening in the scene at the moment (Jimmy is beating her up). The act itself of Jimmy slapping her instead of talking to her - presents him as the powerful over her. His tall height also makes it possible to focus at him using a low camera angle using an over the shoulder shot from Keziah shoulders.

High camera angle is as well used to focus at Keziah in the next scene when Jimmy's brother, Kioi comes to the house demanding to see his brother. The viewers are placed at a psychologically high place to once again present Keziah as a very insignificant person who has no say even in her own house, a high camera angle focuses at her while a low camera angle at Kioi when the two are engaged in an argument.

Once again the high camera angle is used to give the viewers an impression that men are at a superior level and present women as vulnerable and dependent. This is shown in the subsequent scene when Keziah meets Mojo, a high camera angle is used to focus on her and the opposite on Mojo; this once again is facilitated by the fact that Mojo is taller than Wa Muthoni but still she is presented dependent as she really need Mojo to locate her husband.

The same camera angle is used to make the viewers see Wa Muthoni from a perspective that presents her as dependent. She is shown while lying on Kabuthi's bed as she receives instructions from him. Though it is her idea, Kabuthi seems to be in control and the angle is used to affirm it.

In Ruiru when Keziah goes there to look for Jimmy, though the camera angle seems to be level, it obvious that Jimmy is towering Keziah. He looks at her overhead and thus giving a high camera angle which creates an illusion to the viewers that he is prominent compared to her. High camera angle thus is used partially to focus at Keziah when talking to her husband. At this scene she plays a role of a good and submissive wife who wants her husband back home and him (jimmy) as the head of family. This is reinforced by him giving her money to buy food for the children. Their camera angle presents her as dependent not only emotionally but also financially.

#### 4.2.2 Low Camera Angle

A low angle is mainly used to focus on men character mainly when they are assaulting or helping women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo* in one way or the other. The low camera angles therefore places the viewers at the women point of view to elevate the men character to a position where they are superior to women characters.

As the film starts a low camera angle is used to focus at Nyare giving the viewers the impression that he is prominent and more powerful than Wa Muthoni. Therefore besides the action of beating up Wa Muthoni who is obviously shown as helpless, the camera angle makes him powerful and in control and as such the camera angle makes this point clearer. The low camera angle is used gives the same illusion that Kioi is superior as compared to his wife Wa Muthoni when he goes to Nyare's room to save her as she is being beaten up by Nyare. This camera angle thus makes Wa Muthoni dependent on Kioi since he indirectly saves her life by his mere presence at Nyare's house.

The camera positioning allows the viewers to understand the relationship between Kabuthi and Wa Muthoni. The point of view created by this camera angle makes the viewers get into the positions to feel what she is going through from her POV. From the time Wa Muthoni steps into his bar, Kabuthi is portrayed as the one in authority and Wa Muthoni only takes orders from him. Even by the way they are sitted Wa Muthoni is always shorter than him by either lying on bed as he sits on it or chair. This is also emphasized by the camera angle. A low camera angle has also been used on Kabuthi particularly when he promises to help Wa Muthoni to shop for her mini skirt and also take revenge on her in laws. The height of the characters has also made it easy for the low camera angle in *Mucii ni Ndogo* bring out the point of view clearer. Men are taller than

their women which gives them authority over women. Kioi is taller than his wife Wa Muthoni just as Jimmy is still taller than Keziah, his wife.

Low camera angle is used to focus on Mojo as such used to emphasize the way the two women need him. Both Wa Muthoni and Keziah depend on him for information (to tell them where Jimmy is) and the camera angle is reinforced by his height since he is taller than the two. Though Kabuthi is not very tall, whenever he is with Wa Muthoni he is always towering over her and so is Nyare who is portrayed as more powerful than the women especially Wa Muthoni regardless of his short height.

#### **4.2.3 Over the Shoulder Shot**

Subjective point of view in film can also be created by over the shoulder shot which is abbreviated as 'OS'. According to Sian Lynes, OS is usually a close up or mid shot over the characters shoulder. He claims that this shot helps an audience to gain an intimate view of a conversation by allowing the viewers an insight into what the main character see from his point of view. This shot makes the viewer see from the point of view of one of the characters. They see the subject as that character would see it.

