

Sexuality and Sexual Scripting in African Traditional Religion: Mumbi in *A Grain of Wheat*

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Abstract

The African novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his novel *A Grain of Wheat* introduces a female character Mumbi. Mumbi resides in a village of pre-independence Kenya and shares the same name with the first woman in the Agikuyu myth of origins. In the novel, her life story brings to the centre stage religious, sexual and gender politics in the realm of everyday life. Whilst her husband Gikonyo is in detention, she gets pregnant by Karanja. Upon his release, Gikonyo swears never to talk about the child, continue with life as if nothing had happened, but never enter Mumbi's bed. Eventually out of frustration, he becomes violent to Mumbi to the extent that she leaves him to return to her parents. Using narratological text analysis and the sexual scripting approach, this paper examines Mumbi's sexuality in the context of her traditional village deeply immersed in Agikuyu traditional religion to explore the dilemmas of women's autonomous sexuality in African traditional societies. Sexual scripts existing at the Agikuyu traditional societal level are contrasted with those arising from both the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels in order to examine processes of transitions related to family, Agikuyu religion and sexuality and how Mumbi adopts new ways of negotiating sexual life.

KEY WORDS: Agikuyu Traditional Religion, Sexuality, Mumbi, Sexual Scripting

Introduction

The novel *A Grain of Wheat* was written by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Ngugi was born in 1938 in Kenya. He studied at Makerere University and also at the University of Leeds. He is a leading African writer who has been awarded several literature prizes. His literary career started in 1962 and his book, *A Grain of wheat* was first published in 1967. Before 1914, British settlements had begun in the central highlands of Kenya. This was a time of forceful eviction of people from their land leaving many as squatters or forced laborers. These events were not very far from Ngugi and are replayed in the novel. The characters of his novel in a rural setting are tremendously affected by colonialism in different ways.

Mumbi in the novel is a young Kenyan woman from the Agikuyu community living in Thabai village. She is compared to Wangu Makeri because of her looks, one of the most beautiful women in all the eight ridges, admired by many and has two brothers, Kihika, and Kariuki. She eventually marries Gikonyo who outsmarts other suitors. Whilst Gikonyo is in detention, she gets pregnant by Karanja and bears a child. The context in which part of her life is lived is presented in the novel through flashbacks, indicating a somewhat uncertain future for herself and her marriage.

Ngugi delves deeply into the complicated thinking of the main characters both as individual subjects and community members who must negotiate the conflation of religio-cultural heritage and colonialism. In the novel, Ngugi does not compartmentalize language, religion, politics etc.¹ Deep reverence to traditional religion and culture is exemplified in the novel. Ngugi shows how though Kihika may carry a pocket bible around; he also draws inspiration from traditional religious beliefs. In essence, he brings together Christianity and African traditional religion and fuses them to get a version that speaks to his struggle against colonial domination.² The core ideas that emanate from traditional religio-cultural heritage are those of self-sacrifice and justice which later inspire Kihika to give his life to fight for his people.

Agikuyu traditional religion provides sexual scripts at societal level which arise from the existing cultural discourses on sexuality. Further, Agikuyu culture carries messages regarding sexual power, appropriate sexual expression and sexual normalcy. However, these are not the only scripts available to use when negotiating sexual activities and behavior (Simon and Gagnon 1984, 1986). Mumbi, at the individual and interpersonal levels acquires sexual identity dependent on her particular stage in life. The sexual scripts she adopts as displayed in part result from her emergent relationships or situations rather than those guidelines provided by traditional culture.

In general, this paper demonstrates through sexual scripting the implicit rules of sexual scripts at different levels. It shows that these scripts are not the exact duplicate of each other at the Agikuyu religio-cultural level and at Mumbi's individual level. A critical analysis of these different scripts enables us to understand how Mumbi in the context of African traditional religion and culture develops and determines her own sexual behavior and activities.

Introducing *A Grain of Wheat*

In this novel, there are different temporalities with flashbacks used to narrate changes in time. These changes intersect with the individual as well as the collective historical consciousness adding complexities to the characters of the novel. The many flashbacks provide a way in which memories and histories are brought to the present.

The novel follows the life of an orphan named Mugo, who was brought up by Waitherero, his aunt. The setting of this novel is Thabai and Rungei villages in Kenya, from the colonial period moving to the state of emergency and into Kenya's independence. Troubles and problems abound beyond the struggle for independence.

¹ Peter Mwikisa (2000). The Limits of Difference: Ngugi Wa Thiongo's Redeployment of Biblical Signifiers in *A Grain of Wheat* and *I will Marry when I want*. In: Gerald West and Musa Dube. (eds.) *The Bible in Africa. Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* Leiden: Brill, 164.

² Peter Mwikisa (2000). The Limits of Difference, 168.

Kihika, a freedom fighter and brother to Mumbi dropped out of the Mission school in order to join other freedom fighters. Kihika kills a colonial officer, DO Robson and is regarded by other fighters as a hero. A manhunt is issued for him and Mugo, the protagonist betrays him. Kihika is found and hanged in public by a District Officer Mr. Thompson in order to teach the other fighters a lesson.

Instead of Mugo being rewarded, he is arrested and detained for trying to protect a pregnant woman who was being hit by a home guard. Like many other young men, he is detained for a couple of years. When he comes back, the people of Thabai consider him a hero because he never confessed the oath, although he was beaten many times. “You were brave not to confess. We admired your courage, and hid our heads in shame” (Wa Thiong’o 2002: 66). This earns Mugo respect among other detainees and the community as one who never confessed though no one knows that he is actually the one who betrayed Kihika in the first place. The community is convinced that Mugo should be the one to make a speech at the Uhuru celebrations.

As youth, Gikonyo is friends with Kihika and Karanja. They visit each other and spend a lot of time together. Gikonyo together with many other young men from Thabai village are arrested and taken to detention at the primacy of their marriage. Since there is no communication whatsoever between Gikonyo and Mumbi, she is unsure of his being alive or ever returning alive. Gikonyo had stayed in the detention camp for over six years. Community members were never really sure whether he and others were dead or whether they would ever return. Gikonyo, while in detention confesses and is released. His love for Mumbi inspires hope in him to live and be reunited to Mumbi. “His longing for her [Mumbi] is so all-consuming that he betrays his oath of loyalty to the cause of freedom in order to return to her” (Cook & Okenimpke 1997: 77). However, after returning he learns that in his absence many things had changed. Mumbi had betrayed him with Karanja and got pregnant. Through the years, Gikonyo is saddened because of Mumbi’s unfaithfulness and to find out, “...that a friend, or a man you always trusted, has betrayed you” (Wa Thiong’o 2002: 119).

Though betrayed, he tries to be polite to Mumbi but soon gets distanced. Gikonyo chooses to follow Agikuyu traditional conventions by staying with his wife in the same house. However, he sleeps in a different room, determined never to touch her, to ignore Mumbi’s child and expend all his efforts on getting rich. Mumbi’s attempts to have him talk about the child are shunned by Gikonyo who will hear none of this.

Mumbi left her seat and stood in front of her husband. She put her small hands around his neck, resting them on his shoulders. Her eyes glowed. Her lips trembled. ‘Let us talk about it’, she whispered. ‘About what?’ He asked and raised his head. ‘The child’. ‘There is nothing to talk about,’ he said with acid emphasis. ‘Then come to my bed tonight. I have waited for you only, these years.’ ‘What is wrong with you?’ Gikonyo pulled her arms from around his neck and slightly pushed her away. (Wa Thiong’o 2002:33)

As he continues to gain wealth, he opens a shop ‘Gikonyo General Store’. Then he went on and built a house, one of the best and most modern in the village demonstrating he had wealth, albeit small. Later, he got a political position in the land. This cast a big difference from his days of the poor carpenter. He also bought a five-acre farm (Wa Thiong’o 2002:28). When Gikonyo becomes violent, Mumbi separates from him. But how can Mumbi tell her family that part of the reason she left her marital home is

because Gikonyo had never touched her since he returned from detention. Would they not say that he was impotent and start spreading dangerous rumors? (Wa Thiong’o 2002:196).