Over the shoulder shot is used to show Kioi and Keziah in argument. From Keziah viewpoint, the viewers can see the anger on Kioi's face and from Kioi's point of view the viewers as well are able to see Keziah's reaction as she attempts to calm him down. (see fig. 7 and 8)

OS also enables the viewers to see Keziah in pain after she is slapped by Kioi and in a way feel the pain as she does. The shot is once again used when Kabuthi and Wa Muthoni visits Nyare. The viewers see from Nyare's eyes, Kabuthi and Wa Muthoni hold each other to convince him that they are a couple and from Kabuthi and Wa Muthoni's viewpoint the viewers see Nyare's

facial expressions which display surprise to see the two embracing and the viewers share with him the surprise and shock.

When Wa Muthoni is talking to Mojo over the shoulder is used to show contrasting emotion that the two hold. From Wa Muthoni's viewpoint, Mojo is very excited to tell her that Jimmy has greatly changed he no longer drink and he even works but from Mojo's point of view, the viewers can clearly see that Wa Muthoni is not happy at all with the news and therefore the shot enables the viewers to penetrate her heart to understand her evil character and destructive nature.

This is the technique that is also shot when Keziah is talking to her mother-in-law. The shot is informative and reveals to the viewers Keziah's character traits as a gentle, caring and an emotional woman. From her mother-in-law's side, the viewers get to see her crying tears of joy as she explains how happy she is to have found her husband. From Keziah's viewpoint, the viewers as well get to see her mother-in-law's reaction to Keziah's crying and the efforts she makes to both congratulate and console her.

#### **4.4 POV and Camera Shots**

##### **4.4.1 Extreme Close up Shot**

Johnson explains that extreme close up shot gives specific details of a person that reveals emotions, it also has the ability to foreshadow that happens later in the film (115).

A good example of this shot in *Mucii ni Ndogo* is when Keziah is shot portrayed in a deep thought, she is actually portrayed worried. The camera is zoomed in to magnify beyond what the viewers can see no matter how close they would be to the character such that it looks as if it touches her face to usher in a flashback where she remembers the confrontation she had with Wa Muthoni earlier in the day. The shot takes the viewers' attention totally making them walk with

the character in her flashback from her perspective. Extreme close up is used to bring out Wa Muthoni's different emotions like bitterness or happiness especially when she is short changed by Nyare and Oley, an extreme close up which shows part of her face as she stares at the roof giving a mixture of bitterness and frustration. Through a close up the audience gets to know that Kabuthi is interested in Wa Muthoni's in-law piece of land though he says no word about it. The camera shifts to him and we get a close up showing him nodding the head as if he is in deep thought.

#### **4.4.2 Close up Shot**

The shot gives audience an opportunity to see, hear and feel as the character would and therefore the shot makes the viewers emotionally connected with the characters. This shot brings out the subjectivity point of view in the film provide viewers with information that clearly enables them to experience the characters world.

In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, a close up shot directs the viewers to a specific action taking place. The shot is used when Nyare places his hand on Wa Muthoni's hand as he try to caress her but she removes the hand. The same shot shifts to Nyare's face to shows his reaction which is a mixture of shock and surprise as if he did not expect Wa Muthoni to remove his hand from her thighs. Again the same shot reveals Wa Muthoni's emotions especially the disgusts when Nyare and Oley tell her that they want to sleep with her. From these characters' perspective, Wa Muthoni automatically becomes a sex object and that is how the shot is manipulated to present her besides convincing the viewers to believe so. The shot further present her as dependent or under dominion of someone since when she is still in Nyare's house a close up shot shows her in deep thought when Nyare gives her the conditions. She is in this deep thought first because she has been overpowered by Nyare, a man and secondly because she would not want her husband to

know the trouble she is in and hence she is wondering of how to get herself out of the trouble without her husband knowing. The shot shows Keziah's happiness when she finds her husband in Ruiru. She is so excited that she cannot stop smiling making Jimmy to look confusion of what is happening to her. The close up shot reveals a reaction on his face that suggests that she is nagging.