Karanja was never detained but served the colonial authorities as a home guard and later as chief, therefore he was always in proximity to Mumbi. He still admired her and hoped to win her heart. On many occasions he gave Mumbi a helping hand.

Mumbi was depressed because there was no man of the house. In the end, she tied a belt around her waist and took on a man’s work. Together with Wangari, they cleared the site. Karanja came and helped them draw the plan of the hut on the ground...Men, finding women like Mumbi on the roof hammering in the nails, stopped to tease them. (Wa Thiong’o 2002:154)

Later, a big trench was dug around the village to isolate it, as the villagers are forced to dig the trench and prevented from escape. Nobody is allowed out. This punishment comes so as to teach other villages a lesson, a warning that they must never give food or any help to the freedom fighters. The food supply in the village dwindles to levels that some people are starved to death. Mumbi’s body bears the brunt of this until she states, “For me, I felt I could not live another day” (Wa Thiong’o 2002:159). Karanja however, brings her food when all hope is gone. He sneaks to bring her food in darkness. This food saves herself, her mother-in law, her parents and her younger brother. “To this day, I’ve never told anybody about the food which saved us” (Wa Thiong’o 2002:160).

Most characters in the novel think that it is Karanja who actually betrayed Kihika yet, it is Mugo. General R. and Lt. Koina want to find the traitor who betrayed Kihika and make it public at the celebration day. Mugo has to bring himself to confess he betrayed Kihika. At first he does not want to give a speech as he feels very guilty. Later he agrees and in his speech, he confesses to being the traitor. This way he saves Karanja who was considered the traitor even as he served the colonial administration as a home guard.

On Uhuru day, there is a last race and this race is between the rivals, Karanja and Gikonyo, in order to win back Mumbi. Mumbi once again is the object of competition. At the end of the novel, Gikonyo seems to again win the last race for Mumbi, although he lost the actual race against Karanja. It is at this point that he gets a change of heart and regrets his behavior towards Mumbi. While in hospital he considers to rescue his marriage as well as his love for Mumbi. “He thought about the wedding gift, a stool carved from Muiri wood. I’ll change the woman’s figure. I shall carve a woman big- big with child” (Wa Thiong’o 2002: 243).

Method and the Sexual Scripting Approach

In order to present Mumbi in her particular context, this paper employs the method of narratological text analysis. This method includes the analysis of different character features, their characterization and their constellation in the text. This method offers several possibilities which help to deconstruct the text into important components; thus teasing out the direct and indirect characterization (Bal 1997; Toolan 2001). Mumbi in the novel is described through the voice of the narrator, self-reflection or through other characters which comprises direct characterization. Similarly, there are aspects of indirect characterization as her character is also developed through emotions and thoughts,

actions and speeches or stream-of-consciousness. In general, Mumbi as an important character in the novel is selected, characterized and analyzed within the collection of the novel.

The sexual scripting approach proposes that people's sexual lives are governed by socially learned sets of sexual desires and conduct, rather than by biological imperatives. It asserts that sexual scripts are implicit rules which determine the who, when, what and how of individuals' sexual activities and behaviors (Baber 1994:60). Scripts, thus serve as specific rules of guidelines that individuals use regarding their sexual behaviors (Simon and Gagnon 1986). These scripts often arise from the existing cultural, religious and social discourses on sexuality and carry messages on appropriate sexual conduct.

The sexual scripting approach suggests that sexual scripts exist at three interrelated levels. The individual level which is also the intrapsychic level refers to how people may have their individual fantasies and desires which are often influenced by cultural scenarios. The interpersonal level refers to how people may write interpersonal scripts at the level of social interaction. These people's ideas mutually influence each others' beliefs and sexual conduct through consensus and compromise. The third level is the societal level. This refers to how social institutions and cultural moulds affect people's choice on when, why and with whom to relate to sexually. Cultural scenarios play a large part in influencing people's behavior and people consult these to guide their choices (Carpenter 2010: 161-162).