In his actual words Bela in his book, *Early Film Theory: Visible and Spirit of Film* refers to close up as the terrain of film. he goes on to say that films with many good close-ups a viewer often gain the impression that these shots are the product not so much of a good eye as of a good heart (38-39). This is because close up shots opens up the inside of the characters and makes the viewers part of the character in action taking place and hence enable them, viewers, to walk with the character; feel with them, by experiencing what they are going through and even asses their mind to know exactly what they are thinking. This gives subjectivity to POV.

This shot presents Keziah as a caring woman. It enables the viewers to see fears and worries in the faces of Keziah and her mother-in-law. Before they even talk about their issues, the way they make their faces reveals there is a problem. The same is seen when Keziah visits Mama Shiku and she cannot understand why Wa Muthoni has decided to make her life unbearable. When she closes her eyes one can feel the pain in the heart to remember as she narrates how both her husband and her brother-in-law hit her. When she finds Jimmy close up shot the displays happiness the same which is reflected in her mother-in-law's face. Bela Balazs gives close up intrinsic ability by saying that a close up enables one to see even that is concealed in the heart. He continues to say that through a close up of a film we can see to the bottom of a soul by means of such tiny movement of facial muscles (190-191).



The shot reveals Wa Muthoni's character that presents her as destructive and evil woman. This is shown by the joy on her face after she manages to convince Jimmy to run away. The fake smile she gives and swiveling the head tells the viewers that the probability is that she is lying and she is celebrating her success to dupe him. The shot also show the same joy she has whenever she is with Kabuthi unlike when she was at her home. Though she does not say it, she seems more at peace in love with Kabuthi. The shot is further used to heighten their love affair when the two are shown is a close up holding hands and leaning on one another. The shot therefore helps to reveal her other character trait as a sex object because she is happy with another and not her husband and she does not show any sign of remorsefulness.

#### **4.4.3 Medium Shot**

In *Mucii ni Ndogo* when Wa Muthoni is visited by Oley asking her to see Nyare because their deal has gone sour, a medium shot is used when Oley and Wa Muthoni are having a conversation. Although not at an intimate level, this shot allows the viewers to understand the relationship between the two. They are not so friendly. The medium shot then allows the viewers to see both her facial expression and gestures which reveal the fear of leaving the children alone in the evening and her husband is about to arrive home from work. The shot therefore reveals her weak character trait that though she has a strong personality there is still something that worries her. The same shot again is used to show her sitted between the two characters-Oley and Nyare. This reveals her as a sex object since a morally upright woman would not sit on bed so close to men who are not her husband. The shot has also been used to show Wa Muthoni under the dominion of men and thus depict her as a passive character. This is revealed by the action happening at Nyare's room particularly after Wa Muthoni slaps Nyare and then Nyare starts to

beat her up. The shot shows Wa Muthoni struggling to release herself from him and Nyare holds her even tighter as he slaps her.

A medium shot is used to show Wa Muthoni's body from her waist as she lies on bed. (See fig. 9) This camera shot exposes most of the uncovered part of her body. Once again this shot is used when she is wearing make-up and the camera moves from her shoes tilts up through her thighs and stops at her face with a close-up shot. This shot thus enhances her character role as a sex object.

#### **4.4.4 Long medium shot**

The shot plays the similar role as that of a long shot to inform and introduce the characters to the scene. The shot has mainly being used in a home setting to emphasize the role of some women characters as housewife and therefore they are domesticated. In *Mucii ni Ndogo*, the shot is seen when Keziah visits Mama Shiku. The framing of the shot does not show a full human being from head to toe but it is small enough to reveal the setting of the scene. From the other subjects seen in the shot like sofa set, coffee table and a TV set the viewers get to know that the action is taking place in a sitting room.

#### 4.4.5 Long shot

The shot shows an entire human body with the head near the top of the frame and the feet near the bottom. Just like the extreme long shot, long shot introduces the viewers to the setting the action is taking place and the other subjects that are placed in that setting. This enlightens the viewer exactly where the character is and thus relates the action about to take place. When the film, *Mucii ni Ndogo* starts, the viewers are given a long shot of a house. This shot just like the medium long shot is used by the filmmaker to reveal the character role of most women as housewives. The shot gives viewers a setting of a home with a family and the next scene the viewers see Wa Muthoni and her children feeding. Whenever there is an action taking place in a house or home setting, a long shot of a house is always given, like the house in which Nyare is hiding, Keziah's house, mother-in-law's house and even Kioi's house again when he is rushing there to confront his wife.