In ordinary life, there are inevitable sexuality and family related transitions which range from illness, divorce, incarceration, separation, sexual abuse, death and the like, of which people necessarily have to adopt or reject certain sexual scripts.³ Studies have shown how the termination of marital and cohabiting relationships represents a life transition. This further makes it possible for people to adopt new sexual scripts (Wade and DeLamater 2002). Sexual scripting helps to indicate the change processes in individual sexual lives and continuity in sexual lives as people reject and select certain scripts. Due to individuals experiences in particular socio-historic contexts, individuals tend to accumulate sets of experiences which guide them in adoption and rejection of sexual scripts (Carpenter 2010:156). In general, through this approach, it is possible to explore the ways in which Agikuyu religio-cultural heritage along with personal experiences and Mumbi's interpersonal relations influenced the sexual scripts displayed.

Sexual Scripts Arising from Agikuyu Traditional Religion

The Agikuyu believe that Ngai is the creator and giver of all things. Ngai created the first man Gikuyu who is the founder of the Agikuyu communities. According to Jomo Kenyatta, the Agikuyu peoples' daily lives are infused with constant commune and relationship with spiritual entities. To him, there is a distinction between Ngai and other deities. He adds that *gotbaitbaya Ngai*, which means to beseech God was never said to

³ Marsiglio and Greer also proposed to examine older men's sexuality and their sexual behavior in terms of scripts. See Marsiglio, William and Richard A. Greer (1994). *A Gender Analysis of Older Men's Sexual-ity*. (eds.) J. Edward, H. Thompson, and M. S. Kimmel. *Older Men's Lives*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 130.

other deities.⁴ The Agikuyu believe that Ngai's abode is on Mount Kenya, who made the mountain his resting place. Ngai took the first man, Gikuyu and gave him a view of all the land he would bestow to him. Upon descending the mountain, Gikuyu met a woman named Mumbi. They married and gave birth to ten⁵ daughters. They desired husbands for their daughters and so they made a sacrifice at the Mugumo tree and ten men appeared who later married the ten daughters.

Ngai is not to be disturbed unless it is really necessary (Kenyatta 1961:234-237). During prayer, the Agikuyu face Mount Kenya. This is also done whenever a sacrifice is to be made, which was commonly done under a *mugumo* tree (Kenyatta 1961:249). Traditionally, the dead were buried with their heads facing the mountain and houses also had their main entrances facing the mountain.

Agikuyu traditional pre-initiation ceremonial dances and sessions was a period when the initiates were taught the rules relating to sexual indulgence (Kenyatta 1961:155). These rules form the corpus of sexual script blueprints and guidelines at societal level and carry with them messages of what is normal and appropriate sexually. Agikuyu's traditional sexual scripts allowed for free sex between boys and girls only before circumcision and not after (Mugo 1982:20). Yet, in some instances, Agikuyu culture encouraged men and women to follow different scripts. One example is that before initiation, it was considered proper for boys to masturbate as a preparation for future sexual activity. However, masturbation among girls was considered wrong (Kenyatta 1961:162). Such is a gendered process precluding certain sexual options for women and men.

During the waiting period for boys or girls to be circumcised, parents would appoint a certain man or woman to act as a sponsor to their own son or daughter on the day of circumcision. One sexual script that was very clear is that, the sponsor was to abstain from sex for the whole period until his or her candidate is fully healed. To ensure compliance, the sponsor was required to live in close proximity to their candidate (Mugo 1982:18). Further, another sexual script was that initiates who had undergone circumcision were obligated to marry and get children. The bloodshed from their reproductive organs was a profound religious act which meant that the young people accepted to become bearers of children (Mbiti 2004:104). It was only after circumcision that boys and girls were admitted into the privileged class of womanhood and manhood. They could now be allowed to court in readiness for marriage (Mugo 1982:19).

Yet, another sexual script encouraged restricted intercourse. For this, circumcised boys and girls would mix freely and spend nights in groups together in one place. In the selected hut, they would pair up and the boy would remove all his clothing. The girl would remove only her upper garment and retain her soft leather apron pulled back

⁴ Jomo Kenyatta (1937). Kikuyu Religion, Ancestor-Worship, and Sacrificial Practices. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. Vol. 10, No. 3, 308.