The shot has also been use to present women as sex objects. This is evident when choosing a seat at Kabuthi's bar, a long shot of Kioi and Baba Shiku do not only introduce the viewers to the setting but gives them a room to see a wall photo of a woman who is almost naked. The shot thus helps to objectify women sexually since the two look quite excited to sit there. They even personify the picture (they discuss it as if it is a living woman they are talking about. In part of the conversation, Kioi says, "you want as to sit next to her")

This camera shot also help to lay emphasis on presentation as a sex object by exposing different parts of her body. When lying on bed, the camera focus on her half covered breast and so when she is wearing her shoes, the camera moves to show both her half covered breast and barely covered thigh before moving to her half covered thigh (See fig. 10).This shot, thus, definitely

present her as a sex object since Kabuthi seems excited and even teases her before she leaves the room.

#### **4.4.6 Extreme long shot**

An extreme long shot of Wa Muthoni walking on the road gives so many subjects ( the bush) making her a tiny subject that her face is clearly seen. However the shot gives the viewer an idea of a lonely and dangerous journey that she takes to see Nyare in the place where he is hiding. They viewers get to know her as a destructive and sly woman who would go through any trouble to take to cover up her wrong doing. The shot also identifies the time the action is taking place, it is late evening. A time ordinarily a nurturing and caring mother should be preparing supper for her family (she had mentioned that to Oley when he delivered Nyare's message). In *Mucii ni Ndogo* camera shots heighten the way women are presented in this film as sex objects. Camera shots in the film are used for emphasis at the room in Kabuthi's bar when she is lying on bed as she looks at herself in the mirror. The camera pans from right to left showing her barely covered thigh moving to her breasts as the zoom lens give extreme close up shots and close up shots to show the same clearly hence emphasizing her presentation as a sex object.

#### **4.5 POV and Camera Movements**

Camera movements just like camera shots and angles play an important role in creation on point of view which in turn aid in presentation of women characters in the film. They help the audience to see subjects from a particular dimension. Camera movements guide the eyes of the viewers toward a certain subject in a scene. Through this movement the viewers who are already part of the action do not see everything but tend to see what is going on from a particular dimension. Different camera movements are seen in *Mucii ni Ndogo* and are used to highlight

various ideas to the viewer by swaying them to a particular viewpoint. The film has mainly used two camera movements; panning and tilting. The subsection thus probes the way the camera movements are manipulated to create the point of view that aids in presentation of women characters in *Mucii ni Ndogo*.

#### **4.5.1 Panning shot**

Johnson defines a pan as a smooth-moving shot produced by a camera moves to the right or left along the horizontal planes which at times follows the subject (115). Fitzsimmons and Mannion say that in panning the camera shots moves side to side on a fixed axis. They add that the shot is important since besides creating realism, it is useful in showing the location (40). This shot is used to follow Keziah and her husband Jimmy walks towards Jimmy's house. This shot diverts the viewers from everything else happening on the scene to direct them to where the two are going in addition to creating realism since the viewers walk with the two characters. The camera movement further allows the viewer to know that the two have rekindled their loves since they walk holding hands.

#### **4.5.2 Tilt shot**

According to Fitzsimmons and Mannion, a tilt shot moves up and down on a fixed axis and aids in profiling the characters by looking at them up and down (40). This movement also directs the viewers to a particular subject and thus understands their presentation better. A tilt has been used to present women as sex objects. It is used when Wa Muthoni is with Kabuthi in the bedroom. When she is bending to wear her shoes, the camera tilts from up to down highlighting Wa Muthoni's half covered breasts to her partially covered thighs and legs. This camera movement directs the viewers to see what Kabuthi is seeing from where he is seated. The shot makes everything seem out of focus and gives special attention to her body parts shown. This shot

therefore aids in presenting her as a sex object since Kabuthi looks so fascinated such that, after Wa Muthoni realises that he has been staring at her, she poses for him to see her body better.

A tilt shot has also been used to not only highlight what Shiru is doing but also present her as a dependent character. While she is at the bar cleaning and lifting beer crates, the camera moves up and down guiding the viewers to where she is placing them and the viewers also get to see Kabuthi helping her to lift the table.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Point of view as demonstrated in this chapter is a technique that has deliberately been used in *Mucii ni Ndogo* to propagate negative stereotypes against women. Though the point of view emphasises and empathizes with the characters, Wa Muthoni, the story is about her told from someone else perspective and even from her own perspective depending on the position of the camera. The viewers have limited access to her side of the story like they do not get to see the real reason she holds so much bitterness towards her in-laws to an extent she wishes to kill all of them. Besides telling the story from the male characters perspective, camera movements, shots and angles are manipulated by the filmmakers to negatively stereotype women. Similarly camera shots are used to show different character traits women characters are accorded. Extreme close up shots and close up shots are used to reveal the inner feelings of the characters which builds their character traits.

Camera angles have clearly presented women characters as weak and vulnerable. A high camera angle has been used to focus on women characters only especially these women characters are begging the male characters to do something for them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter indicates the major findings of the study and the recommendations using two subtitles namely summary of findings and conclusion and recommendation for further research.

#### 5.2 Summary of Findings and Conclusion

From the study, it is possible to conclude that the filmmaker accords women character the characters roles that present them as domesticated, dependent on the male characters and sex objects. It is evident that there is interconnectedness between the visual media and the Kikuyu culture. To start with, the names used to refer to a woman are stereotypical by themselves.

The names tell the position a woman should occupy; that she is not fully part of the society but occupy the position of ‘others’. This negative perception is mirrored in *Mucii ni Ndogo* where the names suggest that women are mainly objects. The study further shows that women characters in the film are also presented as dependent. The film creates a perception that women character cannot do anything without the male characters.

The study moreover finds that women characters are commodified. First of all they are presented as men’s object of pleasure. This is seen in the film when women characters are touched inappropriately by the male characters with the intention to sleep with men. Women characters also present themselves as sex object by enhancing their ‘to-be-looked-at-ness’ by applying makeup and changing their mode of dressing. The study thus found out that the women characters use their physical beauty and sex to get anything they want and in so doing they destroy other people’s lives and theirs in the process.

The study moreover reveals that the women who refuse to be defied as domestic and dependent, play the roles that present them as destructive and sex objects. However even the ones who play as destructive women at the end of it all, get on their knees begging for men's help. The sex objects similarly accept to be used by men to get favor or money in return and are therefore dependent on men. With women dependency on men it is possible to see that women are unequal to men.

The locale where the characters are placed, the props and what the characters wear like costume and make up have an impact on the presentation of women. The audience is able to interpret what is going on in their minds and the intentions of their hearts. Through these elements it is possible to know that women characters are domesticated, dependent, passive and sex objects.

Point of view was also used to present women characters in this film as 'others'. The words and the actions which lead to the drama that unfolds in the film is instigated by the male characters. As the drama continues, the negative stereotypes against women are shown like domestication, sex object and properties, destructive, passiveness and dependence all seen from the men character perspective. This thus makes the women characters to mere objects of scrutiny.

The filmmaker has as well manipulated the camera to create a point of view that propagates negative stereotypes against women. High camera angle has been used to focus on women characters making them not only vulnerable but also weaker and dependent on the male characters. There would be therefore be a need to research if the stereotypes made against women characters in the films have an impact on the viewers.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix: A. Gestures and Camera angles.



**Figure 1. Nyare places the hand on Wa Muthoni's thigh.**



**Figure 2 Oley's hand on Wa Muthoni**



3.



4.



4

**Figure 3 and Figure 4 Wa Muthoni cat waking in her short skirts**



**Figure 5 Wa Muthoni lying on Kabuthi's bed.**



6.

**Figure 5 Wa Muthoni seated on a bed between Nyare and Oley.**



**Figure 7 Over the the shoulder shot from Kioi's shoulder**



**Figure 8 A reverse shot from Keziah's shoulder**



9.

**Figure 96 A medium shot of Wa Muthoni lying on Kabuthi's bed**



10.

**Figure 10 A long shot of Wa Muthoni and Kabuthi in the bedroom.**

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