⁵ The prevalent confusion between having nine or ten daughters is well explained by Mugo. Mugo in his outline of Kikuyu people customs and traditions asserts that no Kikuyu would dare openly tell you that there were ten clans within the Kikuyu tribe as Kikuyu's were not used to mention living things by exact numbers let alone the number of their children. It was believed to be bad omen to whatever was being counted. Therefore, people were discouraged to say that the clans were ten for fear that this could bring a slow end to the whole tribe. See E. N. Mugo (1982). *Kikuyu people: A brief outline of their customs and traditions*. Nairobi: Kenya literature Bureau, 3.

between her legs and well fastened to effectively protect her private parts.⁶ The two would then fondle each other, rubbing their breasts together and engaging in sexual conversations until they fall asleep (Kenyatta 1961:158). Mugo adds that during such encounters, a girl would never allow a young man to break her virginity, so she would sleep with her legs tightly placed together. She intentionally secured her private parts with a very tight protective covering of hard cloth or soft goat skin. To him, this was one reason why in those times it was impossible to find any fresh matured young girl bearing an illegitimate child (Mugo 1982: 21).

Another sexual script occasioned in these times was that neither a boy nor girl was to sleep with their back turned against each other, or the girl lie on top of the boy or touch his penis (Kenyatta 1961:160). Further, another sexual script from Agikuyu tradition forbade sexual relations among blood relatives or distant relatives (Mugo 1982:25; Kenyatta 1961:161). Also, any form of sexual intercourse other than that between women and men acting in the *normal way* (Italics mine) was forbidden. Kenyatta maintains that it was considered taboo to have sexual intercourse with a woman in any position except the regular, face to face (Kenyatta 1961:161).

Agikuyu religio-cultural heritage sexual scripts frown upon adultery. Many taboos and social stigma are attached to cohabitating with a married woman. One such taboo, *megiro* is of a wife having any sexual intercourse outside the homestead as it is regarded as bringing bad luck to the homestead. Nor can a wife have any sexual intercourse while her husband is away on a journey or other activities. Doing so is bringing misfortune on the husband (Kenyatta 1961:183). If a woman commits adultery, the husband is to quietly return her to her parents and claim a refund for all his bride-wealth (Mugo 1982:36). It is an offence for a wife to invite a man secretly to her hut, even a member of the age-group. Any man who breaks this rule, is punished severely. The wife is punished and taken back to her parents. If this is a repeat offense, the wife is divorced and the husband is to be refunded what he had given as bride-wealth. One saying has it that,

Before a man embarks upon such an adventure of visiting another man's wife, it is advisable for him to arm himself, for there is no mercy for one who entices another man's wife or steals his cow (Kenyatta 1961:182).

In general, Agikuyu religious traditions prescribe sexual scripts which may be said to be traditional, those which perpetuate gender and power differences. These scripts tolerate men's infidelity but taboo any infidelity on the part of women (Brinkman 1996). The script of abstinence by girls until marriage was for the relatives and neighbors to highly value the girl. These scripts also weigh heavily on the centrality of marriage and childbearing as the focus of life, which may be overwhelming for a couple like Mumbi and Gikonyo who were childless. Indeed, it was bad fate for a Kikuyu family not to have children and even more, the blame was directed at the woman. The woman would be regarded as a useless creature who has failed to fulfill an important requirement for her life (Mugo 1982: 6).

⁶ Kenyatta states that the main concern in this relationship was to enjoy warmth and breasts. He adds that missionaries found it unbelievable that two young people would sleep together in such a manner without copulation. Jomo Kenyatta (1961). *Facing Mount Kenya*. London: Mercury, 158-159.

Mumbi's Individual and Interpersonal Sexual Scripts

Mumbi rejects Agikuyu sexual scripts which advocate for restricted intercourse in groups of age-sets. She is fully undressed by Gikonyo, pulled to the ground and caressed in the woods before marriage. Mumbi negotiates her sexual life on the basis of her individual desires which determine her sexual behavior.

Mumbi adopts Agikuyu sexual scripts that encourage wives to wait for their husbands who are away. She actually remains alone for the years that Gikonyo is in detention. Separation, incarceration and the like serve as transitional moments which present moments to create new scripts. Mumbi was well able to seek out other partners secretly but she did not. She lets Gikonyo know that she had waited for him all these years (Wa Thiong'o 2002:33). Agikuyu religio-cultural scripts have unfaithfulness on the part of the wife as an unknown (Mugo 1982:36). Mumbi was therefore expected to remain faithful in as long she was the duly married wife to Gikonyo. Regardless of his period away, she was to wait. The appropriate sexual expression required by Agikuyu culture is faithfulness on the part of wives.

Mumbi does not get pregnant by Gikonyo before his detention. The centrality of motherhood in this Kenyan community cannot be underestimated. Indeed, village life exerts pressure on married women who are childless (Maseno-Ouma 2014). According to Mbiti, marriage and childbearing are the focus of life (Mbiti 2004:106). To him, the crucial events in one's life involve the groups of basic significance to the person. A person's kinship group may involve the dead and the yet to be born.

The arrival of a child in the family is one of the greatest blessings of life...If it is the first pregnancy for her [a woman], it assures everyone that she is able to bear children. Once that is known, her marriage is largely secure and the relatives treat her with greater respect than before (Mbiti 1975:81).

Mumbi and Gikonyo's marital sexual experiences do not yield children as yet. By the time Gikonyo is detained, Mumbi has not assured the community that she can get pregnant, neither has Gikonyo that he can father a child. Such a situation at village level brings in insecurity for the marriage at large and diminishes the level of respect that would normally be accorded such couples. The myths of creation in many communities in Africa indicate that human life started with husband and wife and it must therefore continue this very same way even as children come into the picture (Mbiti 2004:104).

Further, given that Mbiti addresses childbearing within the African context of marriage, he states,

Marriage fulfils the obligation, the duty and the custom that every normal person should be married and bear children... Failure to get married is like committing a crime against traditional beliefs and practices... The supreme purpose of marriage according to African people is to bear children, to build a family, to extend life, and to hand down the living torch of human existence (Mbiti 1975:104-105).

The societal sexual scripts expect the couple to have children and increase the extended family. Customarily, women are looked upon solely as child bearers and servers and are often cruelly oppressed if they cannot bear children. African cultures often present a

woman as one who has to fulfill her destiny being a mother. Women without children are not accorded respect (Nasimiyu 1992). In becoming a mother, a woman renounces her personality or personal identity, she is simply referred to as ‘the wife of--’ or the ‘mother of--’. She belongs to her husband and is thus possessed by him (Nasimiyu 1997).

Clearly, Gikonyo is childless and this is bad fate but even more to Mumbi (Mugo 1982:6). After his release from detention, he resents any physical intimacy with his wife Mumbi. He decides to live with her in the same house but never touch her. Gikonyo is unhappy in all this. In Mbiti’s collection of practices and popular beliefs, he notes,

In our traditional Society, where procreation is at the center of marriage, a childless marriage can become a most painful and embarrassing situation...traditional attitudes and philosophy of marriage make it extremely hard for a childless man to be successful and happy (Mbiti 1987:43).

Accordingly, Mbiti adds that through marriage and procreation a person becomes immortalized in African society. Indeed, this position by Mbiti has been critiqued by women writers who question what it means for an African woman to be in community and further question the link between immortality and procreation.

Mumbi lives out another sexual script at the interpersonal level. Here, she abstains from sexual relations, in the presence of her husband Gikonyo. The tensions in her marriage at the time and of which others are oblivious, leads her to renegotiate her sexual behavior. Mumbi and Gikonyo have a dysfunctional marriage after his return from detention. Though husband and wife, they live under the same roof but do not share sexual relations. What is considered usual as per Agikuyu culture and should be habitual has broken down and Mumbi now finds herself having to adapt in this situation. She does not leave Gikonyo even under such situations and lives with this for a long while. Whereas she knows what is going on, she does not tell anyone of the predicament she finds herself in as indicated below,

Mumbi had found it difficult to tell her parents why she had left her husband. She had never told her own mother or father about the tension in which she lived: how do you go telling people that your husband has refused to sleep with you? Might they not think that he was impotent and spread damaging rumors? (Wa Thiong’o 2002:196).

This interpersonal script is clearly a rejection of Agikuyu traditional religion script that would have it otherwise, husband and wife actively seeking to bear children and nurture them together. How are Mumbi and Gikonyo going to have children if they continually abstain from sexual activity and this remains the state of affairs in their house?

Another interpersonal script becomes evident when Mumbi and Gikonyo’s relationship degenerates. Violence and abuse against Mumbi becomes the order of the day. Often times, violence is tolerated by women to their own harm (Kirk and Okazawa-Rey 2004). ‘Shut your mouth, woman!’ Gikonyo shouts at Mumbi, also standing.

“I’ll make you shut this mouth of a whore”, he cried out slapping her on the left cheek, and then on the right.He trembled with excitement outside the house. Nobody would hold him back. He would thrash Mumbi until she cries for mercy (Wa Thiong’o 2002:192).

Though she is physically attacked by Gikonyo who wants to beat her, his own mother intervenes and dares him to hit his wife. In Mumbi's attempts to change the situation, she takes a rebellious stance where she actively desires to be something more. This tension adds to the trouble already in the marriage and affects appropriate sexual behavior between the two.

Mumbi's encounter with Karanja highlights another sexual script at the interpersonal level. After her sexual encounter with Karanja, she confesses,

When I woke and realized fully what had happened, I became cold, the whole body. Karanja tried to say nice things to me....I took one of his shoes and threw it at him. I ran out and could not cry.... I went to Wangari and this time I cried and I could not clearly tell her what had happened (Wa Thiong'o 2002:165).

Mumbi confesses to Mugo that she gave herself to Karanja at the time when he gave her the news of Gikonyo's release from detention camp. This sexual encounter in her terms was but an ultimate extension of her supreme joy in hearing of her husband's release and Karanja merely was an agent in the process. She had waited for years for her husband to return, therefore she reacts with a kind of hysteria to Karanja's news. According to Rutere, Mumbi is redeemable. By picking Karanja's shoe and throwing it back to him, she demonstrates her remorsefulness about the sexual encounter and disapproval for Karanja the chief, who has tormented her for quite a while (Rutere 2009).

In general, Mumbi's individual and interpersonal scripts emanate from individual desires, emotion and fantasies, though religio-cultural and social influences permeate such scripts to some degree. Mumbi's scripts help explain her construction of sexuality and the ongoing process of acquiring sexual identity. Sexual scripts are traditional when they seem to reinforce the power relations between individuals. In this case, Karanja who is now a chief in the colonial context has power over Mumbi and has information that is very important to her- the return of her husband. At the same time, these are traditional in that they decrease Mumbi's power over the sexual situation, developed through less than positive experiences (Baber 1994).

Conclusion

Sexual scripts emanating from Agikuyu religio-cultural constellations provide implicit rules and guidelines to determine sexual behavior and activities. These scripts as shown generally carry messages regarding sexual power and normalcy. However, many societies including Agikuyu culture continue to encourage women and men to follow different scripts in certain instances. The scripts offered to women being more restrictive and punitive. The whole arena of sexuality is closely linked to security as Mumbi's sexuality becomes a source of vulnerability and societal restriction. Her sexual autonomy, activities and identity meet restriction in the Agikuyu patriarchal culture even as she is branded a whore and beaten by Gikonyo. Mumbi's individual and interpersonal sexual scripts in some instances defy and antagonize those scripts provided at the Agikuyu societal level. Her life's trajectory, opportunities and constraints influence her preferences for particular scripts at the individual and interpersonal level. The sexual scripts emanating from Agikuyu culture seems to be continually contested and in some cases rejected as Mumbi negotiates her sexual life. In the end, she constructs her own scripts that signify

her needs for protection and affection. In all, she acquires a sexual identity emergent in situations and relationships that she encounters.

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